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**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
EDU2017-2425**

**Language Choices of Multilingual Learners of German in
a Texas Border Town**

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This paper should be cited as follows:

Sahr, A. (2018). “Language Choices of Multilingual Learners of German in a Texas Border Town”, Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: EDU2017-2425.

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www.atiner.gr
URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm
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ISSN: 2241-2891
04/04/2018

Language Choices of Multilingual Learners of German in a Texas Border Town

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Abstract

Considering the tensions between dominant language ideology and multilingual identity the language choices of learners in the German as a foreign language classroom were explored in this qualitative study. Data was gathered through participant observations, as well as phenomenological interviews and analyzed using constructivist grounded theory. The findings suggest a strong influence of the dominant language discourses on language choices the learners claim to make. Speaking English is part of performing Americanness for the multilingual study participants. However, through their language praxis a more complex situation surfaced and the claim is made that learning an additional language can reshape the learners' identities as confident multilinguals who draw on their full linguistic repertoire for learning German.

Keywords: language ideology, English-only discourses, multilingual identity, translanguaging practices

Introduction

This qualitative study situated at a university at the Texas- Mexico border explores the tensions that are posed by dominant language discourses that associate being “American” with being a monolingual English-speaker, and multilingual language identities that emerge in a foreign language classroom and possibly influence language learner’s language choices. In a German as a foreign language class for beginners the bilingual participants were confronted with translanguaging pedagogies (Garcia & Wei, 2014) that created opportunities to draw on their full linguistic repertoire in order to make meaning of the new language and to facilitate their own learning and also to communicate with classmates. In my positionality as the German language teacher I was able to experience how students use translanguaging practices during the German class; however, during their phenomenological interviews the participants made claims that they had been using English-only in the classroom. The main research question of this study is: How are language learners making choices between languages in the German as a foreign language classroom and how are those choices related to language ideology and identity? Language is part of our identity and acquiring a new language also means acquiring a new identity (Lemke, 2002; Andrews, 2013). Assimilationist language ideologies have been influential over a long period of time and have therefore shaped many adult learners of German as a foreign language. Due to these ideologies, bilingual learners are limiting themselves by not drawing on their Spanish language capabilities for learning German because they have constructed Spanish to be a non-academic language, which excludes it from use for language learning in an academic setting. Therefore, research is necessary to understand the complex nature of language learning for bilingual learners. The bilingual learner has been widely overlooked in both German textbooks that are commonly used in language classes across the United States, as well as in research that focuses on German in the United States. In the process of acquiring a new language the existing languages are facilitating the learning process, because they serve to create understanding of the new foreign language. Many adult learners of a foreign language have already experienced different educational settings, in which they were allowed or not allowed to use their full linguistic repertoire. When put in a classroom environment that allows multiple languages to be used, previously acquired language attitudes might surface and are shown through the expressed language preferences. The prestige and status of a language has an influence on language choices of multilingual speakers. The topic of language prestige with regards to German as an additional language has been researched by Borland (2005), as well as Budach (2013). The latter conducted a study in a two-way immersion German-Italian bilingual classroom. Peer interactions have been studied by Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2012) the settings in the study are multilingual classrooms with multilingual speakers using a second language as lingua franca. Code-switching from the perspectives of bilingual teachers has been researched by Casimir; Mattox; Hays and Vasquez (2000), teacher attitudes towards code-switching have also been examined by

Chimbutane (2013). The particular connection of ethnic minority teachers with bilingual learners and code-switching have been studied by Conteh (2007). Karakas (2013) assessed the potential of minority ethnic teachers from a transnational perspective.

There is a gap in the current literature on German language learners and language choice in the United States, only one study conducted with monolingual students was found. Chavez (2007), at a large public Midwestern university, observed three sections of a German-as-a-foreign language class where the students were traditional college age, white, as well as middle class English speakers. Chavez analyzed the transcripts of the observations and shows that code switching is going on between German and English as part of the peer interactions. Edwards (2004) discusses language and power, as well as identity, and language shift, maintenance and policies, and gives a historic perspective of German in the United States. According to Edwards, heritage languages that are connected to minority groups in English-speaking countries are marginalized, while foreign languages taught in the educational setting enjoy a high status among members of the dominant group (2004, p. 144). The gap in the research is the role of English in the multilingual classrooms in the border area of the United States. Van Sluys and Rao (2012) look at the deficit perspective commonly applied towards new-English language learners and the connection of power and language. Keim (2009) studied institutional deficit notions towards peer-group interactions in multilingual classrooms. A study within a subtractive bilingual context regarding heritage language learners was conducted by Lechner and Siemund (2014). The gap in the current literature is in the field of foreign language classrooms with students' who have gone through different educational settings (additive, subtractive bilingualism, dual-language programs, heritage language learners) and how that has affected their language attitudes towards the different languages they know. Ntelioglou; Fannin; Montanera and Cummins (2014) highlight the advantages it brings to students when they develop literacy in two or more languages. No study so far was found that brings all these elements together, multilingual students in a German as a foreign language class, their previous experience with language learning and their resulting language attitudes that are also connected to their multilingual identities.

Theoretical Framework

In my theoretical framework, I draw on concepts of language ideology, multilingualism and identity, discourse analysis as well as translanguaging. Garza and Crawford (2005) define language “as a symbolic system of communication” (p. 602). Language choices are shaped by both power, and ideology (Mbatha, 2016).

Language ideology is understood as “meaning in the service of power” (Thompson, 1990). A historiographic look at language ideologies can explain how English became tied to national American identity. Pavlenko (2002) in her

historic overview over the development of different ideologies about American identity shows that the hegemony of English as the only American language surfaced after the great immigration wave to the United States between 1880 and 1924. With the beginning of World War I, so called “*Americanization*” began the “*emergence of a hegemonic discourse which established English monolingualism as a constitutive part of American national identity*” (Pavlenko, 2002; p.174). As Sobanski (2016) states “*research on multilingualism has been grounded in critical sociolinguistics, an approach that attends to how identity and power play into linguistic interactions*” (p.162).

Critical sociolinguists are looking at the relationships between language and identity and do not see languages as tied to nation states any more (Sobanski, 2016; Woolard, 1992). According to Sobanski (2016) language can be understood as a marker of identity (p.162), and multilingualism is shaping the speaker’s identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) in their sociocultural linguistic approach claim that identity is “contextually situated and ideologically informed” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p.605).

Identity can be understood as constructed by language which in turn is constructed through discourses and the dominant discourse perpetuates a certain language ideology.

Nativist as well as racist notions against bilingual education have been fostering the idea that the “ideal American” is white, born in the United States and speaks English (Bondy, 2016, p.588).

Garza and Crawford (2005) have called the assimilationist agendas in the educational system a form of hegemonic multiculturalism, if the cultural capital of a group is in sync with that of the dominant group, then that is seen in a positive light (Garza & Crawford, 2005). In addition to that this theoretical framework draws on habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) and the power that a state has in imposing English as more valuable than immigrant languages, and more specific on “linguistic habitus” and “linguistic and cultural capital” (Kayaalp, 2016, p.133). The hegemonic discourse of English as the dominant language in the United States creates a system of domination particularly for immigrant cultures and languages in the United States.

Heller (2001) describes discourse analysis of interactions as a way to discover “*how social reality is constructed*” (Heller, 2001). Reality is regarded as socially constructed and through discourse analysis of interactions it can be deconstructed according to Heller (2001). Interactional data is analyzed as text in this qualitative study. Language and language use are not neutral and multilingualism involves the interplay of identities (Heller, 2001, p. 255). There have been studies focusing on performing gender, race, nationality and ethnicity and “*the interactional dynamics of social and cultural reproduction in school*” (Heller, 2001, p. 256). The social organization of discourse in educational settings structures who gets to talk and it controls how languages are judged and what language is ascribed higher value. The discourse controls whose knowledge counts in educational settings (Heller, 2001, p. 256). Furthermore, the discourse in educational settings dictates what is considered a language of learning.

The last element of this framework is translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2014), this approach considers the linguistic repertoires that an individual has, not as separate languages, but as one language. With the translanguaging turn and the development of this pedagogical approach new practices are theorized that help transform fixed language identities (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 21).

Methodology

The data in this qualitative study was analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz “grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to construct theories from the data themselves” (p.1). A discrepancy was found between what learners claimed to be doing regarding their language choices and the observable language practices. Learners used language practices that can be summarized under translanguaging practices in both the German class, as well as in the interview process (García & Wei, 2014).

Data Collection

This qualitative study explores the language attitudes and the language preferences as well as use among multilingual adult learners, 18 years and older in a non-credit class of German as a foreign language at the University of Texas at El Paso. The class had 10 students. Participant observations were conducted for 10 hours, which is the length of the complete German language crash course. Informed consent was gathered from all participants prior to the beginning of the participant observations. Semi-structured interviews with six of the participants were transcribed and analyzed.

Findings

There are two main categories that emerged from the data: performing Americanness and questioning borderland Spanish. A discrepancy was found between what learners claimed to be doing regarding their language choices and the observable language practices. Learners used language practices that can be summarized under translanguaging practices in both the German class, as well as in the interview process (García & Wei, 2014). Out of their sometimes clashing language discourses and practices learners constructed and reconstructed a bilingual/multilingual language learner identity.

Performing Americanness

Being American is constructed as being monolingual, which means English speaking, for bilinguals it is valuable to transition to English-only fast according to

that notion. Speaking English with no accent is considered performing Americanness for the participants. Speaking the dominant language is necessary in the eyes of the participants, English is regarded to be the dominant language of high societal status. In this paradigm languages are tied to nation states. Spanish is tied to Mexico and English is tied to the nation state of the United States in the perception of the participants. Through one's language choice a statement about belonging to a certain community is made and social status can be revealed through language use.

What it means to perform Americanness through language choice and usage can be analyzed historically. For example, German in the United States underwent a period in which there was a lot of anti-German sentiment, the same is true for Mexican Spanish in the United States. The participants and their families have been directly or indirectly affected by these language ideologies which influenced how much of their heritage language a member of the second or third generation still speaks.

A difference I found between the bilingual participants was that if the participants were born in Mexico they did not want their children to learn Spanish at school, they wanted them in English programs. But those participants that had been born in the United States to bilingual families were in favor of their children learning Spanish in addition to English as the language of schooling. There seems to be a different perspective between first generation immigrants and second and later generation immigrants. Kayaalp (2016) describes first-generation youth as disadvantaged compared to second-generation youth because of the lack of linguistic habitus, which can lead to marginalization in society (p.144). As a newcomer to the country one tries to assimilate and learn English, which is associated with higher status than any immigrant language. However, once someone is more established or has been born as a citizen in the United States studying a language the grandparents/and-or parents spoke or currently speak seems more valuable, and it is not linked to negative associations about having language deficiencies. The first-generation immigrants have often been subject to open discrimination and racism based on their origin and their language practices. The language discrimination experienced particularly by first-generation immigrants to the United States is closely tied to cultural marginalization, "discrimination based on language, intersects with power imbalances, exclusion, social inequality and racism in society" (Kayaalp, 2016, p.133; Creese & Kambere, 2003).

These deficit notions seem to have been internalized deeply as they still influence those participants that are currently working as teachers in the field of bilingual education in public school districts. Kincheloe (2005) addressed stereotypical discourse about minorities and minority cultures (Kincheloe, 2005). Kayaalp (2016) shows the association between subtle forms of racism that are institutionalized and language, those surface in school settings and in teacher beliefs. The state imposes a non-recognition of linguistic habitus, "inequality including new racism, is reproduced on the basis of language. This power of the dominant society and the state's hegemony to legitimize, to recognize

and to name are the forms of domination that exclude language identities” (Kayaalp, 2016, p.145).

Schools are contextualized as English-only by the participants. Monica, a first-generation Mexican-American states, when asked what languages were spoken at school: *“It was purely English, I never had anything with another language in school.”* Monica experienced the English-only schooling, or subtractive bilingualism (Garza & Crawford, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Maybe the students that are learning English fast are doing so in order to pass for white, or perform in a sense to demonstrate they belong here in the United States, that they can aspire to be American or that they in fact are American citizens. This topic came up in the data in this example of Andrew, a second-generation immigrant of Puerto Rican decent, discussing the languages he would hear at home:

“At home it was English, my mother was very Spanish adverse, in fact to this day, if someone speaks to her in Spanish at the checkout line, she will remind them sternly that she can speak English, but with my grandmother she would speak Spanish. So my mother was the tail end of the Spanish detention period so that is why she failed first grade, she learned English. And I would assume, some of it was informed by her experience in lovely tolerant Dallas, Texas, where she was heavily discriminated against for being Puerto Rican, so I am sure that all fed into that.”

Andrew’s mother uses English only in the house and outside the house if she can because it is offensive to her if people judge her based on her skin color and how she looks that she must be a Spanish-speaker. As an immigrant, she had to claim that cultural capital of being an English speaker who is deserving of all the privileges associated with being “American”. What surfaced in the mother’s story is the fact that speaking English is tied to whiteness therefore she would answer in English when spoken to, particularly in public.

Blaisdell (2016) addresses this issue as the racial contract:

“a social agreement among whites that only whites can have full rights as persons [...] though no longer written into the law in as explicitly, whites continue to endorse the Racial Contract (often unknowingly) by upholding an ideology of white supremacy that justifies the ongoing domination of people of color” (Blaisdell, 2016, p.287).

Blaisdell further explains that whiteness is both produced by and productive of power in society and can be exerted by whites as well as people of color (2016, p.288).

Andrew and Caitlin, who is a teacher at one of the local public schools, reflected on their experience of attending UT Austin and made a connection between whiteness and a lack of diversity and English-only attitudes. Andrew

said: *“I remember thinking there is something weird and I figured out why, there is lots of white people so it is primarily English, you don’t have that diversity, and if you have it, it is in pockets.”* Andrew also showed his language preferences towards English in his language choices with his family. He would choose to respond in English to his Spanish-only speaking grandmother: *“With my grandmother she would ask me in Spanish and I would answer in English.”* Andrew who was born in the United States experienced what Garza and Crawford (2005) called *“hegemonic multiculturalism”*, that expressed itself in a transitional nature of schooling towards English and assimilation to an American culture that is defined by a dominant group. Garza and Crawford (2005) explain that *“even when schools and families are supportive of bilingualism, sociopolitical conditions that value the cultural capital of the dominant group exert tremendous pressures to speak, read, write in English-only”* (Garza & Crawford, 2005, p.602).

Caitlin and Andrew when talking about the education system construct successful students as students willing to learn English. Caitlin, who is a teacher at a High School explains: *“I had some great students and they will be next to fluent by the end of one year. They volunteer to read aloud and they come to tutoring and get help.”* Becoming fluent in English means to pursue performing Americanness, while students who resist learning English do not wish to become Americanized. Caitlin gave an example for that: *“And I have kids, if you run into them in the hallway they only wanna speak Spanish. That is it. I am going to move back to Mexico. And I feel bad because they tend to fail classes.”* The purpose of schooling is to alleviate constructed deficits that are a part of hegemonic multiculturalism, which is used as *“a mask that hides the enforcement of sameness as the requisite for success”* (Garza & Crawford, 2005, p. 615).

An assimilationist discourse was voiced by Anita, a Mexican-American born in Mexico, who explained that her children need to learn English because they are not going back to Mexico. Anita remembered that she told her children’s bilingual teacher: *“Just teach them English, because we are never going to go back to Mexico.”* Anita told a story about a lady she met in her first semester at ESL classes in the US, seven years later they met again and Anita found out that her friend was still relying on a government program and spoke Spanish. Anita ascribed the lack of English to “unamericaness”. In her perspective the described lady had the same opportunities that Anita had but she did not take advantage of them. Using opportunities is associated with performing Americanness. Anita responded like this to her friend from ESL class who had not learned English within seven years:

“Well, it is not like you didn’t have the opportunity. It is just that you didn’t want to learn the language. For me it was a need maybe because I have little kids and I want my kids to be bilingual but for me I always wanted to learn English. I always wanted to. Maybe that helped.” Anita gives a value statement about the importance of speaking English in the United States.

In this excerpt the topic of learning English for her children is also apparent. While Anita was born in Mexicali, Mexico her children had been born in the United States and she needed to learn English in order to help them with their English language development because speaking English is not only a highly valued skill but seen as an essential part of being American .

For Anita learning and speaking English was a choice she made, and for her living in the United States meant she had to know English. When she would sit in a College class and did not understand what the professor said she would assume that was her own problem. Anita gives the example of her Math professor he used a word she did not know: *“I was okay, I didn’t understand that word, but I didn’t want to be rude and ask him. I was thinking it was my problem because I didn’t understand Math really good.”*

Manuel, a Mexican-American who had been born in the United States but was raised in Mexico recalled his experience of attending College in the United States he said:

“I started taking College classes, writing, Math and all that stuff that’s when I really had to drop the Spanish and start speaking the language. And after that for me it was ah joining the military pretty much nobody spoke Spanish... and that was a good thing. And then I realized that I have a really heavy accent, I haven’t been able to shake.”

For Manuel joining the military made him feel self-conscious about speaking English with a Spanish accent. The *“language”* is used as an equivalent for English in his discourse.

Elisa, a heritage German language learner with a German grandmother and a Danish grandfather talked about her grandmother’s life and the anti-German sentiments. Elisa summarized: *“Between World War 1 and World War 2 in that grouping of it is all about be American. And so the people who grew up during that time for them it was, if you are going to be here you better speak English.”* Multilingualism seemed like a threat to the core values and meanings of being American.

Elisa narrated her grandmothers story emphasizing her struggles for being of German heritage:

“Okay, my grandmothers first language was German, she was born in the states, but her parents were born in Germany, and when they came over, when her parents came over, they lived in an area that was German speaking even though that was in the US. ... I think it was Pennsylvania where she was born, and they only spoke German in the household, and when she was younger, I know she was homeschooled and uhm actually the nuns from church came by to visit the household, and this was around World War 1, and at that time the sentiments were changing and when they found out she didn’t know any English, they knew she spoke German, but when they found out she only knew German they removed her from the

house. And took her to a parochial school and she didn't know English and was labeled stupid and she ended up dropping out from High School."

Elisa also talks about the physical punishment her grandmother had to face for using German in the Catholic School she was forced to attend:

"if she tried to answer in German she would get slapped with a ruler and she didn't know what was going on so they just said: 'Oh, you are stupid.' And they labeled her because she didn't know the language and so she just dropped out. And I know she fought that most of her life overcoming that label, because she was actually very smart but it would not show up in school."

After having this traumatizing schooling experience Elisa's grandmother took it upon herself to study English very well to cover up the fact that she had German heritage:

"I mean she worked to where you didn't know she was not a native speaker. I never heard an accent. And she was so afraid because she was physically removed from her home for not knowing English, it was ugly."

The grandmother carried the fact that she was labeled for not knowing English her whole life and it also influenced her decision not to teach German to her own children, because she wanted her children to have better opportunities in the United States as English speakers with no accent.

Elisa's dad learned almost no German for precisely that reason: *"My dad didn't learn a lot of German because he was born just at the beginning of World War 2 and then it was like: oh, don't speak it around because after they saw what happened with the Japanese they didn't want to risk it."* Elisa discusses how the war sentiments had led her dad's family to switch to English only at home. *"Whole new life"*, Elisa described the conscious decision to subscribe to the Americanization that entailed English only. In order to pass as American, German had to be dropped, because being born in the United States was not enough to be American. The grandmother also wanted to avoid for her kids to be marginalized and discriminated against for speaking German so she didn't speak German with her children. Only occasionally a German phrase would slip:

"She didn't want my dad and his siblings for them to be labeled stupid cuz of that label, so she made sure the first language was English, she would slip with the German when she was upset or things like that or just common things but not a lot of it got passed along."

Questioning borderland Spanish was developed as a second category that emerged of the data, referring to the discourses about Spanish in the Texas city that shares a border with Mexico.

This category leads to the topic of what it means to be bilingual in the borderland where the study took place. For example, in the interviews participants used the term “Pocho Spanish”, for the language mixing as it occurs in the borderland describing the mix between English and Spanish as problematic, because it doesn’t measure up to the categories of English, which is the language of schooling in the United States for the participants, and correct Spanish, which measures up to academic Spanish taught in Mexico. According to the discourse that some of the participants subscribed to people who mix English and Spanish don’t have any “proper” language available. Bilinguality and bilingual language use are common in the border town university in which the study took place. Interestingly, value statements were not made about mixing German, English and Spanish. Negative associations in regards to using German in conjunction with other local languages or previously learned languages were not voiced by any of the participants.

While English is ascribed the high value of an academic language, Spanish is not considered to be an appropriate language for use in an academic setting. The bilingual participants all stated that they have not been using Spanish for their College classes; however, translanguaging practices were used by the participants. For example, participants were asked to provide a written answer to questions about their family members in German that were written in German on the blackboard. Students helped each other to translate answers from Spanish or English to German. Moreover, students discussed similarities between Spanish and German in English, also cultural aspects of family relationships were discussed. Students were sharing experiences they have with German family members, such as grandparents, or German in-laws with the class and references were made between the experiences of Mexican-American family life, American family life and German family life. Throughout activities such as this one students were drawing on all of their languages, similarities were found, and comprehension evolved because students used concepts that were familiar to them in order to make sense of German, which to some students was a completely new language to others it was already familiar because of family ties to German speaking relatives.

Some of the bilingual participants described themselves as having no Spanish, although they were able to speak it, because they felt that the lack of academic language or their inability to write properly in Spanish somehow means that they don’t know Spanish and that they are not bilingual. Having a bilingual identity depends on the level of “proper” language one has, according to these participants. Their pragmatics in both Spanish and English were just fine, but based on their self-ascribed deficits in writing they belittled their own competencies in accordance with deficit notions. This pattern was found widely as well as a criticism of bilingual education in the schools, one reason being that students do not learn proper Spanish, teachers also might not have a very high commend of Spanish and on the other hand it is criticized that in the bilingual programs the emergent bilinguals rely too much on translations. One example is that if a teacher is using English students wait for the translations to

Spanish without acquiring the adequate English language skills that would be expected of their grade level.

Pocho Spanish is described as having a lower status versus English that has the highest social capital and Spanish that was correctly used and spoken. Andrew describes the Pocho Spanish of the borderland as having deficits:

“When I learned Martial Arts I would hear Spanish, but then I trained in Juarez, then in South El Paso, I would hear Spanish with gang members also, it was an interesting mixture, other than that I would just talk in English. If I was in El Paso, it was that Pocho Spanish, that weird Spanish were you just phase in and out, then if I would go in to Juarez it was proper Spanish when I was over there”.

“Pocho” as a term still carries the same cultural meaning it had since the increase in Mexican immigration to the United States due to the Mexican Revolution according to Herrera (2010), Pocho, when referring to a person describes “a man without a country” (Herrera, 2010, p.22). Pocho describes the inferiority of Americans of Mexican decent to the “white American” (Herrera, 2010, p.22). “Pocho” is used by Andrew to show the “unamerican” attributes of the people in the borderland. Andrew’s example also ascribes low social class to the user of this type of Spanish along the border. Herrera states that *“without feeling Mexicano, Chicano, or even completely ‘American’ all that remains is Pocho”* (Herrera, 2010, p.25).

Monica, who self-identified as a first generation Mexican-American describes how she grew up having a bilingual home: *“It was always Spanish, English occasionally, my Mom knew very little English so she would talk to me in Spanish and I would respond in Spanish.”* Monica also discussed how she found differences regarding the frequency of Spanish use at the border:

“When I was up north, so Oregon, Washington it was purely English, when I moved down to California more towards the San Diego area that is closer to the border so there were more Spanish speaker, then when I moved to Dallas Texas there is more English, but the Hispanic community is growing.”

Spanish is not considered to be a language appropriate for academic discourse. An example for this is this excerpt, when asked if her interactions in Spanish were mostly outside the classrooms Monica states:

“ It was mostly outside the classroom, I mean if you were sitting next to a friend in the classroom that spoke Spanish it wasn’t looked down upon, but we would never speak Spanish to the teacher.”

An example where bilingual speakers measure themselves against monolingual language standards is when it comes to writing: *“I just speak Spanish. I can write very little Spanish. English I know the language.”* Monica is a

bilingual student born in the United States of America and she is very comfortable using Spanish; however, she is eager to describe her perceived language deficits. According to Monica, her knowledge in Spanish writing would not hold up if she was to take a class in Mexico: *“if I was to go to Mexico I would definitely suffer as far as the writing goes”*. Monica’s self-evaluation of her perceived deficits in Spanish writing could be considered a result of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). Bilingual children in the school system are evaluated according to the dominant cultural capital which is English, (Garza & Crawford, 2005) since Spanish did not perceive as much attention her writing skills lack behind her speaking and comprehension skills.

The so-called Pocho Spanish of the borderland has a low status according to the participants. When asked what languages he spoke at school for social interactions Andrew a primarily English speaker with a Puerto Rican mother stated:

“Primarily just English, all English. Teachers had the ability to speak Spanish. I would hear the interactions and it is typical in El Paso you have these interactions, they would speak Spanish with the Spanish speakers but not with the one’s taking a Spanish class. I spoke Spanish even at UT I had this friend from Guadalajara and he would speak in English. He detested the Pocho, he was snobbish.”

Manuel, a second-generation Mexican-American who was born in the US but grew up in Juarez talked about the hybridity of the borderland languaging. Referring to English on the Mexican side of the border he explained: *“It was not spoken, a word here or there a hybrid.”*

The bilingual programs of the borderland are questioned during the interviews, all participants had some form of concern about the efficiency of bilingual education. On one hand it was critiqued that Spanish speakers in bilingual programs learn to wait for translations from the teacher and do not really try to learn. The example that emerged in the data is Andrew talking about this situation:

“They were never pushed out of it, every time they needed assistance, raise your hand and they would take over in Spanish, they created this reliance for the Spanish speakers, if they didn’t understand they would go over it in Spanish I remember it being like that as a child. I remember kids that are in the bilingual track, coming in as Spanish speaker and they never have merged over to the English world.”

The achievement that would be seen in a positive light by the participants is if students actually have a want to learn English, because a true need is not given by the specific circumstances of the borderland where students know they can get by with Spanish without ever acquiring English. What came to my mind is the possible role of resistance that those Spanish speakers assert in light of the push for English, maybe their resistance to English is the only way

they can use their agency in a climate that is trying for them to assimilate to an English-speaking culture. Another topic that emerged in the data is that bilingual learners who become bilingual teachers are reproducing the learning techniques that they underwent themselves, which means a sink-or-swim model for bilingual teaching.

Below is an excerpt of a discussion Anita and Manuel had about the meaning of the term bilingual:

Manuel states: *My point is that, just because you grew up speaking a language doesn't make you bilingual.*

I asked aren't the children able to write in Spanish?

Manuel: *Hugo better than Victor. Victor no, he speaks no Spanish. I mean other than: quiero comer, Mama.*

Anita: *No, he speaks Spanish.*

Manuel: *It sounds like Spanish to you but it is not.*

Manuel makes this self-evaluating statement: *"I had a hard time with languages. I don't speak it."*

In response to this Anita explained:

"He doesn't hear the accents in Spanish, he memorized the accents and I thought it was kind of like, really? You memorized? The syllables, the accents is very easy for someone who can hear them. But I told him: Manuel, you write really good in Spanish, because they teach us where the accent goes and you have to memorize it."

This example shows that Manuel is devaluing his own skills, because in his mind he cannot hear the accents in Spanish so he concludes that he is struggling with the language. Regarding their children Manuel concludes that one does not have the ability to speak Spanish and the other one speaks better than the one who does not speak it at all. It later on turned out that both children speak Spanish, but one more than the other. In their fathers mind they did not measure up to the high standards he had for being considered a bilingual.

Discussion

The data was analyzed according to the outlined theoretical framework. The language ideologies that were identified are mostly in line with hegemonic multilingualism and the dominant discourse of English as the "American" language, which is contrasted with borderland Spanish, which is framed in a deficit discourse. The identities that participants portray are complex, but a certain trend was found that learning German contributed to reframing the participants bilingual/multilingual confidence. This positive identity was particularly constructed around translanguaging practices that help to overcome the dichotomy between English and Spanish or any other additional language. Students in the

class collected practical experiences with making use of all their linguistic resources in the German class. The reflective process in the phenomenological interviews (Seidman, 2013) also led to a reflective process for the participants who through sharing their stories began to question the way they themselves or their family members have been treated in the United States based on the fact that they spoke additional languages.

Conclusion

English is the tool that participants used to demonstrate their “Americanness”, after they had adopted the English-only ideology of the dominant society. These problematic notions of American identity need to be further researched. It seems that in the past English-only legislation were adopted out of a fear of immigrants, and it can now be asked why the second-generation immigrants perpetuate these notions. Americanness is performed through language choice and a decision to focus on English as one’s dominant language. For the bilingual participant’s their second language did not play a dominant role in their lives, according to their discourses they used it mainly to accommodate speakers who had a perceived language deficit, although they actively used in it their German as a foreign language class. Participants who were eager to downplay the role of Spanish in their lives were using Spanish extensively in both the German class and outside the class. It can be said that subscribing to a discourse that frames Spanish, or any other language other than English as not appropriate for academic use or in broader terms for use in the public overall has led the participants to come to these opinions. Considering the historic aspects, as well as the difficulties emerging bilinguals faced it would make sense why bilinguals and multilinguals would orient themselves towards learning English fast and assimilating to the dominant culture in a timely manner in order to avoid further discrimination. Further research is needed to investigate if possible translanguaging practices are helpful in constructing a positive identity as a multilingual speaker. Critical discourse analysis might be another option to deconstruct the dominant discourse further.

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