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Permalink

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Journal

L2 Journal, 10(1)

Author

Burns, Katharine E.

Publication Date

2018

DOI

10.5070/L210135863

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Peer reviewed

Marginalization of Local Varieties in the L2 Classroom: The Case of U.S. Spanish

KATHARINE E. BURNS

Carnegie Mellon University

E-mail: keburns@andrew.cmu.edu

The United States is one of the world's most populous Hispanophone countries, with over 35 million Spanish-speakers. In addition, Spanish is the most widely taught foreign language in the United States, with more students enrolled in Spanish at the higher-education level than in all other modern languages combined. How, then, is the United States' status as a top Spanish-speaking country reflected in the treatment of sociolinguistic variation in Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) curricula at the university level? This case study of a large, public university, which is home to an SFL program among the largest in the country, explores that question using a two-tiered approach. First, an analysis was conducted to examine the ideological underpinnings of how varieties of U.S. Spanish are presented in beginner and intermediate SFL textbooks used at the university. Second, focus groups of SFL instructors were conducted to gain insight into their beliefs and practices regarding the presentation of language variation in the classroom. The study finds evidence of a systematic reinforcement of standard language ideology in the university's beginner and intermediate SFL curricula, with little attention paid to regional varieties of Spanish and, at times, an explicit de-legitimization of U.S. Spanish varieties in particular.

INTRODUCTION

According to data from the Modern Language Association (MLA), Spanish enrollment at the university level in the United States surpasses the enrollment of all other modern languages combined (Goldberg, Looney, & Lusin, 2013). What is not clear from these numbers, however, is whether the treatment of language variation in U.S. university-level Spanish courses reflects the United States' status as a top-five Spanish-speaking country with over 35 million Spanish-speakers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Typically, critical discussions of language variation in the L2 classroom have taken place within the context of Spanish as a Heritage Language (SHL) (Parra, 2016; Martínez, 2003); however, this is also an issue that directly affects Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) students in the United States, since speakers of the varieties of U.S. Spanish may be present in communities in which SFL students live. If SFL students have occasion to use Spanish in their daily lives outside the classroom, it may be with users of U.S. varieties of Spanish.

Spanish departments in the United States have a long history of being Euro-centric and literature-focused (Ortega, 1999). Students, however, particularly those in beginning-level SFL courses, are in need of accurate and inclusive sociolinguistic information about the varieties of Spanish spoken in their own country and communities. In addition, SFL courses often lack significant research-based information on sociolinguistic variation in global spoken varieties of Spanish. This may be due in part to a traditional focus on grammar and writing and the use of an amalgamated 'standard' variety of the language, which does not always reflect the language used by speakers in authentic conversational contexts. The

current study examines how U.S. varieties of Spanish are presented in the beginner and intermediate curricula of a large public university in the U.S. Southwest that is home to an SFL program among the largest in the country. To this end, the presentation of regional language variation in the university's first- and second-year SFL textbooks was analyzed to examine the ideologies at work in regard to 'standard' language and U.S. Spanish varieties. While the textbooks form the core of the course syllabi, they cannot provide a complete picture of classroom practices. Therefore, the study also includes focus group interviews with SFL instructors to gain insights into their perspectives on this issue.

BACKGROUND

Language Standardization and Ideology

As Train (2007) details, Castilian Spanish (*castellano*) and the Latin American *norma culta*, which, he argues, are tied to notions of "real Spanish," or a native speaker standard Spanish, have achieved supremacy over other varieties of the language through a historical process marked by ideologies of language standardization and of nativeness in the context of imperialism and (post) colonialism. Language standardization involves a systematic attempt to eliminate the kind of variation within language that is often tied to regional, ethnic, or social identities. Though these attempts at minimizing variation are billed as necessary to simplify, clarify, or consolidate the language (Cheshire, 1999; Garvin, 1993) by those who engage in overt or covert language standardization, they are in fact part of a larger ideological process by which a dominant group solidifies its power. Namely, such dominant groups engender the belief that their own language variety is a necessary means by which to acquire cultural, political, economic, or social capital (Bourdieu, 1991). The power and dominance of these 'standard' varieties are often reproduced through their use in media and educational discourses. Though the term 'standard' language suggests uniformity, Milroy (2001) observes that a 'standard' language variety is, in fact, more likely to be aligned with high social prestige than to have a higher degree of systematicity than other varieties.

Institutions such as the *Real Academia Española* (RAE; 'Royal Spanish Academy') have considerable power and work world-wide to attempt to determine what 'Spanish' is (and is not) and how it is taught. Their promotion of 'standard' Spanish, which is identified with the educated and/or elite, reinforces the hegemonic power of dominant groups. Paffey and Mar-Molinero (2009) have found the RAE's language policy, which the RAE itself claims is pan-Hispanic, to be hierarchical, Iberian-dominated, and lacking significant treatment of language variation.¹ Others have pointed out that the RAE's language policy largely ignores many varieties of Spanish and languages closely related to it, such as Catalan² (Vann, 2002) and

¹ The RAE is not the only Spanish language academy. In fact, there is a consortium of Spanish language academies, (*Asociación de las Academias de la Lengua Española*; Association of Spanish Language Academies), most of which are located in former Spanish colonies. The consortium, known as ASALE, even includes a location in the United States, which was founded by a member of the RAE in 1973. However, ASALE is firmly under RAE leadership—the director of the RAE is also its president. The existence of additional Spanish language academies in Latin America and elsewhere, which in some sense are simply satellite branches of the RAE, has not mitigated the historic or present-day influence of the RAE and the colonialist 'standard' language it promotes. For more information, please see www.asale.org.

² Catalan is a Romance language that is spoken mainly in northeastern Spain. It has co-official status with Castilian Spanish in three of Spain's autonomous regions: Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, and the Valencian

U.S. Spanish (Villa, 2002). As language educators aware of the effects of language standardization and ideology on variation, and yet mindful that variation is inherent in spoken language, how can we arm students with the critical sociolinguistic awareness they need in order to use their target languages in authentic conversation outside the classroom?

Language Ideology and Varieties of Spanish in U.S. Universities

Several studies have found that ‘standard’ language ideology is reproduced in the way Spanish is conceptualized and taught in U.S. universities. Valdés, González, López García, and Márquez (2003) interviewed instructors in a university Spanish department in the United States and found widespread evidence of an ideology of ‘standard’ Spanish. Most participants indicated that ‘standard’ or ‘academic’ Spanish should be “pure, formal, and error-free” (Valdés et al., 2003, p. 16) and either did not mention U.S. Spanish, or displayed a negative stance toward it. In addition, Valdés et al. (2003) point to ideologically-based power dynamics within Spanish departments that favor monolingual (Spanish) faculty and graduate students from Spain or Latin America over those from bilingual/heritage Spanish or non-Spanish L1 backgrounds.

In a similar study, Pomerantz (2002) interviewed university-level SFL students about their motivations for studying Spanish and their attitudes toward the language. Their answers revealed their adherence (whether conscious or not) to the ideology of Spanish as a commodity to be used for the acquisition of social and economic capital. The notion of Spanish proficiency was also ideologically tied to institutional requirements such as getting good grades and completing a study abroad experience. Pomerantz (2002) observes that this ideology is perpetuated in the case of L1 English monolingual students but not in bilingual or U.S. Latino students, who are denied ‘proficient’ status, though their competence in Spanish may outstrip that of the institutionally-sanctioned ‘proficient speaker.’

Ortega (1999) criticizes foreign language professionals for wrongly claiming that foreign language study is apolitical so that they may justify their role in perpetuating elitist views about language varieties. She postulates that institutionally sanctioned preoccupations with literature and written language and the virtual dismissal of spoken language on the part of Spanish department faculty also contribute to the reproduction of the ideology of standard language and the suppression of sociolinguistic variation in the SFL classroom. In addition, Train (2009) has problematized the characterization of Spanish as a ‘foreign’ language in the United States in the first place, given the very large number of Americans who speak many varieties of Spanish, or that the U.S. is among the world’s largest Spanish-speaking countries—facts seldom acknowledged in more than a cursory way in the SFL classroom.

In the case of the U.S. Southwest, Spanish pre-dates English by many years and therefore cannot be characterized exclusively as an immigrant language. Villa and Rivera-Mills (2009) point out that Spanish-speakers have lived continuously in what is now New Mexico since 1598 and until the mid-19th century Spanish was the *lingua franca* in what is now the U.S. Southwest, which was part of Mexico until 1848. This makes the Spanish-speaking community in the U.S. Southwest very linguistically rich, since some families have preserved Spanish for centuries, while those who have arrived recently have in a sense ‘refreshed’ the language of the community (Villa & Rivera-Mills, 2009, p. 28). Other large Spanish-speaking

Community. However, Catalan has not always had such status—it was outlawed during the reign of dictator Francisco Franco (1939-1975). Catalan is often invoked in arguments in favor of Catalonia’s separatist movement.

communities in the United States include Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the Northeast and Cubans in Florida, though Spanish-speakers can be found in all 50 states and in most communities (Lipski, 2008).

The standard language ideology so entrenched in Spanish departments is all the more problematic in that ‘standard’ Spanish been identified, repeatedly, as an abstract construct, like all ‘standard’ languages (Train, 2003; Vann, 2002; Villa, 2009). This is a particular issue for the L2 classroom because, as Train (2003) points out, it is tied to the ideology of ‘nativeness’ that promotes an idealized native speaker as the model to which L2 students should aspire. If the true goal of L2 professionals is to encourage students to sound ‘native-like,’ Train (2003) observes, they should actually embrace language variation, which reflects the true practices of target language speakers. Adherence to an ideological construct of a ‘native speaker standard’ will not prepare students for the realities of authentic conversation outside the classroom.

As the United States is a large and diverse country, it would be difficult to pinpoint just one form of U.S. Spanish, just as it would be misleading to characterize U.S. English as monolithic. One distinguishing feature of U.S. Spanish varieties are their long and significant contact with English, and the vast majority of U.S. Spanish users are also English speakers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Some have therefore characterized these varieties as ‘*Spanglish*,’ a term which has generated some controversy. Otheguy and Stern (2011) have problematized the term ‘*Spanglish*’ as reinforcing an ideological position that does not give U.S. Spanish, as they believe it should be called, a legitimate place among the other regional varieties of Spanish (e.g., Mexican, Argentine, Costa Rican), but stigmatizes it as an English-polluted bastardization of ‘real’ or ‘standard’ Spanish. Otheguy and Stern (2011) argue that U.S. Spanish varieties, like other varieties of the language, have their own regular rules and patterns, and are not simply a random mix of Spanish and English, so they should be treated as legitimate varieties of the language. In contrast, Zentella (2009) argues in favor of using the term ‘*Spanglish*’ as a way of conveying the role oppression plays in the linguistic past and present of U.S. Spanish-speaking communities. She calls for its users to reclaim the word ‘*Spanglish*,’ turning it into a means of expressing linguistic and cultural pride.

The Language of Instructional Materials

Many language educators have noted a disparity between authentic oral language use and the type of language often presented in foreign language textbooks and instructional materials. Virtually exclusive focus on written forms of language, often as if written and spoken language were one in the same, is typical of L2 instructional materials, as are outdated conversational expressions or instructions (Lippi-Green, 2012). As the primary basis for syllabi, textbooks’ presentation of oral language often constitutes the majority of students’ total exposure to conversational varieties of the target language. How does the presentation of oral language in such instructional materials measure up to authentic oral discourse?

Glisan and Drescher (1993) found that grammatical explanations in SFL textbooks generally did not reflect authentic spoken Spanish, often giving the impression that all grammatical forms are equally important in speech, while the data suggest that some grammatical forms are preferred in speech or used differently in speech than in writing. As Gilmore (2004) observes “...but to what extent should we deprive students of exposure to natural language? I would argue that if our learners’ goal is to be able to operate independently in the L2 outside of the classroom, then at some point they have to be shown

the true nature of conversation” (p. 371). In this vein, Shenk (2014) argues for including *el voseo* (the use of the second person singular pronoun *vos* in parts of Latin America) at the intermediate level in SFL courses, while Schoonmaker-Gates (2017) found a positive correlation between SFL students’ ability to recognize and understand language variation and the inclusion of sociolinguistic information about such variation in their instructional materials and classroom discourse.

Mougeon, Rehner, and Nadasdi (2004) provide a strong case for including local or regional language varieties in FL instruction. Their study examined the use of 13 lexical, grammatical, and phonetic variables common to Québec French (*québécois*) in 41 high school students in a French immersion program in Toronto, Canada. This situation is comparable to the case of the U.S. Southwest (and other areas where Spanish is widely spoken, such as the U.S. Northeast and Florida), since Ontario is an English-dominant environment that nevertheless has a high percentage of speakers of another language (*québécois*) and borders an area where that language is dominant. In addition, Parisian French has prestige over *québécois* in the Francophone world just as Castilian and ‘standard’ Latin American Spanish are privileged over U.S. and other Spanish dialects in the Hispanophone world. The authors conclude that the L2 French students’ acquisition of sociolinguistic variants is well below that of native speakers of *québécois*, and that this is generally due to the lack of these variants in both their teacher-talk and classroom materials.

Previous research has also found evidence that ‘standard’ language ideologies are often reproduced in textbooks. De los Heros (2009) employed Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate whether a Peruvian high school L1 language arts book, *Talento*, actually promotes linguistic diversity within Spanish, as it purports to do. Her findings revealed that the textbook advances linguistic prescriptivism and the superiority of ‘standard’ Spanish over regional varieties. Turning to a similar study in an L2 context, Heinrich (2005) found that Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) textbooks propagate an ideology of the ‘standard’ Japanese of the educated, urban middle class as the variety to which JFL students should aspire, virtually ignoring ‘non-standard’ Japanese varieties. Brown (2010) performed a study of the representation of honorifics in Korean as a Foreign Language textbooks in which he found their presentation to be oversimplified and inauthentic. Burns Al Masaeed (2014) found systematic reproduction of ‘standard’ language ideologies, at the expense of regional language varieties, in SFL and SHL textbooks. The present investigation seeks to examine how beginning and intermediate level SFL textbooks used in this case study present U.S. varieties of Spanish, keeping in mind that they are used in U.S. SFL students’ own country and communities.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The case study presented here was undertaken in order to investigate how varieties of U.S. Spanish are represented in beginner and intermediate SFL courses in a large Southwestern university. Approaches to U.S. varieties of Spanish in the university’s SFL program were analyzed in a two-step process: a) the treatment of U.S. Spanish in the program’s first- and second-year textbooks was analyzed; and b) SFL instructor focus groups were conducted to gain insight into classroom practices and teaching strategies regarding sociolinguistic variation and U.S. varieties of Spanish in the program.

Materials and Participants

The textbooks examined in the current study are the official textbooks used in the SFL courses at the university at which the case study was conducted: in the beginner courses, *¡Dímelo tú!*, 6th edition (Rodríguez Nogales, Francisco, Samaniego, & Blommers, 2010), and in the intermediate courses, *Imagina*, 2nd Edition (Blanco & Tocaimaza-Hatch, 2011). Both books are used over two-semester course sequences: the beginner book is used for first and second semester classes, and the intermediate book is used for the third and fourth semesters.

The nine instructor participants in the focus groups conducted for this study were all current graduate instructors for the SFL program at the beginner or intermediate levels. Five of the instructors also had experience teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language at the beginning, intermediate, and/or advanced levels, and two of the nine were native Spanish-speakers. The participants volunteered for the study by responding to a recruitment e-mail sent to a departmental listserv that asked for instructors in the SFL and SHL programs willing to participate in a study about the teaching of speaking skills. All participants were enrolled in Ph.D. programs in either Second Language Acquisition or Hispanic Studies. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

Method

For each textbook, the researcher conducted a careful reading of the introductory material, preface, and scope and sequence of the Instructor's Annotated Edition in order to determine how each book presents itself in relation to both Spanish outside the classroom and language variation—including whether it was systematically addressed. Subsequently, the index of each book was searched for key terms pertinent to U.S. Spanish and language variety in general, such as: U.S. Spanish, Spanglish, language contact, loan words, language variety, vernacular, colloquialism, dialect, etc. The corresponding pages were examined for lexical and grammatical information about regional language varieties, with particular focus given to U.S. Spanish. Finally, the entire textbook was examined for any additional information on regional language variety. Special attention was paid to chapters, lessons, or sections focusing on the U.S. and/or Hispanic or Latino populations in the U.S., and any mention of language variety in those sections. Quotations from the textbooks have been translated to English (by the researcher) for the benefit of all readers, with the exception of those from the textbook prefaces, which appear in their original English. Due to space limitations, readers are referred to indicated pages of the textbook for the original Spanish.

The two focus group discussions were moderated by the researcher in a semi-structured format and each lasted approximately 60 minutes (see Appendix for sample questions). One group contained five participants; the other was comprised of four participants. The groups' conversations were audio recorded in full, and then selected passages were transcribed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results: Analysis of Textbooks

According to the preface the beginner textbook, *¡Dímelo tú!* takes an interactive,

communication-centered approach to teaching Spanish—with a strong emphasis on learning through cultural immersion. While no explicit mention is made of language variation in the introductory material, the following is asserted about language in context: “The authors also believe that language should not be taught in a void, but rather in rich cultural and relevant contexts that steadily move students toward a greater global awareness and understanding” (Rodríguez Nogales et al., 2010, p. AIE 10-Preface).

The authors of *Imagina*, the intermediate textbook, also state that the pedagogical orientation of the book is toward interactive communication in meaningful context: “...IMAGINA encourages students to expand their use of language beyond the classroom setting and participate in broader, richer Spanish-speaking communities” (Blanco & Tocaimaza-Hatch, 2011, p. IAE-7-Preface).

U.S. Spanish Varieties at the Beginner Level

The first-year textbook, *¡Dímelo tú!*, devotes one chapter to the U.S. as a Spanish-speaking country. In that 33-page chapter, the linguistic diversity of the United States is discussed once, as the subject of a *¿Sabías que...?* [Did you know?] side-bar feature focusing on lexical evidence of Spanish-English contact. The ten U.S. Spanish lexical items listed in the *¿Sabías que...?* box do not appear to belong to any particular semantic category.³ Their ‘standard’ Spanish equivalents are also listed, and are given the title “*Español más común*” [More Common Spanish], though the spheres (geographical or social) in which those equivalents are more common are not specified. The *¿Sabías que...?* feature describes U.S. Spanish varieties:

Due to daily contact with English, Spanish-speakers in some U.S. communities use a large number of “loan words” from English that form a kind of Spanglish. These words, because they have equivalents in normative Spanish, are not understood outside of the communities that use them. (Rodríguez Nogales et al., 2010, p. 306)

Here, U.S. Spanish varieties are immediately framed in the context of English, rather than Spanish. According to this passage, U.S. Spanish varieties are the result of contact with English and consist of mostly English loan words. Otheguy and Stern (2011) dispute this assumption, citing a study by Moreno-Fernández (2007), who found that “words with English etymology were less than 7% of the total vocabulary of Hispanic youth in Chicago whom he studied” (p. 90). Additionally, in this passage, varieties of U.S. Spanish are referred to as “*Spanglish*,” a contentious term that has been characterized in the literature as potentially disparaging and misleading (Otheguy & Stern, 2011).

The previous passage from *¡Dímelo tú!* explicitly reinforces the ideology of the ‘standard’ language, declaring that words have ‘equivalents’ in ‘normative Spanish.’ It also explicitly takes the step of further marginalizing U.S. Spanish varieties by contrasting them with ‘normative’ Spanish. Along with questioning what, in fact, constitutes ‘normative’ Spanish, we might also challenge the claim of equivalency made here. Does it actually mean the same thing to say *armí* [U.S. Spanish] as it does to say *ejército* [‘more common’ Spanish]? Though

³ The ten U.S. Spanish lexical items given in this *¿Sabías que...?* are: *armí, bas, biles, breca, colegio, daime, escuela alta, gasolín, magazzino, and sainear* (Rodríguez Nogales et al., 2010, p. 306).

both can be translated to ‘army’ in English, calling them ‘equivalent’ ignores a host of sociolinguistic factors and is thus misleading.

This *¿Sabías que...?* feature draws a distinction between English loan words that are ‘accepted’ in ‘normative Spanish,’ such as *champú*, *jeans*, *shorts* and *béisbol*, and the ten lexical items presented, which are not ‘accepted.’ The final word is left for students, in a discussion prompt entitled *En tu opinión* [In Your Opinion]: “Why do you think that some U.S. English words like *champú* and *béisbol* are accepted in normative Spanish and others like *biles* and *daime* are not accepted?” (Rodríguez Nogales et al., 2010, p. 306) While it is admirable that students are asked to think critically about this issue, this question is phrased in such a way as to encourage students to come to the conclusion that varieties of U.S. Spanish (and/or their speakers) are afforded lower prestige than other varieties of Spanish (and/or their speakers). One might argue that this is an unfortunate consequence of power dynamics in society, which must be faced in the interest of painting an accurate sociolinguistic portrait of Spanish in the United States. This may well be true, but U.S. Spanish varieties are not presented from a neutral point of view in this text. In light of the explicit devaluation of U.S. Spanish varieties in this same *¿Sabías que...?* feature, students are not equipped with the proper context to understand the complex workings of language and power.

Finally, this passage from *¡Dímelo tú!* characterizes U.S. Spanish varieties as insular and limited, stating that they are “not understood outside of the communities that use [them]” (Rodríguez Nogales et al., 2010, p. 306). While language varieties, by their nature, may have elements that are not universally recognized by all speakers of the language in question, this contextualizing information about the nature of language variation is not presented to students in this passage. Therefore, *¡Dímelo tú!* sends a message to the student that varieties of U.S. Spanish are insular and not particularly useful for SFL learners, an opinion not explicitly expressed about any other linguistic variety included in the textbook. In this passage, then, we see not only a clear reinforcement of the ‘standard’ language ideology, but an active devaluation of U.S. Spanish varieties in particular. This is an incomplete and misleading portrayal of U.S. varieties of Spanish and also constitutes a missed opportunity to encourage Critical Language Awareness in students, especially given that students in U.S. classrooms may have the opportunity to encounter a speaker of one of the many varieties of U.S. Spanish in their own communities.

In fact, the *¡Dímelo tú!* chapter centered on the United States does include an activity that asks students to engage with a Spanish-speaker in their own community. While this is encouraging, the suggested questions prompt the student to ask about the weather in the interviewee’s home country, assuming that the interviewee is an immigrant, though this chapter is on Spanish in the United States, and the directions require only that the student interview a Spanish-speaker, not necessarily an immigrant. The implication here is that Spanish is not a U.S. phenomenon—that it must be something that is practiced far away and by people who come from elsewhere. This de-legitimizes varieties of U.S. Spanish and their speakers as ‘owners’ of Spanish, and misses the opportunity for students to be introduced to their own community in potentially new ways, and to see Spanish as a skill that can be employed at home, rather than only in faraway places they may never visit. In addition, the suggested questions for this assignment are about weather: the interviewee’s weather preferences, favorite activities in different types of weather, and the weather in the interviewee’s home country. This essentially subverts some of the assignment’s potential value by making the conversation about *the* quintessential superficial small-talk topic—the weather—rather than taking the opportunity to ask about more substantial topics. Here, U.S.

Spanish-speakers are not presented as linguistic or cultural resources.

Finally, there are no activities in the chapter on Spanish in the United States that encourage students to use the presented U.S. Spanish vocabulary. In the instructor's annotated edition, however, there is a margin note suggesting a homework assignment in which students research a language variety, pick ten interesting words from that variety, and look up their equivalents in "more widely used Spanish" (Rodríguez Nogales et al., 2010, p. 306). While such contrastive analysis may be pedagogically useful for students, the phrase "more widely used Spanish" reinforces the notion of a monolithic 'standard' Spanish, and, by extension, standard language ideology. Simply using more neutral language such as "another variety of Spanish" would serve the same pedagogical purpose without potentially implying that U.S. varieties of Spanish are insular or somehow abnormal.

Though *¡Dímelo tú!*'s preface states that "language should not be taught in a void, but rather in rich cultural and relevant contexts" (p. 10-Preface), the rich, relevant, and proximate U.S. Spanish cultural and linguistic community is sparsely mentioned in the text itself. When presented, U.S. Spanish varieties are at times de-valued and undermined, both implicitly and explicitly. The 'standard' version of Spanish promoted by *¡Dímelo tú!* is an abstract construct that exists mostly in the very teaching "void" the authors, by their own admission, sought to bypass.

U.S. Spanish Varieties at the Intermediate Level

Imagina, the second-year textbook, includes a feature section in the lesson focusing on the United States that lists 18 words and expressions under the title "*El español en los Estados Unidos*" [Spanish in the United States]. This list is subdivided into two sections: a) "Spanish Expressions Commonly Used in English"; and b) "Influence of English on Spanish." The 12 words in the first section are loan words and phrases from Spanish that have become assimilated into English: 'adios, amigo,' 'fiesta,' 'gracias,' 'gusto,' 'hasta la vista,' 'mi casa es su casa,' 'número uno,' 'plaza,' 'pronto,' 'salsa,' 'sombrero,' and 'vamos' (Blanco & Tocaimaza Hatch, 2011, p. 13). Just as in the discussion of U.S. Spanish varieties in *¡Dímelo tú!*, here U.S. Spanish varieties are framed in the context of English. The first section, which is technically a list of English words, comprises 2/3 of the total list, and their quantity is double that of the second section. In other words, two-thirds of the "U.S. Spanish" lexical items that the authors of *Imagina* chose to present are, in fact, taken from English. While it may be argued that this is an attempt to show that language contact is a two-way street, it also reinforces the idea that English deserves more prestige than Spanish in the exchange. Privileging English in this instance is not just an issue of the quantity of words, but also of the kinds of words chosen. The lexical items in this list collectively call to mind Mock Spanish, a term coined by Hill (2008) to describe the following phenomenon:

...a set of tactics that speakers of American English use to appropriate symbolic resources from Spanish. In Mock Spanish, Spanish loan-words...and even a few morphological elements such as the Spanish definite article *el* and the masculine singular suffix *-o* are assigned new pronunciations, new meanings, and new kinds of cultural value...in American (and even international) English. (p. 128)

In the case of the data at hand, with the possible exception of 'plaza,' all twelve words in

this section have non-loanword equivalents in English that are much higher frequency, which is not the case for the words in the second section. For example, ‘fiesta’ is not the main word in English used to describe a festive gathering (party), nor is ‘gracias’ the main word used to express gratitude (‘thank you’). ‘Hasta la vista,’ certainly not widely used in English, conjures up impressions of Arnold Schwarzenegger’s *The Terminator*, again, as if in caricature. As Hill (2008) argues, Mock Spanish functions as a form of covert racist discourse that “works to reproduce negative stereotypes of people of color, in this case, members of historically Spanish-speaking populations in the United States” (p. 119). The textbook, then, not only neglects to address the racialization of Spanish-speakers and ethnic Hispanics in the United States (see Cobas, Duany, & Feagin, 2009), but also indexes and thereby reinforces negative stereotypes of Spanish-speakers as associated with “the non-serious, the casual, the laid-back, the humorous, the vulgar” (Hill, 2008, p. 147).

On the other hand, the second list (see next paragraph) is comprised largely of English loanwords to Spanish like *computadora* and *escáner*, which are virtually the only words used to describe computers and scanners in Spanish (notable exception: Spain, where *ordenador* is widely used for ‘computer’), and carry no mocking connotations at all. This reinforces the implication that Spanish has little of real value to contribute to English, whereas English has made important contributions to Spanish, while failing to mention the hundreds of Spanish loanwords in English that are used more or less exclusively to refer to an object or concept. Some examples might include: avocado, banana, barbecue, breeze, cafeteria, canoe, canyon, chocolate, corral, embargo, flotilla, junta, lasso, mesa, mesquite, mosquito, patio, potato, puma, rodeo, stampede, tobacco, tomato, and vigilante (Montague, 1971).

The second section presents six *anglicismos*, or Spanish words that are “adapted” from English, and which are prefaced by the following: “Many commonly used words in Spanish, especially words related to technology, are adapted from English” (Blanco & Tocaimaza-Hatch, 2011, p. 13). The list includes: *chatear* [to chat online], *computadora* [computer], *escáner* [scanner], *esnob* [snob], *gol* [‘goal’ as used in sports], and *marketing*. These words have been completely assimilated into Spanish, and are thus not regional lexical items specific to U.S. Spanish. Therefore, this section actually presents examples of English and Spanish in contact, but not of U.S. Spanish varieties as independent and legitimate. By not only ignoring U.S. Spanish varieties, but going so far as to present English loanwords from ‘standard’ Spanish as if they were U.S. Spanish, the authors give the impression that there is no such thing as a unique U.S. Spanish variety (or set of varieties). In other words, they proceed as if ‘standard’ Spanish *is* U.S. Spanish. In addition, negative stereotypes about Hispanic culture are perpetuated.

A closer look at the six words presented in this section—keeping in mind that they do not represent U.S. Spanish lexical items—reveals an additional, implicit reinforcement of English as more prestigious than Spanish. The preface singles out ‘technology’ as one semantic category from which many English loanwords have been assimilated into Spanish. Four of the six words on this list are related to computers or professional vocabulary: *chatear* [to chat online], *computadora* [computer], *escáner* [scanner], and *marketing*. This suggests that English has a high-status, technological contribution to make to Spanish, while Spanish offers words and expressions to English that are related to parties and alternative, mock greetings. The section on Spanish loanwords in English fails to mention other, non-technological or professional *anglicismos*, which are perhaps less prestigious in nature: *bar*, *biquini*, *camping*, *gángster*, *hippy*, *punk*, *spray*, *surf*, *trippy*, *trivial*, to name but a few (Gómez Capuz, 2000; Lorenzo, 1996).

The preface of *Imagina* states that the book “encourages students to expand their use of language beyond the classroom setting and participate in broader, richer Spanish-speaking communities” (Blanco & Tocaimaza-Hatch, 2011, p. IAE-7-Preface). However, this investigation did not uncover any activities within the *Imagina* text that encouraged or required students to use Spanish in their own communities. As we have seen, the text of *Imagina* itself seems to advance an ideology of ‘standard’ language, in which U.S. Spanish varieties are by turns ignored and misrepresented. Despite the fact that in this university’s Basic Spanish Language Program the syllabi are based largely on textbooks, what we have seen about language variety in *¡Dímelo tú!* and *Imagina* may not tell us all we need to know about how language variation is addressed in the classroom. For further insight on this topic, we turn to the results of the SFL instructor focus groups.

Results: Focus Group Discussions

The nine instructors in the focus groups agreed that the Basic Language Program’s stated general learning outcomes for students in basic Spanish courses are in line with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), with a large percentage of students’ grades based on oral participation. They identified a disconnect, however, between those stated program goals and the students’ actual learning outcomes, in large part due to the often-negative effects of testing on classroom activity, also known as ‘washback’ (Cheng, Watanabe, & Curtis, 2004). Due to the combination of time constraints and the necessity of preparing for departmentally-written exams, which almost exclusively contain grammar and writing exercises, the instructors felt significant, implicit pressure to engage in explicit grammar instruction on a regular basis. They also reported that when they were able to incorporate speaking practice into their lessons, time constraints required that it be pair work designed to practice a grammatical concept, a means to the end of grammar study, rather than a skill honed for its own sake. Their discussion of language variety in the SFL classroom, then, was framed through the lens of their desire and their need to respond to students’ practical concerns about being prepared for exams. According to instructors, students believe that success on exams translates into success in the course, and thus, in learning Spanish. By extension, in this case, students believe that success in grammar exercises and writing constitutes success in learning Spanish. As we have seen from the textbooks, however, ‘grammar’ is often reduced to ‘standard’ or normative Spanish grammar. This explicit omission of the diversity and complexity of authentic oral (or written) Spanish grammar documented by sociolinguists and other researchers results in an implicit devaluation of non-‘standard’ language varieties, including those of U.S. Spanish.

As a result of the limitations placed on classroom time because of exam preparation, instructors reported that they felt they had very little opportunity to supplement the syllabus with information on any topic, including language variation. Their comments are in keeping with recent critiques of the limits of textbooks and instructional materials designed for use in a CLT framework, especially regarding their portrayal of culture in a touristic fashion and a general lack of engagement with “the deeper ideological and political worldviews that students would have to understand to operate in a global economy” (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015, p. 11; see also Bernstein, Hellmich, Katznelson, Shin, & Vinall, 2015; Kramsch, 2006). In this section, I will examine the instructors’ comments about the ways in which the SFL curriculum presents language variation and the notion of ‘standard’ Spanish.

SFL Instructors on 'Standard' Spanish and Language Variation

The instructors unanimously agreed that the examples of conversation in the textbooks do not represent authentic spoken Spanish as it is commonly practiced in everyday life. One instructor, Sandra, compares the issue of non-conversational Spanish presented by the SFL textbooks to the disconnect that many English as a Second Language (ESL) students face when they attempt to use 'textbook' English in the wider community. Sandra's comment is made in the context of a discussion about the lack of local Spanish-speaking community involvement in the SFL program:

Cost and also look at the textbook...if an ESL learner was learning English and he looked at the textbook and some of the ways that things are said and the way the people outside in the community talk, it's different, so I think that, perhaps, that's probably discouraged because it's more of a formal way of Spanish than when people talk.

Here, Sandra posits one reason, apart from the cost of implementation, the SFL program has not made use of the local Spanish-speaking community as a resource: a desire, whether conscious or not, to preserve the ideology of the 'standard' language. By exposing students only to "a more formal way of Spanish" as presented in the textbook, the program sends a latent message to students that the hegemonic, 'standard' variety is the only one that exists (as in Train's (2007) "real Spanish" constructs). In addition to reproducing power imbalances through language, this practice directly contradicts the program's stated goal of developing students' communicative competence by not fostering in students the ability to acquire the skills to engage in real-world conversations with Spanish-speakers in their own communities and abroad. Furthermore, presenting Spanish in such a limited way causes some students to develop explicit ideological biases, as Charlotte experienced in one of her beginner classes with regard to U.S. Spanish:

We did that one section in [the beginner class] about Spanglish and all the kids went into riots and they were talking like 'you're a racist, why are we talking about this? You should just talk about what the book talks about.' I talked about my experience living in Texas and the different varieties and stuff there compared to when I was living in Spain...and they were just like 'well that's not real Spanish' and I was like...well then I don't want to try to make you speak with a real person 'cause if they don't speak the Spanish that you learned or are familiar with you're just gonna think like...[shrug]

Charlotte's supplementation to the textbook and curriculum of her own sociolinguistic insights about the varieties of Spanish in Texas were unwelcome because they did not fit the students' preconceived notions of "real Spanish." Where did her students acquire their strong opinions that a "real Spanish" exists, and that it does not include U.S. varieties? As Train (2007) points out, the notion of "real Spanish" is tied to the perpetuation of standard language ideology and suggests that information about the heterogeneous and dynamic nature of Spanish (and of all languages) is needed both from course materials and from instructors.

Why did Charlotte's students accuse her of being "a racist" when she brought up

sociolinguistic variation, features of U.S. Spanish, and Spanish-English contact? There is perhaps an opportunity here for SFL curricula and instructors to engage with the issue of the racialization of Spanish-speakers in the United States and the ways that language is used to index that racialization (Cobas, Duany, & Feagin, 2009; Hill, 2008).

Charlotte's comments also suggest that her students may be in a cycle of ignorance regarding regional varieties of Spanish, especially as applicable to their own geographical area. Students are not involved with their local Spanish-speaking communities, which results in a lack of exposure to U.S. Spanish varieties. This ignorance makes students susceptible to ideologies of 'standard' language. Consequently, they come to have an aversion to local varieties of Spanish, and, as a result, do not see local Spanish-speaking communities as a resource valuable to their study of Spanish. Thus, students are not involved in their local Spanish-speaking communities, and the cycle begins anew.

Instructors on SFL Engagement with the Local Community and the SHL Program

Overall, the instructors reported a lack of engagement between SFL students and the local Spanish-speaking community, as well as between the university's SFL and SHL programs. They reported that logistical concerns, the need for standardization across sections, and unwanted extra duties for already-overworked graduate instructors were the main reasons for this lack of involvement. On the question of engagement with the local community, the instructors clearly see considerable untapped potential for SFL instruction. The instructors unanimously agreed that they see scant evidence of the SFL program engaging with the local community of Spanish-speakers to promote or encourage the varieties of Spanish they might need in their future professional lives in the Southwest, for example. They do believe such a connection would be helpful for the students, however, as Melissa puts it:

I think it would be [helpful] I mean just coming from [another Southwestern university] ...there was a little more effort to kind of include the community and kind of have both ways like 'this is the communities where there's Hispanic populations. You should visit. Look at the culture, listen for the language...look at the history.' Anything to try to make it interesting. Sometimes they don't even know they're living in a predominant Hispanic community because maybe it is third generation, fourth generation. They don't even know that people do speak Spanish around them. So, I think it's kind of something that should be incorporated. I mean, one assignment at least: 'hey this is what people sound like here. Could you have a conversation with them?'

The consequences of this lack of contact with the local community, however, are more serious than a simple missed opportunity. Ignoring the local Spanish-speaking community in a region of the United States known for its proximity to Mexico and its heavily bilingual population serves to reproduce the ideology of 'standard' language by sending the message that varieties of U.S. Spanish are not important, nor useful for L2 study because they deviate from the idealized, monolithic 'standard.' As Leeman (2014) argues, this "erasure" of U.S. Spanish varieties and U.S. Spanish-speakers in FL departments and curricula may be tied in with ideologies of Hispanism, which privilege Iberian Spanish and have colonialist and racist origins (see also Train, 2012). In addition, Melissa makes the point that many students do

not understand the Hispanic communities around them, assuming that they are comprised solely of recent immigrants, when in fact in many areas of the Southwest, Spanish-speakers predate Anglo settlers by generations (Villa & Rivera-Mills, 2009). This lack of engagement with Spanish-speaking experiences, communities, and identities in the United States might be addressed through critical place-based pedagogy (Gruenewald, 2003), in keeping with Melissa's comments, as well as through service learning (Leeman, 2011).

Jessica agrees with Melissa and adds the following: "...this is the closest you might get to studying abroad without leaving the United States...and the fact that there's zero attempt to tap into that is shocking to me." This brings to light another issue regarding the ideology at work in the SFL curriculum—despite a lack of local community involvement, the program strongly encourages students to participate in one of their several study abroad program sites in Spain, Central America, and South America. This sends the message that speaking Spanish is something that happens in faraway places, but not in the city where the university they are studying at is located, which contributes to the discourse of U.S. Spanish varieties as a problem rather than an asset.

Pedagogical Implications and Future Research

As SFL educators, we should work to cultivate in our students, in addition to a more complete and balanced general awareness of language variety within Spanish, the ability to engage in critical language inquiry. It should be emphasized, for example, that Spanish is not a monolithic entity and that there are many ways to be a Spanish-speaker. Though SFL students should of course not be expected to produce all grammatical, lexical, and phonological varieties of Spanish, they should be able to recognize and understand them as much as possible. This might be accomplished by incorporating more diverse language varieties into our classroom activities and by discussing variation explicitly and in a way that does not privilege one language variety over another. SFL educators may also consider tailoring a section of their curricula, when applicable, to the features of their own local U.S. Spanish varieties, so that students are prepared to engage with members of their community and to see them as a linguistic resource. After all, the SFL student is in the process of creating his/her identity as an L2 speaker, and, as their instructors, we should empower them to make informed choices about which language varieties to include in that identity construction process.

Syllabi and assessments less driven by grammar would take pressure off of instructors to cover as many grammar topics as possible, freeing up time to practice speaking and to incorporate sociolinguistic information into lessons in a meaningful way. Thus, larger programs might consider creating more than one path for SFL study. Some students, particularly those interested in pursuing further study of Spanish linguistics or literature, may desire or require extensive grammar instruction. However, many students seek to fulfill a foreign language requirement or to learn basic conversational Spanish—for them, instruction in the present, past, and future tenses may suffice, and perhaps more class time could be spent on speaking practice using materials derived from authentic conversational data and on vocabulary acquisition. This would allow for engagement with local Spanish-speakers and would might improve retention of basic Spanish conversational skills, should students need them in the future.

An additional way to make explicit the tacit ideology of the standard is to emphasize that

spoken and written languages are different entities. This can initially be demonstrated through examples from the students' shared, non-target language (in the United States, English) and reinforced periodically with contrastive examples from the target language that are contextualized within the curriculum. We cannot reasonably expect students to become proficient users of all varieties of a language (for what speaker, whether native or not, fits this description?); rather we should strive to develop their receptive competence in as many varieties as possible to prepare them for the realities of authentic spoken language and for situations in which the 'standard' may not be the most effective or appropriate variety in which to communicate. Therefore, students must also be made aware of the connection between language variety, ideology, and indexes of identity: "...ideologies of language are not about language alone. Rather, they envision and enact ties of language to identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology" (Woolard, 1998, p. 3; see also Ortega, 1999 and Pomerantz, 2002). L2 learners must be made aware that they are in the position to make choices about their language use that are directly tied to their identity formation as a user of the target language and/or participant in the target culture.

Much work remains to be done to continue to examine the ideological biases both of our teaching materials and of ourselves as instructors. In this way, we can work towards a more balanced, complete, realistic learning experience for our students—one that embraces all of the fascinating complexity of language. Future studies could gather more comprehensive data on language variety in SFL textbooks and curricula by including more textbooks and interviewing more instructors at multiple universities and in a variety of different programs. In addition, a longitudinal perspective on presentation of regional language variation ranging from the beginner-level to higher level courses taken by Spanish majors and minors would provide insight into the ways in which these issues change over the span of an individual's career as a Spanish student. New pedagogical materials that incorporate language variation, are based on sociolinguistic data and spoken corpora, and that resist surreptitiously reproducing the ideology of the 'standard' language are urgently needed as well. Future studies could also examine the effect of integrating critical place-based pedagogy (Gruenewald, 2003), an approach that includes educational discourse and practices designed to "decolonize" and "re-inhabit" local communities, into SFL courses. In an FL context, this approach could encourage students to explicitly examine ideologies of foreignness, nativeness, standardization (especially regarding language), and racialization as well as their own linguistic attitudes and preconceived notions.

In addition, future research could seek to capture the perspective of FL students on this issue—how do they feel about their current ability to hold a conversation in the target language outside the classroom? What do they feel is missing from the textbooks and curriculum that might help them feel more confident about their speaking abilities? How does the focus on grammar and writing as compared with speaking skills affect student retention?

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the ways in which U.S. varieties of Spanish have been delegitimized in the textbooks and curricula of beginning and intermediate-level SFL courses at a large public university in the Southwest. U.S. varieties of Spanish have been characterized in the data as insular, limited, and as incomprehensible slang corrupted by their contact with English. This ultimately reinforces the ideology of the 'standard' language, creating a sense

that Spanish is monolithic and that understanding sociolinguistic variation within Spanish is incidental to successful SFL study. Local Spanish-speakers are not portrayed as a linguistic and cultural resource, giving the impression that Spanish is used in far-away places that are associated with more prestigious language varieties.

The instructor focus groups revealed that SFL instructors feel pressure to engage in explicit grammar instruction in order to prepare students for exams that focus on decontextualized exercises covering a wide range of grammar points. Sociolinguistic phenomena are rarely included in the syllabus, and virtually never form part of the course assessments. Though the SFL program claims to employ communicative pedagogical techniques, and emphasizes the importance of culture in language learning, the instructors confirm that, in practice, acquisition of conversational strategies and awareness of the differences between spoken and written Spanish are low priorities for the program, which focuses mainly on grammar and writing. The program also makes little effort to engage the local Southwestern community, which has a high population of Spanish-speakers.

Kramsch (2003) asserts the right of language learners to their own variety of an L2, just as native speakers have. Thus, non-native speakers, throughout the process of learning a target language, must make choices about language use that contribute to the construction of a competent target-language user with a unique, valid linguistic identity. Therefore, as Kramsch (2009) argues, most FL curricula, by largely focusing on monolithic, ‘standard’ languages and assuming both the students and their ‘native-speaker’ models to be monolingual, ignore the subjective, intimate transformations occurring as students construct multilingual identities: “As a sign-system, language elicits subjective responses in the speakers themselves: emotions, memories, fantasies, projections, identifications” (pp. 2–3). Though writing provides its own opportunities for individual voice, it is chiefly in spoken language that we express ourselves in daily life, and engage in identity construction through language as performance. By providing balanced, contextualized information about language and its place in society, we can empower students to become both critical and active agents of their language identity formation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Khaled Al Masaeed for his careful feedback on early drafts of this article. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and helpful comments.

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APPENDIX: SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is your current status in the department (Graduate Associate in Teaching, adjunct, etc.)? If you are a student, what program are you in?
2. How long have you been teaching Spanish? How long at this university?
3. Which levels have you taught at this university? At other institutions?
4. I would like to talk to you about Class X (first-year, second-year, etc.). What do you believe are the learning outcome goals of the course? That is, what do you think the course designers want students to be able to do when they finish the course?
5. Of the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), which do you think is/are most important to students?
6. Of the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), which do you think is/are most emphasized by the course syllabus or design?

7. In practice, what are your goals for your students? What areas or skills do you most emphasize? Why?
8. What tools or strategies do you think are most effective for teaching speaking in a foreign language setting? Why?
9. What tools do you think are least effective for teaching speaking in a foreign language setting? Why?
10. Spanish is spoken in many countries and has a lot of regional differences in vocabulary, particularly in its spoken form. Are you aware of any attempts by the course textbook or other instructional materials to make students aware of these differences in vocabulary? If so, how?
11. Are you aware of any attempts by the course syllabus to make students aware of these differences in vocabulary? If so, how?
12. There also exists a wide variety of regional pronunciation differences in the Spanish-speaking world. Are you aware of any attempts by the course textbook or other instructional materials to make students aware of these differences in pronunciation? If so, how?
13. Are you aware of any attempts by the course syllabus to make students aware of these differences in pronunciation? If so, how?
14. In many parts of Latin America, the use of the pronoun *vos* is an important part of daily conversation. Are you aware of any attempts by the course textbook or other instructional materials to make students aware of the existence of *vos* and how to recognize or use it? If so, how?
15. Are you aware of any attempts by the course syllabus to make students aware of the existence of *vos* and how to recognize or use it? If so, how?
16. When speaking, we often include words or phrases that help to structure the conversation. Some examples in English might be *like, you know, well, or so*. We do the same thing in Spanish; for example: *como, entonces, bueno, tú sabes, o sea, este, bien, ándale*, etc. Have you run across these ‘conversation words’ in a classroom setting? If so, in what context(s)?
17. Do you feel that ‘conversation words’ are an important part of spoken language?
18. Are you aware of any attempts by the course textbook or other instructional materials to teach the use of these ‘conversation words’? If so, how?
19. Are you aware of any attempts by the course syllabus to teach the use of these ‘conversation words’? If so, how?
20. Have you ever supplemented the course syllabus and/or textbook with attempts to teach any of the features we’ve talked about (regional vocabulary, pronunciation differences, the use of *vos*, ‘conversation words’)? If so, how?
21. How would you gauge your success at any attempts to teach these features of different kinds of spoken Spanish? Did you attempt to measure that success in a formal way?
22. In your opinion, should different geographical features of Spanish be included in foreign language curricula? Why or why not?
23. If ‘yes’ to the previous question, what suggestions would you have for incorporating them into existing curricula (or for changing/improving how they are taught)?
24. Do you have any other thoughts on teaching speaking or on the incorporation of different kinds of spoken Spanish in the classroom?