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‘Qué barbaridad, son latinos y deberían saber español primero’: Language Ideology, Agency, and Heritage Language Insecurity across Immigrant Generations

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INTRODUCTION

This case study examines how ideologies of what it means to speak Spanish and of Spanish as part of Latino identity intersect with monolingual norms and ideologies of individual agency to negatively impact linguistic identities and language use of US-born bilinguals. While positive attitudes toward heritage languages generally encourage their transmission and maintenance, in my data, these attitudes also reflected ideologies of monolingual proficiency and individual agency that imposed deficit identities on later-generation speakers, erasing their actual bilingual competencies and contributing to language insecurity and avoidance. The findings shed new light into the complexities and tensions inherent within even ‘positive’ heritage language attitudes and demonstrate the power and endurance of restrictive ideologies

of language, identity, and agency which transmitted within families and communities,[1] constrain later-generations' sociolinguistic identities, language use, and affective relationship with the heritage language.

BACKGROUND

Language is a powerful index of social identity, including ethnocultural affiliation (Fought 2006). This relationship is not static or *a priori* assigned but constructed through social interaction about attitudes and ideologies about languages and speakers (Bourdieu 1991; Silverstein 2003; Bucholtz and Hall 2005), where ideologies are reductivist/axiomatic sets of beliefs which are socioculturally motivated and can themselves generate further meanings (Van Dijk 1998; Irvine and Gal 2009).

Identity is a key aspect of minority language acquisition and maintenance which relates to socialization (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986), imagined learner selves and communities (Pavlenko and Norton 2007; Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009), and speaker agency. While the agency is often seen as a positive factor in language learning (Norton-Peirce 1995; Williams and Burden 1997), my findings show that the intersection of ascribed individual agency with beliefs about language proficiency and identity can negatively impact heritage speakers, a point which I return to in the following sections. The symbolic importance of language in group membership and associated qualities, such as values, authenticity, and belonging (Irvine and Gal 2009), influences its use or avoidance. Research worldwide shows that community contact and the desire to maintain ethnocultural identity support positive language attitudes, loyalty, and maintenance (Fishman 1966; Lynch 2003; Bradley 2013). In the example of US Latinos, Spanish is strongly associated with Latino identity (Urciuoli 2008). Further, the relationship between Spanish and Latino identity is complicated by local identities and language attitudes, such as acceptance or rejection of notions of 'proper Spanish' (Coryell *et al.* 2010; Helmer 2011).

However, linguistic identities are susceptible to hegemonic social pressure. Political and educational policies enforce a privileged role for dominant languages and repress minority languages (May [2001]2012). The US's history of language suppression includes English-only legislation and opposition to bilingual education (Wiley 2012); within this, Spanish, despite being the second most spoken language nationwide, is targeted as 'undesirable' due to prejudice against Latinos (Leeman 2012; Gonzalez-Barrera and Lopez 2013). This social and linguistic discrimination can cause ambivalent or negative home language attitudes.

The link between language and identity makes bilingualism ideological (Heller 2007: 1–22). However, bilinguals are often misunderstood due to (i) ideologies of 'one culture, one language, one people', which assume a direct and exclusive connection between language, ethnicity, and national identity and (ii) ideologies of proficiency which privilege the 'native speaker'—itself a constructed subject position—as the ultimate embodiment of language and

culture (Davies 2003; Holliday 2006). Monolingual bias elevates monolingual speech behavior such that bilingualism is understood as 'two monolinguals in one', where 'real' bilinguals are indistinguishable from monolinguals in both languages, and anything else is dismissed as inadequate language use (Grosjean 2010: 20). This belief leads to the intersection of ideologies about proficiency and prescriptivism or ideologies of linguistic correctness and 'efforts to regulate the language of others' (Straaijer 2016, cf Curzan 2014: 17), resulting in conflated discourses of proficiency, language purity, and 'incorrectness'. Negative attitudes in schools and families toward 'non-native accents' and language mixing (Helmer 2011; Carruba-Rogel 2018) stigmatize phenomena, which are a natural part of language contact and change (Dillard 1962; Bhatt 1995; Kachru 2017), and heritage speakers' use of nonstandard regional varieties and informal registers is sometimes misidentified as lack of proficiency (Lynch 2012). Assumptions also intersect with deficiency beliefs about minoritized social groups so that bilingual language is dismissed as 'broken' or deficient (Valdés 2001; MacSwan 2005; Grosjean 2010) and linguistic hybridity stigmatized (Zentella 1997). The term 'heritage speakers',[2] encompassing speakers' sociocultural relationship to a language as well as the full range of bilingual competencies, arose to challenge these deficit perspectives (Valdés 2001; Lynch, 2003; Hornberger and Wang 2008). However, 'common-sense' myths such as 'bilinguals have equal and perfect knowledge of their languages . . . have no accent in their different languages . . . [and] mixing languages is a sign of laziness' (Grosjean 2010: xv) continue to affect heritage speakers in schools, communities, and broader society.

Finally, the ideologies surrounding bilingualism and linguistic identity interact with ideologies of language agency. Agency is increasingly understood as relational and dynamic rather than as an 'individual internal state or quality' (Bucholtz *et al.* 2018: 4) closely associated with motivation,[3] as has been traditional in applied linguistics and education. Ahearn's (2010) influential definition understands agency as 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (p. 28), a capacity which is simultaneously individual, relational/interpersonal (Mercer 2012), socially contextualized, and political (Bucholtz *et al.* 2018). However, ideologies of the individual agency remain influential in obscuring the social conditions or 'complex ecology of affordances and constraints', which are embedded within social histories and which conscribe individuals' capacities to act (Miller 2016: 345–55). Since meta-understandings of agency relate to 'notions of personhood and causality' (Ahearn 2010: 30), individualized ideologies of agency contribute to moral discourses of praise (Park 2010) and blame in language learning.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data comprise 22 conversational sociolinguistic interviews conducted with first- and second-generation Latin American immigrants (11 males and 11 females) of diverse national and ethnoracial backgrounds, recruited through

community contacts and chain-referral ('snowball') sampling in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Twelve participants are first-generation immigrants and 10 were born in the USA. Participants are Spanish–English-speaking bilinguals, speaking both languages regularly. Most have experienced some Spanish-language education in Latin America or US schools. Participants are working or middle class, as defined by occupation and terminal level of education or, if still dependents, that of the head of household. The largest age cohort was 20–30 years old. Consistent with regional demographics, the majority of participants were of Central American origin, and Salvadorans are the largest national group (23%). The remainder came from diverse Latin American origins (Table 1).

Interviews were casual, typically between 40 and 90 minutes, and conducted in informal, nonclassroom settings, such as coffee shops, on campus, at organizations, and in homes. They were loosely guided by question modules on language and identity, such as immigration, daily life, language attitudes and language use, and popular perceptions of Latinos. Sample questions included 'What is Latino life like in D.C.?', 'Do you think there are stereotypes about Latino people?', 'What does being Latino mean to you?', 'Is language an important part of Latino identity?', and 'How do you feel about your Spanish and English abilities?' Seventeen interviews were conducted one-on-one by the researcher, a non-white non-Latino second-generation immigrant who speaks fluent Spanish and participates in local Latino social networks. The combination of peripheral community membership and word-of-mouth recommendation, coupled with the shared experience of racial minoritization, family migration, and intergenerational bilingualism, encouraged frankness and a sense of commonality. Participants were made aware that the researcher spoke Spanish (many already knew this, given word-of-mouth referral) and that interviews could be conducted in English, Spanish, or a combination as they preferred. Following participant language leads, the interviews were conducted in English with code-switching. The remaining five interviews were conducted in English by non-Latino interviewers,[4] four one-on-one and one-by-two interviews. These interviews were also loosely guided by sociolinguistic questions designed to elicit casual speech following Labov (1972), such as

Table 1 Participant information

	$N = 22$ (100)	Sex		Origin		Class		Age (years)			
		Male	Female	Central America	Other Latino	Working	Middle	18–30	30–40	40–50	>50
G1	12 (45)	6 (50)	6 (50)	4 (33)	8 (66)	5 (42)	7 (58%)	6 (50)	2 (17)	4 (33)	0
G2	10 (55)	5 (50)	5 (50)	4 (40)	6 (60)	2 (20)	8 (80)	5 (50)	3 (30)	1 (10)	1 (10)

Values are represented as *N* (%).

?	Rising intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at end of interrogative sentence)
.	Falling intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at end of declarative sentence)
,	Continuing intonation: may be a slight rise or fall in contour (less than '.' or '?'); may not be followed by a pause (shorter than '.' or '?').
(.)	Noticeable pause
text	Louder than surrounding talk
::	Vowel or consonant lengthening
-	Self interruption
[text	Overlapping talk
[text	
Italics (plain text)	Spanish followed by English translation
(hhh)	Laughter
…	Text has been omitted
[text]	Researcher notes

Figure 1: Transcription conventions

'What was it like when you were growing up?' which elicited participants' thoughts and experiences with Latino identity, Spanish, and migration.

Open coding identified themes such as family, Latino identity, and language. Metalinguistic and meta-agentive discourse (Ahearn 2010) uncovered participants' attitudes and ideologies about Spanish, Latino identity, and language agency. Participants' discursive identity construction also revealed these ideologies as they positioned themselves and others as Spanish speakers and Latinos in the interviews while drawing on broader reported experiences. Positioning refers to discursively enacted subject relations, enacted through diverse 'contextualization cues' (Gumperz 1982) and discursive stances (like evaluation and affect) toward conversational objects (Du Bois 2007), through which speakers construct, impose, accept/reject, and evaluate identities (Van Langenhove and Harré 1999), and force others/are themselves forced to respond to these positions (Harré and Van Langenhove 1991). Broad transcription conventions were modified from Cashman(2005) and De Fina (2003) (Figure 1).

FINDINGS

Language as an index of culture and identity

The following excerpts are representative examples. Participants' beliefs that speaking Spanish is an important index of culture and identity. When asked if she thinks her children will lose Spanish, 'Michelle', a first-generation Panamanian immigrant married to a Bolivian, described Spanish home use and her desire to transmit the language.

Excerpt 1

Michelle	Pretty much the whole family they're exposed to, they only speak Spanish to them, like my in-laws. You know, we try to, and it's kind of (.) nice that, when they come

home, it's like a, like a sacred clean place for them to be at. And, to relate it to Spanish. To relate it to that culture that (.) We have to (.) Personally, I wanna make sure that they are, exposed to my husband's culture, and to mine too, 'cause they are so different. And not lose it when they've never had it. You know?

Interviewer Yeah

Michelle 'Cause I have it, I came when I was fifteen, I remember what it's like, so, my husband came when he was I don't know, nine, or something like that, so he s-remembers some of it. And (.) But them, they've never had either one. You know, all they know is the U.S. So I wanna expose them enough to that so that they hold on to their language, and they relate it to home, to like a comfort zone for them. You know, so it's, I don't know I think that it creates a special bond between the language, you know among the, language the culture and family. You know to come home to speak Spanish and, just, relax.

Michelle associates Spanish with Latino identity generally and in terms of specific cultures. Her metacommentary and stances toward Spanish demonstrate positive attitudes toward the language, position it as essential to culture and family, and position her as an agent of language and cultural transmission for her US-born children. Michelle's expressions of volition ('I wanna') portray home-Spanish use as a choice, as elsewhere in the interview she makes it clear that she and her husband are bilingual. This contrasts with her general description of younger-generation speakers, to whom she ascribes agency in language avoidance ('a lot of kids [at church] don't want to speak [Spanish]'). Michelle viewed Spanish maintenance as a family responsibility and as a family and individual choice.

In another example, 'Raimundo', a second-generation Caribbean Latino immigrant articulated the indexical relationship between Spanish and Latino identity while describing how ethnic identity boundaries are reified through language: 'If you are Latino but don't have the cultural connection or speak the language (.) You don't get the discount. Without the language, you lack the credentials, therefore you will not be accepted by the group.' Here, 'getting the discount' is a humorous reference to group acceptance; 'Raimundo's' second utterance clarifies that speaking Spanish is a non-negotiable part of ingroup credentials, resonating with previous research that authentic Latino identity is equated with Spanish proficiency (Urciuoli 2008). However, as will be explored in the discussion from Excerpt 5 on, participants' perceptions of what it means to speak Spanish were as much ideological as reflective of actual language behavior.

Similarly, 'not speaking the language' was seen as a rejection of Latino identity and by extension assimilation to Americanness. 'Diana', a first-generation

South American immigrant, described Spanish as part of her Latina identity, together with her preference for Spanish-language music and dancing, and a primarily Latino friend group. She contrasted this with her 'Americanized' younger sister's preference for English, American rock music (negatively evaluated as 'shit'), and non-Latino friends: 'She's more Americanized than I am. I like to keep to my roots.' As part of this, she portrays her sister as reluctant to speak Spanish, providing poor translations for their father:

Excerpt 2

Diana I've always done it because, I've, always had practice with my dad 'cause whenever we were watching a movie, I'd always have to translate e::verything. And I would- I wouldn't translate like, the scene like, look, o::h, have one scene, look at it all and then be like in five words, tell my dad. [That's-] That's what

Interviewer [(hh)]

Diana my sister does. She like summarizes it. No I tell my dad everything that everycharacter is saying, everything the whole plot, everything that's going on I tell him and then he's like, "You see now I like watching movies with you, I don't like watching movies with your sister cause she doesn't (h) tell me anything that's [going on] in the

Interviewer [(hh)]

Diana movie." And I'm just like, "Oh the graphics and all this, good stuff" and uh, she's not telling me the story. You know, so, and I like doing it.

Diana's positive evaluative stance toward her detailed translation is supported by her father's reported preference for her help over her sister's. Her sister's translation skills are positioned as inferior, with the interviewer's laughter acknowledging the contrastive evaluation. By taking stances toward Spanish translation for her father, Diana positions herself as a superior speaker and constructs her identity as the more culturally authentic sibling. Diana viewed Spanish maintenance as a question of individual agency and choice, making it an index of cultural orientation and personal identity.

Self- and other-positioning around language proficiency

Having given key examples of language as an index of culture and identity, I turn to participants' understandings of proficiency. Participants understood 'speaking a language' to mean monolingual-normed fluency. 'Not speaking Spanish' was considered to represent a lack of connection to Latino heritage. 'Viviana' is a first-generation immigrant whose parents' residency status forced them return to Central America, leaving her in the USA. In the

interview, Viviana's reflection on her own Spanish abilities led to a narrative supporting her argument of being a fluent speaker. When evaluating her Spanish, she initially expressed insecurity around linguistic hybridity and correctness ('sounding like a teacher'):

Excerpt 3

Viviana Because I have that English background? Some, I guess the English wants to step in? And then you just want to change a word, and, it sounds in English but, you think it's Spanish (h) or, something like that? Um, so that's why I don't say perfect. Because- and also because I'm not a teacher, you know, and, I guess I don't feel like I, have to be (.) I don't know how to explain it I guess I- cause I compare it to a teacher's.

However, she then constructed a position of linguistic competence through comparison with other, less-fluent Latinos, using an account of an encounter with an immigration lawyer to support this identity claim.

Excerpt 4

Viviana But it's pretty good compared to (hhh) other. (hhh) So that's why- I won't put myself a::ll the way down. But I say I'm pretty good because I'm able to (.) talk to someone I, I went to (.) I went to (.) I don't remember when- I think last year before my parents left we went to talk to, an attorney? And um (.) I think he had been to *Guatemala* or something but- and he was Hispanic. Um and we were sitting there (.) and I guess he (.) he thought that he would need to speak English to me? Because you know he saw my mom and then he saw this, younger lady and, I guess maybe that's what, that's what he has seen, you know a mom come and then, but the son's like, in English and she's like, all talking in Spanish. So I guess he, he had that like, quick, or just, you know a small-second, perception of, that he would need to speak to me in Spanish? [she means English] But when I started, telling him why we were the::re, and, who I was and how old I was? I, told him in Spanish. And, he just kind of sat back and, and looked at my mom and he congratulated her. On the fact that I was, talking, pretty good Spanish to him, but I knew English because I have been here and I, went to school and I've learned it (.) A::nd I'm like, how many people get this opportunity because, if, if I was my mom I would have, felt pretty good, that, I was being (.) told that, that it was GOOD that I had, you know, I had my child learn both languages, not forget, Spanish, so. And I think my- I think I remember coming home and my mom would- my mom explained, told it to my dad and then my brother came and then she told him that and then my cousin, so it's something like, that they- that- you know she was proud of.

Interviewer That's awesome

Viviana And that I was proud of too that I, I, I wasn't being told congratulations? But my mom was? And, and that was like hey, that's pretty good. [Cause ,]

Interviewer [That's awesome]

Viviana you know, I wasn't just there 'Oh what? What? What did you say in Spanish and, can you translate it?' No::, I was like 'Eh, yeah, let's talk in Spanish if that's, all you' (hhh) So I, felt, good, cause of that.

She begins the narrative by describing the setting: a 'Hispanic' lawyer's office. When the lawyer assumes she will only speak English, Viviana surprises him by speaking in Spanish. Her linguistic agency has a positive affective consequence, making her feel 'good'. Through constructed dialogue, Viviana describes how the lawyer congratulated her mother on her daughter's 'good' Spanish and bilingualism. This positive evaluative stance is emphasized by Viviana's narrative technique, drawing out the lawyer's actions to emphasize his response. Viviana's report of her mother's pride, expressed through conversation with family, also takes a positive stance toward her Spanish. Others' positive evaluation of her Spanish, the lawyer's and her mother's, strengthen Viviana's argument that her Spanish is 'good' and indicates the attitudes she expresses are shared by her family and in the community (an attitude the researcher keys into). Viviana's narrative also illustrates the belief that good bilingualism consists of monolingual-normed fluency in both languages. Finally, the language agency in Viviana's positively celebrated language fluency was located not only in her as an individual but also seen as a family achievement.

Viviana's self-positioning as a Spanish speaker simultaneously constructs a contrastive other position. These 'others' are English-dominant, younger-generation Latinos ('he saw this, younger lady and I guess that's what, that's what he has seen, you know a mom come and then, but the son's like, in English') and are explicitly negatively evaluated elsewhere in her interview: 'Some Latinos look at other Latinos and you're like wait a minute, you look Latino but you're not speaking to me in Spanish what's wrong with you (hhh)'. While Viviana first expresses the censuring group gaze through third-person referents ('some Latinos'), pronominal shift to the second person makes it clear that she shares the attitude being voiced. The shift from collective to individual voicing positions her in the gatekeeping in-group which judges non-Spanish-speaking Latinos as having 'something wrong with them' for agentively not speaking in Spanish.

The social meaning of 'not speaking Spanish' is elaborated by 'Celia', a first-generation South American immigrant, as she discusses the criticism her two sons face at community events. Excerpt 5 demonstrates the negative

evaluation they face from adult community members and illuminates the tension between the boys' assumed lack of Spanish and their actual bilingual abilities.

Excerpt 5

Celia	But when we are in an all-Hispanic setting, they feel embarrassed. Because they-because the Hispanics aren't very- they're like, *'¡Qué barbaridad! ¿No, no me entiendes el español?'* [(hh)] ('How awful! You don't, don't understand me in Spanish?').
Interviewer	[(hhh)]
Celia	And, my sons turn red and they're like, *'Sí, entiendo.'* (hhh) *'Pero no hablo.'* [(hhh)]. (Yes, I understand. But I can't speak.)
Interviewer	[(hhh) It's [language learning] tough sometimes. It took a while.]
Celia	So it's shame- well the shame lies on me they're like, *'Qué barbaridad Celia.'* ('How awful Celia.') (.) *'Son latinos y deberían saber español primero.'* ('They're Latinos and they should know Spanish first.') (.) And I'll, 'Well, my daughter speaks Spanish.' (hhh)

Celia describes the same attitude of 'there's something wrong with you', which she attributes to 'the Hispanics' as both an abstract referent group and her local community. Criticism for 'not speaking Spanish' causes shame (keyed into by the researcher, who attempts to mitigate it by saying 'It's tough'): her sons 'turn red' and attempt to defend themselves (*'Sí, entiendo. Pero no hablo.'*/'Yes, I understand. But I can't speak.'). This shows that a gap exists between community understanding of bilingualism and the actual practices of younger bilinguals. As Celia's reported speech of her sons demonstrates, they understand and are able to respond in Spanish, although their comprehension may outstrip their production (as is common for heritage speakers; Montrul 2010). Rather than being supported, their bilingual ability is not recognized in the community. They are shamed for their linguistic 'inadequacy' and positioned as deficient Latinos. Community shaming of her sons for not speaking Spanish extends to Celia since, as a parent, she is responsible for transmitting language and culture; she defends herself by describing her daughter's fluency to reposition herself as a successful language transmitter. Celia's community shaming for inadequate language transmission highlights the belief that agency in language maintenance rests in families and individuals—her sons as speakers, and herself as language transmitter.

'Their Spanish is broken'

The aforementioned discourses imposed an identity of linguistic inadequacy on second-generation immigrants (variously described as 'born here', 'kids', 'the younger generation') which is iconic (Irvine and Gal 2009), or symbolically representative irrespective of actual abilities and behavior. For example, 'Inés', a first-generation Central American immigrant, stated, 'We [in the community] do have a large number of Latino kids that don't speak Spanish very well ... their Spanish is broken.' 'Ángel', a first-generation South American immigrant, when discussing families stated that 'all' US-born Latinos are English dominant:

Excerpt 6

Ángel	It's tougher to raise this new generation of kids. First generation born here kids you know? One, they all speak English. All of them. They might speak Spanish, they might speak Spanish very well not so good whatever, but they all speak English. First language.

'Emanuel', a first-generation Salvadoran immigrant, describes the Latino youth he works with as 'losing their language'.

Excerpt 7

Emanuel	Latinos are losing their language. So the same thing that has happened to the Irish and, you know all those, children of, great grandchildren of, white immigrants, you know is- a lot of, most people didn't keep their language.
Interviewer	Yeah
Emanuel	So that's beginning to happen with us.
Interviewer	Is it like happening very strongly in the-
Emanuel	Yeah.
Interviewer	You see it happening?
Emanuel	Like, you give half of the kids, in in our group, you give them a Spanish language newspaper. It's torture, for them to read, especially if you ask them to read out loud.
Interviewer	Oh really
Emanuel	So if you give them, and that's a newspaper. Now if you give them like a book, a novel, or a poem, you know.

Interviewer So the arts are really like harder

Emanuel Because, you know it's more sophisticated you know? Like if you, if you read a *García Márquez* text, I mean it's dense. Very dense, you know?

Interviewer So like people maybe they can still talk at home or whatever [but they can't like Emanuel [Yeah. Uh huh yea::h. It's like *'ah hah a que horas'* (uh huh at what time), you know. *'Te voy a recoger'* (I'm going to pick you up) yeah. *'yo, tengo hambre'* (I'm hungry) you know. Simple things.

In his example, second-generation immigrants represent Spanish loss ('Latinos are losing their language'). As with the example of Celia's sons, however, there is a disconnect between the actual and perceived Spanish of the youth, he describes. Although they may lack higher registers and advanced literacy skills associated with educated native speakers, they use Spanish regularly in daily conversation. Further, the comparison with 'white' (European) immigrant language loss attributes agency in language loss to speakers as they 'didn't keep their language'. Finally, despite his initial mention of the historical US trend toward minority language shift, Emanuel does not connect language loss with systemic discrimination. As such, this decontextualization locates language loss in second-generation speakers without acknowledging the institutionalized social forces, such as English-only educational and political policy, which conscribe individual agency and militate against minority language maintenance.

Heritage language insecurity

The discourses of inadequacy expressed above contribute to later generations' Spanish insecurity. Fifty percent of second-generation participants expressed ambiguity or insecurity about Spanish, compared to only 17% of first-generation speakers. 'Ricardo', who was born in South America but arrived in DC as an infant, stated: 'My Spanish is not as good as it should be'; the modal 'should' indicates awareness of an expectation or standard which he fails to achieve. Washington-born 'Noemí' used herself as an example of 'bad Spanish' despite using it regularly (sometimes exclusively) with family members.

Excerpt 8

Interviewer and then it [language discrimination] puts them in a hard position too because then you get kids who like, and then you get kids who go to school and stop being able to speak their home language [and then their families get upset

Noemí [Yeah, yeah

Noemí Yup, yeah, yeah, that's, I mean that's kind of what happened to me like my Spanish like, honestly just gets worse and worse and worse and worse and it's really sad but I feel like it does,

Interviewer Do you think?

Noemí I feel like it does, I feel like it does, because, I mean, I just don't speak it enough like I just don't have enough, you kno::w, and like now all my younger, cousins, worse don't even speak Spanish at all.

Interviewer Really

Noemí Yeah:: I don't know why, I mean- yeah I have no idea why I guess it's not cool or something you know

Noemí positions herself as an inadequate speaker through negative evaluative and affective stances toward her Spanish (using the adjectives 'worse' and 'sad', emphasized through the adverbial modifier 'really', repetition, and emphatic volume), expressing internalized linguistic insecurity. She reinforces the association between language loss and second-generation speakers when she describes her younger cousins as not speaking Spanish 'at all', negatively evaluated. However, despite personal experience with language discrimination at school, and an awareness of pressure to shift to English ('I guess it's [Spanish] not cool or something'), she still decontextualizes language loss from the hegemonic society in which socialization and acquisition are embedded ('I don't know why [my cousins don't speak Spanish], I have no idea why'). As with Emanuel's discussion of second-generation youth, the social-structural pressures against Spanish as a heritage language in the USA were invisible to Noemí in her emotional discussion of language loss in her own life and family, a lack of critical awareness which attributed language loss to individual speaker agency and motivation (the desire to be 'cool'), decontextualized from the broader language-learning context of societal discrimination.

Linguistic insecurity related to monolingual norms reinforced in reported interactions with family and other Latinos. For example, 'Rico', a second-generation Salvadoran man, revealed parental criticism while discussing his Spanish in response to the question, 'Has anyone ever given you a hard time about the way you talk?'

Excerpt 9

Rico But actually my parents, have bothered me 'cause I don't really know some words in Spanish. Or how to say like, I can't pronounce my Rs in Spanish. You know?

Interviewer 1 Yeah

Rico 'Cause they use the tongue, you know? Yeah, [like that, and some

Interviewer 1 [Yeah yeah yeah

Rico different- and words. And I can't. I just can't. No.

Interviewer 1 Do you speak Spanish?

Rico Yeah, I speak Spanish, but there's some words that I can't say. And they make fun of me, my, my parents.

Interviewer 2 (hhh) 'Cause they speak it perfectly.

Rico Yeah, they was like "Man, you were, man you were born here, and,"

Rico described how his parents 'bother' him about his non-native pronunciation, making it clear that this teasing is explicitly related to his American birth: 'Man you were born here.' While the tone of this 'bothering' as reported is playful, he receives the message of negative evaluation of his speech and its connection to his second-generation identity.

Finally, second-generation participants mentioned language avoidance related to linguistic insecurity. 'Maureen', a second-generation woman of mixed Latino origin, in response to the question 'Have you ever gotten a comment on how you speak in Spanish?', stated:

Excerpt 10

Maureen Every now and then I'll say a word, with a, heavy accent.

Interviewer Mmhm

Maureen Yeah, I'll, forget how to say something or how to pronounce it properly, so, I do have a bit of a, an accent in Spanish and it's very embarrassing to me which is why, I don't speak as often as I should now, 'cause they [Latinos] can tell you that, you're, first generation [she means second generation: the first generation born in the United States].

Interviewer Mmhmm

Maureen Yeah. Like but other times I can get by just fine, and they don't notice? But every now and then like a word, or if I'm really struggling for something, um if I get nervous then the accent comes out and they pick up on it immediately.

Interviewer	And is that a big problem? If you don't sound (.) Spanish enough?
Maureen	Uh::, well I think, I don't think it's a- a problem but (.) a lot of times, especially if my hair's up. (h). People will approach me and just start speaking to me in Spanish. It never happens when my hair's down. But when I'm up I, I guess I look more Hispanic? Or if I'm wearing like hoop earrings, people come up to me and say 'Are you Latina,' especially when I was in the restaurant business, but- even around the, you know the DC area. My hair's up, someone will come up to me. Multiple people will come up to me in one day, and speak in Spanish.
Interviewer	That's rather strange.
Maureen	And then when they hear- if I get nervous and they hear an accent? They're kind of (.) Well, you know.
Interviewer	[Mmhmm
Maureen	[Taken aback 'cause, they think I'm supposed to speak Spanish. So that's the only-and then they hear the accent and they're like (.) I don't know.

Maureen expressed pressure to speak 'proper' Spanish, lest she be judged by other Latinos, specifically mentioning accent-related shame. For her, an occasional non-native accent is 'improper' and reveals that she doesn't speak Spanish as she should. This causes her to avoid speaking Spanish to avoid embarrassment and being identified as second-generation (conflated with speaking badly). The ideologies of language purity she has been socialized into and internalized, which are reinforced in interactions with other Latinos, cause language anxiety and avoidance ('It's [accent] very embarrassing to me which is why, I don't speak as often as I should now'). Community pressure to live up to a monolingual norm, and the desire to avoid an imposed deficit identity, curtail her agentive language use.

Some resistance to the imposition of deficit identities on second-generation immigrants was observed. 'Héctor', a second-generation immigrant of Central American origins, reported that Latinos who do not speak Spanish (or who don't speak it well enough to 'count') may avoid other Latinos to avoid censure and teasing but also contested the discourse that not speaking Spanish deauthenticates ethnic identity: 'I know a lot of Latinos that, don't speak, Spanish, and they don't want to get close to Latinos because they're- they're scared of being made fun of. You know what I'm saying? But they look Latino and they are Latinos,' an attitude consistent with other research on intergenerational US Latino language and identity change (Beaudrie *et al.* 2009; Bost and Aparicio 2012; Lopez 2016).

However, while Héctor contests the one-to-one indexical relationship between Spanish and ethnocultural identity which positions him and other US-born Latinos as linguistically deficient and culturally inauthentic, he still evaluates his own Spanish in terms of community perception of in/out-group membership and ideologies of idealized proficiency. Further, he reports that his confidence, identity, and language use are affected by internalized linguistic insecurity and fear of judgment:

Excerpt 11

Héctor But then I'll be (.) when I'm in um, a room full of Latinos, I get tongue-tied. I, I, I stutter. I, don't know my tenses. I, preterite, subjunctive, and, blah blah blah blah, I don't know any of it, like,

Interviewer Like in Spanish?

Héctor In my Spanish. My Spanish, you- I speak Spanish, you know, people, down the street can, hear me and be like, 'This guy's a *gringo*.' Like, Latino- *entre latinos* (among Latinos), I'm a gringo. I speak like an American. And it's funny it's like, when I'm with people that look like my family, I'm very cool, with my Spanish, like it comes out all right . . . Like when it comes with like White*latinos, se me traba la lengua* (I get tongue-tied). But when it comes to people who look more *mestizo*, I'm much more comfortable with them.

Internalized reductivist and essentialized linguistic ideologies impose a deficit-speaker identity on Héctor and conscribe his linguistic agency even as he contests the ideology that Latinos must speak Spanish. His linguistic insecurity intersects with notions of correctness based on sounding non-native (specifically labeled as '*gringo*', non-Latino) that create identity tension and fear of community judgment ('people down the street can hear me and be like, ''This guy's a *gringo*'' '). Interestingly, he draws attention to other context factors that affect his language that his language comfort and use, specifically the social positioning, race, and social class (described elsewhere in his interview) of his Latino interlocutors.

DISCUSSION

Findings render visible intersections between ideologies of language, identity, proficiency, and agency, unpacking the tensions they cause within positive language attitudes, and underscoring their pervasiveness and impact on later-generation linguistic identities and language behavior. In the data, imposed deficit identities derived from ideologies of language purity, proficiency, and individual agency misunderstood and stigmatized later-generation heritage

speakers, leading to language insecurity and avoidance despite shared positive attitudes toward Spanish maintenance.

Spanish proficiency was a stance object around which identities were constructed and discourses of morality and identity imposed. However, purist language beliefs imposed deficiency identities on second-generation speakers regardless of actual language use. Rather than being validated, their actual bilingualism was overlooked in favor of an idealized native-speaker target, and the label of inadequate Spanish was imposed as an iconic aspect of generational identity. The second-generation speakers did not generally resist the imposed positioning of themselves as inadequate Spanish speakers, indicating the durability of ideological constellations encompassing monolingual ideology, native-speakerism, and notions of language purity and correctness. Even Héctor, who contested the notion that Latinos 'must' speak (native-like) Spanish, had internalized insecurity about his Spanish—insecurity into which he was socialized through community interactions and judgment. The second-generation speakers reported that the resultant linguistic insecurity led them to avoid Spanish in settings that warranted its use. This finding resonate with the previous research showing that well-intentioned purism can discourage heritage language use (Bradley 2013: 6–7; cf Dorian 1994; also see Hill and Hill's 1986 work on Nahuatl and Spanish bilingualism in Mexico) and expands the ideological constellation to include related ideologies of agency, ethnicity, and belonging.

The first-generation immigrants force-positioned second-generation immigrants as inadequate speakers both in interviews and in reported interactions, a positioning which second-generation participants had internalized. The strong indexical relationship between home language and ethnocultural identity, coupled with the belief that 'speaking a language' entails native-like proficiency, made Spanish a potent site of Latino identity gatekeeping. It thus not only undermined second-generation speakers' identities as competent Spanish speakers but also led to questioning of later generations' authenticity and group membership. For example, 'Diana' positioned her younger sister as not only a bad translator but 'Americanized'. This forced positioning was imposed on and became embodied by second-generation Latinos ('born here'), where 'second generation' was understood as shorthand for 'speaking badly'.

Ideologies of agency played an important role in the constellation of sociolinguistic ideologies that affected speaker identities and language behavior. Participants saw agency as a question of individual action. While first- and second-generation participants experienced this differently—first-generation participants expressed insecurity about successfully transmitting Spanish to their children, rather than their own proficiency—they nonetheless shared a view of agency as fundamentally individual and language learning as a personal (individual and family) responsibility. Similar to ideologies of proficiency and correctness, the ideology of individual agency erased and, paradoxically, curtailed later-generation speakers' actual linguistic agency as

well as causing identity tension, as in this case the perceived 'willful rejection' of the minority language and culture. This finding echoes Mercer's (2012) articulation of the consequences of interpersonal relationships for individual identity and agency, and resonates with Dressler's (2010) finding that family or community positioning of later generations as heritage speakers (or not) affects their identities as such.

Further, the primacy of the ideology of individual agency erases social forces that mandate against language maintenance and curtail individual agency. Ideologies of agency attributed 'inadequate' Spanish and, more broadly, language shift or loss to individuals while erasing the influence of hegemonic social organization. This narrow understanding of agency is an important aspect of the stigmatization and disempowerment of later-generation speakers, and the imposition and internalization of negative sociolinguistic identities. As Miller (2016) notes,

> If . . . actions are understood to originate solely from individual choice, then 'choosing' not to learn a language or not to work hard enough to learn it well can commonsensically be condemned as insufficient effort (laziness) or insufficient intellectual capacity (stupidity) or willful rejection of necessary assimilative actions in immigrant situations (self-imposed exclusion). (356)

The overemphasis of individual agency in language maintenance and as an indication of ethnic orientation, without recognition of broader social–structural factors, such as language discrimination and English-dominant education (Wiley 2012) constraining minority language maintenance and use, itself paradoxically curtailed the second-generations' linguistic agency.

Implications and future directions

Findings show that the intersection of ideologies of language, identity, proficiency, and agency can affect principles of heritage language acquisition (Lynch 2003: 36–9), namely reducing heritage speakers' purposeful and incidental acquisition by constraining interactions with other Spanish speakers (Principles 1 and 2), and impacting the potential of their social identities and language pride to support heritage language maintenance (Principle 8) in the second generation and beyond. Given the important role of families and communities in heritage language support, the study indicates the need for more critical studies of the consequences of ideologies of language, agency, and identity for short- and long-term language behavior, a direction which echoes Lynch's (2003: 40) call for qualitative study of the development of heritage language repertoires and recent research (Carruba-Rogel 2018) showing that Latino youth in California internalized parental deficit discourses about their (the youths') Spanish. More research is indicated on the ways in which attributed individual agency and imposed deficit identities constrain language agency. It would also be productive to explore how diversity and tensions

within ethnocultural identity categories such as 'Latino' affect linguistic agency and identity (as shown by Héctor's example). In terms of application, community outreach is necessary to raise critical awareness of complex bilingualism and celebrate heritage speakers' fluid linguistic identities and abilities, to encourage positive home language affect and language-learning conditions (Helmer 2011). Findings also indicate directions for language education to combat heritage language insecurity and community/institutional bias, echoing calls for a 'sociolinguistic turn' in heritage language education (Leeman and Serafini 2016) and, more generally, for culturally sustaining pedagogies that respect students' bilingual repertoires and nonstandard language, and which raise awareness of the hegemonic pressures which constrain their individual linguistic agency and devalue their competencies (Leeman 2005; Showstack 2015; Bucholtz *et al.* 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

The findings complicate heritage language acquisition principles, which relate positive family and community heritage language attitudes to language maintenance by shedding light onto the ideological assumptions inherent within these attitudes and their consequences for later-generation speakers. They demonstrate the reproduction of ideologies of language, identity, and agency across generations in language-minority communities, the tension inherent between monolingual-normed notions of proficiency and actual bilingualism, and the constraining consequences of this ideological constellation for later-generation linguistic identity and language use. Ideologies privileging individual language agency conscribed second-generation speakers' language use. Over-ascription of agency to individuals without recognition of the broader social-structural forces that mandate against language maintenance, in combination with normative beliefs about language proficiency and purity and the direct indexical relationship between language and ethnocultural identity, led to forced-positioning of later generations as linguistically deficient and culturally inauthentic. Further, this attributed deficiency was seen as agentive—a question of personal responsibility and choice. This imposed deficit positioning contributed to language avoidance, further conscribing second-generation participants' linguistic agency, and damaged their linguistic self-identities and self-esteem.

The study adds new dimensions to heritage language principles (Lynch 2003) and to sociocultural, ideological, and relational aspects of language use and maintenance (He 2010): the 'sociolinguistic turn' in applied linguistics (Block 2003; Leeman and Serafini 2016). Without articulating the complex ideological relationship between heritage languages, ethnocultural identity, and attributed agency, researchers run the risk of oversimplifying the relationship between positive home language attitudes and language maintenance and overlooking the ways in which ideologies of proficiency, 'good' language use, and individual responsibility inadvertently contribute to linguistic insecurity and avoidance. The findings caution against overemphasizing

individual agency without taking into account the complex social ecologies within which this operates, echoing Miller (2016): 'language researchers need to take care in distinguishing between responsibility and responsibilization and recognize the social, economic, and political processes by which responsibility for learning a language is assigned and adopted' (356). Critical understanding of bilingualism, ideology, and agency is particularly important given the 'double bind' US Latinos face where both their heritage language and English abilities are assumed to be deficient (Leeman 2012; Rosa and Flores 2015) and is essential for informing pedagogy and community outreach to support heritage speakers' linguistic identities, reduce insecurity, and disrupt the internalization of hegemonic language ideologies by vulnerable speakers.

NOTES

1 Following Morgan (2014), I understand communities as groups of people 'defined and identified in terms of space, place, affiliation, practices … [with a shared] system of interaction and symbols,' including language, who are aware of these commonalities (p. 1) and perceive themselves as distinct from others (Cohen 1985). In this study, 'community' refers to interviewees' experienced perception that encompasses the commonality of Latino origin, a sense of distinction, and shared attitudes.

2 As noted by Doerr and Lee (2013), García (2005), and Rothman and Treffers-Daller (2014), 'heritage speaker' and 'native speaker' are constructed subject positions.

3 Norton-Peirce (1995) similarly reconceptualized individual motivation as dynamic, relational, and sociohistorical in her notion of 'investment'.

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