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Heritage language socialization at work: Spanish in Miami

https://doi.org/10.1515/jwl-2022-0048
Received January 10, 2022; accepted December 16, 2022; published online January 11, 2023

Abstract: In recent decades, the increasingly blurred boundaries between work, home, and various other spheres of social life have brought greater complexity to the notion of the workplace. In many contemporary workplace environments in the U.S., the demand for Spanish is unequivocal and uncontested; in some areas, Spanish is a *de facto* requirement. Because U.S. Latinx bilinguals show a broad social preference for English and lack formal education in Spanish, they may feel challenged to meet workplace language demands in Spanish, particularly where specialized vocabulary or formal registers are concerned. Carried out in the highly dynamic bilingual context of Miami, this study posed the following questions: Do adult heritage speakers of Spanish in Miami – where a broad majority of the population speaks Spanish – appear to draw linguistic benefits from participation in the local labor market? Does this participation have the potential to curtail language loss? To answer these questions, semi-structured interviews were carried out with heritage speakers of Spanish in Miami. Their personal accounts of adult heritage language socialization suggest that Spanish use in the U.S. workplace is a highly situated, localized discourse practice that depends largely on the individuals involved. Despite the uncontested value of Spanish in Miami and the demand to speak it in most workplace settings, conscious choice to do so remains with the individual. The participants' related experiences reveal the importance of speaker agency and manifest the potential of workplace environments to engender more positive orientations toward Spanish as well as active use of the language during adulthood.

Keywords: bilingualism; heritage language socialization; Spanish; workplace

1 Introduction

Although the bulk of scholarship on language socialization has been concerned with child development in terms of speaker identities and community roles, contemporary research takes up questions of socialization across the lifespan in a wide array

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of settings, from households and classrooms to media use, medical encounters, political efforts, and workplaces (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011: 2). The interactional processes of language socialization in adulthood are probably less understood than those pertaining to childhood or adolescence, but the patterns of acquisition and use – or production and reproduction – of particular types of discourse (i.e. codes, registers, or genres) are arguably age-independent. In this article, I consider the ways in which adult heritage speakers of Spanish in Miami benefit from the interactional demands of work in this dynamic bilingual city.

2 Language demands in the contemporary workplace

In recent decades, the increasingly blurred boundaries between work, home, and various other spheres of social life have brought greater complexity to the notion of the workplace. The so-called "new work order" that emerged at the end of the 20th century had important sociolinguistic implications (Heller 2010; Roberts 2010). As manufacturing began to decrease in the U.S., Canada, and the countries of Western Europe, language – and language skill – quickly became essential dimensions of the workplace in the service- and knowledge-based industries of the globalized, tertiary economy. English has increasingly been integrated in workplace settings the world over, giving rise to novel speaker identities (Duff 2005; Pujolar and O'Rourke 2022); in Canada, French has acquired a more vital role since the 1980s (Heller 2013); and in the U.S., Spanish has gained greater presence in a traditionally English-monolingual labor market in recent decades (Callahan and Gándara 2014). Within the context of these changes, Spanish in the U.S. – similar to French in Canada – began to be construed more as a marketplace commodity or socioeconomic asset and less as a marker of ethnolinguistic identity or a talking point about cultural assimilation, as it became enmeshed in the discourse of consumerism and the global economy (Lynch 2018; Mora 2014). This is not to suggest that nationalism and the Anglophone imperative were eroded in the process, but rather that Spanish garnered a particular marketplace legitimacy previously unseen in U.S. public life. In Heller's (2008, 2013) terms, neoliberal economic practice came to command rather more authority than national language policy or nationalist linguistic ideology in certain spheres and particular places. This is especially the case of Miami, where urban development and economic globalization have been concomitant with the expansion of Spanish language use since the 1970s (Lynch 2022).

The importance of Spanish in the social and economic life of Miami cannot be overstated. As Portes and Stepick (1993) explained, Miami's Spanish-speaking "ethnic

enclave economy" grew in relation to continuous immigration and commercial ties to the Caribbean and Latin America throughout the second half of the 20th century. This local economy was built upon an already steadfast touristic and commercial exchange with Havana during the 1940s and 1950s (Pérez 1999). The enclave of entrepreneurial Cubans who fled Castro's regime during the 1960s and 1970s not only legitimated the public use of Spanish but also attracted successive waves of middle- and upper-class Latin American immigrants escaping political and economic instability in their respective countries: Nicaraguans beginning in 1979; Colombians and Peruvians in the 1980s; Venezuelans in the 1990s; Argentines in the early 2000s; Puerto Ricans in the wake of Hurricane María in 2017.[1] The Spanish-speaking immigrant influx has remained constant to the present day. More than half (54.6%) of Miami-Dade's current population is foreign-born, the overwhelming majority (93.2%) of Latin American origin (American Community Survey 2019). As Table 1 reflects, the majority of Miami-Dade's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, and Spanish is spoken in the majority of households, across all socioeconomic strata (United States Census Bureau 2020).

Table 1: Language use and socioeconomic status in metropolitan Miami (United States Census Bureau 2020).

	Hispanic/Latino	Speak a non-English language at home (age 5+)	Median household income
Miami-Dade County	69.4%	75.0%	$53,975
Miami (city proper)	72.5%	77.6%	$44,268
Hialeah	95.7%	93.5%	$38,471
Miami Beach	58.0%	71.9%	$57,211
Kendall	67.5%	70.1%	$72,323
Doral	83.7%	88.2%	$75,138
Coral Gables	58.4%	61.0%	$103,999
Key Biscayne	73.7%	82.8%	$166,667

One must bear in mind that in homes where Spanish is spoken, English is oftentimes also spoken. This is especially true for Miami-born second- and third-generation bilinguals, for whom English is the dominant language (Lynch 2022; Otheguy et al. 2000; Pascual y Cabo 2015). Their general social preference for English and lack of formal education in Spanish condition patterns of incomplete acquisition,

1 Macías (2014: 32) affirmed that: "The economic power of an educated and capitalized population that had fled Cuba with significant resources was a factor in the acceptance of their language. After all, the first wave of Cuban immigrants had produced an economic boon for the southern Florida region, albeit in Spanish".

grammatical simplification, and cross-structural influence of English at all linguistic levels, as in other areas of the U.S. (Escobar and Potowski 2015; Montrul 2015; Polinsky 2018; Silva-Corvalán 2014). They may thus feel challenged to meet workplace language demands in Spanish, particularly where specialized vocabulary or formal registers are concerned, as we will see in the personal accounts that comprise the present study.

In most workplace environments in Miami, the demand for Spanish is unequivocal and uncontested; in some, Spanish is a *de facto* requirement. About half of Miami-Dade County's employed population currently has a service-, sales-, or office-related occupation (American Community Survey 2019), in which bilingual working abilities are essential.[2] Although I am unaware of any recent studies concerning the vitality and perceived necessity of Spanish in local businesses, one could safely assume that the general findings of a survey study conducted by Fradd in 1996 would still hold true today. Of the 245 metropolitan Miami businesses surveyed at that time, a Spanish-English bilingual workforce was deemed important by 96% (Fradd 1996: 42). One in ten businesses surveyed in 1996 indicated that Spanish was used in 76–100% of their communication; only one in four reported use of Spanish less than 10% of the time (Fradd 1996: 39). Based upon 1990 U.S. Census data, Boswell (2000) demonstrated that bilingual abilities bestowed economic benefits: Hispanics in Miami-Dade County who indicated that they spoke English very well and lived in homes where "mostly Spanish" was spoken earned an average of $7,000 more per year in 1990 than Hispanics who spoke "only English" at home. Although I am unaware of any studies that have considered the correlation of bilingual abilities with higher incomes in Miami since the 1990s, the findings of other inquires beyond South Florida cast some doubt (see Callahan and Gándara 2014). In a statistical analysis of five years of American Community Survey data from 2006 to 2010, Robinson-Cimpian (2014: 93) found no significant annual income differences between monolingual (English) and bilingual (Spanish-English) Hispanics aged 24–64 who lived in high-concentration Spanish-speaking areas of the U.S., as is the case of Miami-Dade. However, Robinson-Cimpian's (2014: 91–93) analysis did reveal that, in high-concentration Spanish-speaking areas of the U.S., the participation rate of bilingual Hispanics in the civilian labor market was significantly higher than that of their monolingual counterparts.

2 Various factors drive the demand for Spanish, among them: 1) about 35% of Miami-Dade's total population speaks English "less than very well" according to American Community Survey data from recent years; 2) in addition to the constant immigrant influx of monolingual or near-monolingual Spanish speakers, millions of Latin American tourists visit the city each year (nearly 6 million in 2018 and 2019 – prior to the Covid pandemic – according to 2020 data of the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau); and 3) the city's financial sector is directly linked to the Caribbean and South America (Beyer 2015).

In light of this latter finding, Robinson-Cimpian (2014: 96) affirmed that: "If the labor market differentials overall favor bilinguals in these locations [i.e. areas with high concentrations of Spanish speakers] and if a heritage language is easier to maintain in the presence of many heritage language speakers, then perhaps the loss of bilingualism is not inevitable". His suggestion motivates the present inquiry: Do adult heritage speakers of Spanish in Miami – where a broad majority of the population speaks Spanish – appear to draw linguistic benefits from participation in the local labor market? Does this participation have the potential to curtail language loss? I believe that the answer to both of these questions is affirmative and that the explanation has to do with language socialization.

3 Language socialization at work

Language socialization involves both "socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language" (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986: 163). In this regard, language acquisition and socialization are mutually constitutive processes that not only reproduce the social order but also the beliefs, values, ideologies, and indexes that undergird that order (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011: 10). Research on language socialization spans phonology, grammar, lexicon, and discourse, bringing the interactional dimensions of language into focus: "it is hard to imagine a community in which language socialization does not cultivate social competence in and through requesting, questioning, asserting, planning, storytelling, correcting, evaluating, confirming, and disputing, for example" (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011: 1). Just as children are socialized in the home and school environments, adults must be socialized into the particular linguistic and cultural environment of each workplace that they enter, confronting the tensions between corporate or institutional discourses, professional registers, and the personal or creative aspects of language (Roberts 2010: 214).

Because everyone is "new" at some point in every workplace, one might think of workplace language socialization in terms of Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice model. Within this framework, the "novice" or "newcomer" is apprenticed into a community of practice through situated learning in dialogue and collaboration with experienced "old-timers". Applying this model, Gershon's (2015) edited volume *A World of Work: Imagined Manuals for Real Jobs* presents ethnographic accounts of learning how to do an array of culturally specific jobs that come with no conventional instructions or established training, i.e. real jobs whose manuals can only be imagined: a professional wrestler in Mexico City, a cell phone repair technician in the United States, a journalist in Siberia, a village court magistrate in Papua New Guinea, a salmon farmer in Norway, among others.

Gershon (2015: 3) affirms that: "people have their own culturally specific ways of talking about work, talking about having a career, talking about skills that can be passed on to others, talking about the unique challenges that arise in each workplace". She (Gershon 2015: 4) points out that the authors of all the imagined manuals in her volume "show that jobs change in doing them, and the communities of practice change as people move from being newcomers to old-timers as new ideas get put into dialogue with earlier notions and practices". As such, language use at work is not static, especially not in contexts of multilingualism.

I suggest that, in many ways, patterns of socialization into workplace Spanish language practices in the U.S. context reflect imagined manuals for real jobs, as Gershon (2015) conceptualizes them. In the vast majority of workplace settings in which Spanish is actively spoken – among bosses and employees, between coworkers, as well as between workers and customers or clients – there is no sort of norm or standardized practice regarding use of the language. Inevitably, complaints and legal disputes occasionally arise because someone does not speak English at work, but such occurrences are relatively rare in light of the overall frequency of Spanish being spoken in all sorts of stores, businesses, and workplace settings across the country (cf. Callahan and Gándara 2014; Torres 2019; Zentella 2014).[3] In the everyday social environment of work in Miami, Spanish use appears to be generally normalized. That is not to say it has been normativized, however. For that reason, one might affirm that people who regularly speak Spanish for work-related purposes in Miami – and across the U.S. – adhere to an imagined manual of sorts, based upon their own socialization experiences. Their practices and repertoires combine corporate codes and consumerist discourses, sometimes translated from or calqued on English (Lynch 2022), as well as approximations to professional registers that have generally been imported from diverse Latin American countries. Most importantly, their practices and repertoires reflect hybridity and creativity, which result from their own personal inclinations and their solutions to the immediate dilemmas of (mis)communication.

In what follows, I offer personal accounts of language socialization experiences among adult heritage speakers of Spanish in the workplace. However exceptional their stories might appear, I can confidently assert that in Miami such experiences are commonplace. As teenagers grow into young adults in this dynamic bilingual U.S. city, many develop more open outlooks regarding Spanish. They begin to speak – and find themselves having to speak – the language more beyond home. Nowhere does

3 On this point, I agree with Callahan and Gándara's suggestion that as "increasing numbers of people are hired *because of their ability to communicate in Spanish* (and other languages) […], attitudes toward those employees – and how and when they are allowed to speak Spanish – will almost inevitably shift with time" (Callahan and Gándara 2014: 7, emphasis in the original).

this seem truer than at work. These accounts suggest that adult heritage language socialization in workplace settings involves both structure and agency, i.e. Spanish is a given condition of everyday life in Miami and people speak it everywhere; yet, the choice to do so at work resides principally with the individual. English is, after all, the *de facto* language of the U.S. Matters of structure and agency resonate in each of these accounts, supporting the central idea of research on language socialization: "nurturing arrangements are motivated by a community's repertoire of shared and varied cultural beliefs about social reproduction, including personhood, sociality, emotions, knowledge, and human development, which are given materiality through language and other semiotic forms in everyday life" (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011: 10). Although our participants' use of Spanish at work is unscripted, and their manuals for language practice thus imagined, the effects of language socialization on their heritage language abilities appear tangible, as we will see.

4 Personal accounts

The following accounts are based upon semi-structured interviews that I carried out with five heritage speakers of Spanish in Miami. In the course of conducting research for the various studies of Spanish in Miami that are presented in Lynch (2022), I noted a recurrent strand of themes about Spanish language use in the workplace. Various perspectives presented themselves: that of second- and third-generation bilinguals who expressed worries or frustrations about their linguistic abilities in workplace settings; that of employers who sometimes conveyed the difficulty of finding Miami bilinguals who could meet the linguistic demands of certain work-related tasks, especially in relation to formal registers of language; and that of first-generation immigrants (principally Spanish-speaking) who occasionally remarked upon the "poor quality" of Spanish they observed in professional or commercial settings in Miami, oftentimes citing Anglicisms, commonplace usage of the familiar personal pronoun *tú* rather than the more deferential *usted* (which they perceived as a lack of professionalism or personal respect in some cases), lack of context-specific vocabulary, and halting fluency of worker discourse, among other linguistic phenomena. These concerns led me to a series of interviews focused more explicitly on Spanish in the workplace.

The interviews followed the topic arc format described by Knott et al. (2022). In the beginning of the interviews, general questions about acquisition and use of Spanish were posed, followed by a series of more specific questions about Spanish in the workplace, and ending with a general question about participants' perception of the importance of bilingual abilities. The workplace-related questions were:

- How often do coworkers or bosses at your current job speak to you in Spanish? Do you always understand everything they say to you? If not, what sorts of comprehension difficulties arise for you? What about your previous job(s)?
- How often do customers or clients at your current job speak to you in Spanish? Do you always understand everything they say to you? If not, what sorts of comprehension difficulties arise for you? What about your previous job(s)?
- How often do you actively speak Spanish in addressing or responding to co-workers or bosses at your current job? Are you always able to express in Spanish everything that you'd like to express to them? If not, what sorts of linguistic difficulties arise for you? What about your previous job(s)?
- How often do you actively speak Spanish in addressing or responding to customers or clients at your current job? Are you always able to express in Spanish everything that you'd like to express to them? If not, what sorts of linguistic difficulties arise for you? What about your previous job(s)?
- How much of an influence or impact did your workplace experience(s) have on your knowledge and use of Spanish? Would you say that the need to speak Spanish at work changed the way you view or use the language? If so, in what ways?
- Do you think that Spanish will remain in your workplace or professional future? Why/why not?
- How important would you say bilingual abilities are in your own workplace setting? In Miami in general?

I chose the following five individuals for the present purposes because they represented a range of ages and bilingual experiences, across different types of workplace environments.[4] One of the participants (Alex) had been a personal acquaintance for several years; knowing that I am a professor of Spanish, he had personally expressed to me on various occasions his concerns about his bilingual capacity at work. Alex placed me in touch with his co-worker Elena (Section 4.1), whom he credited with mentoring and helping him linguistically at work. Another of my personal acquaintances suggested that I interview Felipe (Section 4.2) for this study, because he felt that Felipe had excelled in his career precisely because of his bilingual abilities. Cristina (Section 4.3) was the manager of a coffee shop that I frequented, so I had established a casual acquaintanceship with her through personal interactions in her workplace over the previous two years and had informally observed her using both languages with customers and co-workers. Diego (Section 4.4) was a friend of Alex; I chose to include him in this study because, as we will see, his experiences and views regarding Spanish use at work were rather different than those of other participants.

4 All names are pseudonyms.

I took an entirely qualitative approach to the questions posed for this study. Thematic analysis of the interviews followed an iterative process, as described by Knott et al. (2022). I turn now to the principal themes that emerged in each of the interviews and offer some personal background information for each one of the participants.

4.1 Alex and Elena: asset value

Born and raised in Miami by his Nicaraguan mother and Cuban father, 27-year-old Alex had always spoken Spanish at home. Because he was an only child and his parents knew little English, Spanish was the sole language of his home environment. Like almost all second-generation Spanish speakers in Miami, however, English quickly became his dominant language during elementary school. He characterized his middle-school years as bilingual and affirmed that by the time he reached high school, he spoke mostly English with his friends: "it was obvious that my Spanish got worse over the years". Despite the fact that nearly everyone who attended his high school in Hialeah spoke Spanish,[5] Alex explained that the use of English served to mark an important sociocultural divide between recently arrived immigrants, whom local teenagers sometimes call 'refs' (short for 'refugees') and those whose families had been in Miami longer:

> The refs were ESOL kids.[6] They were maybe bullied sometimes and kind of looked down upon. They were definitely isolated in their own groups […]. For the most part, people didn't cross lines. Of course, it wasn't really because we couldn't communicate with them. Like 90% of us spoke Spanish well, and we'd talk to them sometimes, so it was more of a cultural thing – the way they dressed and the way they acted […]. They just didn't act like the rest of us. We all spoke English – or mostly English to each other, and they always spoke Spanish to each other. Some of them really struggled with English, others just didn't really try, I think, and so we looked down on them. It wasn't because of their race or where they were from or anything like that, I mean, we were all Cuban or Nicaraguan or Colombian or whatever. They came from the same place we did. We're all Hispanic and we all speak Spanish. But they don't really speak English. Now, when they'd learn English after a couple of years or whatever – most of them, then they'd transition into being more like everybody else, like normal. (Lynch 2022: 139)

Asked about the use of Spanish beyond the school setting, however, Alex commented that Spanish was very much a normal part of his life. His observations confirm the particularity of the educational domain versus other spheres of daily life in Miami:

5 Hialeah, an independent city located within the Miami metropolitan area, is the contemporary bastion of Cuban immigration. Spanish is spoken in more than 9 out of 10 households there (see Table 1).

6 ESOL refers to English for Speakers of Other Languages, which are separate classrooms designed for students who are in the process of acquiring English.

school is really the only context in which Spanish is unabashedly marginalized. Despite these reported social divisions along lines of language choice at school, the vast majority of Miami high school students whom I surveyed in a previous study agreed with the statements that "Spanish is necessary to be truly successful in Miami" and "Spanish is necessary for a good job in Miami" (Lynch 2022: 134). Indeed, Alex affirmed that although teenagers might perceive Spanish as a liability of sorts at school, young adults in Miami recognize that bilingual ability is an asset for most jobs in the city. In his current job as a telephone sales representative for a real estate company that assists potential buyers with locating agents and navigating the loan process, he reported using Spanish frequently. Although his hourly wage was the same as that of some co-workers who only spoke English with customers, he emphatically affirmed that his bilingual ability had given him an advantage:

> It really has put me ahead of the curve in terms of sales, just because I can take more calls and convince more people to pursue their goal to buy a property. And, you know, I get a commission on each one of those, so it's just sheer volume. If it's a call from someone who doesn't speak English, that's a customer I would just lose if I didn't speak Spanish. The fact that I'm able to do calls in Spanish has made me more valuable to the company.[7]

Because the company Alex worked for did not have a separate line for calls in Spanish, he always began with a standard greeting in English. He explained how some calls would then turn into Spanish-language interactions:

> If I hear an accent or notice a struggle to speak, I'll switch into Spanish. And I'd say that like 90% of the time they're thankful for that. I notice sometimes they kind of warm up when I switch to Spanish. Their personality comes out. And there are times when I switch to Spanish and they say they appreciate it, but then they tell me they would prefer to continue in English because they want to practice. That's not usually the case, though. Other customers will just go back and forth once they know I'm bilingual.[8]

Alex explained that his company had no policy regarding language use nor any formal guideline about switching to Spanish – or back to English – with customers:

> We just go with the flow and play it by ear. We have a script for the calls but it's only in English, so for Spanish we're just translating it in our own way. The English calls are more uniform than

7 Like Alex, many participants of Porras et al.'s (2014) survey study in California considered that their multilingual abilities had brought them real advantages at work, even though they did not earn a higher wage. A Los Angeles bank manager in their study remarked that: "I am not paid more for being multilingual, but as a banker, I make more money than the monolinguals because I have more clients that come to me and have faith in me. They want to invest their money with me".

8 Heller (2010: 375–376) highlights the 'wordforce' constituted by call centers in the global new economy. She observes that in the service of meeting consumer expectations, a sort of contradiction or tension arises between Taylorist standardizing practices and local flexibility in language use.

> the Spanish calls precisely because of that. When I started at this company I didn't know much about real estate or loans in Spanish – the terminology, I mean. There are words that as a Spanish speaker in Miami I would never use, like the word for realtor in Spanish. Before this job, I just said [*reálto*], and I know that's Spanglish. So, I've learned all kinds of vocabulary, like *red de referencias* or *hipotecario*. The improvement has been specific to my industry, but it's improvement nonetheless, and the practice means my fluency has improved, just because I'm speaking it more frequently now. Because of work, a greater percentage of my day is spent speaking Spanish.

Alex explained that one of his co-workers, whose desk is located directly beside his, had been instrumental to his linguistic improvement: "I'd be on a call and my co-worker would hear me trip up on words or say something wrong, and she'd just come whisper a word in my ear or turn and correct me. Her Spanish is much better than mine, and she's been super helpful".

That co-worker, Elena, is also a second-generation speaker of Spanish of Cuban background. Born and raised in New York City, Elena's childhood experience with bilingualism was asymmetrical, i.e. her mother and grandmother spoke to her in Spanish and she spoke to them in English. Despite her ability to understand Spanish, she only spoke English until age 13. When she began to study Spanish in middle and high school, she started speaking the language more and then continued taking Spanish courses in college. She told me that, as a young adult, she realized she was "good at Spanish" and began to write poetry in Spanish (cf. Callahan 2010). As an elementary school teacher in New York City for seven years, she taught ESOL students. Afterwards, she moved to Miami and entered the real estate business; she had been a realtor for more than 30 years. Now in her sixties, Elena's greater proficiency in Spanish in comparison with Alex – as he affirmed above – could thus be attributed to the many years that she had spent working in Miami. After all, Alex had always spoken Spanish growing up, and did not learn English until he entered elementary school; Elena had not begun to speak Spanish actively until her teenage years. Elena stated that her son had followed a similar trajectory, having spoken mostly English until after high school, when he joined the police force. She observed: "As an officer, he pretty much had to start speaking it more, and now that he's a lieutenant, it means he's better at his job. It obviously gives him more credibility and authority because we live in a bilingual city".

Like Alex, Elena asserted without hesitation that her ability to speak Spanish had benefitted her economically. She estimated using Spanish with 70–80% of her clients as a part-time realtor, which occupied her time beyond the hours at the company where she worked with Alex. Unlike Alex, she stated that she did not have any difficulties expressing herself in Spanish for workplace purposes, given her lifelong experience in the real estate and home sales industry in Miami. She remarked that because Spanish-speaking customers "require more handholding than English-

speaking ones" as they navigate the market and the process of buying a home in the U.S., she had gone about developing a stylistically careful and discursively extensive linguistic repertoire specific to the job in Spanish: "Spanish was always necessary for my work in South Florida. Not just being able to speak it but speak it well, and also read and write it. That's been a huge asset to my career".

These two second-generation speakers thus evidence the outcome of Spanish language socialization in the workplace in their relationship to each other, with Alex as newcomer and Elena as old-timer in Lave and Wenger's (1991) terms. Because of the relationship that had developed between them on sociolinguistic grounds, despite their nearly forty-year age difference, they had become friends. "We almost always speak to each other in English, though", Alex said, "unless it's something about work or about some customer. Then we'll speak Spanish".

4.2 Felipe: all about anatomy

Different than Alex and Elena, Felipe did not speak much Spanish with his parents. Because Felipe's mother was born in New Jersey to Cuban immigrant parents and his father had arrived in Miami from Cuba at the age of 2, the predominant language at home with them was English; Spanish input came principally through his grandparents. His parents were nonetheless adamant about his learning the language:

> My parents tried with us. They really did. They even tried this odd thing where they forced us to speak in Spanish, but it didn't stick. And it was actually because my grades in Spanish class were really bad. The only 'D' that I've ever received on a report card in my life was in Spanish.[9] And my dad was furious about it – furious to the point that I came back with a B+ the following semester. That was kind of the turning point for me in understanding the importance of Spanish.

Felipe continued studying Spanish through high school but stated that he never spoke it with friends for the same reason that Alex explained:

> Anybody who was primarily a Spanish speaker or was struggling with English, we'd call them 'refs' or we'd say that they 'just got off the boat' […] so that was definitely a point of divide among people, for sure. And you did not want to be referred to as a 'ref' […]. That was the sentiment in high school about being a Spanish speaker.[10]

9 In the US school system, grades are assigned on a scale of 'A' (excellent) to 'F' (failing); a grade of 'D' (below average) is the lowest possible passing grade for a course.

10 In Chicago, Rosa (2019: 87) documented a similar phenomenon among Mexican and Puerto Rican high school students. Puerto Rican U.S. mainlanders sometimes referred to more recent arrivals from the island as *jíbaro/as*, regardless of gender or skin tone; U.S.-based Mexicans sometimes called recently arrived Mexicans *brazers* if they appeared unsuccessful in their attempt at cultural assimilation, e.g. form of dress. Rosa noted that these students were "uncool" from the perspective of young people who asserted "cool" U.S.-based Mexican identities on the south side of Chicago.

It was not until his college years as a theater major that he began to perceive the benefit of being bilingual. Afterwards, when he took an acting job with a regional theater company in the U.S. Midwest, his bilingual ability seemed to bring him more roles during a time when, according to him, there was a push for Hispanic diversity in the industry, referring to the 2000s:

> It was the first time in my life that I felt the minority thing, not being in Miami, but it was kind of empowering. Spanish was definitely a plus […]. I think that was kind of the point when I started to lean into that part of myself with a greater understanding of how all my experiences with the Spanish language had led me there.

This perceived advantage of speaking Spanish was heightened after Felipe returned to Miami and began to work as a personal fitness trainer. Now at age 36, Felipe reflected upon the impetus for developing stronger Spanish language skills at that time, in his 20s: "In Miami, it's like anybody can do it [i.e. speak Spanish], and I also think it's the only place in the United States where you can kind of demand to speak only Spanish. That served me a great deal when I became a personal trainer, because there were a lot of clients who wanted sessions in Spanish. What set me apart when I first started was that I was the cheapest trainer, but I was also one of the few that could speak about anatomy in fluent Spanish". Just as Alex described how he had developed a fluent repertoire of speaking about real estate and the financial lending process in Spanish, Felipe explained that he cultivated a full inventory of anatomical vocabulary in the language, in addition to pragmatic-discourse skills relative to command forms and bodily movements. With a morning block of training sessions all in Spanish during his first three years working at an upscale fitness center in Coral Gables – one of the wealthiest areas of Miami (see Table 1), Felipe's linguistic finesse proved to be lucrative: "That was like a hundred sessions per month, all done in Spanish, in addition to another hundred or so that I did in English, so that ended up putting me among the top trainers in the company […]. I recognize that being bilingual allowed me to find a niche in a new career and, financially, turn my life around in those three years […]. I went from 'I don't want to be a ref' when I was in high school to 'no, I speak it, I own it, and it makes me money' a few years later".

Starting out as a personal fitness trainer in his mid 20s, Felipe committed himself to learning about anatomy in Spanish, because he wanted to sound more professional with his clients:

> I needed to appear like I knew what I was talking about, so for example, you have "hamstring." Hmmm, I'm not gonna say [*xanstríŋ*], and I'm sure as hell not gonna say *hilo de jamón*. So, I literally started looking up all this vocabulary and memorizing: it's *músculo isquiotibial*.

> I thought, these people are paying $140 per session, and I need to knock those Spanish sessions out of the park […]. I got really good at names of muscles, but I was not so great at joints. I knew *hombro* and *codo* and *rodilla*, but then I might not remember *muñeca* or *tobillo* or something like that, so I would just ask the client, and I would learn the words from them. But the funny thing was that I had taught myself all those terms for muscles in Spanish that even they didn't know. I would say *el músculo isquiotibial,* and they would say, *"¿el qué?"* [the what?] So, I would show them a diagram and teach them those words, and they were impressed that I knew all that.

Felipe explained that he was mostly unable to rely on fellow trainers in linguistic terms because of the face-to-face nature of the work and the fact that there was usually substantial background noise in the facility (i.e. weights, music, people talking), so he could not hear their dialogues with other clients nor could he easily ask them for help.

However, Felipe recounted learning a series of essential command forms and specialized discourse from a Colombian co-worker who was an expert in a mobility practice called "Animal Flow". That co-worker was the head trainer for Animal Flow throughout South America. Learning the language of the practice in Spanish, Felipe was surprised by the many Anglicisms that were considered normative from a monolingual South American perspective: "I've found it funny that they're using and understanding all these English words just with a Spanish accent. They don't call Animal Flow anything special. It's just like [*ánimalflo*] with a Spanish pronunciation, which to me is very funny, but I'm like okay, whatever, you guys made it up. I'm not gonna question it". Felipe's reaction echoes a tendency that I have previously documented among bilinguals in Miami: second- and third-generation English-dominant bilinguals deem English-origin loanwords as unacceptable or incorrect significantly more than their Spanish monolingual or near-monolingual counterparts (Lynch 2017, 2022) – a pattern already noted by Otheguy and García (1988) among Miami Cubans during the 1980s. This tendency is owed to the general appeal and social cachet of English-origin words in the speech of middle- and upper-class Latin Americans versus the social stigmatization of those same words in the speech of U.S. Latinx bilinguals (Lynch 2022). Felipe affirmed that he felt highly reluctant to borrow words from English in his training sessions and felt odd about having to say terms like [*ánimalflo*] in Spanish, even when his clients received them positively and used them also.

Moreover, Felipe pointed out what he regarded as a general cultural difference between his Spanish-speaking and English-speaking clients, which he characterized in terms of their motivations and desired outcomes. He remarked that discovering and understanding these two rather different cultural codes, in his terms, had helped him become a more effective trainer. He explained the codes as, on one hand, more

aesthetically oriented for Spanish speakers and, on the other hand, more physiologically oriented for English speakers: "I think Latin American culture in terms of the gym is far more concerned with the look and the body and the aesthetic aspect of things. When I'm working with English speakers, and I also mean like Hispanics from Miami, they're oftentimes more concerned like with their longevity, or dealing with shoulder pain or something like that. I feel like I have to take a more clinical approach with the English speakers than I do with the Spanish speakers". Felipe explained that this differential orientation affected his discursive delivery in the two languages. He recalled that, with one of his first Spanish-speaking clients, he realized how emphasizing the effect on her appearance would boost her motivation the most: "I remember I would say to her *Faja, faja para que no necesites faja* ('Fight, fight so you won't need a girdle'),[11] and that would really get her moving. She thought it was hilarious". Felipe affirmed that he typically did not say such playful things to English speakers, because he felt like they would be offended. "Although the English speakers are surely thinking those things, too, it's not what they want to hear from their trainer. You don't comment on their appearance", he said. "I feel like for people in Spanish, it's usually about not sounding so clinical and having a little more fun with the delivery, because they respond to that better".

4.3 Cristina: corporate culture

Cristina was born in Guatemala City to a Puerto Rican father and Spanish mother. When she was 5 years old, her father's work required that they move from Guatemala to Miami; from there, they moved to Puerto Rico when she was 7; a year later they went to Mexico City, and then returned to Guatemala City. When she was 16, the family returned to Florida, where she had lived ever since. Although she had lived in various Spanish-speaking countries – Guatemala being her favorite – and despite speaking only Spanish with her parents and older siblings, English had been the language of literacy and formal education for her because she had always attended American schools everywhere she had lived. She regarded English as her dominant language, not only in terms of control but also frequency of use; she explained that she typically "processed things" in English. Cristina characterized her mother as "the enforcer of proper Spanish" as she grew up: "I've always translated things from English in my head because I think in English. When I would say them in Spanish, my mom would correct me".

11 The verb *fajar* is often used in colloquial Cuban Spanish rather than the more general *pelear* ('*to fight*'), and in its command form is homonymous with the word for *girdle* (*faja*).

Cristina explained that although her comfort level in Spanish depended upon the topic at hand, she was always confident and articulate about work-related topics, because work was a realm of discourse that she had developed over the years. Now 38 years old, Cristina had been working for a multinational corporate chain of coffeeshops since her college years, when she took a part-time job as a barista. After earning a Bachelor's degree in Architecture, she continued in that job while she worked to establish herself as an interior designer. Although steady work in her chosen field proved hard to find, work at the coffeeshop chain presented ongoing pay raises and promotions: she was soon asked to be a shift supervisor, then later an assistant manager, then store manager, and finally a district manager for the company. She ultimately gave up on trying to make a living as an interior designer in Miami's highly competitive market when she realized, a few years later, that her salary and benefits as a manager at the coffeeshop were more than what most firms were offering.

Having worked for the company at various stores throughout Miami, some of them in predominantly Spanish-speaking areas, she had acquired what she considered to be a multi-dialectal repertoire in Spanish for all things related to her workplace. She remarked:

> Before leveraging it at work, my Spanish was limited to family interactions. Once I started working in stores where the customer base was more in Spanish than English, I had to hone my work-specific Spanish craft. Because we get customers from all over Latin America, I started learning a lot of vocabulary used in particular countries. So, like a straw: for Cubans, it's an *absorbente*; Argentines say *sorbete*; Mexicans say *popote*; in Guatemala, they say *pajilla* and of course in Spain, it's *pajita*. I wanted to make sure that whatever word I was using was the right word for them, meaning they would not only understand me but also not be potentially offended. If you want to have happy customers, you can't create a negative moment out of pure miscommunication. So, a lot of it was just figuring out different ways to speak about products in different dialects of my customer base.

Cristina explained that speaking about the products had proven more challenging – and more consequential for her Spanish language ability – than learning dialect differences. In a city with a vast Hispanic majority, half of whom are Cuban-origin, local coffee culture does not easily translate to the products of mainstream US corporate coffee culture, especially with names or terms that are specific to the company: "The names of drink sizes cause confusion, as do types of drinks. People will come in and order a *cortadito*, because they're used to getting the Cuban window coffee.[12] We don't have that, so we have to translate that into the most similar thing

12 Many restaurants and cafes across Miami feature walk-up coffee windows that cater to a local street culture of *cafecito* and conversation, especially in traditional Cuban areas such as Hialeah and Calle Ocho, e.g. the iconic Versailles restaurant.

we have. A *café con leche* in most Cuban restaurants is made with condensed milk, which is why it's so sweet. Again, we don't have that, so we have to describe for them the most similar thing we can make. It's figuring out how to accommodate their request and explain it to them in a way they'll understand and in a dialect of Spanish they speak". Because of Cristina's expertise, or craft as she called it, the company made her a trainer for marketing and sales teams sent from Latin America to Miami for product training. That aspect of her work drove acquisition of more formal registers of the language, according to her:

> That's the sort of conversational Spanish that was for me the hardest to keep going. I think that was the big moment for me with Spanish. I can have a conversation with anyone in my family just fine, but these are conversations where I have to talk technically and talk about materials. So, at first it was clunky, because I could carry on the conversation, but I didn't know many technical words or phrases for things in Spanish […]. Getting in front of groups of people, sometimes bigger groups of like fifty people, I had to be prepared to have that kind of conversation, which also involves written Spanish.

When asked if she thought that her Spanish language ability had benefitted her professionally, she emphasized that it had been a workplace asset, just as Alex and Felipe did. She remarked that, because of the pervasiveness of bilingualism in Miami, she sometimes had to remind herself of the value of Spanish:

> Because we live in Miami, Spanish just seems like a given, so we tend to forget that it's an asset. When I've looked for different positions within the company elsewhere in the U.S., sometimes I forget to even put language skills on my resume, just because pretty much everyone here speaks Spanish and English to some degree. A lot of mentors were looking at my resume and asking, "Why don't you put that?" But in my head that was just a given.

In light of the language skills that she had acquired in her job, Cristina commented that she considered the possibility of moving to Latin America: "If an opportunity in the company comes up in Guatemala, I'm there". In the meantime, her expertise continued to be tapped in Miami. Three weeks after her interview with me, she was charged with overseeing the opening of the company's first store with a walk-up coffee window, modeled on the local Latin American concept found across the city. Thus, viewed in terms of social trajectory, Cristina's experiences reflect the tension highlighted by Roberts (2010: 214) between corporate discourses or regimes, on one hand, and personal or creative dimensions of workplace language use on the other, i.e. "the gradual process of becoming a full participant in the workplace where there is not only one overarching community of practice but also multiple local communities depending on the particular sites of engagement that employees are subject to or contribute to creating".

4.4 Diego: not a necessity

Born and raised in Miami, 23-year-old Diego stated that he did not speak much Spanish until he moved in with his grandparents at the age of 11. Although he understood conversational Spanish as a small child, he did not begin to speak it actively until his teenage years while living with his grandparents. He affirmed that he felt very comfortable speaking Spanish with most people and emphasized the importance of Spanish in his everyday life in Miami. He studied Spanish in elementary school but later opted for other languages in middle and high school: "I was already dealing with Spanish at home, so I had the best practice you can get there. I felt tired of Spanish and wanted to learn something new". He chose to study Italian, inspired by the Italian origin of his Cuban family surname. Like Cristina and Felipe, he emphasized that "Spanish is just a given in Miami. Pretty much everyone speaks it". But unlike the previous individuals, Diego had not found himself in the position of speaking much Spanish in the workplace.

In his current job as a service technician for a large automobile dealership, he reported using very little Spanish. Although several of his co-workers were primarily Spanish speakers, he attributed the pattern of speaking mostly English with them to the fact that the industry-specific technical terms used at the facility were in English, and the manuals and online resources that everyone consulted for repairs were in English. According to Diego, then, although some of his co-workers spoke Spanish, he had no need to learn the terminology in Spanish nor speak to anyone in Spanish, especially since he never interacted with customers. In two of his previous jobs, he had spoken Spanish to some extent. As a delivery driver for a major U.S. shipping and receiving company, he often had to communicate with customers and co-workers in Spanish and, thus, found himself learning words with which he was unfamiliar: "Sometimes there were customers who didn't speak English, and there was one co-worker who pretty much didn't know any English, so the only way I could communicate with him was in Spanish. And sometimes he would use words that I didn't know – not technical or work-related words but just like in conversation". Diego also reported working for the U.S. Census in 2020, going door to door in areas of Miami where most people did not know much English. In that capacity, he learned some question-specific terminology but considered that he already knew the language used in the Census, e.g. household, income, residence, etc. "We had a script we would follow in English, but the questions were all simple, so it was easy for me to translate. I never needed to look words up or anything".

Diego nonetheless affirmed that he had difficulties speaking Spanish at times, even at home with his grandparents. "Ironically, one example was trying to describe a problem that I had with my truck. I know how to describe it perfectly in English but

translating it all to Spanish in a fluent way was difficult. It wasn't like the simple types of conversation that I usually have with them". Diego's comments about the importance of Spanish in Miami seemed rather disconnected from his own personal account of using it – and even attempting to use it – with people at work. Although he indicated having opportunities to speak it with coworkers, he rarely did so. "Diego is like really American", said Alex, who had been friends with Diego since they worked together on a local political campaign in Hialeah the previous year. The apparent contradiction between overtly positive attitudes toward Spanish on one hand, and not actively speaking the language despite opportunities to do so, on the other hand, is commonly attested among U.S. heritage speakers (Silva-Corvalán and Enrique-Arias 2017: 95–97). Data of my recent survey study of Miami Latinx high school students revealed that despite highly positive attitudes toward Spanish, English was by far the dominant language of interaction among siblings and peers, as well as in mass media consumption (Lynch 2022). Diego asserted that: "Spanish is one of the skills you need to have if you live in Miami. Knowing both languages is a key skill. It helps you get a job and communicate with so many people here who don't know English at all or just prefer to speak Spanish. If you want to speak only Spanish here, you can do it". At a later point in the interview, however, when asked if he might study Spanish formally in the future, he explained: "I already have a lot of access to Spanish. And I've seen the extent of the necessity of Spanish, and it's not enough to warrant any more studying. If something is that important, they're gonna have a translation for it or someone at work is gonna know. Everyone here knows both languages, so I just ask".

5 Synthesis and conclusion

Diego's case highlights the fact that although "Spanish is everywhere" in Miami, as he affirmed repeatedly in his interview with me, its importance and active use are always relative because, after all, English use is hegemonic in the U.S. For that reason, one must read the previous four cases (Alex, Elena, Felipe, and Cristina) from a relational perspective. Despite the uncontested value of Spanish in Miami and the demand to speak it in most workplace settings, conscious choice to do so remains with the individual. Alex could have chosen not to take calls from potential clients in Spanish; Elena could have offered her services as realtor only in English (as some local realtors indeed do); Felipe could have not taken on Spanish-speaking clients; and Cristina could have avoided using Spanish at work (as a few of her employees did). In this regard, I would argue that socialization in this particular domain of the lives of Miami heritage speakers is perhaps less about societal structure (i.e. the

demand for Spanish) and rather more about individual agency (i.e. the response to that demand).

Of course, an array of complex psychological and social factors determines agency in this regard (Moreno-Fernández 2017) and, even in Miami, societal discourse regarding the prestige of Spanish circulates parallel to anti-immigrant narratives and the stigmatization of not speaking English, especially in lower income sectors of the city (Lynch 2022). Even once one makes the conscious choice to speak Spanish actively in the workplace as Felipe did, there is the highly fraught matter of dialectal variation. Despite Miami's Caribbean-origin majority, speakers of Caribbean varieties bear the brunt of negative attitudes on sociolinguistic grounds (Carter and Callesano 2018; Sobrino Triana 2018; Zentella 2014), rather similar to the disenfranchised working-class Quebecois speakers described by Heller:

> Working-class speakers far from the sites of what counts as 'good' language, or prestigious performance, are placed at a disadvantage in situations where their linguistic performance is judged by members of categories other than their own; they have to do what they can with what they have, given the structural relations of inequality in which they find themselves (and this of course can include resistance as well as collaboration). (Heller 2008: 517)

For Alex, Elena, Felipe, and Cristina, the work-related benefits of their Spanish language skills were palpable, despite not being paid higher wages specifically because they were bilingual. But as Robinson-Cimpian (2014: 80) has noted, "quantifying the wage returns to bilingualism […] is difficult because it is nearly impossible to isolate the effect of bilingualism". All these personal accounts of adult heritage language socialization suggest that Spanish use in the U.S. workplace is a highly situated, localized discourse practice that depends largely on the individuals involved. Their stories reveal the importance of speaker agency and the evolving notion of "speakerness" in the contemporary era, especially in relation to minority languages (Pujolar and O'Rourke 2022). Their experiences manifest the potential of workplace environments to engender more positive orientations toward Spanish during adulthood, motivate heritage speakers to use the language more actively, and thus foster linguistic awareness and proficiency.

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