Mexican Immigrants’ Views on the Spanish Dialects in Mexico: A language attitudes study

Research Thesis

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by

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Introduction

Milroy and Milroy note that the US standard English is one that we view as unmarked and unaccented (1999, p. 151). Preston (1998) comments further on the standard American English (SAE) saying that it is not truly spoken anywhere in the US due to a lack of a precise definition. He goes on to say "It is doubtful, however, that non-linguists in the US believe that there is no region which is more (or less) standard than others" (p. 3). In my experience in the classroom, abroad, and with the Spanish speaking community in the US, it seems that the standard Spanish is viewed this way as well. The use and existence of a standard Mexican Spanish, while of much interest, is a question for a separate investigation. Rather, I will be looking at social meanings and attitudes tied to the dialects that native Mexican-Spanish speakers perceive.

Asif Agha (2005) defines enregisterment as “processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users” (p. 38). In other words, enregistered dialects are talked about, while speakers tend to not discuss dialects that are not enregistered. Enregistered dialects in the US include ‘Pittsburghese’ (Johnstone 2009) and Californian (Podesva 2011) to name a few.

So what dialects are enregistered for native Spanish speakers? And what do they think of the enregistered dialects that they have? This study specifically investigates the major dialect areas of Mexican Spanish according to the native speakers themselves and the attitudes towards those dialects. While the attitudes investigated are about the Spanish language spoken in Mexico, it is known that “attitudes toward language are often the reflection of attitudes toward members of various ethnic groups” (Fasold, 1984, p. 148). The current study was no exception as those
attitudes came out both as comments on language as well as explicit statements about different
ethnic and social groups. This was expected since the two are intertwined.

When Dennis Preston (1998) sought to find “Where the Worst English is Spoken” in the
United States, he was open about the fact that in order to answer his question the attitudes and
perceptions of the speech community must be taken into account. There is certainly value in
dialectology studies based on phonetics, morphology, lexicon, and the syntax of a language.
However, they can sometimes lack an important aspect of the cognitive reality present in non-
linguists’ minds found in perceptual dialectology (p. 298). Dialectology focuses on the diatopic
variation of the internal structure of a language, while sociolinguistics focuses on diachronic
variation according to class and communicative situations. Perceptual dialectology combines
these two through “an interpretive and interactional approach” (Iannàccaro & Dell’ Aquila 2001,
p. 266). Using this approach adds to our understanding of the linguistic landscape from the
perspective of those in it.

According to Pedro Martín Butragueño, the question of the Spanish dialectal zones in
Mexico has still not been resolved despite years of research on the subject (2009, p. 1). This
study seeks to help resolve this question from a language attitudes perspective. It is an important
question for the mere fact of pushing Mexican Spanish dialects to the forefront of conversation.
Linguists and non-linguists alike tend to gloss over Mexico as if it is one big speech community
with a shared “Mexican Spanish” dialect (Blanch 1999). This tendency is seen through the
authors’ treatment of ‘Mexican Spanish’ in both Neysa Luz Figueroa’s (2003) study on speakers’
attitudes toward ‘world Spanish’ varieties as well as Marion F. Freeman’s (1983) work on
Mexican youthful expressions. Past studies (Blanch 1999) and the findings here work to refute
that commonly-held notion.
Schiller et al. (1992) define a transnational community as one that lives on both sides of a nation-state border and maintains social, economic, political, and emotional ties that extend across that border, in this case between Mexico and the United States (p. 1). These ties help to maintain, shape, and/or reinforce the attitudes held by the speakers in this study. Awareness that the participants in the present study form part of a transnational community is key to understanding that the results are only a piece of the puzzle. It is not a complete view of the attitudes held by Mexican speakers, nor is the migrant population independent of the speech communities in Mexico. As we will see later, experiences on both sides of the border contribute to the perceptions and attitudes expressed by participants.

**Literature Review**

As mentioned previously, decades of data collection have been done on Mexico’s dialectology (Martín Butragueño 2009). Martín Butragueño gives us a history of Mexican dialectology, starting with the Linguistic Atlas of Mexico through current day. Some of the most noted work done on Mexican dialectology is that of Lope Blanch. Blanch’s work resulted in seventeen major dialect zones which were later reduced to ten. These ten zones are currently the most accepted in Mexican dialectology, but the subject is still very much under debate by the scholars.

There are currently no perceptual dialectology studies of Mexico in the literature. The only language attitudes studies done on Mexican Spanish have focused on specific communities. Included in these, Marcia Farr (2006) investigated the meaning of being ranchero in a Michoacán community living in Chicago. D. Letticia Galindo (1996) studied the language use and language attitudes of border women in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico and Laredo, Texas. She found that the
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major themes important to this speech community included correctness (high-prestige), code-switching (low-prestige), and colloquial varieties (lowest in status, highly stigmatized).

Margarita Hidalgo (1986) likewise did a study focusing on language on the US-Mexico border in her study on language contact, loyalty, and prejudice in Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas.

Hidalgo’s study, like Galindo’s, found that an urban variety is used as a standard proto-type with language contact being regarded as low-status. Claudia Parodi and Otto Santa Ana (1998) investigated language use and attitudes in the high and low-lands of a community in Michoacán. While there was no high/low distinction, they did find the speech community to be very strictly defined. Matus-Mendoza (2002) navigated farther inland with his study of variation between Mexican Spanish spoken in the migrant community in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania and its origin community in Moroleón, Mexico. In this circulatory migrating population, the English influence found in returning migrants’ Spanish was found to hold linguistic power and prestige.

Claudia Parodi and Otto Santa Ana (1997) take a typological approach to investigate language in Mexico based on the aspects of rural and standard Spanish. Other studies deal with Mexican Spanish within the US context, such as Flores (1975), which examined relationships between degree of acculturation of Mexican Americans and their attitudes toward varieties of language use. Yet another angle in language attitudes on Mexican Spanish compares it to other Spanish language varieties. Neysa Luz Figueroa (2003) looks at language attitudes of speakers of high and low-prestige varieties of Spanish toward ‘World Spanishes,’ in which Mexican Spanish is considered lower prestige than Castilian varieties of Spain.

**Historical Background**

The Spanish of central Mexico, according to the speakers interviewed, is seen as unmarked and the most prestigious in Mexico. There is a language ideology that any contact with
other languages makes the variety lower status. This may be in part due to the Comisión Para la Defensa del Idioma Español (Commission for the Defense of the Spanish Language), formed in 1981, which sought to ‘cleanse’ Mexican Spanish grammar of so-called errors as well as the rid its lexicon of English borrowings. The Committee’s objective was “[t]o defend the use of the Spanish language which is spoken and written in Mexico…mainly in the border areas and in regions of difficult cultural adaptation,” namely the US-Mexico border population extending into the US and the Amerindian-speaking indigenous population of Mexico (Baumgardner 2011, p. 5-6). Up until this point, the Spanish Academy and Mexican Academy had lost most of their influence, and even scholars expressed their lack of respect for them. This lack of respect resulted in the formation of the Committee (p. 4). While the Committee was disbanded the next year, it seemed to re-establish or reinforce language ideologies still seen today, including in the present study.

Methods

This survey is based on data collected from 21 Mexican-born respondents who immigrated to the US, all of whom reside in Columbus, Ohio. Participants included fifteen men and six women, ranging in age from 20-41 years old. Participants’ places of origin included Northern Mexico (n=2), Central Mexico (n=10), Mexico’s capital city (n=4), and Southern Mexico (n=5). Justification for grouping participants using these geographic labels will be given later. For future study into this topic, it would be desirable to have a wider variety of home areas as well as more balance in the genders. Levels of education included no formal education (n=1), some primary school (n=1), finished primary school (n=3), some high school (n=2), completed high school (n=8), technical school (n=1), some college (n=2) and college degree (n=3). While a
wider than expected range of education levels was reported, this may have been confounded by the context of the participants as migrants. All but one of the participants were employed in the food service industry despite their educational background. Further biographical information is available in Appendix 1. Figures 1 and 2 give respondents' pseudonyms correlated with their home area.

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed, with the exception of five participants who opted out of the recording in which case the interviewer took notes during the task. The interviews were then analyzed according to recurring themes and labels mentioned by speakers.

Figure 1: Map of participants’ home regions
The task presented to participants was as follows:

(1) Participants were presented with a brief paragraph (in Spanish) explaining the goal of the project to investigate the different dialects of Spanish in Mexico. The paragraph also stated that they would draw divisions of these dialects on a map of Mexico and then describe them. It was made known that the boundaries did not have to be exact and any other details they wished could be added to the map.

(2) Participants were then given a map of Mexico (containing state names and boundaries, seen in Appendix 2) and were instructed to draw in the boundaries where they believed the differing speech (in Spanish) is found in Mexico using any of four different colored markers. This technique is loosely based on that found in Preston, 1996. Interviews of those participants who agreed to it were recorded using a LogiTech webcam.
During or after drawing the boundaries, participants described the speech of the area they had marked. From the data collected, several reoccurring themes emerged. These themes will be discussed later. These themes apply to different, but often times overlapping, speech zones according to the participants.

Final maps were generated electronically using PowerPoint to outline the speech zones that participants gave. The shapes tool was utilized to mark the regions on a map of Mexico containing state lines only. Final maps were based on participants’ hand-drawn maps in combination with their interviews. Whichever of the two contained more detail for a given area was used in the final map. Areas grouped together by ≥50% of participants constituted a major dialect area. Areas grouped together by 45-49% of participants were marked as sub-regions.

Rather than explicitly asking participants to rate dialects on a pre-constructed scale such as in Preston (1998), the resulting themes arose naturally in the interviews. While scales and speaker ratings can be helpful and insightful, it was important that the values placed on language in the US not be imposed on the participants due to the fact that the culture and context being investigated are not native ones to me.

It should be noted that the quantitative analysis yielded areas whose borders were defined by governmental units, i.e. state boundaries. Normally in this type of task, participants roughly circle areas (cf Preston 1998, Bucholtz et al 2007) making the present results striking. As mentioned above, the maps did contain state names and boundaries. These were included since participants’ familiarity with the map before the task was unknown. This
technique has been used in previous perceptual dialectology studies. As Preston (1993) puts it: maps with boundaries should be used, otherwise “folk dialectology research is confounded with folk geography”.

**Participant Strategies in Map-Task**

Of the thirteen participants who marked their maps, five either traced state lines exactly (n=2) or nearly exactly (n=3). Those who roughly circled areas (n=3) verbally described a speech zone, often starting these statements with “Todo que es…” [All of…] followed by a list of state names. The states that may have appeared to be partially grouped with an area due to an inexact boundary marking were either named as being part of a neighboring speech area or were left out entirely due to the participant not knowing or remembering what the speech was like there. Examples of hand-drawn maps are given in Appendix 3. Areas not mentioned by participants or mentioned as unknown/forgotten were not included in the analysis. When a participant named a state as being a part of a speech area, their verbal description was used even if the map contrasted with it.

Apart from tracing state lines, there were other surprising map-marking techniques not commonly seen in the literature. Two participants chose to underline state names and differentiate the zones by color of underline only. One speaker used different symbols such as asterisks, check marks, and circles in each state to signify that its speech was the same as a state with a matching symbol. Of the three participants who used straight lines (through state boundaries), two of them gave verbal descriptions of speech
areas that were drastically different from those marked on their maps. One of these participants combined techniques of straight lines and a rough circle. Five participants chose not to mark the map at all and three marked only their home town or state. There were no correlations between not marking maps with home region, education, age, mobility, age at immigration, or years in the US. For the reasons given above the final electronic maps were created using both the paper map (if participants marked it) as well as participants’ verbal descriptions of the speech in Mexico. Figure 3 gives the major dialect areas perceived by speakers based on final maps. Figure 4 gives how often (in percentages) a state was assigned to its final, major region. States appear in more than one region only if they were evaluated as sub-regions. Two speakers’ maps were left out (Adriana and Rebeca from Oaxaca). Both reported that the Spanish spoken is uniform throughout all of Mexico.
Figure 3: Major Dialect Areas Perceived

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Assignment Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) North</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonora</td>
<td>54.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinaloa</td>
<td>78.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>73.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coahuila</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durango</td>
<td>57.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BajaCali</td>
<td>53.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BajaCalSur</td>
<td>53.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NuevoLeón</td>
<td>53.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamaulipas</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1a) BajaCali</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1b) Northeast</td>
<td>53.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NuevoLeón</td>
<td>46.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Central
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Assignment Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AguasCalientes</td>
<td>90.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colima</td>
<td>84.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanajuato</td>
<td>84.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>84.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td>84.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Querétaro</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SanLuisPotosí</td>
<td>81.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michoacán</td>
<td>68.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalisco</td>
<td>64.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puebla</td>
<td>56.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) Capital
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Assignment Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DF</td>
<td>64.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veracruz</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campeche</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yucatán</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiapas</td>
<td>92.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabasco</td>
<td>91.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>88.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrero</td>
<td>61.54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Assignment Frequency of States to Major Dialect Regions

Major Dialect Areas Perceived

As can be seen in the above chart and map, major dialect areas for participants were: 1) North, 2) Central, 3) Capital (aka Distrito Federal, hereafter DF), 4) Coast, and 5) South. For this reason, participants are grouped into Northern, Central, DF, and Southern speakers. Only three states (Campeche, Yucatán, Quintana Roo) were assigned to a region by 100% of participants who mentioned them. Other than these, some states were more agreed upon than others. For example, Sonora was placed in the North by 94% of participants who mentioned it, as opposed to Nuevo León, included with the North by 53% of participants, and as its own Northeast region by 46% of participants. Fifteen participants mentioned Nuevo León in the task, eight calling it North and seven calling it Northeast. So although it was classified as North a majority of the time, this majority was based on one participant’s map. Northeast and Baja California appear as subregions as a result of participants being basically split on their classifications.
Those participants who classified Northeast and Baja California as their own regions were generally more mobile or from the North. According to Mary Bucholtz, residents are aware of greater complexity and diversity than nonresidents (2007, p. 348). This observation is a reason for interviewing Mexican-born participants for this study, as well as a reason to suspect there are finer-grain details present than the ones seen here. Further research including more participants with a greater diversity and balance in home regions would show if the Northeast is a separate speech zone for other Mexican speakers, and if so depending on what factors.

Reoccurring Themes

As stated earlier, participants were not explicitly asked about any of the themes analyzed as salient in this study. One could ask Mexican speakers about correctness in Mexican Spanish, but how does one know that correctness matters to them in the same way it does to American English speakers, or even at all? Correctness was mentioned by only three of the nineteen participants (the two participants perceiving uniformity in Mexico were excluded from the analysis), and is therefore not included. Ten themes were brought up by more than one participant and of those, the four most salient were brought up by nine or more participants. Although 9/19 is less than a majority, as with the case of the regions, it is only one participant who made this difference. The other six themes were brought up by six (31%) or fewer participants and were excluded. Themes brought up by nine or more participants were therefore counted as salient and are discussed below.
(1) Language Contact

Language contact was by far the most mentioned phenomenon by participants in this task being brought up by fifteen participants. This concept was expressed in various ways, which will be discussed in detail below. Figure 5 shows comments on the language contact in Mexico correlated to the target area. Comments are color-coded according to the regional background of the participant who said them.

Figure 5: Language contact map

*Foreignness*

Southern and coastal areas of Mexico were often described as having a degree of foreignness to their speech by participants. Josué said that in the state of Chiapas the Spanish
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sounds closer to that of South America or El Salvador. Emilia also noted that Chiapas sounded ‘foreign’ but reported their Spanish to be “muy parecido a Guatemala” [very similar to Guatemala]. This same assessment was made by two central speakers, Guillermo and Javier. Areas given these descriptions sometimes overlapped with areas that were frequently described as speaking Spanish that sounded like it was from the Caribbean. An important difference however, was that when the Spanish was referred to as sounding ‘Guatemalan’, ‘South American,’ etc. the states were labeled as ‘southern’ and when they were ascribed Caribbean qualities they were called ‘coastal’. Jesús, a speaker from the southern state of Oaxaca, said “como los puertorriqueños, más o menos. Como caribeños. Así hablan todos desde Veracruz, Chiapas, Yucatán algunas partes, Campeche” [Like Puerto Ricans, more or less. Like people from the Caribbean. That’s how they all talk in Veracruz, Chiapas, Yucatan in some parts, Campeche]. Martín also said the states of Tabasco, Quintana Roo, Yucatán, and Campeche talk “costeño” [coastal] which he described as sounding like Spanish spoken by people from the Caribbean. Talking about people from Veracruz and Guerrero, Diego said “hanlan como gente de Puerto Rico, como de la costa” [they talk like people from Puerto Rico, like from the coast].

Of the seven participants who described speech areas as ‘coastal,’ three of them equated coastal to Caribbean-like qualities. Comparisons were never made between Caribbean varieties and regions not described as coastal. No blatantly negative views were shared about these ‘other-sounding’ Spanish varieties, and there very well may not be any to share. The speakers may not have anything against the Spanish or people from the Caribbean, but they are ascribing an ‘other-like’ quality to a variety found in Mexico. While this evaluation may not be negative, it is saying that the dialect being discussed is not the ideal Mexican Spanish. Despite the fact that these speech zones are located
in Mexico, they are given labels as sounding like some variety that is not Mexican. A participant never described his/her home area as sounding in any way foreign. The Oaxacan speaker mentioned above, Jesús, is from a state that is said to sound like Guatemala yet he focuses his attention on those that sound like the Caribbean. These descriptions along with many to follow fit into a language ideology contrasting ‘pure, Mexican Spanish’ from other varieties. Margarita Hidalgo (1986) also found this to be true of her participants who were loyal to and desired to maintain “Mexican Spanish’ as it is presumably utilized in the interior” (p. 206).

**Indigenous influence**

As linguists, we use the term dialect to mean variation within a language which is tied to different factors such as geographic region, social class, etc. (Stockwell 2002, p. 5). Participants in this study used this term to describe indigenous languages, which were typically viewed as inferior to a ‘standard’ language such as Spanish. When many of the participants began to talk about languages that were not Spanish, it was thought to be a misunderstanding of the task and a confusion of terminology between the linguists’ and non-linguists’ usage. It very soon became apparent, however, that when talking about the views of Spanish in Mexico speakers very seldom describe it without mentioning these indigenous languages. The presence of what they often refer to as ‘dialectos’ [dialects], or sometimes ‘lenguas indígenas’ [indigenous languages] when asked for clarification, are integral to the views of a given region’s Spanish.

Several participants from central Mexico gave lexical examples as differences in Spanish due to the presence of indigenous languages or indigenous peoples in Southern states. The two central speakers, Javier and Selvin, were the only central participants to state that there were indigenous languages in their home regions. Javier believes that the Spanish is still the same, just
some words are different. Selvin shared that in the southern state of Yucatán they talk ‘chistoso’ [funny] due to the presence of an indigenous language. When asked if there were indigenous languages in his home area, he admitted that there were but stated that there they are very outdated or isolated (“muy retirado, pues”) and they’re nothing more than a dialect (“nada más un dialecto”).

The state of Oaxaca received the most comments on its indigenous languages, and according to Oaxaca native Manuel, it is the state with the most languages. Martín explicitly stated that Oaxaca’s Spanish is very different due to the indigenous populations, but did not wish to describe their Spanish because he did not want to upset Oaxacan co-worker Rebeca in case she ever found out what he had said. For Valentina, it is much easier for Oaxacans to learn English due to their knowledge of more than one language. This is a view we may not get on the other side of the border, but it was unclear how she felt about the Spanish in Oaxaca.

Manuel was the only participant who actually spoke an indigenous language, Zapotec. He admitted that he is unable to understand several of the other languages in Oaxaca such as Mixe and Chinanteca, which he described as sounding like Korean. When he is here in the US and meets a fellow Oaxacan, the first question he always asks them is if they speak another language. If they also speak Zapotec, they converse in that. Other Mexicans are confused and usually react with “What are you speaking?!”. While it wasn’t explicitly stated, Manuel seems to sense that others (non-Oaxacans, non-Zapotec speakers) are off-put by the use of his indigenous language. He felt the need to explain that they too in Oaxaca are civilized, but they don’t lose their culture. Oaxaca won’t allow them to lose their culture. Those who don’t speak Zapotec see it as indexing uncivilized. What the non-Zapotec speakers in Manuel’s experience fail to see is
the parallels between their mistreatment and misconceptions of Zapotec and US residents’ mistreatment and misconceptions of Spanish (cf Millard & Chapa 2004).

**English influence**

A criticism of English influenced Spanish around the border was found by Margarita Hidalgo (1986) in her study of the Juarez and El Paso communities. These two cities once formed one city, Paso del Norte, until they were separated by the Mexican-American War (1846-48) (p. 194). Today, there are at least three distinct dialects for those that live in Juarez: that spoken in El Paso where they lack the vocabulary in Spanish to say what they want and constantly have to come back to English (p. 208), the Juarenses themselves who want to uphold "Mexican Spanish" but recognize that Anglicisms creep into their daily speech, and the perceived speech of the interior which is a pure, Mexican Spanish (p. 206).

The northern states, particularly those along the US-Mexico border, regularly received comments about their heavy influence from the United States and English. Around the border they use "palabras raras" [strange words], "palabras que no tienen sentido" [words that don't make sense], and "palabras que no reconocen en otras partes" [words that aren't recognized in other parts]. For one of the northern speakers, María, Spanglish spoken in the Tijuana, Baja California area was explicitly called 'incorrecto' [incorrect]. She went on to say:

> Para ellos es normal agarrar una frase, por ejemplo en inglés y así literalmente traducirla al español y para ellos es la manera correcta decir, pero es incorrecta en español [For them it's normal to take a phrase, for example in English and literally translate it into Spanish and for them it's the correct way to say it, but it's incorrect in Spanish].

Another Northern speaker, Josué, admits that the border area uses "strange words" such as 'soda' from English instead of the Spanish *refresco* and the verb 'pichar' (from English 'to
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pitch’) rather than the Spanish *invitar* (“to invite”). A central speaker, Javier, attributed this feature to Chicanos only, or those born in the US of Mexican descent.

Los chicanos ya hablan diferente que nosotros, muchas palabras….pues ya mezclan inglés con español. Muchas palabras que están mezcladas. La mitad en inglés y la mitad en español. Cuando van para México, no les gusta que habla así [Chicanos talk differently than us, a lot of words….Well, they mix English with Spanish. A lot of words that are mixed. Half in English, half in Spanish. When they go to Mexico, they don’t like them talking that way].

Hidalgo (1986) found that code-switching varieties were seen negatively even by both those who do it. Code-switching is seen as a lack of competence in Spanish resulting in speakers having to ‘resort back to English.’ She posits that there appears to be "a subjective need for ethnic identity assertion" (p. 207) thus resulting in code switching and Spanglish varieties as low-status (p. 208).

(2) Urban/Rural

The second most occurring theme was that of an urban vs. rural dichotomy mentioned by fourteen participants. The term dichotomy is used because participants described these categories as black and white (from their individual point of view). They form two distinct groups in speakers’ minds. As with any issue of identity, answers/perceptions vary depending on whom you ask.

*Ranchero*

Many descriptions of rural speech used the word *ranchero* [‘rancher’, ‘farmer’]. As noted by Marcia Farr (2006), ranchero is a polyvalent term with both positive and negative connotations. In urban Mexico, it is the equivalent to the English term ‘hillbilly’ and indexes backwardness,
lack of modernity, and being uncouth, uncultured, and uneducated. Urban mothers in Mexico will even scold their daughters by saying ‘No seas ranchera!’ to tell them not to be so backward or lacking in social skills. At the same time however, there has been a tradition in Mexico to valorize all that is ranchero as “the real Mexican” and male identity (p. 7). This term was used to describe the Spanish of the southern state of Guerrero, western-central states of Jalisco and Michoacán, and even encompassed all northern states by several participants. Rather than always falling in one specific area, the distinction seems to be made between areas that are urbanized and those that are rural. For speakers in this study however, the term extended to entire state(s) deemed ‘urban’ or ‘rural’.

The surprising result was that speakers tended to generalize whole states as either speaking ‘ranchero’ or ‘de la ciudad’ [of the city]. For Ricardo, central Mexico was broken into the western half which speaks ‘ranchero,’ and the eastern half, which includes his home region, where they speak more ‘city’. When asked to describe the differences in how they sound, he said ranchero is “más agudo, el ruido o el sonido” [a sharper sound or noise] while the city Spanish is “suave” [smooth/pleasant]. As Salas Carreño points out, the conceptualization of this rural/urban divide denies the modernity of rural inhabitants. Participants categorized by others as living in rural areas were aware of being denied this modernity. This is seen in María’s response to those who categorize the north as rural:

Aquí en Nuevo León, en Monterrey, es una de las ciudades más grandes de México con más industria, con más tecnología, muchas avances. Chihuahua es pura industria. Todas las compañías americanas vienen y tienen sus industrias aquí [Here in Nuevo León, in Monterrey, it’s one of the Mexico’s biggest cities with more industry, more technology, a lot of advances. Chihuahua is pure industry. All of the American companies come and have their industries here].
Figure 6: Comments on areas perceived as ‘ranchero’ or ‘city’

Figure 7: Perceived ‘rancho’ and ‘urban’ areas of speech
Norteño

A second term used to indicate ruralness specifically in the northern states was *norteño* [lit. northern]. While by its dictionary definition, the term indexes nothing about the speech other than its geographic location, it became apparent through the interviews that the meaning was deeper than this. Josué stated that his home state of Nuevo León, along with neighboring states Coahuila and Tamaulipas speak “más norteño” [more norteño/northern] than the other states in the north. Interestingly, these states are geographically further south than the other states in the North. “Ellos hablan más norteño. Como los de Nashville” [They speak more norteño. Like people from Nashville]. Enrique also said that Tamaulipas and Nuevo León speak a “norteño regio” [strong norteño] as compared to other northern states he labeled as norteño. He described the strong norteño as similar to speech in Texas.

Just as findings about ranchero dress in Farr (2006), norteños were described as wearing ‘botas,’ ‘botas vaqueras’ and ‘sombreros’ [boots, cowboy boots and cowboy hats]. While he didn’t specifically use the word norteño, Umberto, a participant highly fluent in English, said that the north has more ranches and farms, and for this reason people in the north have an accent that we here would call ‘hillbilly’. From these responses it can be concluded that for Mexican speakers (at least those in this study), norteño is a less stigmatized, more geographically specific way of saying ranchero.

Both of these terms can be used as a positive part of one’s identity, but outsiders would most likely see it as a negative characteristic. Both norteño and ranchero index a sense of ruralness. María from the Northern state of Sonora commented on the perceptions found in Central Mexico of rural and urban:

La gente del estado de México, ellos sienten que son los ‘citadinos’, los de la ciudad, de la metrópoli, la gente con educación. Y todos afuera del estado de México, ellos piensan que somos de provincia, los de los pueblos, la gente que vive en el valle, que hace la agricultura.
No todos nos dedicamos a la agricultura, a la ganadería aunque no estemos en el centro del país [the people from Mexico state, they feel like they’re the ‘city folk’, from the city, from the metropolis, the educated people. And they think everyone outside of Mexico State, that we’re from the country, the villages, the people that live in the valley, that farm. Not all of us dedicate ourselves to agriculture or livestock farming even if we don’t live in the central part of the country].

Almost as if it were in response to her statement, Timoteo had the following to say about non-DF natives: “Todo el resto es provincia” [All the rest is country]. All indigenous groups and those non-indigenous groups not living in an urbanized area are seen as rural. Due to this, we see overlap in regions labeled as ‘ranchero’ and ‘indigenous’. For some speakers they are separate categories, and for others it’s all lumped into one. The tension due to the urban/rural divide for Mexican Spanish speakers is obvious.

(3) Chilango

Another term that is highly salient for Mexican speakers is chilango. According to the Royal Spanish Academy's dictionary chilango is a colloquial word for one from the state of Mexico or something/someone that pertains to the capital city, Distrito Federal (DF). While this word was most attributed to the speech of the capital city, it was also extended to various states surrounding DF and Mexico. Figure 8 illustrates participants’ perceptions of chilango speech. Each dot represents a speaker marked at the home region with an arrow to the corresponding region that he/she said speaks ‘chilango.’ Generally, the closer one lives to the capital, the narrower his/her concept of chilango becomes. As seen in the map, 4/5 Central speakers and the one southern speaker who mentioned chilango consider only the city of DF to have chilango speech (red/green area seen in the inset representing governmental border of DF). The two
speakers from DF even went further to say that the ‘real’ chilangos are those in the central part of DF, where they’re from (blue area seen in inset).

Timoteo self-identifies as a chilango and does not view this term as offensive, but he is aware that others use it offensively and aren’t fond of what they associate with chilango.

Muchos llegan a DF, en las orillas. Roban y quitan lo que tienen. Ellos se van. No llegan a la ciudad de México, llegan a las orillas, de los lados. Y dicen que ‘chilangos’ son robateros, pero no somos [Many people arrive in DF, to the outer-edges. People rob them and take what they have. Then they leave. They don’t get to Mexico City, they get to the out-skirts, the edges. And they say that ‘chilangos’ are robbers, but we’re not].

Those who self-identify as chilango take pride in this. Not all outsiders are aware that its use is accepted within the group. María said that those that are referred to as chilango don’t use the term because “[e]llos piensan que es ofensivo” [they think it’s offensive]. Timoteo went on to say that in Michoacán they almost talk the same as in DF because they wish that they talked like them. Alberto, from Michoacán, said “Ellos no saben como hablar” [They don’t know how to talk]. Another Michoacán speaker, Martín, described chilango speech as “bien naco, como los mollos de aquí” [really trashy, like the niggers here]. Both Alberto and Javier agreed that while many people think chilango means someone from DF, it’s really someone who moved to DF. DF is “a mix of everything, the whole race.” Those who reported DF as their home region hold the concept of chilango as part of their identity. Non-DF residents who talked about chilango typically didn’t respect this concept and challenged this identity as being based on a misconception.

Chilango can be indexed through DF-residents’ special lexicon and heavy use of slang and profanity. Likewise, speakers may (whether consciously or not) index not being chilango through their speech. Enrique said that he’s always told he doesn’t sound chilango. No one knows he is from DF until he tells them. They say he sounds like he is from Jalisco, which as
Figure 8: Perceived areas of chilango speech

far as this study can conclude is a fairly unmarked accent in Mexico. He does not find the term chilango offensive, and it is unclear whether he purposely indexes being not-chilango. His ties to it as an identity are weaker than other DF speakers, perhaps due to his high mobility (only participant to have lived in a country other than Mexico and the US) and higher education (only participant with a degree currently using it). We see the opposite phenomenon occur in Selvin. Below is his report of what others from Michoacán say about his speech:

Ellos dicen que yo soy chilango. Pero no soy chilango yo. Que yo hablo así. Sí, dicen pero no. Yo soy de Michoacán [They say that I’m chilango. But I’m not chilango. They say I talk like one. Yeah, that’s what they say but it’s not true. I’m from Michoacán].
Selvin clearly doesn’t want to index belonging to this group, because he feels he is part of another group: Michoacanos. However, the Michoacanos don’t accept him as talking like they do. It was unclear why Selvin would have been perceived as chilango, since he had never lived in/near the capital and didn’t report many friends from DF. This could be a different interpretation by speakers of the rural/urban divide since Selvin said the difference was that others in Michoacán face a different problem: being viewed as ‘ranchero’.

(4) Slang and Profanity

Throughout the interviews, slang and profanity came up frequently and it proved difficult to tease the two categories apart. Some speakers told me certain areas use more ‘slang’ than others and went on to list slang terms including words that others explicitly labeled as profane. For some speakers, the two are different, and for others they overlap. Both are important in shaping language attitudes for Mexican speakers. The specific speech areas to which they are tied are discussed below.

In DF

The capital city was by far the speech area reported to have the most slang and/or profanity. Of the nine speakers who mentioned slang and/or profanity, eight discussed its heavy use in DF. Diego describes the language of his home area as “el lenguaje más específico o más agresivo, tiene palabras más altisonantes, más groserías” [the most specific or aggressive language, it has more rude words, more vulgarities]. An example he provided was the word ‘wey’ which is used informally to mean 'dude' or 'man' but is suspected to originally come from buey [ox]. Diego said in the North or South of Mexico, they find this term offensive. Another common phrase in DF is ‘chinga tu madre’ [fuck your mother].
Para mí, es como si fuera un saludo, pero existe un respeto. No van a decirlo en frente de la madre, pero si estás solo o con amigos, sí es un saludo” [For me it’s as if it were a greeting, but there’s a respect that exists. No one will say it in front of your mother, but if you’re alone or with friends, then yeah it’s a greeting].

Robert W. Tierney (1979) reported similar usage of aggressive language in DF. It is the only place where he’s heard someone say “‘Le mando a él una calurosa, afectuosa y fuerte chinga a su madre de mi parte’ (Please send him from me a warm, loving, vigorous fuck your mother)” (p. 278).

In order to understand and be intellectually stimulated by the banter in DF, one must comprehend the *albures* [double-meaning, double-talk] and *apodos* [nicknames, aliases] that they use. The frequent translation of pun doesn’t quite do them justice, since they are more systemized than the puns of English (Tierney 1979, p. 278). To those who use it, the slang-filled, often profane language of DF is like a verbal playing or fencing. Tierney also notes that it’s not just exclusive to the lower class; professionals and university students can engage in it as well. It’s also starting to shift from exclusively masculine language, although older generations still frown upon its use by females (p. 278).

DF natives were not the only ones aware of the vulgarities in Mexico City speech. The first phrase that came to mind for Emilia was “no mames wey” [don’t suck my dick, dude]. Umberto asserted that DF uses more slang than anywhere else in Mexico. Manuel noted that he has many friends from DF before telling me that they use more slang, play with words, and use many double meanings. He puts their slang usage in a positive light in the same way DF natives do themselves. They see these double-meanings as witty and part of their identity as chilangos. Diego even went as far as calling the Spanish of DF ‘its own language’.

The language of the capital is perhaps the most marked in all of Mexico, or as Josué says:
Y en el centro de México el lenguaje es más popular, el cual es más reconocido. Entonces cuando un chilango va al norte, inmediatamente le reconocen. Al igual si él se va para el sur, igual [And in central Mexico the language is more popular, it’s the most recognized. So when a chilango goes to the north, immediately they recognize him as chilango. It’s the same if he goes south, the same].

This could be due to a different prosody, as participants (including Josué) ascribed them a singing quality (‘cantado’, n=4), but is largely in part due to the words/phrases they use including the slang for which they are known.

In contrast to the present study, Hidalgo predicted the Mexico City (DF) variety would be regarded as prestigious. According to the participants interviewed for this task, the DF variety is the only urban variety regarded as low-prestige. Previous studies on the speech in the capital have shown that there are two speech communities there: the highlands and the valley (Tierney 1979). Martín Butragueño (2002) distinguishes between public institutional leaders (government, institutional, etc.) and the non-institutional linguistic leaders (p. 3). The marginalized valley/non-institutional community is that which is typically linked to this slang usage.

Jennifer Roth-Gordon found a similar situation with the slang in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Those who use the slang (‘on the hill’) see it as rich, funny, ironic, allusive, and largely incomprehensible to outsiders. It’s used to ‘mock the system’ as Roth-Gordon puts it. Those who do not use the slang (‘down the hill’) see it as the language of thieves, pot-smokers, and no-goods (p. 57). Like those labeled as chilango in the present study, the youth in Rio de Janeiro are very aware that the register of slang that they use is associated with favela (shantytown) residence, crime, and danger. “The Brazilian middle class attempts to confirm the terms of their Brazilian citizenship through performances of their standard language competency” (p. 63). This may be the same strategy used by the urban, non-chilangos in Mexico.
In Other Parts

While no other area is quite as recognized as having slang as the capital (only 2/9 participants mentioned slang/profanity in areas other than DF), there are other areas that are associated with slang and/or vulgarities. María associates the coastal state of Veracruz with having “groserías, muchas malas palabras” [vulgarities, many bad words]. Emilia, who associated the phrase ‘no mames, wey’ with DF associates its milder form ‘no manches’ [don’t fuck with me] with the northern state of Tamaulipas. No speaker associated profanity with their home region except for DF speakers.

Context

Status of population as migrants

The views shared in this study were that of a very specific population: Mexican-born speakers who immigrated to the US. While a basis of their views of the Spanish spoken in Mexico were most likely formed before crossing the border, the context of their status as migrants does show up in various ways. Since participants were chosen through a snowball sampling, many of these participants know and interact with one another. Therefore, they are exposed to speakers from other areas more than they probably were in Mexico. This gives speakers opportunity to form new opinions on speech varieties as well as confirm or change previous opinions. For Martín, a reason not to share his opinion on how Oaxacans speak was to keep a Oaxacan co-worker from getting upset, in case she ever heard what he had said. Another instance of change was seen in Javier’s thoughts on Chicanos mixing Spanish and English. “Cuando van para México, no les gusta que habla así. Yo cuando estaba allá tampoco” [When they go to Mexico, they don’t like them talking that way. When I was there, I didn’t either]. He
went on to say that now it doesn’t really matter to him if they talk ‘half and half’. He didn’t admit to doing it himself, but either way he’s still aware of the stigma attached to it. Not only does this migrant population have attitudes about Mexico’s speech, but they’re now situated within a new context of views shaped by US experiences. There were no correlations with level of integration into US culture (although this is a difficult aspect to measure), time lived in the US, or age of arrival with comparisons to English varieties.

*The Role of Race*

Two speakers made comparisons between speeches of certain populations in Mexico to African American varieties here in the US. This same result occurred in Leticia’s 1996 study of language attitudes on the border where certain varieties were equated to black speech. Enrique said that certain coastal dialects “forget to pronounce the <s> sounds. It’s similar to the way African Americans speak in English” while Martín described chilango speech as “bien naco, como los mollos de aquí” [really trashy, like the niggers here]. Comparisons to this population as a speech community illustrate an awareness of speech communities being able to exist across groups, not just physical space. This is relevant as more enregistered Mexican Spanish dialects (chilango, norteño, etc.) show up in the US.

In Roth-Gordon’s (2009) work, the use of slang is tied to blackness and marginality (p.64). Chilango, on the other hand, is tied to marginality but a lack of race. While Mexicans speak of *la raza* [the race] as their unifying, Mexican identity they also identify with their individual state ties. DF residents are no exception, but others assert that their identity claims are not valid. This challenge to their DF identity is seen when others say that they are a ‘mix of everything,’ ‘a mix of the whole race,’ and challenge the very definition of their group term
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‘chilango’. This is merely another way of stigmatizing the group. Jane Hill (1999) talks about whiteness in the US being unmarked and invisible. Lack of race in this case is not, and may be the opposite of, unmarked. Not having ties to a specific race is highly marked and stigmatized.

Although non-chilangos denied the tie of chilango to a specific race, the term will continue to gain more group/social ties than geographical ones, especially as the population migrates and settles in different areas of the US.

**Major Dialectal Groups**

Many themes were discussed throughout this paper as individual topics, yet it was nearly impossible to keep themes from bleeding over into the other categories. This reflects the fact that in reality, they form a complex interwoven set of ideas in the minds of the Mexican speakers interviewed for this study. Despite the messiness of analyzing such attitudes, a major division can be concluded from the interviews: Rural vs. Urban. Within this division, the major groups of Ranchero, Indigenous, and Coastal fall under Rural and Chilangos and Urbanized Speakers (Non-Chilangos) fall under Urban. The Costeños or Coastal group was not as salient as the other four groups. Some participants collapsed Coastal and Indigenous into one Rural sub-group.

The presence of urbanness in the north was defended by a Northern participant, but it was never asserted that urban and rural can coexist, or that individuals can cross these lines. Even if northerners can modernize themselves through industry, they still form a distinct linguistic community for speakers (even for Northern speaker María who brought up the presence of industry in the North). Likewise, one cannot be chilango and ranchero or chilango and urban (non-chilango). If a speaker like Enrique is from DF, but sounds like he is from Jalisco, he’s
rejected as a ‘true chilango’ by other DF natives. He may well likely belong to the ‘institutional’ speech community in DF rather than the ‘valley.’

In hierarchical terms, as Hidalgo (1986) predicted, the urbanized dialects are viewed as more prestigious in Mexico. The lack of language mixing is a part of the language ideology of speakers viewing it as the home of the pure and true Mexican Spanish. As Emilia said “en Jalisco pues…Yo soy de Jalisco, siento que[…]hablamos[…]no se nota tanto el acento que tenemos” [In Jalisco, well…I’m from Jalisco and I feel we speak…the accent we have isn’t really noticeable]. Not only is the accent ‘not noticeable,’ her pauses indicate her struggle to put a description of it into words. This accent that is associated with urbanized central Mexico is viewed as unmarked, and by some speakers was described as ‘average Spanish’ (Enrique, DF) or ‘standard’ (Javier, Michoacán). Emilia goes on to say “[p]ero la gente ya educada, y que ha estudiado…de la alta sociedad, hablan más educados y no se lo nota tanto el acento” [But the people who’re now educated, who have studied and are high society, they speak more educated and the accent isn’t so noticeable]. She may be equating her region with educated speakers, or perhaps the only way to rid one’s speech of a marked accent is through education. As seen earlier in the case of Enrique, people say he sounds like he’s from Jalisco rather than DF. Enrique was one of the most educated participants in the study. Not only did he receive his degree, but he was the only college graduate to be using his degree in his current job. Further research is needed in order to tease apart the role of education in having an unmarked accent. Chilangos would most likely have higher status than the rural groups, but it was unclear from the interviews in this study. The
break-down of groups in Mexican Spanish perceptual dialectology is represented in Figure 9.

**Major Groups**

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Urban
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Chilango          Urbanized speakers
                  
Rural
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
  v                  v
|                  |                  |
Ranchero          Indigenous
                  Non-Norteño
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Figure 9: Major groups in Mexican Spanish perceptual dialectology

Spanglish varieties may constitute a separate group, but from the current data it is unclear whether this is the case for Mexican speakers, and if so, where they would fall in the hierarchy. It is also unclear whether they would be viewed as rural (surrounded by/intermixed with ‘ranchero’ and ‘norteño’ comments) or urban (due to contact with English through industrialization).

Rural dialects are lower-status than urban ones, and in this case it would appear that indigenous populations’ dialects are lower-status than ranchero dialects. Ranchero can be divided into the subgroups of norteño and non-norteño. Both were described as being ranchero, but no one grouped the two regions together as one large ranchero speech area. It is unclear from the current data whether one of them is higher-esteem than the other. Selvin, who is always mistaken for a chilango from his speech, said “nada más que los de Michoacán tienen una plaga más diferente que yo. Pero los que sí son...como de ranchos, así” [it’s nothing more than those from Michoacán have a different plague than I do. But those who are...like from ranches, like that].
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Being identified as a ranchero speaker is a ‘plague.’ Furthermore, he refers to them in the third person despite asserting his Michoacán identity and distaste for being identified as chilango.

While rancheros are seen as ‘backward’ and ‘lacking modernity’ (Farr 2006), they are still seen as more modernized and have higher status than indigenous groups. Marcia Farr points out the positive connotations associated with ranchero including the “tradition to valorize lo ranchero as ‘the real Mexican’ and male identity.” She compares their status to frontiersmen/women or cowboys in the US. There is some value associated with this identity even though they are not seen as advanced or modern as city people (p. 7). Indigenous populations on the other hand are seen as not being able to modernize themselves (Salas Carreño 2007, p. 109) and “…essentially fieldworkers, poor, illiterate, and isolated from ‘modern’ society” (p. 113).

Of the indigenous groups, Oaxaca was the most mentioned area having speech influenced by ‘dialectos’ or indigenous languages. Oaxaca received the most pejorative comments of any state or area of Mexico. Oaxaca natives view the indigenous languages as part of their culture, but are also aware that the contact and code-switching that result are looked down on by outsiders. Manuel felt the need to defend Oaxaca: “También somos civilizados, pero no nos deja perder la cultura” [We’re civilized too, but Oaxaca doesn’t let us lose our culture]. Perhaps because Oaxaca is the area with the most indigenous languages, it is the target of the most critique. Guillermo said “En Oaxaca se habla feo. Hablan más[…]no como indios pero sí[…]” [In Oaxaca, they talk ugly. They talk more…not like Indians, but yeah…]. Fellow Michoacano Alberto said “Sólo que los oaxaqueños son gente bajita. Chaparros, prietos, y feos. Pero, así son ellos” [It’s just that Oaxacans are little short people. Short, dark-skinned/narrow-minded, and ugly. But, that’s how they are]. María talked about the vowel weakening phenomena (Blanch,
2010) found in Oaxaca and described it as "mala pronunciación" [bad pronunciation], probably due, she said, to the illiteracy and ignorance found there that spreads among its inhabitants.

Oaxacans have long felt the brunt of discrimination in Mexico, according to Dr. Jeffrey Cohen who studies Mexican-US migration, specifically that of indigenous communities in Oaxaca. “The way we talk about Mexicans here in the United States, Mexicans talk about Oaxacans in Mexico” (Dr. Jeffrey Cohen, personal communication, 4/3/2012). This discrimination may be the reason behind two Oaxacan female participants, Adriana and Rebeca, stating that all of Mexico talks the same. Margarita Hidalgo (1982, p. 205) would call this ‘dialect deafness’, which she says tends to be a feature of less educated speakers. However, there was no correlation in this study with education level and perceptions of dialects. Like Martín, participants often associated speech areas with acquaintances from the area and “the activity of explicitly evaluating another person is a socially loaded one” (Campbell-Kibler 2006, p. 172). If a person knows that they are constantly evaluated negatively, they may not want to come out and say that as far as the dialects in their home country, their own is considered the worst. According to Dr. Cohen, Oaxacans have been discriminated against for so long that they’ve learned to just ignore it (personal communication, 4/3/2012). Not talking about others’ pejorative views of them and simply stating that everyone talks the same may be Adriana and Rebeca’s way of dealing with the discrimination and to an extent, ignoring it. It was unclear why this occurred in female Oaxacan participants and not male. Male Oaxacans reacted by discussing all dialects other than their own (n=1), minimally commented on the speech of Oaxaca and focused on other dialects (n=1), or defended Oaxaca’s multilingualism (n=1). Further comments on Spanish in Oaxaca are given in Figure 10. The comments seen were attributed to Oaxaca in general; the position of them on the map is not relevant. It should be noted that all Southern speakers are from Oaxaca.
In this study, basic starting points for the speech areas in Mexico were determined. Attitudes associated with those areas were gathered through individual interviews. The Spanish of central Mexico, according to the speakers interviewed, is seen as unmarked and the most prestigious in Mexico. There is a language ideology that any contact with other languages makes the variety lower in prestige (as seen here with English in the north, indigenous languages in the south, as well as the capital dialect that emerged from possible contact of various migrant dialects). Slang and profanity form part of the identity of self-identifying chilangos, while non-chilangos do not report their own use of them.

Major groups found included subcategories of Rural and Urban speakers: chilango, urbanized (non-chilango), ranchero (norteños and non-norteños), indigenous, and coastal. Of these, enregistered dialects include chilango, norteño, and coastal. This conclusion is based on
the definition of enregisterment given in Agha (2005). These dialects were a reality in speakers’ minds and were easily talked about. All three were imitated by speakers without solicitation (by eight, eight, and five speakers respectively). No one had difficulty talking about indigenous dialects, but they were never claimed to form a single, uniform dialect. No one imitated indigenous dialects, but some lexical differences were given and attributed to influence of ‘dialectos’. No one could imitate the non-chilango, urban dialect. Those who claimed to speak it described it as ‘normal’ (n=4) while no other speaker described his/her own dialect this way. Lexical differences given for other regions were often compared to the ‘normal’ word used in this variety. A non-norteño, ranchero dialect was never imitated. Given the results, for speakers in this study Chilango and Norteño varieties are the most marked, closely followed by coastal varieties.

Since this is one of the first studies of its kind, it establishes a point of departure for research to come. It helps to form a basis of concepts important to the Mexican Spanish speaker, through which many more concepts important to assigning social value to Spanish in Mexico can arise and be discovered. Reiterating Farr’s point, a scarce amount of research has been done on language use among Mexican-origin groups, in spite of the fact that they are one of the fastest-growing populations in the US. Most of the research focusing on this has concentrated on the Southwest. While of interest, the population in the Southwest holds entirely different questions for researchers due to its distinct history. Research like that of the current study, Farr (2006), and Matus-Mendoza (2002) seek to spark investigation in the area of the Midwest where new and interesting linguistic phenomena are taking place. The more research that is done on this area, the more that will be understood of this diverse set of speech communities living in the US setting.
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Notes

Translations done by the author.

An orthographic transcription was used for quotes.

‘[…’] indicates a pause in speech.

‘…’ indicates an omission

Acknowledgments

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## Appendix 1

Table 1: Additional biographical information of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home region</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Spouse's home area</th>
<th>Parents' Home Area</th>
<th>Friends' Home Area(s)</th>
<th>Edu Level</th>
<th>Reported languages spoken</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>María</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Ciudad Obregón, Sonora</td>
<td>Sonora</td>
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### Mexican Immigrants’ Views on the Spanish Dialects in Mexico

#### Table 2: Participants’ self-reported mobility information. Years in regions did not always match reported ages. Time lived in a region in years unless other unit given. Some participants declined to report time lived in a region.

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Map presented to participants containing state names and boundaries.
Appendix 3

Maps 1a & 1b: Alberto’s hand-drawn and electronic maps. Technique: Exact tracing of state lines/coloring in states.


Maps 3a & 3b: Manuel’s hand-drawn and electronic maps. Technique: Roughly circled areas.
Maps 4a & 4b: Juan Luis’ hand-drawn and electronic maps. Technique: Straight lines and rough circle.

Maps 5a & 5b: Josué’s hand-drawn and electronic maps. Technique: Straight lines.