Chapter 14
‘gusɑme kɑ’ lɑtɑ!: Faux Spanish in the New Latino Diaspora

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Abstract Drawing on ethnographic research in one American elementary school, this chapter investigates how a group of young English-speaking students react to the increasing presence of Spanish in their school and community. The authors focus on how English-speaking African American students use basic Spanish words and phrases, speaking “faux Spanish,” as they imitate their Spanish-speaking peers, participate in interaction rituals, seek attention, and playfully mock their peers. The chapter describes how these instances show children making sense of difference, as they assign value and high status to language practices and social identities often marginalized in school settings. The study suggests that, regardless of the Standard English variety taught and required for academic endeavors at school, children are busy expanding their linguistic repertoires, playing with positioning and footing, and laying claim to and negotiating multiple social identities. The authors argue that attention to these processes may help educators treat them as resources for learning that can inform practice.

Keywords Faux spanish · Stylization · Register · New latin diaspora

14.1 Introduction

Across the USA, rapidly shifting classroom demographics have given way to what Enright (2011) terms the “new mainstream,” growing numbers of students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds attending American public schools

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even in areas that have not traditionally been ethnically diverse. This is happening most saliently in areas of recent immigrant settlement called the "new Latino diaspora" (NLD; Murillo and Villenas 1997; Wortham et al 2002), rural and suburban areas in which Spanish-speaking students are beginning to outnumber their English-speaking peers in many public elementary schools. In such schools, first- and second-generation immigrant students work and play alongside peers from various backgrounds whose families have no recent history of immigration. While most research in NLD locations examines how Latino students are faring, in this chapter we focus on English-speaking peers in one such community, examining a distinctive response to the arrival of Spanish speakers.

In newer receiving communities, where long-standing residents live in close proximity to growing numbers of Mexican immigrant families, both hosts and immigrants face the task of making sense of one another. These sense-making processes take place within the larger national debate about Mexican immigration to the USA, a debate rife with negative evaluations of immigrants (e.g., Dick 2011a; Santa Ana 1999, 2002). Research on these processes documents how widely circulating discourses about immigrants are reproduced, contested, and transformed at the local level (e.g., DeJaeghere and McCleary 2010; Koppelman 2011; Gallo et al. 2011; Perez 2012). Following this line of scholarship, and drawing from 3 years of ethnographic research in one school, we focus on the language practices of young host community members from one classroom in an NLD community. Over the course of the first 3 years of school, children from English-speaking backgrounds, the majority of whom were African American, expressed great interest in learning Spanish and using basic words and phrases, incorporating Spanish phonology and vocabulary into their discourse, and claiming to speak Spanish and understand Mexican culture.

We focus on moments when children from English-speaking backgrounds spoke what we call *faux Spanish*, nonsense syllables which sound like Spanish in their phonology and intonation. Faux Spanish utterances included nonsensical syllables interspersed with Spanish vocabulary such as numbers, which were often strung together to formulate what sounded like conversational turns. For example: "'komɑs 'mɑkɑ dos 'komɑs 'ɛkɑ pu'lɑtɛ 'ninəə 'sokɑ 'siŋko 'komɑs 'nɑki."[1] The following excerpt from our field notes describes this kind of language use. Imani, an English-speaking African American girl, interacts with her Mexican, Spanish-speaking peers and a researcher.[2]

> During the bus ride on the kindergarten field trip to a nearby farm, I (researcher) sit near Imani who tells her peers and me that she speaks a lot of English, but only a little bit of Spanish. Gregorio, her seatmate, asks her to speak Spanish, but she does not. A bit later, when I ask her if all of her family lives here in town, she first replies yes, but then says no, that they also live in Mexico….Hours later, on the bus ride home when most of the children are sleeping, I hear Imani, several rows in front of me, speaking loudly in what sounds like faux Spanish to her seatmate, Madalena. (Field notes, June, 2009)

Throughout the 3 years of research at Grant Elementary, Imani and her peers from English-speaking backgrounds engaged in similar language practices and claims.

[1] This and all examples of faux Spanish are transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet.

[2] Pseudonyms are used for names of research participants, school, and community.

Over half of their classmates were from Spanish-speaking households, the majority of Mexican heritage with parents who arrived in the USA over the past decade.

In this chapter, we argue that these practices violate normative expectations about language attitudes, language learning, and language use in the USA—where languages other than English are normally positioned as inferior, and their speakers are positioned as lacking the skills needed to succeed in school.[3] We discuss how faux Spanish and related practices contest widely circulating negative evaluations about Mexican immigrants and their language. Children’s embrace of Spanish and Spanish speakers represent counterhegemonic action through which language practices and social identities often marginalized in school settings are nonetheless assigned prestige and value in local contexts. We describe how these responses, when children from English-speaking backgrounds draw on and play with the linguistic resources available to them at school, emerge, transform, and solidify as we follow the same class of children across 3 years of elementary school. Our analysis shows how young children, both in discrete interactions and diachronically across several years, make sense of difference and attempt to forge solidarity with their Spanish-speaking immigrant peers. These students’ actions reveal an unexpected heterogeneity and flexibility in interethnic relations.

14.2 Dialogism, Stylization, and Enregisterment

In this chapter, we draw on Bakhtin’s dialogic approach to discourse in which “the expression of an utterance can never be fully understood or explained if its thematic content is all that is taken into account” (1986, p. 92). Utterances not only have referents, but also “echo” with the “voices” of others. When one speaks with a certain voice, she uses “words that index some social position(s) because these words are characteristically used by members of a certain group” (Wortham 2001, p. 38). In this way, speakers inevitably position themselves with respect to others, making indexical associations to and evaluations of others. In the field note excerpt above, for example, Imani voices her Spanish-speaking peers positively, aligning herself with them and offering a positive evaluation of their language practices. Following Bakhtin, the language use we examine in this chapter can be seen as a site of diverse, shifting, and negotiated meaning (cf. Bailey 2007). The voices young English speakers invoke as they move across the school day reflect not a singular or static response to the prevalence of Spanish and Spanish speakers in their classrooms, but rather multiple and conflicting understandings of difference and evolving voices and evaluations.

To examine these dialogic practices more closely, we follow Rampton’s (1995, 2006, 2009, 2010) research on heteroglossia in multiethnic school settings in the UK. He documents moments when adolescents engage in *stylization*, or “reflexive communicative action in which speakers produce specially marked and often exaggerated representations of languages, dialects, and styles that lie outside their own

[3] Exceptions to these normative expectations exist, especially in areas of the USA where bilingual education programs are growing (cf. García, 2009), but the monolingual ideology remains strong.

habitual repertoire" (Rampton 2009, p. 149). This concept, rooted in Bakhtinian notions of discourse, illustrates how, when speakers produce "an artistic image of another's language" (Bakhtin 1981, p. 362), they are critically reflecting on and evaluating that language as well as positioning themselves with respect to its speakers (Rampton 2006). Rampton also explores how adolescents engage in language *crossing*, or "the use of a language or variety that feels anomalously 'other' for the participants in the activity, involving movements across quite sharply sensed social or ethnic boundaries, in ways that can raise questions of legitimacy" (Rampton and Charalambous 2010, p. 2; see also Rampton 1995). In examining these kinds of language practices, listener uptake or response is of great analytical import (Rampton 2009). For example, the success of crossing depends on whether listeners are convinced of its interactional salience as well as the speaker's "ethnopolitical right" to cross (2009, p. 153). We argue that English-speaking children's use of Spanish and talk about Spanish and Mexican-ness at times resembles stylization, and at other times crossing—when usage involves more explicit movement across social/ethnic boundaries.

As we followed one class of children through their first 3 years of elementary school, we documented how the constellation of language practices described above emerged and changed over time. We came to see these practices as part of an *emergent discursive register* in which linguistic and paralinguistic signs came to be associated with and recognized by particular groups of speakers (Agha 2004, 2005, 2007). We refer to this register as *faux Spanish*. Its development and transformation is, in Agha's terms, a process of *enregisterment*, "whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (and enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language speakers" (Agha 2005, p. 38). Using the concept of enregisterment, we examine the development of both the *social range* and the *social domain* of this emergent register. By "social range" Agha means those who are recognized as displaying these particular language behaviors, and by "social domain" he means those who recognize these behaviors as indexes of this group (Agha 2007, p. 125). Our analysis traces how children's instances or tokens of talk become meaningful in a changing social domain and range. The concept of enregisterment builds on Bakhtinian dialogism and Rampton's empirical research on stylization and crossing. Just as children's utterances echo with multiple voices, involve metalevel evaluations, and accomplish social positioning, their language practices can be seen as reflexive activity through which linguistic and paralinguistic forms come to index particular social roles and stereotypes (see Agha 2007; Silverstein 1976, 2003). These roles and stereotypes are not static or monolithic, but emerge in and through children's interactions as they move across kindergarten, and first and second grades.

In this chapter, although the emergent register we refer to as "faux Spanish" centers on actual instances of faux Spanish, it also includes a number of additional features. First, it emerges and develops within a shifting but limited social range and domain. It includes some Spanish language practices of peers from Spanish-speaking backgrounds, often those used in ritualized utterances (such as greetings and leave-takings), classroom routines, and everyday interpersonal interaction. It also involves metalinguistic activity—talk about Spanish language practices and

Mexican-ness. The utterances in faux Spanish have little, if any, referential meaning, but substantial indexical value. This register is linked to but distinct from wider socio-historical phenomena such as the local, primarily Mexican, immigrant language(s) and the standard academic variety of English used in school. In the following section, we describe these broader contextual factors as we discuss the research setting and methods.

14.3 Marshall as a Community of the New Latino Diaspora

In the past 15 years, longstanding patterns of Mexican presence in the USA have changed dramatically. There has been considerable growth in immigration to areas previously unfamiliar with Latinos, especially rural and suburban locations such as Marshall, our focal community. Wortham et al. (2002) refer to these areas as the “new Latino diaspora” (a term coined by Murillo and Villenas 1997). Marshall, a town of approximately 35,000 located outside of a large city in the Northeast, has experienced a dramatic demographic shift in recent years. From 2000 to 2010, the Latino (primarily Mexican) population grew from 1,500 to almost 10,000. It has a shrinking White population (32%), and growing African American (38%) and Latino (28%) populations (US Census Bureau 2010).

Marshall’s longtime residents respond in various ways to the growing numbers of Mexicans. Some view Mexican newcomers as hardworking, family-oriented, and religious people who have revitalized the town’s commercial areas and churches. Others describe them as a strain on social services, lament the increased use of Spanish in local businesses, and insist that English should be the only language used in schools. The comments of a longtime resident upon hearing Spanish spoken in a local deli—“This is America, speak English!”—exemplify these latter sentiments (Gallo et al. 2011). Our research in Marshall has explored some of these responses with regard to Mexican residents’ language use, particularly in local schools (Allard and Mortimer 2008; Gallo et al. 2011). Findings suggest that attitudes in Marshall about Mexicans’ language use are dynamic and heterogeneous. For example, administrators and teachers at the high school have tended to view Mexican newcomers as lacking both education and language, describing them as speaking “Tarzan English” and “Hillbilly Spanish” (Gallo et al. 2011). In contrast, at the elementary level educators have expressed more positive views of Mexican-heritage students, positioning them as bilinguals-in-the-making (ibid).

14.3.1 Grant Elementary School

The school site for our study, Grant Elementary, is one of six elementary schools in Marshall and is located in the downtown area. Over 96% of its approximately 400 kindergarten through fourth-grade students qualify for free or reduced lunch due to

their families' limited resources. The school serves almost equal numbers of African American and Latino (predominantly Mexican) students, and a few students from other backgrounds (MCES 2010). In the lower grades, however, Latinos constitute the majority of students, and over 70% of the current kindergartners come from Spanish-speaking households. In the cohort we have been following for the past 3 years, more than half are of Mexican origin or first-generation children of Mexican families, roughly 25% are African American, and the remaining 25% are of Puerto Rican, Caucasian, or multiethnic (African American-Caucasian, African American-Latino, Mexican-Caucasian) heritage. Teachers at Grant are from European American, middle-class backgrounds, and only one teacher in the school speaks Spanish. For the first 2 years of research, one Spanish-speaking administrator of Puerto Rican heritage was present, and in the third year a Latina principal arrived. Spanish-speaking students at Grant are integrated with other students for the majority of the school day, and the approximately one-third who qualify for English as a Second Language services participate in a pull-out program for 15–60 min several times per week. At Grant, none of the classes or curricular materials are provided in Spanish, and while many of the students at the school are bilingual, the school itself is not. English is the official language of academics at Grant, and students are expected to use it for all academic tasks.

14.3.2 A Diachronic Look at Language Practices

We collected data at Grant Elementary for a 3-year period, from 2008 through 2011. In the first year of the study, we followed a group of six Mexican-heritage children at home and school during their kindergarten year, focusing on their language development as they entered the school system. We continued to follow this same group, with some changes in focal students, for the next 2 years as they moved through first and second grade, examining their language and literacy practices at home and school (first grade) as well as their fathers' involvement in their schooling (second grade). During this time, data collection included both field notes from participant observation and videotaping of focal students at home and in school, plus interviews with focal children, their parents, their teachers, and school administrators.

Although not part of our planned research focus, during the 3 years we began to notice how children from English-speaking, non-Latino backgrounds showed great interest not just in using and learning Spanish but also in talking and making claims about the language and its speakers. Our discussion in this chapter centers on the language practices and metalinguistic activity of these English-speaking students. Our ethnographic analyses follow Emerson et al. (1995) and Maxwell (1996), iteratively drawing patterns out of field notes, documents, transcribed interviews, and transcripts of video-recorded interactions. We used the qualitative software program *Atlas.ti* to code and group the instances of English-speaking children's talk in and about Spanish and its users in over 500 hundred texts, composed of field notes, transcribed interviews, and video-recorded interactions. Thus, although English-speaking children were not focal students in the larger study, we collected substantial

data on their interactions with the children we were observing regularly. As classroom composition changed each year, focal students were spread out across three classrooms in kindergarten, and across two in first and second grade. Additionally, there was a high rate of mobility, particularly for the English-speaking (non-Latino) students. Thus, the English-speaking students we observed expressing interest in Spanish and Mexican-ness changed over the course of the 3 years. Friendships between English-speaking students and the focal students also changed, which, as we discuss below, seemed to affect Spanish speakers’ responses to their peers’ interest in and use of Spanish or faux Spanish. In what follows, we provide an outline of the language practices children employed during the 3 years. We then discuss how these practices became enregistered as children moved through kindergarten, and first and second grades.

Children from English-speaking, non-Mexican backgrounds engaged with Spanish and Spanish speakers in various ways. They learned and used basic words and phrases in Spanish, adopted Spanish phonology and lexicon (or imitated these in faux Spanish), and at times even claimed Mexican identity or heritage. The tables below summarize the types of practices we observed. Table 14.1 represents how students from English-speaking backgrounds demonstrated metalinguistic awareness regarding Spanish, as well as claims they made about their relationship to Mexico. Students from English-speaking backgrounds frequently commented about spoken Spanish (e.g., “you talk Spanish?”) and written Spanish (e.g., asking to have the Spanish version of handouts to take home). Many students also expressed a desire to learn Spanish and solicited English translations of spoken Spanish. A few students engaged in play about Spanish (e.g., enacting a Spanish class) and labeled students based on their language backgrounds. For the most part, these practices were accepted by peers from Spanish-speaking backgrounds. However, when English-speaking students claimed Mexican heritage (e.g., “I lived there [Mexico] before”) or knowledge about Mexico (e.g., “Mexico is right here [on the map]”), students from Spanish-speaking backgrounds were less likely to accept the claims.

Table 14.2 represents the ways that children from English-speaking backgrounds incorporated Spanish into their school interactions, such as using Spanish vocabulary (e.g., *Excelente!*), repeating Spanish words spoken by their peers (e.g., *Rojo, rojo*[red, red]), translating words and phrases between English and Spanish (e.g., *Hola* means hello), and speaking faux Spanish. Over the 3 years, many children from English-speaking backgrounds engaged in these practices, and these uses of Spanish were generally accepted by classmates from Spanish-speaking backgrounds.

From this array of practices, the most striking to us were moments when children spoke faux Spanish, using intonation and phonology that made nonsense syllables sound like Spanish (with few, if any, actual Spanish lexical items). These utterances included drawn out or exaggerated nonsense syllables sprinkled with basic Spanish vocabulary (e.g., ‘komɑs ‘mɑkɑ dos ‘komɑs ‘ɛkɑ pu’lɑtɛ ‘ninəə ‘sokɑ ‘siŋko ‘komɑs ‘nɑki). Children strung together multiple utterances of this sort, formulating what sounded like conversational turns, at times directed to no one in particular but uttered in front of peers or researchers, and at other times spoken to English speakers or Spanish speakers. The phonological, intonational, and syl-

Table 14.1 Talk about Spanish or Mexican identity/heritage by children from English-speaking backgrounds

Descriptions	Examples from field notes and video logs
Noticing or asking about others' use of Spanish	Why did she say *caramba*? You talk Spanish? I saw you speaking Spanish
Commenting about written documents in Spanish	Spanish, Spanish, Spanish! (requesting Spanish version of note sent home) Do you got Spanish ones [forms to send Home]?
Asking how to say words in Spanish or expressing desire to learn Spanish	How do you say, "you're welcome, baby" in Spanish? I wanna learn Spanish. I try to be sayin' it
Requesting translation of what peers said in Spanish	What did they say [in Spanish]?
Engaging in play about Spanish language	[Let's play] Spanish class! (kids gather on the rug)
Labeling others' language backgrounds	Spanish, English, Spanish, Spanish (pointing at different children at the lunch table and naming them)
Claiming Mexican heritage or identity	I live there [Mexico] before
Claiming or showing knowledge of Mexican geography	Mexico is right here. (pointing on a map)

Table 14.2 Use of Spanish by children from English-speaking backgrounds

Description	Examples from field notes and video logs
Use of Spanish vocabulary for classroom activities, interactional rituals, evaluative remarks, and simple commands	*Excelente!* *Rá-pi-do, rá-pi-do, rá-pi-do* [fast, fast, fast]! (while peer passed out playing cards) *Gracias* for listening to my song. *Siéntate* [sit down]! *Mira* [look], sit down please
Repeating or parroting words uttered in Spanish by peers	*Rojo, rojo* [red, red]! (when Spanish-speaker announced in Spanish that his face was red from running)
Translating words and phrases from Spanish to English, or from English to Spanish, in front of peers and researchers	*Hola* means hello. I can say "come here" in Spanish—*ven aquí*
Speaking faux Spanish to or in the presence of English- and Spanish-speaking peers and researchers	For example, gúsame kalata!

labic construction of faux Spanish mirrored the language of Spanish speakers in the classroom, and most likely the Spanish they heard in Marshall and the media, but the utterances lacked referential meaning. We became curious about the indexical significance of these utterances and the interactional work children were accomplishing with them. Across the 3 years, we traced how these utterances and actions were enregistered in this classroom during the early years of elementary school.

14.3.2.1 Kindergarten

Our first year of research coincided with the children’s first year of elementary school and was, for almost all the children, their first experience interacting extensively with others from substantially different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. At the beginning of the school year, for most of the students from Mexican households, Spanish was the primary language of communication. Spanish-speaking children tended to use Spanish in interaction with each other. They also saw us, the researchers, as Spanish-speaking adults who could help them communicate with teachers and English-speaking peers. Their peers from English-speaking backgrounds responded to these uses of Spanish by frequently asking what we or they were saying. During the kindergarten year, these inquiries and requests were directed primarily to researchers. English-speaking children also began to try out Spanish vocabulary, often in a performative manner, calling a researcher’s attention before proclaiming, for example, “Do you know what *corazón* means? Heart!”, or asking how to say different words in Spanish. Students frequently demonstrated how they could count in Spanish or use salutations and leave-taking expressions. We recognize that our presence as non-Latino Spanish speakers and teacher-like figures legitimized and may have incentivized the use of Spanish for non-Spanish speakers in the classroom, but we argue that these instances also reflect children’s attempts to make sense of the different ways of speaking they were encountering.

Early in the study, we noticed that some students were stringing together short series of Spanish-sounding syllables as they sat at their tables and worked side-by-side with their Spanish-speaking peers. These faux Spanish utterances often took place during times when children were not being directly supervised by their teachers and when many of their peers were conversing with each other in Spanish. Some of these early usages seemed to be forms of *self-talk* (Goffman 1981), which were directed to no one in particular but most likely were meant to be heard by peers (or researchers). In these cases, children were “keeping alert and staying in tune” (Rampton 1995, p. 185) with the language practices of their peers and engaging in a relatively safe exercise of stylization. The social positions indexed or enacted through this stylization were tentative and unlikely to generate a rejection or confrontation.

The use of faux Spanish progressed over the course of the kindergarten year and culminated in more explicitly interactional types of usages such as that when Imani spoke directly, loudly, and at length to her Spanish-speaking classmate on the bus ride home from a field trip. This excerpt is a particularly rich example of the interactions between English and Spanish-speaking peers linked to faux Spanish, as it includes Imani’s claims about her ability to speak Spanish (“a little bit”) and about her family “also” living in Mexico, claims that preceded her utterances in faux Spanish by several hours. When she broke into faux Spanish, her seatmate, Madalena, a Spanish speaker, did not question Imani’s attempts at communication. While the researcher was not close enough to document Madalena’s reaction, Imani spoke long enough and loud enough for others to react. Across the bus, her teacher caught the researcher’s eye, later telling the researcher she was uncomfortable with Imani’s utterances, as they could have offended Spanish-speaking parent chaperones on the

bus. Madalena, on the other hand, seemed to take this form of communication in her stride, listening politely. Immediately afterward, the researcher told parents sitting within earshot that sometimes children from English-speaking backgrounds pretended to speak Spanish, and they smiled and laughed in response. Thus, Imani's use of faux Spanish, together with her claims about her ability to speak Spanish and her family living in Mexico, could be what Rampton calls a "safe" kind of crossing which was perhaps tacitly ratified when it was accepted by Spanish-speaking peers and parents. Through this crossing, Imani aligns herself with her Spanish-speaking peers, offering a positive evaluation of them and their language practices as something she herself participates in.

Other students from English-speaking backgrounds were not so successful in their attempts to affiliate or interact with their Spanish-speaking peers through Spanish. Jaleesa, an African American child who had few close friendships in the classroom with peers from either English- or Spanish-speaking backgrounds, spent much of her kindergarten year talking about Spanish and demonstrating words or phrases she had learned. However, while Imani, over time, began to use faux Spanish with her peers, Jaleesa primarily used it with the researcher. About half way through the school year, in front of tablemates who were mostly Spanish speakers, she told a researcher that she could speak Spanish and launched into faux Spanish. When her Spanish-speaking peers commented that what she was saying did not make sense, she ignored them and continued. Jaleesa remained unpopular with her classmates over the course of the year, regardless of their language backgrounds. Her attempts to position herself as a Spanish speaker were seen as transgressions by her peers. This example illustrates the risk inherent in crossing and stylization, and how the success of such moves depends on listeners' uptake, which in turn depends in part on contextual factors such as existing interpersonal relationships.

Over the 3 years, more and more English-speaking students engaged in similar stylization and crossing. What were initially instances of self-talk or talk directed to researchers grew into more interactional uses, which were mostly implicitly accepted or explicitly ratified by Spanish-speaking peers. At the same time, more children, Spanish and English speakers alike, became familiar with and came to value the use of Spanish tokens in the classroom. Initially just "momentary disruptions" (Rampton 1995, 2006), utterances in Spanish came to index status. Students for whom these practices had more neutral or positive interactional effects tended to engage in more positive interactions with their Spanish-speaking peers; in some cases, these children were considered to be close or "best" friends of Spanish speakers by their classmates. We follow Rampton (1995, 2006) in viewing these practices not just as part of a self- and sense-making process, but also as a way for children to forge solidarity with peers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Students' uses of and talk about Spanish became increasingly integrated into routine interactions with peers over the course of the year, as the faux Spanish register emerged and expanded.

14.3.2.2 First Grade

In first grade, many English-speaking children continued to use and talk about Spanish with researchers, and they began to use it more often in interactional rituals and

curricular routines with their peers. For example, they readily greeted, took leave of, evaluated others’ work (e.g., *muy bien* [very good/well] and *excelente*), gave directives, and used terms in Spanish for counting and basic school vocabulary (e.g., colors, shapes, classroom materials). We also noticed an increase in meta-talk about Spanish, with children often asking each other, even in cases when they knew the answer, if a peer or researcher spoke Spanish and reacting enthusiastically or dramatically (e.g., “Oh my God!”) when the answer was affirmative. Children who did not use Spanish at home also showed more interest in the school library’s collection of bilingual (Spanish-English) and Spanish texts, at times choosing books in Spanish to take home or to have researchers read.

We noticed that the range of the register continued to expand as children seemed to feel more comfortable trying out Spanish tokens, and some who had not been observed using it began to perform in faux Spanish in front of peers and researchers. Qasim, an African American boy from an English-speaking background who frequently commented on others’ abilities to speak Spanish, would break into loud, full-bodied performative stylizations in Spanish or faux Spanish during transitional moments in his classroom. For example, on one occasion when a researcher entered the room with a small group of mostly Spanish speakers from a nearby classroom, he ran to the door and began speaking rapid-fire strings of Spanish-sounding syllables, following the group to the rug, and continuing by demonstrating and translating Spanish words and phrases (*hola* means hello, *siéntate* means sit down). In such cases, researchers often smiled or praised these efforts, while Spanish-speaking students made few comments. Their choice not to reject (or to praise) their peers suggests that they had become more familiar with these practices, and that the Spanish speakers saw such uses of faux Spanish as part of the classroom routine. In another classroom, also during a transitional moment, a group of children, mostly Spanish speakers, followed Jeremiah, a boy of multiracial [non-Latino] heritage, to the rug for an impromptu enactment of “Spanish Class” while the teacher was preparing materials for her lesson. In other instances of language play, children recycled words and phrases from a Mexican folk song, the single song in Spanish that their music teacher had taught them that year. Through practices such as these, an increasing number of children offered positive assessments of Spanish and those who spoke it. Spanish speakers’ responses to these practices were positive or neutral. At the same time, catalyzed in part by interactions that started with faux Spanish, several children came to develop affiliations or cross-ethnic friendships.

As the year progressed, children engaged in increasing amounts of metalinguistic activity about Spanish and Mexican-ness, and it became routine to hear children discussing others’ language practices or abilities. Charles, an African American boy from an English-speaking household whose closest friend throughout first grade was Gregorio, a Spanish-speaking student, showed great interest in knowing and learning about Spanish and Mexico. He often asked about or commented on his peers’ and the researchers’ use of Spanish, and on several occasions he chose books in Spanish from the library. He also claimed to speak and read Spanish, although he rarely uttered any actual tokens. Toward the end of the first semester of first grade, upon hearing his peers discuss who at the table spoke Spanish, he responded, “I do, too. I only speak it at home, and sometimes I do at school, right Gregorio?” Gregorio did not discredit this claim, but he later commented about his “best friend

[Charles],” saying “he doesn’t talk in Spanish but I show him in Spanish.” Charles’s talk about Spanish could perhaps be seen as “safe” crossing, but a curious kind in which, due to his alliance with a Spanish speaker, uttering tokens of Spanish was not necessary. Although Charles was clearly part of the social domain that recognized the faux Spanish register that was emerging in the classroom, he was apparently not confident or competent enough to use Spanish tokens.

In contrast to Charles, Shantel had no close Spanish-speaking friends. She tended to direct her comments and use of Spanish to the researchers, and she had few successful interactions with Spanish-speaking peers. Despite her interest in Spanish and Mexican-ness, the claims she made in the presence of her peers were flatly contested. For example, in early spring of her first-grade year, during an independent work time, she began pointing at a location on a map with a stick uttering what sounded like, “that’s Mexico.” Immediately, Ben, a Mexican-born classmate replied, “Where? You not go to Mexico. I went there before. That was my house.” She responded, “me, too,” and then argued with Ben, claiming that she had, in fact, lived there. Ben shut down this interaction by commenting, “Dang, you not talk Spanish.” In this case Ben insisted across several conversational turns that her assertions were false. Such failed attempts happened with children like Shantel and Jaleesa who did not have positive interpersonal relationships with many peers. These children nonetheless continued to experiment with Spanish and faux Spanish in the classroom.

Negative reactions to the use of Spanish or claims about Mexican-ness mostly came from Spanish speakers, but not always. One day early in the year Lori, a White student, and Tavia, an African American student, began speaking faux Spanish to each other during independent work time. Their tablemate, Zachary, an African American boy, told them to stop, saying: “this is the USA, this is America.” His words echoed with more widely circulating voices, like the Marshall resident we described earlier saying “Welcome to America. Speak English!” These comments echo negative discourses at the national level that condemn immigrant language use (cf. Dick 2011b). Zachary’s directive illustrates how “people are continuously affiliating or disassociating themselves from a range of circumambient images of language and speech” (Rampton 2011, p. 288). As a child who never attempted to use Spanish during the 3 years we observed in his classrooms, Zachary represents other students who, while they most likely recognized the faux Spanish register, chose not to employ these practices themselves.

In first grade, while metalinguistic activity and use of Spanish tokens directed to researchers continued, children began to employ the register more often in informal interactions and even during curricular routines. During this year, more children showed interest in Spanish, and it was normal to see English speakers discussing its use. This more routine use, as well as claims children continued to make about Spanish and Mexican-ness, suggest that the register had begun to solidify across the small social domain of the classroom. Not all users employed all of the register’s features, and some English speakers did not use it at all. Furthermore, the kinds of evaluations communicated through talk in and about Spanish broadened, and not all were positive. As the register expanded, it was sometimes evaluated by mobilizing more negative national discourses about Spanish.

14.3.2.3 Second Grade

Many of these patterns in English-speaking students’ Spanish use continued in second grade, as the register of faux Spanish solidified further, but important changes also occurred. A wider range of students from English-speaking backgrounds incorporated actual Spanish lexical items into their talk, but there were fewer instances of faux Spanish. And, although Spanish literacy was not taught or recognized in school, students also demonstrated an increased awareness of Spanish print, often commenting on the Spanish-language version of handouts sent home to families or the Spanish sides of their weekly literacy magazines. Some students, like Keisha, an African American girl who regularly showed interest in Spanish and tried out Spanish vocabulary and phrases, also complained about the injustice of not providing equal availability of homework and other documents in Spanish. Others, like Charles, regularly asked for the Spanish version of handouts to be taken home, perhaps trying to demonstrate that there were Spanish speakers in his family (although there were not). In these instances, regardless of whether children were attempting to cross, they had begun to direct their positive evaluations of Spanish explicitly toward teachers, who were less willing than researchers to respond or address children’s comments or requests. In students’ second-grade year we also observed clearer instances of students from Spanish-speaking backgrounds explicitly teaching Spanish vocabulary to their peers from English-speaking backgrounds.

Two students, Nailah and Careem, illustrate how various students were engaging with Spanish and Mexican-ness during their second-grade year. Nailah, an African American student who had many Spanish- and English-speaking friends, regularly showed interest in learning Spanish words, often inquiring what different Spanish words meant. She also liked to repeat Spanish phrases she heard and frequently demonstrated her knowledge of Spanish, such as during a lunchtime conversation when her friend Marcie, from a Spanish-speaking background, said “Mine looks like a *mesa*. Who knows what’s a *mesa*?” Nailah quickly responded, “It’s like a table in Spanish.” She was one of the few who spoke in faux Spanish during second grade, such as during a paired math activity when she used Spanish-sounding language with her partner. Her classmate Gregorio talked proudly about how he and other Spanish-speaking students were teaching Nailah and other friends words in Spanish, such as the colors. And when a researcher asked Nailah what it was like to have classmates speak Spanish in front of her, she responded, “I be like—of course I try to be sayin’ it—I can’t.” She then said she wished she could speak some Spanish, implying that her use of faux Spanish was different from the Spanish her peers from Mexican households spoke, and once again evaluating Spanish speakers positively. Nailah’s Spanish language use illustrates the various ways second-grade students used elements of the emerging register. Her actions were shaped by close friendships with students from Spanish-speaking backgrounds and her desire to build solidarity. She enthusiastically tried out Spanish words and phrases with Spanish- and English-speaking peers and readily asked Spanish speakers for English and Spanish translations or mini-lessons. This active learning and metalinguistic activity suggests that, by this point in the children’s schooling, Spanish was clearly marked as a language of value and prestige.

Nailah's use of Spanish and faux Spanish contrasts with a lower incidence among other students in the second-grade year. This may have been due to one teacher's explicit message to students that they should not pretend to speak Spanish, that they could speak it only if they knew it fully. For example, when Keisha spoke in Spanish in front of this teacher, commenting proudly that she had guessed how to say something in Spanish, her teacher responded, "you don't guess a language, you know it." When asked in an interview why she preferred that students from English-speaking backgrounds not try out Spanish, the teacher explained, "I think they're learning over the years we won't accept it—non-Spanish-speaking children kind of doing that 'making fun' fake Spanish." Although she recognized that some students did have genuine interest in learning Spanish, she worried they would use it "in a mocking sense." We ourselves never observed students using Spanish in a mocking way, but it is nonetheless a realistic fear (cf. Hill 1993). Students from Spanish-dominant backgrounds who were trying out English in nonstandard ways were never told not to use English unless they actually knew it. Instead, they were encouraged to do their best and great emphasis was placed on their acquisition of English. Students from both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking backgrounds did not consider Spanish use to be mocking, perhaps because they did not see Spanish as an inferior language to be ridiculed. The faux Spanish register assigned a different value to Spanish than national discourses do. So the teacher's fears might have been well-founded, but she failed to appreciate the local inversion of national discourses that students were constructing in her classroom.

Careem was typical of students who used few components of the faux Spanish register. He was a multiracial [non-Latino] student who got along well and sometimes played with students from Spanish-speaking backgrounds, but he rarely acknowledged their language and very rarely used Spanish himself. In fact, the only time we heard him using Spanish in second grade was early in the school year during library class:

> The librarian dismisses students from the carpet. A bunch of students, including Careem and several Spanish speakers, run over to the table with a puzzle, rushing to get there first since they know only four of them are allowed at each table. One boy comments to another Spanish-speaking student "*no tu no. no más uno, dos, tres, cuatro*" [you no. just one, two, three, four], pointing to the four who can play. Other Spanish-speaking students then do the same, counting to 4 in Spanish, pointing to those who get to stay at the table and play. Careem says "*uno, dos, tres, cuatro*" [one, two, three, four], starting by pointing to himself and then others. The librarian then walks over and counts to four in English, pointing to Careem as one of the students who can stay.

In this instance, Careem drew upon his limited Spanish vocabulary and knowledge of classroom procedures to jockey for a spot at the prized activity table. His Spanish use was not received by his audience as strange, perhaps because each student was more focused on vying for a position at the table. This instance seems not to be either crossing or stylization. It shows how, by second grade, many students were incorporating Spanish words into their linguistic repertoires and using them for interactional purposes without the language being particularly marked.

On another occasion, however, Careem's talk about Mexico was not accepted by a Mexican-heritage peer. Students are seated on the carpet for a full-class activity and turn to a page in their books that has a map of the world with dark-green

coloring in areas with rain forests. One student asks another Spanish-speaking student and then a researcher: “*Hay mucho en Mexico?*” [Are there a lot of those in Mexico?] Ben (Spanish speaker) then turns to the researcher with an unbelieving face: “*Hay en Mexico?*” and she nods and says “sí” [yes]. Careem, who is seated nearby and overhears this conversation, turns to the boys, points to the map in a teacher-like way and tells them: “Mexico is right here.” Ben rolls his eyes and comments “You don’t even know Spanish,” clearly annoyed. In this instance, Careem’s comment, which may have only been an attempt to demonstrate geographic knowledge rather than claim Mexican heritage, was rejected by his Mexican-heritage peer Ben. Careem, who likely drew upon contextual cues (students using the map and talking about “Mexico”), could have thought they were looking for Mexico on the map and therefore tried to help by showing them. Like his rejection of Shantel’s claims to Mexican-ness in first grade, described above, Ben appeared to have taken up Careem’s comment as crossing, causing Ben to draw upon linguistic proficiency in Spanish as the criterion of Mexican-ness, effectively denying Careem the right to speak on the subject. Thus, while the use of Spanish tokens or faux Spanish was safe for many students, claims about Mexican-ness or claims about knowledge of Mexico were often not.

As children moved through second grade, a wider range of Spanish language practices emerged and were accepted. The examples of Nailah and Careem illustrate variation in the social range of the developing register. Some users employed many or all of its features, while others used it only occasionally. Spanish speakers also retained the right to make judgments about its acceptable use, although they did not do it often. The increased attention to and interest in Spanish texts, and particularly in documents sent home, shows English speakers being more vocal in expressing interest in, making claims about, and aligning themselves with Spanish and Spanish speakers. The use of Spanish tokens became routinized to the point that it no longer stood out as a disruption from the flow of ordinary interaction. The decreasing use of faux Spanish contrasted with students’ more vocal expressions of interest in Spanish. Based on one teacher’s concerns about “fake Spanish” being used to mock Spanish speakers, as well as her comments about needing to “know” a language in order to speak it, we speculate that the movement of actual Spanish tokens into more public classroom discourse led to the demise of faux Spanish itself.[4]

14.4 An Uncertain Future

By tracing the enregisterment of faux Spanish over 3 years in one classroom, we have been able to illustrate shifts and expansions in the register’s social domain and range. We have seen how children drew on different features of the register for

[4] Although our analyses in this chapter are based solely on data we collected in kindergarten, and first and second grades, when this group of students moved to third grade their teachers had similar concerns about “fake” Spanish and communicated to students that only those who truly “knew” Spanish could be considered “Spanish speakers.”

various purposes, and how some of these features—such as the use of Spanish lexical items—became normalized as part of routine classroom interactions. Over time, the faux Spanish register gave way to "authentic" Spanish. The register's social domain was limited to a sublevel of interaction and discourse that operated simultaneously but was removed from official or sanctioned classroom life (cf. Blackledge and Creese 2010). Faux Spanish and Spanish are not completely separate, as illustrated in various examples that included both nonsense syllables and actual Spanish words. But most uses of Spanish are not faux in the sense we describe here. Faux Spanish was used by non-Spanish speakers trying to align themselves with positive characteristics of Spanish speakers, in situations where the aspirant did not have sufficient skill to speak proper Spanish.

The largely positive evaluations of Spanish and Spanish speakers indexed by faux Spanish—from use of Spanish tokens to claims about Mexican heritage—contrasts with dominant language ideologies in the USA, which present English as the only valid language of schooling and positions other languages as problems in need of remediation (Gándara and Hopkins 2010; Gallo et al. 2011; Menken 2008). Children's actions at Grant Elementary contest larger circulating discourses and their negative evaluations of Mexican immigrants and Spanish. Despite the fact that Mexican immigrants are often positioned as uneducated and Spanish is positioned as inferior to English (e.g., Dick 2011a; Santa Ana 1999, 2002), at Grant many young people embraced Spanish and affiliated with its speakers, assigning status to the language and contributing to "the denaturalization of hegemonic language ideologies" (Rampton 2009, p. 149).

Situational meanings of faux Spanish tokens depended on the interactional context, including the relationships between particular children and listener uptake. But in general, through the enregisterment of faux Spanish over 3 years, children from English-speaking backgrounds expanded their communicative repertoires—"the collection[s] of ways individuals use language and literacy and other means of communication to function effectively in the multiple communities in which they participate" (Rymes 2010, p. 528)—and they also fostered cross-ethnic friendships and solidarity. This latter point is particularly important in NLD locations. In Marshall, a NLD community, we have observed more flexible and dynamic responses to newly arriving Mexican-origin residents. As Hamman and Harklau (2010) argue, in NLD communities "interethnic interaction related to the education of Latinos is primarily a new phenomenon and one where the habits and expectations that will steer that interaction are still far from set" (p. 161). The development of the faux Spanish register at Grant Elementary, although only a very local event, may help foster more positive interethnic interactions among Marshall schoolchildren. We are pleased to see the positive affiliations made across linguistic and ethnic backgrounds that faux Spanish made possible. These practices "didn't stand for seamless racial harmony, but carried solidary interethnic meanings" (Rampton 2011, p. 278).

The students we observed have moved into their final years of elementary school, and while they still use some Spanish tokens and engage in talk about Spanish, we have seen a decline in the overall usage of both Spanish and faux Spanish among native English speakers. We do not yet know the fate of the register. Once they enter middle school, will those from English-speaking backgrounds draw on

Spanish and make affiliations with Spanish speakers? Will their uses of Spanish in adolescence become more mocking as they orient toward dominant discourses on Mexican immigration? Will the faux Spanish register simply fade away? Will the beginnings of interethnic solidarity built at the elementary level remain solid? We do not know. But we do believe that teachers’ responses to the faux Spanish register could be important.

While the initial lack of attention paid by teachers to faux Spanish may have allowed it to flourish in the first 2 years of elementary school, the negative responses from teachers in second and third grade apparently restricted its development. The expansion of the register could lead to more positive positioning of minoritized languages. However, since faux Spanish flourished primarily in peer-led interactions that were removed from official classroom life, how might teachers learn to build on rather than squelch these practices? A teacher development approach that included training in classroom discourse analysis (Rymes 2009) and critical language awareness (Alim 2010) might foster more positive responses to students’ creative communicative practices and empower teachers to draw on these practices. And in the case of faux Spanish, more careful consideration of the register through teacher research or critical language awareness could serve pedagogical purposes. First, attention from teachers to how children are drawing on Spanish to affiliate across cultural and linguistic backgrounds could generate teacher-led discussions about social relationships and peer interaction in an interethnic context. Second, teacher attention to the features of faux Spanish could help frame children’s expanding communicative repertoires as resources for learning. Finally, teachers’ consideration of the language learning taking place through peer interaction might result in more deliberate planning for peer learning and teaching. By focusing on the rich and varied communicative practices of their students, teachers could foster more successful school experiences for the growing numbers of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in their classrooms.

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