**Language surveillance: pressure to follow local models of speakerhood among Latinx students in Madrid .[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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*Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile. —* The Borg, Star Trek: First Contact

**Abstract**

In this article, we examine the language surveillance – both self and externally imposed – experienced by Madrid university students of Latin American origin in their encounters with the local population in educational settings. A pattern of language surveillance emerges in the interviews held with these students. It consists of hierarchical observation, normalising judgment and interrogation. These three reported practices are related to the following linguistic and non-linguistic resources that make surveillance possible, namely a) indexicality, especially with regard to phonological distinctions that index speakers as ‘local’ vs. ‘non-local’ or ‘native’ vs. ‘non-native’; b) the invoking of disciplinary and prescriptive linguistic knowledge, together with the application of a colonial episteme whereby the metropolitan norm prevails, thus denying non-metropolitan speakers their right to language ownership; and, c) the management of power within interactions. By these means, varieties and speakers of Spanish are hierarchised and those that differ from locals are positioned as subaltern others. Language surveillance is a disciplinary power technique that prompts speakers to adapt to the centripetal force exerted by the reproduction of this knowledge. Finally, the paper examines the extent to which this stylistic move to adapt, could be considered an example of “muda” given that these shifts are situational and relational and attend to the different social demands of the communicative settings where the practice is observed.

**Key words:** language surveillance, indexicality, disciplinary knowledge, multidialectal speakers, power techniques.

1. **Introduction**

This paper examines the experiences of *language surveillance* reported by Latinx,[[2]](#footnote-2) i.e. Spanish speakers of Latin American origin, who migrated to Madrid at an early age. Such surveillance occurs when they interact with local speakers, particularly, though not exclusively, in educational contexts. The multidialectal speakers who participated in this study gave detailed descriptions of numerous encounters in which local speakers had regularly evaluated their language use negatively on the basis of particular linguistic traits that distinguished them from the local population. Such negatively assessed linguistic features in the Latinx repertoires are standardly associated with *Latin American Spanish*, usually in combination with other forms of symbolic and monetary capital (such as social class and ethnicity).[[3]](#footnote-3) To be accepted, therefore, the speakers have to “*correct”* these “*errors”* and “*adapt”* to the local variety of Spanish, which is considered the model to follow. In other words, to be acknowledged as full participants in their respective communities, these participants have to sound like locals. To investigate this monitoring of spoken language, the (often negative) evaluation participants reported, and concomitant implications, this paper proposes the concept of ‘language surveillance’, inspired by Foucault’s theory of disciplinary power.

Latinx migrants are of particular interest because despite being native speakers of Spanish, they report difficulties in gaining access to social spheres and relational circles *vis à vis* the local population. In this study, oral history interviews and focus groups were conducted with young Latinx who had arrived in Madrid accompanied by their migrant parents. The accounts of their struggles for a sense of belonging, and to gain entry to higher education shed light on how language use is monitored and on the impact this surveillance has when they internalize discourses that undermine their capabilities as competent and legitimate speakers and ‘govern’ their communicative practices (Martín Rojo 2016). Surveillance, then, can be viewed as having an important influencing effect in speakers’ communicative performance, thus as an essential element in self-reflection.

Latinx speakers give accounts of their interactional experiences that reflect processes of social exclusion through self- and externally-imposed constraints. They see their communicative performance being assessed and corrected, but publically they are not expected, to correct and overtly evaluate those who judge them. Such lack of reciprocity generates social and linguistic asymmetries, reminding of concepts and norms produced by a form of prescriptive linguistics that persists in society through the very concept of ‘norm’ and the native speaker as model. These circumstances recall linguistic and colonial ideologies that shape and are shaped by linguistic theory.

In fact, one of the contributions of this paper is to show how the native speaker model is not only associated with a particular territory (the nation), but also with a political and economic project (the metropolis). Metropolitan speakers seem to consider themselves entitled to pass judgment, and even to impose certain linguistic forms and communicative styles, particularly in educational contexts and in combination with other social and ethnic differences. The accounts we gathered reveal how Latinx -specifically with a weak social position and from the northern regions of Central America and in the Andean countries (see Márquez and Martín Rojo 2015)*-,* are constructed in such a context, often positioning themselves as new speakers of the local varieties that they have learnt through secondary socialisation, via multiple cultural and interactional sites of the migration process (Baquedano-López and Mangual 2012). This normative pressure, nevertheless, seems to be a pervasive feature in the Spanish linguistic regime that has been experienced for decades by migration from rural areas to cities and by speakers from the southern regions (see for example, Iglesias 2016).

Such sites are situated either in educational contexts or informally within the larger receiving community. The social and interpersonal implications of the assessment of their communicative actions limits their ability to act (Ahearn 2001), interact and be considered as legitimate members of the adopted society (Duranti 2004). However, the linguistic implications go even further in that they lead these Latin-American-born Spanish citizens, to modify their language performance and erase some of the distinctive features of their varieties of Spanish, in order to conform to a particular model of speakerhood, studied in this volume. Furthermore, we discuss the extent to which this process, which participants refer to as “adaptation” in interviews and focus groups, could be part of a process of “muda”.

This paper then, analyses how participants in oral history interviews and focus groups (re)construct their experiences of speakerhood and their social aspirations. It shows how linguistic performance is socially evaluated by exploring the relation between speaker assessment and differences in social position, which includes access to the production of linguistic knowledge. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the methodological approach, and describes its main theoretical assumptions. The interactional exchanges that participants evoke in interviews and focus groups are recurrent in *time and space,* revealing a cyclic pattern. This pattern, described and analysed in section 3, generally shows a chain of events or actions that usually occur in a particular order. Language surveillance entails that the language practices of some speakers are observed and monitored by others, an action we term ‘hierarchical observation’.[[4]](#footnote-4) We show in this paper that such surveillance is made possible by the indexicality of language. Hierarchical observation highlights particular linguistic features that are considered a deviation from the norm; the norm functions as an index of a valued ‘public’ register and of generally accepted standards. Thus, evoking a linguistic norm is a practice rooted in linguistic prescriptive knowledge; it comprises a second action that we refer to as ‘normalising judgment’. Finally, we show that linguistic norms and knowledge are not objective, but are reinforced and maintained through power relations within interactions, performed by means of an examination. The interactional dynamics combine into a unified whole “the deployment of force and the establishment of truth” (Foucault 1977: 184). It both elicits the truth about those who undergo the examination (betraying their origin or identifying their status as speakers), and controls their behaviour (pressurizing them to adapt to the local variety). In analysing this common pattern, section 3 takes all these considerations into account, encompassing the three practices referred to above, namely hierarchical observation, normalising judgment, and conducting an examination (section 3.1). These practices become evident in indexicality, the production of linguistic knowledge, and the management of power within an interaction (section 3.2). Regarding the effects of language surveillance, section 4 describes how Latinx speakers experience their speakerhood. The analysis reveals a sort of “adaptation”, which is not, in fact, permanent; in most cases, it is temporary, situational and relational. Accordingly, and in keeping with one of the main themes of this special issue, the paper also considers whether these temporary shifts can be understood as part of a process of “muda”, that is, “a specific biographical juncture where individuals enact significant changes in their linguistic repertoire” (Pujolar & González 2013: 139; Pujolar, in this issue). Finally, in section 5, we summarise the main conclusions and consider whether linguistic surveillance should be viewed as an instrument in wielding power. Our findings show how speakers' experiences in their struggles for inclusion help raise resistance towards hegemonic knowledge and ideologies with ulterior effects in the current sociolinguistic order.

2. **Exploring speakerhood through Latinx’ oral histories of surveillance in Madrid.**

The present study forms part of a project that is being conducted by the NEOPHON2 group[[5]](#footnote-5) entitled *New speakers, New Identities: Practices and Ideologies in the Post-National Era.* Its aim is to examine paradigms in which relationships between language and identity are constructed in new speakers. Within this project, our research focuses on migratory contexts, assuming that migration increases linguistic diversity as migrants become incorporated as new speakers of the language or languages of their adopted communities. This situation raises many questions regarding new speakers’ use of language, and its consequences for them and for traditional or native speakers. It also brings into focus the often unexplored case of migrants who speak the same native language as those in the receiving society and have learnt the local variety of their adopted society as part of secondary socialisation, but whose repertoires often contain elements that do not harmonize with those of the local variety. Such elements include (e.g.) the phonological opposition between /s/(voiceless, alveolar, fricative) and /θ/ (voiceless, interdental, fricative) in Central-Northern Peninsular Spanish but absent in other varieties of Spanish that our participants frequently cite as troublesome. This dissonance becomes socially salient insofar as it marks these speakers’ personal identity as different to the locals, with implications for group belonging and full societal participation.

In the case considered here, as native speakers of Spanish, the Latinx share the same basic language as the local population. However, their spoken Spanish is at times recognisably different from both the standard variety spoken in Spain (i.e. Central-Northern Peninsular Spanish) and the local variety spoken in Madrid. These differences seem to be communicatively problematic, even for some of their local interlocutors.

Despite successive Spanish governments’ efforts to represent Spanish as “common heritage” and to dissociate it from any particular territory or national group, the Central-Northern Peninsular Spanish variety remains a norm against which new speakers are measured. The purportedly inclusive, albeit centripetal, institutional view of the language could, nevertheless, be an argument for seeking to maintain the local form of Spanish as the encompassing standard variety (del Valle 2007; Moreno Cabrera 2015). When these normative positions are coupled with assimilation policies, such as the compulsory use of local varieties of Spanish in schools, it is evident that differences between varieties of the same basic language could be equally if not more divisive, thus erecting rather than taking down barriers to mobility (Martín Rojo 2013; Corona 2012; Patiño-Santos, Pérez-Milans, and Relaño-Pastor 2015).

The newcomers’ repertoire often contains a fusion of Madrid-speaker features, such as *laísmo* (i.e.,the use of the accusative *la(s)* to refer to datives that are grammatically feminine) and semantic elements from colloquial Central-Northern Peninsular Spanish, such as the use of expletives (see *no hacer ni puñetero caso* in Example 2, Section 3), together with other idiosyncratic features of the varieties of the language at their disposal. The local population, however, see this as a marked form, specifically identifying the Latinx.

Of particular relevance in this respect is the readily-identifiable phonological opposition between /s/ (voiceless, alveolar, fricative) and (voiceless, interdental, fricative), mentioned above. Although /θ/ immediately indexes the Northern-Central Peninsular variety of Spanish, this opposition is often absent in the spoken Spanish of Central and Western Andalusia and in the Canary Islands (see, for example, Lipski, 1987; Ledgeway and Maiden, 2016). A classic example of the contrastive feature can be found in the pronunciation of words such as *casa* /kasa/ (house) and *caza /*kaθa/ (hunt) in Peninsular Spanish. The opposition is absent in Latin American Spanish phonology, where *seseo,* i.e., the neutralisation of /s/-/θ/, is the norm, thus *casa* and *caza* are both pronounced as /kasa/. Similarly, phonological neutralisation of *ciervo* (deer)vs. *siervo* (servant of the Lord) occurs in the ~~Latinx’s~~ variety used by the Latinxs. To emphasize the contrast, consider the Latinx pronunciation of *zapato* (shoe) as /sapato*/ vis à vis* the locals who would pronounce the initial phoneme as a voiceless interdental fricative, thus /θapato*/*.

The accounts we examine in this paper were framed and constructed in an educational context. The interviewees were successful university students in Madrid who originally hailed from Morocco, the Philippines and Latin America (Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru). They shared some of their educational trajectory experiences with us in life story interviews (Atkinson 1988) and focus groups conducted in a university room dedicated for student use. Twelve oral histories were recorded, and three focus groups held with the identified participants. In this paper, we use extracts from two interviews and a focus group with Latinx to eventually illustrate how language surveillance works among multidialectal speakers. The pattern of surveillance discussed here was also manifest in the other interviews and focus groups, as well as in a recent ethnographic fieldwork we conducted at a Madrid market where highly visible Latin American service providers and clients interact, to a greater or lesser extent, with the local population.

Education is perhaps one of the most important institutional arenas available to the state for moulding and regulating citizens, transmitting a standard language and governing language contact. Undoubtedly, social change, conflict and contradictions are produced and reproduced in schools and universities. In spite of high levels of mobility, migration and multilingualism being a reality throughout the schools and universities of Madrid, these educational institutions retain their cultural and linguistic homogenising role. This is enabled by the social asymmetries that place teachers in a position to evaluate other languages and cultures and to (implicitly) endorse those of local classmates. In addition, our data analysis shows that teachers’ homogenising attempts are replicated and amplified in a myriad of reported day-to-day interactions in which classmates, and partly also the wider local population, reproduce the language norms presented in classrooms.

Latinx voices are commonly heard in Madrid universities, where 11,750 Latin American students were enrolled during 2015, when this research was conducted (see El portal de estadística 2014/2015). These figures, moreover, neither take into account the presence of Latinx descendants, nor of ‘the 1.5 generation’ who either had Spanish nationality before their arrival or had obtained it since then[[6]](#footnote-6). In this paper, we focus on multidialectal speakers of Spanish, specifically Latinx university students in Madrid. We consider this group of particular interest because, despite their ‘nativeness’, their legitimacy as speakers of Spanish and as full members of society is often questioned in asymmetrical and normative social contexts. Arguably, their membership is questioned on the basis of a social evaluation of linguistic performance rather than linguistic competence.

The first interview was conducted with Rodrigo, an Ecuadorian student, who moved to Spain with his mother (of Spanish descent), following her divorce. At that time, Rodrigo was reading Modern Languages and obtaining excellent grades. The second interview was with Norberto, of Dominican origin, who was studying towards a Masters degree in Spanish as a foreign language. Due to his non-local linguistic features, he had not been able to practise in this field (Márquez Reiter and Martín Rojo 2015) and thus was prohibited from fully participating in society; instead, he got employment in a Regional Government reception service for migrants.

The focus group participants were: Nicolás, a Master’s degree student in engineering, of Argentinian origin, who had come to Spain with his mother when he was nearly 14. Manuel, another student, was from Peru, although he had spent much of his childhood in Argentina, where his parents had migrated before coming to Spain. His background was more complex in that he had arrived in Spain at the age of 20, and immediately started working. He only entered university later, taking first a degree in history and then a Master’s degree, with a view to becoming a secondary school teacher. Both of these participants had adopted the variety of Spanish spoken in Madrid, including local gestures and forms of politeness. Nevertheless, they also retained differential features, which local speakers would recognize and judge. The three other participants in the group were a local student in Modern Languages, David, who corroborated some of the experiences reported by the Latinxs, but questioned others, and finally, the two researchers.

The life-story interviews and focus groups were complemented by observations on the university campus and within some graduate and postgraduate programmes, thus broadening the perspectives obtained and enriching the interpretation of the data.

At this point, it should be noted that we view oral histories as a social practice, and not merely as an instrument for collecting information generated from extended responses in which participants produce (linguistic) autobiographical narratives (Pavlenko 2008). The data we obtained represent experiences, facts, attitudes and ideologies that are reflexively (co)constructed between the interviewer and interviewees, and reflect how meaning is negotiated and interactionally accomplished (Talmy 2010; Márquez-Reiter 2018; Cioé Peña, Moore and Martín Rojo 2016). This study focuses on the participants’ accounts of how they learned and used their different language varieties, and on their trajectories as students in relation to issues of inclusion, exclusion and language surveillance. Focus groups, too, are viewed as social practices, in which participants present themselves, including their tensions and their contradictions, in relation to the multiple discourses that circulate within the communities in which they participate. Tensions, contradictions and even incoherencies emerge when participants try to justify their own behaviour and question that of others, appealing to or challenging legitimated and prevalent discourses and evoking their own values and beliefs (Martín Criado 2014).

Within a dialogical frame, participants in oral history interviews and focus groups (re)construct their experiences and social aspirations, not only using their own voices, but also by evoking those of their interlocutors. Thus, it is as if the data were produced by multiple personae, not only from a single standpoint; this interaction discloses diverse practices, perspectives and ideologies borne by each of the different characters (Bakhtin and Emerson 1993; Bakhtin 2010). The reproduction of other parties’ voices reveals how participants struggle against external definitions of their language and actions, and highlights the effects produced. Through this polyphony, therefore, the participants in our research evoke the assessments to which they are subjected, and they reproduce the voices of their interlocutors during the interactions. Further, the vivid evocation of these exchanges enables us to identify common places, multiple similarities and recurrent patterns of surveillance. In constructing and reconstructing their experiences, the participants reveal differentiated levels of reflexivity. In their words, implicit or explicit reference is made to the normative force by which local speakers judge their communicative actions. Thus they articulate two related metapragmatic actions, namely confirmation and questioning (see Botlanski 2011, on confirmation and critique). This double metapragmatic articulation (Márquez Reiter and Kádár, in progress) invokes, on the one hand, the established and primarily descriptive disciplinary knowledge provided by linguistics, though also known to the participants and, on the other, the tensions that this knowledge brings into the migrants’ daily interactions with locals. As the examples will demonstrate, this is especially relevant to how Latinx attempt to ‘adapt’ their communicative performance to be heard for what they say rather than how they say it.

**3. Understanding the why and how of linguistic surveillance**

Participants’ way of referring to how their speech was observed by local interlocutors, and how such observation would pick up any linguistic element that identified them as Latin American speakers, evokes some of the properties that Foucault assigned to ‘surveillance’. For him ‘surveillance’ is a mechanism of control defined as permanent, exhaustive and omnipresent observation, capable of making everything visible, while itself remaining invisible (Foucault 1977). In our study, the effects of local language observation are similar to those highlighted by Foucault when he explains that the person “who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection”. (Foucault 1977: 202-203) Consequently, surveillance can become self-surveillance, in both public and private spheres, and even internally, it becomes a means to avoid being caught infringing rules and expectations.

The following examples taken from the focus group discussion, show how surveillance works. In Example 1, Nicolas reflects on some linguistic surveillance he has experienced. His multidialectal repertoire features various linguistic elements of Madrid and River Plate Spanish[[7]](#footnote-7) (e.g. the Peninsular Spanish idiomatic expression “tocar narices” in line 1 and the pronunciation of ‘cruzar’ in the present indicative in line 4, respectively). In addition, and similar to other Latinx who migrated to Madrid at an early age, he is familiar with various indexical features of other varieties of Latin American Spanish. As he explains, speaking the same language as his interlocutors does not benefit him greatly, because different language varieties are differentially hierarchised. Although he acknowledges that his River Plate Spanish affords him some relational currency, particularly in the romantic plane (see Example 2), the sense of some local interlocutors monitoring his way of speaking is pervasive, undermining and, to a certain extent, overwhelming. This is articulated in Example 1, below, where Nicolas constructs the surveillance he experienced as an interpersonally sensitive activity (Hansen and Márquez Reiter 2016): the in-breathing (line 1) that precedes his explicit feeling of frustration (“it gets to me”, line 1), his direct reported speech of the type of normalising judgements that aspects of his accent generate in Madrid (“no se dice/θ/ se dice con /s/”) followed by an interrogation (“are you from the South?”) and, the laughter that follows his expression of irritation (“uf”) (lines 2 and 3). The use of direct reported speech adds dramatic effect (Tannen 1989) and invites the audience, in this case the researchers and Manuel and David, to share his experience. In presenting what was allegedly said and the way in which it was said, Nicolas invites the audience to judge these local interlocutors’ actions for themselves. He implicitly evaluates their behaviour by merely providing the facts of the case (Holt 2000). Such evaluation indicates his awareness of the inaccurate disciplinary knowledge of linguistics relative to his own, which the locals mobilised. He closes this account by implicitly questioning the reason for the vigilance he is subjected to as a result of a phonological neutralization of which he is painfully aware, but cannot always self-monitor (see also Rodrigo in Example 7) or indeed contest[[8]](#footnote-8). In questioning the grounds of their judgement, Nicolas confirms the prescriptive disciplinary knowledge mobilized to evaluate him and critiques it.

EXAMPLE 1

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6 | =te corri(h)g(h)e la g(h)ent(h)e y: toca la nariz en (determinada) bueno uf(hhhh) .hh no se dice /s / se dice con /θ/ a: pero que eres del sur? O de(h)l .HH no bue(hhhhh) (…) [por n]o dar una explicación a cada persona con la que te cruzás ( ) al final creo que acaba cansando un poco no de de pregunta todo el mundo te pregunta pregunta |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6 | =*people correct you and it: gets to me*  *(sometimes) well uf (hhhh) .hh dont say /s /, say / θ / ah  but are you from the South? Or from. HH no well (hhhh) [having] to give an explanation to everyone you meet () in  the end you get a bit tired of it all everyone asks*  *they ask you ask you* |

This example highlights the main features of surveillance. Nicolas refers to a pervasive feeling of being linguistically observed and monitored. Further, this observation, by local speakers, involves being corrected by them (line 1). Similar to other participants, he uses the term “corrected” (line 1) in explaining how he interprets his interlocutors’ actions to be intentional. In Example 2, we see that for affiliative purposes (“you (want) to fit in”-lines 2-3) he complies with the requirements locals set. As we discuss below, linguistic correction is an activity that positions interlocutors in an asymmetrical relation and makes language monitoring hierarchical, also in that it is non-reciprocal.

In this case, the main target of these linguistic corrections is the perceived lack of phonological distinction between /θ/ and /s/. In making such phonological neutralization a repairable matter, normative interlocutors from the metropolis emphasise the view that their own norm should be endorsed by all speakers of the language. Failure to abide by this norm, therefore, positions Latinx speakers as outsiders or illegitimate actors.

EXAMPLE 2

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5 | [Y :]: no sé (.) despué:s es más que nada cuando uno es chico y: tienes otro acento que m:(h) T .hh que (querés) encajar bien es verdad que con las chicas no me iba mal porque de verda a::y qué bonito el argentino pero no (hacían) ni (.) puñetero caso de lo que estaba diciendo a:(h)y decime algo |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5 | *[And:] I don’t know (.) after all when you’re*  *young and you have a different accent you (want) to fit in well it’s true, I didn’t do badly with girls really ah the Argentinian accent is so nice but they didn’t pay any bloody attention*  *to what I was saying a:(h)and say something else* |

As Nicolas remarks, despite the normative corrections to which he is subjected and the centripetal pressure exerted by local speakers, including those within his own social circle, aspects of River Plate Spanish, compared to Peninsular Spanish, are sometimes positively evaluated and even encouraged, especially in the private realm. The positive assessment he reports shows, on the one hand, his knowledge through lived-experience of the positive relational value that River Plate Spanish may have for some locals. This positive value, in contrast with other Latin American varieties, situates him, nevertheless, outside of the national group. It highlights the fact that accent matters and that he has to sound local in order to be heard and not just seen, to belong territorially, and to some extent also socially. Nicolas’s account underlines how his assessments and those of others are based on incoherences, tensions and contradictions.

We will return in a later section (3.2) to this phonological distinction and its social meaning, when we analyse indexicality and orders of indexicality, showing how “systemic patterns of indexicality are also systemic patterns of authority, of control and evaluation, and hence of inclusion and exclusion by real or perceived others” (Blommaert 2007: 118). But first, we reflect on the frequency of the kind of interactional exchanges that Nicolas reports in Example 1, saying “everybody” corrects him to the point that “it gets to him” and puts pressure on him to adapt to the local norm. On the basis of this observation, we consider what it is that makes linguistic surveillance possible, and how it happens.

**3.1 The dynamics of surveillance: a tripartite process**

The same interactional dynamics and practices of the surveillance process highlighted in Examples 1 and 2 above, and in 5 and 6 below, are reflected more widely in the recorded oral histories. Analysis of these examples reveals the means by which language surveillance operates interactionally to be the following:

- **Hierarchical observation.** The conscious identification of indexicals (/θ/ and /s/ in this case) as markers of linguistic performance.

- **Normalising judgment** (in Example 1, “say / θ / not / s/ ”*).* Surveillance involves not only the production of a linguistic norm, but also the mobilisation of linguistic concepts and knowledge, such as pronunciation and phonemes, as they constantly emerge in the reported interactions (see e.g. Examples 1 above and 3 below). Normalising judgement involves that local speakers draw on established linguistic knowledge to reproduce it and to produce new knowledge to fit their norms. The underlying message is that if you do not reproduce the norm, you are not from here. Thus, local speakers echo norms that they probably acquired in a normalising institution (such as school), and reproduce and enforce them in their everyday encounters with migrants.

- **Interrogation** (in Example 1 above, “… are you from the South? Or from …?” ; see also Example 5 below). Following the production of the norm, the Latinx students are interrogated in a way that reflects awareness of territorial differences and addresses the issue of language ownership (see Examples 3 and 4 below). In the case in question, this examination/interrogation highlights elements (a given form of pronunciation) are salient according the local linguistic norm. Thus, the Latinx speakers are confronted with questions that signal their different origin (“where are you from?”) and hypothesise an outsider identity (“are you from the South?”). Both questions presuppose that they do not fully belong to the local community. This type of scrutiny establishes asymmetrical power relations: the questions are unidirectional, demand an answered, and can hardly be challenged (see Example 5 below). Interrogation thus, produces knowledge (about how language norms relate to territories and communities) which itself becomes a vehicle of power, producing asymmetries and constraining agency.

These three practices – hierarchical observation, normalising judgment and examination – and the sequence in which they reportedly occur constitute a particular form of language surveillance, which is exercised in this and in many other linguistic contexts. The question then arises: which means enable this interactional dynamics of surveillance? In fact, each of the practices we have identified within the interactional dynamic can be associated with one of these resources. Firstly, indexicality, regarding in this case certain phonological distinctions in Spanish that index categories of people and communities, categorises people according to terms such as *true-native-speakers* or *locals* vs. *foreigners*, *new speakers*, and *non-truly-native speakers*. Secondly, disciplinary and, above all, prescriptive knowledge of linguistics is invoked, which includes in this case a colonial episteme that re-establishes the prevailing metropolitan norm, and thus dispossesses non-metropolitan speakers of their rightful ownership of the language. Thirdly, the management power within interaction functions as a surveillance mechanism.

In this way, varieties of Spanish and communities of speakers are hierarchised, and speakers of language varieties that differ from those of local speakers are positioned as subaltern others. This, inevitably undermines *non-local speakers*’ views and their legitimacy in challenging the evaluative judgements to which they are subjected. In short, the reproduction of disciplinary knowledge – also evident in participants’ metapragmatic activity of questioning as performed in the their accounts – underpins and fuels the very management of power that constrains their agency and full integration into the receiving society. In the light of these findings, one can reasonably assume that this knowledge and the asymmetries it conveys play a key role in current models of speakerness, by exercising centripetal pressure on new speakers to conform to metropolitan norms (Bakhtin, 1981).

**3.2 Means of surveillance: indexicality, evoking linguistic knowledge and constraining agency**

A. Indexicality in hierarchical observation

To explain how surveillance is enabled by the above-mentioned interactions, we draw on the notion of **indexicality**. It has been argued that “indexical order is central to analyse how semiotic agents access macro-sociological plane categories and concepts as values in the indexable realm of the micro-contextual” (Silverstein 2003: 193). What facilitates this connection is the fact that “linguistic and penumbral signs-in-use point to contexts of occurrence structured for sign-users in one or another sort of way” (Silverstein 2003:195). It is precisely through indexicality that the phonological distinction between /θ/ and */s/* becomes a recognisable semiotic emblem for groups and individuals. This is what Silverstein calls the first order of indexicality, and the linguistic forms involved in it are also the focus of **hierarchical observation**. The second order is often studied in the field of linguistic anthropology, and is related to ideological structures, given that linguistic forms – such as /θ/ for local speakers – can also function as an index of valued *public register* and the standards of good behaviour associated with its use. In contrast, alternative forms – such as /s/ in this context, or even attempts to pronounce /θ/ – index not only speakers’ social class or ethnic/national group (via first-order indexicality), but also an awareness of social constraints and the subsequent demands for linguistic adaptation (an incidence of second-order indexicality) (Silverstein 2003: 219). Thus, in our analysis we seek to identify the indexical value of particular linguistic forms, in order to model the relationships between multiple indexical values, i.e., the indexical order.

In the following example from an exchange during a focus group meeting in Madrid between the Argentinian-born Nicolas, and the Peruvian-born Manuel, we identify the indexical values between the (phonological) variant and its social meanings. The distinction indexes categories of people and communities (“locals” vs. “new speakers”) and propounds an ideological interpretation of speech behaviour. In both cases, we then seek to determine who the members of these communities are.

EXAMPLE 3

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4 | Nicolas: | | y yo sí que hice un intento de adaptar (.) aunque lo del seseo este de hablar con lo /θ/ y: cosas de esas es una asignatura que [ E S I M P O S I B L E ] | |
| 5 | Manuel: | | [(Sí) la verdad no?] es lo más difícil de todo= | |
| 6  7 | Nicolas: | | [( )después de catorce años] ya .HH [me rendí] | |
| 8  9  10 | Manuel: | | [pero a q]uinientos años es imposible e(h) que nosotros adap[temos | |
| 11 | Researcher | | [a(hh) sí] | |
| 12 | Manuel: | | Quinientos años (y no lo hemos) hecho (…)= | |
| 1314 | | Nicolas: | | = es una cosa que al final acabas hablando peor porque vas seseando donde no toca | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4 | Nicolas: | and::: and I did make an effort to adapt (.) although this business about “seseo” this speaking with a /θ/ and: all that [I S I M P O S S I B L E] |
| 5  6 | Manuel: | [(yes) that’s the truth right?] it’s the most difficult thing of all= |
| 7  8 | Nicolas: | [( ) after fourteen years] already […] [I’ve given up] |
| 9  10  11 | Manuel: | [but in f]ive hundred years it’s been  impossible u(m) for us to ad[apt] |
| 12 | Researcher: | [o (hh) yes] |
| 13  14 | Manuel: | Five hundred years(and we haven’t)managed it […] |
| 15  16 | Nicolas: | =the thing is, eventually you end up speaking worse because you /θeθeo/ when you shouldn’t= |

This example highlights indexical values regarding the phonological distinction between /s/ (voiceless, alveolar, fricative) and /θ/ (voiceless, interdental, fricative) and its relation to social meaning, i.e. being born Latin American. It evokes the chronotope (Bakhtin1981: 84 and ss.) of the Spanish conquest of Latin America (lines 2, 5-6, 8), referring to the period of Spanish colonial expansion (“in five hundred years”), the categories of people and the communities indexed, namely the *colonisers* vs. the *colonised*. Thus, we can identify the meaning of *prestige* via the ideological interpretation of the metropolitan form, used by the earlier “owners of the language”, the true native speakers. The Latin American form’s low prestige is explicated by the dispreferred reactions of the local speakers, and by the others’ attempts to adapt. The second interlocutor, Manuel, establishes a direct link between the linguistic norm and the fact of colonisation*:* “[but in f]ive hundred years it’s been impossible u(m) for us to adapt*”* (lines 5-6).

Thus, these linguistic forms not only identify locals and non-locals, but evoke colonial asymmetries. What is present here, is a double metapragmatic articulation in which the norm is confirmed via interrogation and critiquing. Latin Americans may attempt to adapt, as Nicolas has attested, to avoid being categorised as foreigners, but Manuel suggests that the possibility of resistance, in an indirect rejection of colonial asymmetries. Both participants reveal knowledge of the social meaning assigned to these kinds of linguistic features, and of reflexive uses of indexicals. Thus, we observe a pattern that connects linguistic norms to language ownership and colonial domination, as further illustrated in Example 4, from an interview with Rodrigo, an Ecuadorian-born student.

EXAMPLE 4

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5 | lo::s españoles recurren a que dieron la lengua la cultura […]y la civilización sobre todo o sea varias veces […] no a mí porque: […] no he tenido insultos así racistas duros pero: sé que hay gente que sí le han dicho es que: nosotros so- (.) gracias a nosotros estáis civilizados |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5 | Spaniards fall back on the claim that they gave us the language and culture […] and civilization above all I mean on many occasions […] not to me because: […] I’ve not received hard racist insults […] but […] I know of people who have been told that thanks to us you are civilised |

In this example, we see that instances of interaction are raised to the level of common meanings, and we observe the two directions of indexicality (presupposing the retrieval of available meanings, and entailing the production of new meanings, according to Silverstein (2006a: 14)). This shared meaning is only possible on the basis of the production of linguistic knowledge and norms,, comprising the second element in the surveillance dynamic (see section 3.1 above). However, these examples allow us to go a step further in our understanding of the surveillance process. They give insight into how systematic patterns of indexicality are also systemic patterns of authority (Blommaert 2010: 38). As we discuss in subsections B and C, this pattern of authority is observed in the reported control and evaluation to which these multidialectal speakers are subjected and which they have consequently internalised.

B. Endorsing normalising judgments through linguistic knowledge

In order to understand the role of normalising judgements, let us examine the kind of knowledge speakers deploy in these exchanges. Such knowledge encompasses not only linguistic, but also sociocultural knowledge.

Although linguistics, and sociolinguistics in particular, does problematise prescriptive (vs. descriptive) approaches to language, the truth is that the concept of ‘deviation’ in linguistic variation and in relation to linguistic norms and standard language, remains deep-seated in our societies. Moreno Cabrera (2014) has reviewed some of the knowledge produced by prescriptive, but also by descriptive Spanish linguistics, highlighting the homogenising effects of the fallacy of the five vowel phonemes in all varieties of Spanish (ignoring other phonological distinctions in the Andalusian variety), or similar effects of the existence of a unique orthographic norm. In fact, the term “*seseo”* invoked by speakers in interviews and groups is a term belonging to the discipline of linguistics and is used, as are other, related terms (“*laísmo”*, “*leísmo”*, “*ceceo”[[9]](#footnote-9)*), to nominate and classify certain usages that are considered to be incorrect, improper, deviant or of low aesthetic value, in other words, vulgar.

Thus, the “normalising judgments” evoked by the participants are based on disciplinary knowledge. In fact, in the following example, Example 5, the differences the speaker refers to, are denoted by the term “seseo” in a prescriptive and derogative sense. Rodrigo recounts his difficulties in this respect.

EXAMPLE 5

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8 | Para que me dejen tranquilo sí que empecé a hablar decía Zapato Zanahoria en vez de decir .HH porque los chavales mismo te decían no se dice sapato se dice zapato .HH pues aprendes diciendo zapato zapato y lo que repites más se te acaba quedando y ya lo interiorizas .HH pero hay palabras que sí que teng- que sí que tengo que pensarlas antes .HH como ciervo o siervo de Dios HHHEHHH.HH las pienso sí las pienso y cuando mezclo se me [HHEH] |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9 | *So that they’d leave me alone I started to speak like I’d say /θ/apato /θ/anahoria instead of saying. HH because the guys would say to me you don’t say /s/apato you say/θ/apato. HH so you learn to say /θ/apato and the more you repeat it the more it sticks and you take it on board. HH but there are words that I do nee-d to think about beforehand. HH like /θ/iervo(deer)or/s/iervo de Dios(servant of God)HHHEHHH.HH I think about them I do think about them and I get them mixed up I* [HHEH] |

This account articulates linguistic knowledge derived from a linguistic tradition according to which a given pronunciation is a mistake to be corrected (line 1). Such knowledge has a disciplinary effect, compelling a change of linguistic behaviour, under threat of expulsion from the group. Reproduction of the norm involves not just the possession of this knowledge, but proclaims the right to possess it and to demand it (Pollner 1987). Speakers assume diverse rights in relation to this knowledge, embracing what is known, how it is known (through what method, with what degree of definition, certainty, recency, etc.), and what should be known. Reproduction of the norm does not necessarily reflect consensus on disciplinary knowledge, nor does it indicate the speaker’s compliance with the ways in which it is achieved. However, it is oriented towards enforcement, thus imposing training to ensure compliance with the model*.*

Linguistic knowledge often presents a model of speakerhood to be followed, as an optimum towards which one should aspire. The negative view of linguistic variety, as demonstrated in the case of *seseo*, introduces a value-giving measure and draws a line between normal and abnormal linguistic forms, between normal and abnormal social dialects and between legitimate (healthy) and illegitimate (destructive) linguistic tendencies (homogeneity vs. heterogeneity). In short, the traditional approach to language variation and linguistic practices has a normalising effect. Nevertheless, not only the centripetal force of disciplinary knowledge, but also the centrifugal forces of language and speakerhood are at play (Bakhtin 1981), making possible the questioning of the very norms used to exclude participants.

Furthermore, as Examples 3 and 4 have shown, linguistic knowledge allows a second process of appropriation of ‘language’ to take place, which dictates that only legitimate forces and social groups have the right to possess a language; the forms used by minoritised speakers and communities are mere dialects, or a severe threat to the desirable immutability of the language of the common ‘motherland’ (Martín 1997b; 2016). The production of this kind of knowledge is considered part of a broader process that Mignolo (2011: xv-xvi et passim) calls the *coloniality of knowledge*. This expression refers to the on-going colonialised access to knowledge, as well as its distribution, production and reproduction, a largely subtle process that ultimately excludes and occludes alternative epistemes (or ways of knowing) or, in our case, alternative ways of speaking. Through this detailed hierarchy of languages and people, the colonial discourse is actively perpetuated. These testimonies show the extent to which it becomes re-articulated in migrants’ everyday struggles for language ownership, when they are dispossessed of the local language, regardless of the extent to which they have mastered it.

First, the mere enunciation of the norm, which in fact refers to the native speaker model, establishes a sociolinguistic boundary between speakers of the standard or local variety and speakers of other varieties. Within the frame of nativeness, natives are constructed as both a model and the authority in relation to language (Bloomfield 1933: 43). However, our analysis reveals that the native-model speaker is not only inextricably bound to a national project and a territory, that is, to the *original territory*, but also to a *socio-economic project*, namely the colonial enterprise, which presents the metropolis as the core of its expansion and as its legitimate owner. It is precisely this connection that shows how linguistic concepts are shaped by, and in turn, themselves shape linguistic ideologies.

Linguistic knowledge related to the neutrality of a single linguistic norm, standardised through the hierarchisation of languages and dialects, with models of speakerhood remaining linked to a particular territory, has long been established in certain areas. The postcolonial linguistic construction of national and pan-Hispanic identities in Spain and Latin America has been addressed by del Valle (2007). The same author previously investigated Spain’s contemporary language policies and geopolitical interests in Latin America (del Valle, 2002), while in a recent paper, Moreno Cabrera (2015) analysed the cumulative production of the ideologies and myths of Spanish linguistic nationalism, highlighting the role of linguistics as a discipline and language academies in this respect. Such knowledge, ideologies and the tensions they produce, are reproduced by the interlocutors with whom our participants interact. .

At the basis of the orders of indexicality we referred to in subsection A, is a regime of truth (Foucault, Davidson and Burchell 2008: 20) according to which deeply rooted disciplinary knowledge socially functions as true and so induces regulated effects of power. Local speakers locate the value of a language in conformity with its relationship to the metropolitan community, thus giving way to a pattern of authority. This occurs at the local level and particularly within the field of education. Within this logic, a language variety has to be perceived as deeply rooted in a given social and geographic territory in order to have value. This exhibits patterns of authority. The examples we analyse in the next section reveal the existence of patterns of control and discipline, by which power is often exercised to regulate the behaviour of individuals in society.

C. The management of power relations through interrogation

The way in which the participants in our study talked about language assessments raised the question: “Who has the right to assess?” Apparently innocent utterances about how well the interlocutor puts the language to use, and about how exotic his/her accent is, produced and reproduced social asymmetries in relation to language. This created the impression that only the “best” speakers (the local/standard/native speakers) are empowered to pass judgment. Surveillance, then, goes beyond institutional settings; it is exercised at multiple nodal points in diverse social encounters in which selected participants apparently have access to the management of power resources.

Thus, as critical sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology research has shown, linguistic differences are assigned dissimilar values, as part of a larger social process by which economic and symbolic resources are distributed. However, as the analysis of language surveillance shows, we need to understand how this distribution is reproduced within interaction and how it is mediated by each participant’s power to act within the exchange (Martín Rojo 2016). Thus, in the case we are examining, social agents both Latinx and local speakers compete for symbolic resources within daily encounters in institutional settings. This competition is shaped by various factors, including their migration trajectory, issues of ethnicity and social class. However, we do not have sufficient data to fully explore these interrelations, which could explain differences and hierarchies among Latinx migrants. For instance, early Argentinean migrants (e.g. 70’s arrivals) have had very successful careers in Spain, including holding public positions. Our participants’ accounts capture how in asymmetrical interactions the dynamics the unequal distribution of resources is exacerbated. This process is illustrated in the following example, in which the speaker is Manuel, who before starting his MA attempted to find employment in a tightening Spanish job market, under austerity measures.

EXAMPLE 6

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20  21  22  23  24  25 | [( ) te puedo contar] te puedo contar una experiencia (.) el año pasado .HH entré a trabajar en verano ( ) (entré a) trabajar en (DÍA) en los supermercado de hh (0.4) (buE) .HHH y:::(h) (.) el primer contacto que tengo con mi jefe (.) me- .HH fue decirme: bueno me dijo primero::(h) e:(h) e:: de dónde eres? le digo de Perú .HH qué años tienes? treinta (0.4) .HH mj(h) pues hablas muy bien castellano para ser de Perú  ((Risas))  Me le quedé mirando y le digo es que hablamos castellano  ( )=  =y qué haces? (0.4) en plan de:(h) qué haces? le digo que acababa de terminar historia y voy a hacer un máster para ser profesor (0.4) se me queda así (.) (va bien) de repente me empezó ya a hablar del trabajo y pregunta(.) te apetece trabajar los domingos? pues para apetecerme no (.) (Para) eso ya habla mucho de las ganas que tienes de trabajar .HH directamente PUM (.) en plan de: me marcó yo creo que marco mu- me- me me puso la cruz en cuanto a .HH e:: lo estaba poniendo yo en jaque no:? poniéndole en evidencia con respecto a las tonterías que estaba diciendo .HH entonces directamente  [( )]  [( ) (no sabía dónde estaba Perú)]  (qué) región (.) o sea no tenía ni idea= |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20  21  22  23 | [( ) I’ll tell you] I’ll tell you what happened once(.) last year .HH I got a summer job ( ) (I started) work in (DIA) in the supermarket hh (0.4) (buE) .HHH y:::(h) (.) the first time I met the manager (.) me- .HH he said: well first he said ::(h) e:(h) e:: where are you from? I said, Peru.HH How old are you? ? Thirty (0.4) .HH mj(h) Well, you speak very good Spanish for someone from Peru  ((Laughter))  I looked at him and said, But we speak Spanish  ( )=  = And what do you do? (0.4) meaning, like:(h) What do you do? I said I’ve just graduated in History and I’m going to do a Masters, to be a teacher (0.4) He was, like that (.) (it’s going well) suddenly he then starts to talk about the job and he asks(.) Do you fancy working on Sundays? Well, I wouldn’t go so far as to say I fancy it, no(.) That says a lot about how keen you are to work.HH Straight out PUM (.) it’s like: he took note I think he ruled me out.HH e:: I was showing him up, wasn’t I:? challenging all the stupid things he was saying .HH then, straight out  [( )]  [( ) (he didn’t know where Peru was)]  (what) region (.) I mean, he had no idea= |

In this example, the questioning (“Where are you from?”) is followed by an evaluative stance (“Well, you speak very good Spanish for someone from Peru”),indicating the manager’s expectations that a person from Peru would not speak Spanish as well as the locals. Manuel’s lack of complicity, expressed in his gaze and mentioning the obvious (“I looked at him and said, But we speak Spanish”), underlines his disagreement with the sociolinguistic knowledge and ideologies that shape the manager’s evaluation. The asymmetries in the participation framework and in the management of interaction are prevalent within this sociocultural and ideological frame. This kind of evaluation, thus, is not a two-way process. Manuel’s narrative shows how the unequal social position of the two speakers is foregrounded in this interaction, and not the cultural or linguistic differences per se.

The questioning continues (“What do you do?”), and we see again that the employer had other expectations regarding Manuel’s cultural background and where that would position him. The following question (“Do you fancy working on Sundays?”) seems to be an abrupt change of topic and the prelude to a negative assessment (“That says a lot about how keen you are to work”) implying that Manuel is not sufficiently hard working. The manager continued to subject him to a judgement that confirmed an asymmetrical relationship. Manuel interprets the rejection as the consequence of his asserting himself as a non-native speaker with a respectable education: “I was showing him up, wasn’t I?” challenging all the stupid things he was saying” (lines 20-21).

Thus, it is precisely the management of power relations in day-to-day interactions that produces the difference and associates it with knowledge. Consequently, participants, in a more powerful institutional role, can disempower others. In the course of the reported interactions during which assessment took place, Latinx were constructed as lacking in three respects: “(1) access to the possibility of representing themselves or others (turn level); (2) a legitimated voice, as well as credibility, reason or decision (interaction level); and (3) institutional authority and the possibility of moving up the social ladder (socio- institutional level)” (see Martín Rojo 2016, for a detailed exposition of the microphysics of power in interactions). The articulation at these three levels produces not only the disempowerment of these speakers and the empowerment of the locals, but also the objectification of the values assigned to language varieties and speakers. Thus, the interactional dynamics of interrogation combines the establishment of linguistic norms and hierarchies with a deployment of force within interaction.

Exercising power is not simply a function of the relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is, in addition, a way in which certain actions modify others. In self-monitoring, as in Rodrigo’s efforts (in Example 5) to incorporate and practise the norm, he accepts his subaltern position as a speaker of the language and as a member of society. His capacity to act and interact with local speakers is marked by his experience of previous interactions, and oriented towards satisfying the normative demands of disciplinary knowledge that are mobilised to include or exclude him from the group. Thus, Rodrigo’s self-monitoring behaviour constrains his ability to act (Ahearn 2001) and interact, as Example 7 illustrates. In addition, the corrections to which he is subjected indicate that he is not considered to be a legitimate speaker of his adopted society (Duranti 2004). In short, he is incarcerated by the duality of this confirmation and the futility of resistance.

**4. Self-surveillance, ‘adaptation’ and resistance as potential constitutive elements of “muda”.**

In this section, we examine how surveillance is internalized by the Latinx participants of this study. Surveillance can be self-imposed and omnipresent in the minds of these speakers, especially when interacting with the locals. Inevitably, this has normalising effects. In example 7 below, Rodrigo offers us a glimpse of his failed efforts to master certain aspects of the local norm. He articulates the phonological opposition between /s/ and /*θ*/ as an unconquerable grammatical challenge. Rodrigo’s linguistic performance in his interaction with us had no linguistic features that could be assigned to the Spanish varieties of his native Ecuador. He regularly participates in theatre activities where he performs local personae. His account describes a scenario in which his “muda” (probably initiated years ago) is not working, not being sufficiently considered in this social context. The speaker is aware of this, and reverts to hypercorrection to remedy it. When this adaptation is not complete and hypercorrection takes place and mockery often served.

EXAMPLE 7

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 | hago teatro también . y lo que pasa es que hice el año pasado una obra del S:::: y tenía que decir “siervo” tenía que decir siervo y claro y yo dije cómo se dice ciervo? siervo(de) ( ) ciervo siervo HHHEH .HH y dije pues se dice ciervo EHHEHH .HH y salí y dije “el ciervo de dios” y(h) dije bueno pues  ((Risas))  ( ) claro luego me dijeron es que no: HEHH .HH es que has dicho ciervo  ((Risas))  Digo ciervo (de) qué? HHEHH .HH |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | *1*  *2*  *3*  *4*  *5*  *6*  *7*  *8*  *9*  *10*  *11*  *12*  *13*  *14* | *I do theatre too. And what happened is that last year*  *I was in a play of S:::: and I had to use a phrase meaning “servant of god” and of course I wasn’t sure about how to pronounce it I wondered should I say “ciervo” (deer) or “siervo”(servant), ciervo or siervo, which one is it? HHHEH . HH*  *And I went on stage and what finally came out was “ciervo de dios” (“deer of god”) I said well then*  *((LAUGHTER))*  *( )and of course later they told me that no: ((laughing)) you I had said “deer”(/θiervo/)*  *((laughter))*  *I said deer of what?? HHEHH. HH*  *((laughter))* | |

Rodrigo relates his own monitoring of his accent, showing his anticipation of the effect if he would get it wrong. Then, in spite of reminding himself by an over application of the phonological distinction, he still “mispronounces” *ciervo*, resulting in a humorous performance from the point of view of the audience. Although he laughs, the incident was embarrassing to him. A few lines later Rodrigo said that as a result of this performance, and presumably some others too, “I don’t forget anymore, I get it now, I tell them (°I don’t know whether to say it°) before saying it”. Thus, even before he pronounces a word in which the s/*θ* distinction comes up, he articulates explicit knowledge of the norm according to which he is typically corrected. In doing so he acknowledges the social importance that he attributes to stylistic shifts in his repertoire, as he attempts to fully belong.

In the following example taken from Rodrigo’s oral history, he reproduces the internal tension entailed in the difficulty to challenge hegemonic colonial discourse, and its implications.

EXAMPLE 8

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6  7 | [ N a d a ] o sea normalmente no n:o digo nada o sea simplemente calló m- me pongo serio y ya está .HH (.) ahora ya pues m::(h) (.) me fastidia (0.4) me fastidia un poco más porque ya dices- ya es que ya pasó la broma o sea ya pasó ya: .HH (pues) ya cuando la repiten una y otra vez ( ) digo es que no te puedes reír de ellos porque HEHHEHEH .HH ellos hablan bien? .HH dices bueno pues nada |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6 | *[N o t h i n g] I mean normally I don’t do:n’t say anything I mean I simply shut up or or I grow serious and that’s it .HH (.) now I mean m::(h)(.) it bothers me (0.4) it bothers me a bit above all because you say- the joke is over .HH (so) I mean you can’t laugh back at them because HEHHEHEH. HH they speak good Spanish, don’t they? .HH you say to yourself well alright* |

Rodrigo’s reactions, which agree with those of others we talked to and with incidents we witnessed during observations carried out on the university campus, reveal how painfully aware he is of the norm and of their confirmation, even while they critique it (“they (the Spaniards) speak well?” line 6). The strategies the Latinx have developed as a result of surveillance are primarily passive ones (“I shut up”, “grow serious”); Rodrigo indicates that the only possible resistance in their continuous struggle to be fully recognised, is silence. Put differently, their ability to act is constrained by the centripetal forces that the norm exerts in its endowment of language authority to the locals, and its concomitant dispossession of such authority regarding these migrants. The only route to inclusion and (further) mobility thus is to go with the flow, to make at least some, even if limited, headway. This pressure is, nevertheless, modulated by differences and hierarchies among Latinx migrants and responds to various factors, including their migration trajectory, issues of ethnicity and social class.

‘Adaptation’ thus is a stylistic move that entails the conscious reproduction of indexicals (Silverstein 2003) in an attempt to erase any signs of being different in self-presentation, so as to avoid being treated as non-legitimate. This is clear in Rodrigo’s internalisation of the norm, and in his self-surveillance as well as the resulting self-censorship. Nicolas, in Example 3, also refers to his attempts to adapt to the norm to fully participate in the “dominant discourse” of his adopted society, to renegotiate his identity as a full member of the group with a view to being heard properly. The speakers’ reports of their adaptation to the norm indicate that this change is not, strictly speaking, voluntary. It is mainly oriented towards affiliation, more precisely, to be fully included. In addition, adaptation is not something that is easily achieved. This is captured by Rodrigo’s conscious though failed effort to adapt, in Example 7. The very accentual features he seeks to erase and the ones that he attempts to emulate, remain as markers of inauthenticity as a result of which he is subjected to further surveillance and, in some cases, mockery.

Besides the particular distinctive features that interlocutors highlight, these speakers have certainly adapted their repertoires.. They did so by attempting to eliminate any trace of markedness in some, though not necessarily all their interpersonal interactions. Thus, in keeping with studies on “muda” these changes are not fixed. They fluctuate. They are transitional, situational and relational as they are motivated by a need or desire for full group participation. Indeed, both the social relevance and situatedness of these shifts are captured in the oral histories we gathered, such as in Example 5, line 1 when Nicolas acknowledges adapting “so that they’d leave me alone”, or when performing tasks such as reading aloud, as voiced by other participants in the project.

Although all the interviewees referred to the (local) norm, they did not report internalizing the norm in mechanical or fully predictable ways. Manuel’s account (Example 3) articulates participants’ awareness of the colonial episteme that fuels the language surveillance they are subjected to and their resistance to it. This, along with other reports, indicates that dissenting practices are pervasive. While Nicolas and Rodrigo’s accounts are based largely on their individual experiences, Manuel contextualises his experience socially and historically by politicising it. In so doing, he underscores the importance of understanding individual experiences as public matters. In other words, he performs a double metapragmatic articulation by confirming and critiquing them.

Thus, although these Latinx speakers are aware of prevailing colonial ideologies of linguistic superiority, (attempted) changes in the repertoire do not necessarily indicate ideology alignment. Often they comply with norms due to a desire to belong, to be treated as full members in the adopted society. In the cases we examined, the participants invoked these discourses to contest being discredited and to judge those who judge them. So, the key assumption of the colonial episteme that states the superiority of the colonizers as owners of the language and even as true native speakers is often challenged.

**5. Conclusions**

In this article, we have discussed how language surveillance, as a mechanism of power, regulates the linguistic behaviour of individuals through a complex system of practices. Surveillance is built by producing an order of indexicality, by maintaining a body of disciplinary knowledge, and by producing and reproducing asymmetrical relations of power in interactions that take the form of interrogation. We have also discussed how disciplinary linguistic and sociocultural knowledge is rooted in prescriptive linguistics, particularly advancing the concepts of a standard and metropolitan norm and the notion of ‘nativeness’, and then actualising such ideas in relation to migrants. In this case as is probably the case in all human communities, linguistic practices of both ingroup and outgroup speakers are organized by means of a value system that includes orders of indexicality. Disciplinary knowledge (albeit not always) can become then an instrument of surveillance.

It is in interaction that this knowledge is mobilised and becomes a form of power. Surveillance goes beyond institutional settings; it is exercised through a multiplicity of nodal points in a myriad of social encounters in which participants have their agency constrained and their voices silenced. The microphysics of power within social encounters contributes to the maintenance of particular models of speakerhood, by comparing and differentiating between different categories of speakers, hierarchizing them, attempting to homogenize them, and finally, excluding them. The contribution of this paper is to have identified and described the power technique by means of which social reproduction takes place in relation to language. This power dynamics can be then analysed in detail in other contexts. In fact, it can certainly be observed in the case of internal migration and other types of interdialectal contact within Spain.

We have seen how indexicality is ordered in the interactions reported by Latinxs in an educational setting, specifically the way in which systemic patterns of indexicality represent systemic patterns of authority, of control and evaluation, and hence of inclusion and exclusion by real or perceived “others”. In the context of migration and in educational settings, attempts at maintaining the prevalent metropolitan norm are a way of perpetuating a form of symbolic domination, which prevents the social mobility of those who do not adhere to it. This process is however shaped not only by the educational setting that exacerbates power dynamics, but also by social and cultural capital. Cultural capital and monetary capital are not equally distributed among different groups of Latinx, We have thus observed differences in the pressure these migrant speakers experienced in relation to them.

The oral histories that these participants shared with us, as well as the observations we made during this study, depict a society that constantly presents itself as host, thus inevitably treating the Latinx speakers as guests. These speakers’ reported linguistic performance in the host society in interactions with the local population in specific domains, determines their inclusion or exclusion, their full acceptance or not.

Even when the linguistic performance of these speakers shows hardly any traces of non-locality, the smallest linguistic element of difference is heard as dissonant, prompting locals to interrogate and pass judgment. The basis of this kind of interrogation resides in the endemic and centripetal power of the metropolitan norm, which is reinforced by prescriptive disciplinary linguistic knowledge. Only those with local identity can mobilise this knowledge to judge others and situate them as subaltern others. Latin American speakers are thus positioned as *new speakers* of the language, a language that is constructed as homogeneous and monolithic, detached from the history and social conditions that shaped its varieties, including the Central-Northern Peninsular Spanish variety.

Stylistic moves to erase any signs of markedness in self-presentation to avoid being treated as non-legitimate, can be understood as a particular case of “muda”. However, in the reported experiences of the participants here, these changes are situational, relational, and limited in time and space. They emphasise a need for affiliation, to be included in certain spheres of life. Finally, resistance in given contexts such as we reported regarding surveillance, primarily in educational contexts, have taught these speakers that resistance in this field is often ineffective and that instead, they should pursue adaptation.

We intend the results of this study and their discussion to sensitize others to some of the struggles for societal inclusion and mobility that Latinx speakers experience. We hope with this to contribute to creating an alternative environment in which linguistic norms and knowledge embrace the natural richness that linguistic diversity affords: resistance is NOT futile.

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2. The term Latinx responds to its relatively more common, though still resisted, use in the USA to refer to Latinas and Latinos without the implicit gender binary that Spanish grammatical gender affords them. This label is not used by the participants of our study nor, as far as we are aware, in Madrid. Instead, individuals who originally hailed from Latin America are *neutrally* referred to as Latin Americans, although in some cases, incorrectly and pejoratively, the discriminatory categorizations ‘Sudacas’, is still used. Latinx is thus used here in a second order sense with a view to sensitizing others to the on-going struggles for belonging that these speakers go through in their daily lives, and to the challenges they are likely to encounter in a not too distant future. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For instance, many early Argentinean migrants (e.g. 70’s arrivals) have had very successful careers in Spain, including holding public positions. Many of these speakers still have hearable traces of River Plate Spanish. Indeed, one of the participants of our study explicitly articulates the capital that River Plate Spanish endows him with at a relational level. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. With this term, we refer to an exercise of discipline that coerces by means of observation. This is one of the three mechanisms of discipline proposed by Foucault (1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A consolidated research group in Barcelona, Bilbao, Vigo and Madrid with international partners in the UK and Canada. Currently, the NEOPHON group is involved in a project to explore and document ethnographically the process of “Muda” focusing on “longitudinal” or “life cycle” perspectives on the study of multilingualism. This methodological shift has provided us with supplementary data, mainly service exchanges between Latinx servers and customers, and between Latinx servers and local customers, that shed some light on the analysis we present in this paper. This is why at some points we will refer to these new observations. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Many researchers have highlighted the difficulties faced by students of foreign origin in accessing university programmes, observing that they are often oriented towards compensatory or vocational programmes (see Martín Rojo 2010). Thus, the number of university students with a migrant origin during the first decade of the XXI century represents only 3,2% of the total. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. River Plate Spanish, also referred to as Rioplatense Spanish, is a dialect spoken mainly in the Rio de la Plata basin of Argentina. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Accent is considered to be a key element of the debate on nativeness and often used to provide evidence for the Critical Period Hypothesis. The theory posits that some language functions, in this case accent, can only be fully acquired within a given time frame, generally by puberty, if not earlier. Our Latinx participants, with the exception of Nicolas, migrated to Madrid after puberty. Notwithstanding this, through secondary socialization they acquired the local accent, but all of them have found this phonological opposition an insurmountable barrier to full societal inclusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. These terms have been coined by Spanish dialectology: “*laísmo”* and “*leísmo”* refer to variations from standard Spanish involving the third person object pronouns. The terms “*seseo”* and “*ceceo*” are used to describe the opposition between dialects that distinguish the phonemes /θ/ and /s/, and those that exhibit a neutralisation of the two sounds, into either /s/ (seseo) or /θ/ (ceceo). *Seseo* is the standard pronunciation in southern Spain, the Canary Islands and Latin America. *Ceceo* in the Spanish dialectological tradition entails the substitution of /s/ for /θ/, especially in consonant initial position (e.g. [zevíya] that is frequently heard in southwestern Spain, though stigmatised as incorrect). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)