

Peter Browning (University College London). Reseña de R. Márquez; A. Patiño-Santos. 2022. *Language Practices and Processes among Latin Americans in Europe*. Reino Unido: Routledge. [Infoling 6.57 \(2024\)](#)

The volume begins with an introduction authored by the editors, Adriana Patiño-Santos and Rosina Márquez Reiter, that confidently argues for the need of a book that puts forward a “situated view of diaspora that makes it possible to put language practices and the ideologies of the experiences of diasporic subjects at the centre of sociolinguistic analysis”. A key example that is recurrent throughout the volume is the demystification of the category labels of “latino”, “Latin American”, “Latinx”, etc., and the avoidance of claims of homogeneity within the so-called “Latin American Community”. The volume, rather, draws attention to the situated negotiations of meanings and the complex practices through which what it means to be a Spanish-speaking Latin American in Europe emerges. The volume is programmatic in its positioning and, as each of the varied chapters demonstrate, an important and timely contribution to the sociolinguistic study of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Europe and as such would be of interest to scholars working in Sociolinguistics, Spanish Studies, Latin American Studies, Linguistic Anthropology, Migration Studies and Cultural Studies.

In the first contributed chapter to the book, *(In)visible identities and inequalities: the construction of Latinidad in European censuses*, Jennifer Leeman interrogates the extent to which we can be sure about the number of Latin Americans and Latinxs living in Western Europe. In answering this question, she builds on her previous work to show a number of difficulties in relying on census data. One such aspect is to do with the naming of the group under discussion (a recurrent theme throughout the volume) as Latin American, Latino or Latinx in different contexts. This question is complicated still, Leeman shows us, through the fact that race and ethnicity are collapsed into one another which makes it impossible for many censuses to recognise somebody as both Black and Latino these being held as separate categories within these documents. With the case of the UK census, Leeman highlights the fact that there are no ethnic categories that represent Latin Americans, and as such policy makers often use place of birth, language and citizenship as proxies. Leeman’s contention that she lays out in this contribution is that such a process not only obscures the number of Latin Americans in diasporic populations, which leading to under-recognition, but that such decisions naturalise particular ethnoracial discourses about “who counts as Latin American or Latinx”, and by impicature, who does not. These discourses, Leeman argues, can be potentially harmful and lead to discrimination of Latin Americans based on their race, their ethnicity, their place of birth and the languages they speak, all of which are obscured by the census categories. As such, an important reflection that emerges from this chapter, and which frames many of the discussions in the subsequent contributions, is that categorisation is not neutral and that these practices can lead to inequality.

In the next chapter, *Mobility and Stasis: migrant portraits from a Madrid market*, Rosina Márquez-Reiter draws on interactional data produced as part of a short durée ethnography to sketch out two typical migrant trajectories for Latin Americans found in one of Madrid’s food markets and give “a snapshot of the on-the-ground practices of two Latin American migrants in Madrid as they go about their work”. Having made a compelling

case for the market as a valuable sociolinguistic site, Márquez-Reiter goes on to detail the cases of Paco and Juan Pablo. She demonstrates that Paco, who is originally from Peru, has limited access to the linguistic features of Peninsular Spanish and thus demonstrates considerable linguistic fixity in his use of Spanish, i.e., his variety is markedly Peruvian. In the context of Lulus' restaurant where he works, however, this fixity is understood as "authentic" and is valued by the restaurant managers and (mostly Spanish) clientele alike. An analysis of Juan Pablo's speech, on the other hand, brings to light his linguistic hybridity. Juan Pablo, having been born to Ecuadorian parents but having mostly been socialised in Madrid, is able to deploy both Ecuadorian and Peninsular varieties of Spanish and does so for pragmatic reasons which allows him to build and maintain good relationships with (mostly co-ethnic) customers. The chapter shows that whilst linguistic fixity is the result of relative immobility and fluidity a product of relative mobility, what is similar in both cases explored in this chapter is that the linguistic practices that have been documented are each are valued in their own context and reflect the ways in which these migrants, and their language practices, are inserted into the economic sphere of the market.

The notion of authenticity is taken up in the next chapter, *The Ecuadorian diaspora in Madrid and the conceptualization of sociolinguistic authenticity*; in this instance the authors, Patricia Gubitosi, Daniela Narváez and Christian Puma-Ninacuri, examine the authentication strategies through which different cultural practices, including the use of language, become "authentic" diasporic-Ecuadorian identity markers. Based on "ethnolinguistic observations" and semi-spontaneous sociolinguistic interviews with 23 Ecuadorians living in Madrid, the authors analyse what it means to this group of Ecuadorians to be considered "authentic". The results show that whilst participants are aware of the relative symbolic importance of Peninsular Spanish, they do not see this as an authentic use of language when compared to Ecuadorian Andean Spanish (EAS). Furthermore, the authors point out the fact that the use of EAS is not isolated, but rather this language practice sits within a constellation of other cultural practices which can all be markers of authenticity. One such cultural practice that the authors identify (in resonance with other chapters in this volume) is food which sits alongside sport and language as terrains on which authenticity is negotiated and claimed by this group of Ecuadorians.

The next chapter brings a quantitative lens to the volumes and aims to unpack *Sociolinguistic accommodation by Ecuadorian migrants in Granada (Spain)*. In this chapter, Antonio Manjón-Cabeza Cruz adopts a variationist ontology to consider the extent to which Ecuadorian migrants to Granada adopt local features from Andalusian Spanish. The question arises as these Andalusian features are broadly stigmatised as non-standard within a Peninsular context. With a focus on both phonological (the maintenance of /-s/ in coda position) and morphosyntactic (the prevalence of -ito/a) variables the chapter successfully demonstrates that "Ecuadorian migrants in Granada very strongly maintain the features of Andean Spanish". By means of explanation, Manjón-Cabeza Cruz suggests that this is due to the fact that the variables in Andean Spanish coincide with the prestige variety of Peninsular Spanish with which migrants have substantial contact despite its not being spoken in the environs. The author nuances these findings

with the suggestion that there is some degree of accommodation in the use of diminutives with a generalisation of the “-illo” suffix in Ecuadorians’ speech beginning to emerge.

Returning to a constructivist approach to the study of language, in their chapter *Becoming Latino in Barcelona: The role of stance in ethnogenesis*, Michael Newman and Víctor Corona adopt a novel approach of bringing together into one chapter ethnographic data generated by each author as part of different research projects in distinct fieldwork sites with adolescents across Barcelona. The authors bring these data together to elucidate differing “stance complexes” that articulate around the notion of “latinidad”. In their analysis, the authors characterise three groups of students based on their orientations to “Latinidad”. The first group which they label “Unified Latinos” strongly identified as “latino” diminishing any inter-ethnic differences. For this group the foil to their identity was “español” which was perceived as inferior in relation to a number of cultural practices and members of the group were more likely to have been discriminated against at school, be dissatisfied and achieve low grades. Linguistically the authors bring interactional data to show that individuals belonging to the “Unified Latino” group often used features of Barcelona Latino Spanish. The second group identified are the “Latino Nationals”, like the “United Latinos” this group self-ascribed themselves with a “Latino” identity, yet made salient also their national backgrounds (Colombian, Peruvian, Ecuadorian, etc.), this group were found to hold less oppositional views in relation to “españolidad” than “United Latinos” and performed considerably better at school. As for linguistic practice, the authors state that, for the most part, these individuals use marked national varieties of Latin American Spanish. The final group identified are the “Assimilationists”. Those identified as belonging to this group rejected the “Latino” label, held positive evaluations of the host cultures, adopted features of Peninsular Spanish and were unanimously proud of their Catalan proficiency. By contrasting three distinct stances towards “Latino ethnogenesis”, Newman and Corona effectively demonstrate the competing and contrasting understandings of “latinidad” and thus make a compelling case that there is no stable definition of the term and that “latino” “is more than a term designating a neutral cultural, genetic, or geographic difference. Its deployment, an act of ethnogenesis, is an agentive response to difference, how that difference is experienced, and what those individuals using the term are trying to do with it”.

The next chapter, authored by Santiago Sánchez Moreano and Isabelle Léglise returns to the sociolinguistic space of the market, this time away from the European mainland and gives an account of *Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in the market of Cayenne (French Guiana): Multilingual practice, fuzzy borders, and social positioning*. The volume returns to the site of the market as a place of encounter and carefully documents the language practices of a “focal group” of participants who are representative of the Spanish-speaking Latin Americans who end up in Cayenne having previously spent time spent in other Latin American countries. The analysis of observational data that was generated during “a lengthy ethnographic experience” elucidates the complex repertoires that the focal participants have which bring together a number of national and regional languages. The chapter deftly explores the ways in which participants make strategic use of the resources they share with the other market users. Through a detailed analysis of the everyday language practices of three migrants: Lorenzo, Oscar and Agata each of who have distinct migratory histories, the chapter highlights the “fuzzy borders” between

languages – even to the analysts it is not always clear which language resources belong to. The ubiquity of these “fuzzy” features leads the authors to claim that it is not only the strategic deployment of multilingual resources, but also the use of these bivalent features that contribute to the negotiation of social positioning and thus the social world of the market.

Chapter 7 sees an exploration of *Affect and emotions in the Hispanic linguistic landscape in Milan* authored by Maria Vittoria Calvi. This chapter is based on photographic data, business owner interviews, and client interviews generated in 2015, and in 2019-2020. The analysis of these data demonstrates how a number of “proximity devices” are observable in the linguistic landscape, and that such devices (e.g., use of Spanish for food items) serves to create a sense of community for Spanish-speaking Latin Americans. However, what is interesting in this respect, Calvi argues, is that this does *not* generate an affective response for non-Spanish-speaking Latin Americans who see these features of the linguistic landscape as purely informative. An important contribution of this chapter is the insight it offers into the virtual linguistic landscape. Motivated by the Covid-19 lockdowns, Calvi’s data collection moved on-line to the social media pages of the businesses she had been studying. Calvi shows, through the example of a Peruvian restaurant, how this space “transformed from a place of celebration and culinary pleasure into a point of reference for social assistance. No visible traces of this painful stage remain in the material LL, but it is nonetheless attested in the virtual one”. Thus, the approach adopted in this chapter gives the reader an important insight into this moment in time future studies of linguistic landscapes are encouraged to incorporate the virtual dimension.

The next contribution to the volume *“Pride” and “profit”: The values of Spanish as a heritage language among Latin Americans in German-speaking Switzerland* introduces a much-needed focus on the language ideologies attached to Spanish by Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in a heritage language context. In the chapter, Yvette Bürki draws on ethnographic-interviews and observations conducted as part of two distinct studies to examine how the opposing ideologies of “pride” and “profit” are attached to the linguistic repertoires of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans, especially those in binational families in which the children are learning Spanish as a heritage language. Bürki’s evocative data show the ways in which language ideologies of “pride” and “profit” condition language management and decisions within families, including decisions related to home languages, schooling and language certification. The chapter is illuminating in bringing to light the complex language hierarchies engendered by these ideological orientations and the shift that has occurred since the 1990s. Bürki’s analysis shows that whilst those who arrived in the 1990s attached great “pride” to the mastery of (Swiss) German, and transmitted Spanish to their families in less formalised ways, the data show that more recent arrivals tend to see Spanish as an important identity factor. Alongside this, discourses of Spanish as a global language and thus appreciation of it as a language for “profit” have grown. Bürki demonstrates, therefore, that ideologies of *both* “pride” and “profit” are now attached to Spanish as a heritage language and both play a role in individuals’ lives, this does not however produce contradiction she claims as they operate at different sociolinguistic scales. The chapter closes with a reflection on the specificity of these ideological processes and an acknowledgement that they operate differently in

the European context than in the US context (where the majority of studies into Spanish as a heritage language have taken place). Bürki therefore advocated for more research to be carried out into Spanish as a heritage language in a *European* context and, with a focus on Spanish-speaking Latin Americans, for more research to focus on the language management practices of families from the global south.

In a penultimate contribution to the volume, F. Daniel Morales draws on two emblematic life-stories of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in London in order to analyse the *Language experiences in diaspora across time: Two Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in London*. Taking a historical and comparative approach, Morales centres the stories of Linda who arrived in London in 1989 and Mario who came to the UK capital in 2015. Linda's story, documented by means of life-story interview and analysed with an attention to narrative, is one of overall success. Whilst in the beginning years Linda suffered from work-based exploitation and precarity, she identified having studied English as being the catalyst to her achieving a better life. Linda was able to carve out an upwards trajectory and to achieve her dream of becoming an English language teacher. Indeed, Linda distances herself from those who she describes as "latinos" who are not able to speak English and who she characterises as not wanting to integrate into UK life. Mario's experience, by contrast, is one of being stuck in precarity. Mario, like Linda, has suffered work-place exploitation. However, Mario has been unable to improve his English and 'break the cycle'. Morales explains this not only with reference to Mario's inability to access English-speaking networks, but in light of the "hostile environment" that had been pursued by the UK government, a key component of which had involved cutting funding for English language provision for migrants. What this chapter expertly demonstrates then is the importance of anchoring the study of language practices in their political-economic context, something Morales shows to be particularly important in the case of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans who have been the target of punitive policies through the exigences of State power.

The final contribution to this volume offers *Snapshots of Spanish-speaking Latin American radio producers in London*. In this chapter, Adriana Patiño-Santos gives a rich ethnographic account of the everyday workings of a Latin American radio station, an emblematic example of a diasporic media organisation. Patiño-Santos' analysis focuses on three key participants and employs narrative enquiry in order to analyse the ways in which these participants: Alberto, Vanessa and Néstor, make sense of their roles in the production of diasporic media and the social positioning of each of them within the organisation. The analysis begins with a compelling vignette in which we see that on-air, the journalists avoid conflict and disagreement, "constructing themselves as a united ethnic community for diasporic reasons". It is against this background that the three "snapshots" gain their explanatory power giving an insight into the complexities, difficulties and tensions that exist "behind the scenes". The first "snapshot" is of Alberto who positions himself as a leader in the diasporic media space. He characterises himself as somebody who goes the extra mile and has managed to get on in life because of his grit and determination to succeed. He identifies Spanish as an important commodity for Spanish-speaking Latin Americans and sees the Spanish-language radio as an important tool in "giving voice" to those Latin American migrants who do not speak English. Vanessa likewise identifies the role of the media to give voice to co-ethnics which she

understands as “serving” and “helping” them. In this respect, Vanesa positions herself as a facilitator, a secondary character who, despite her background in media production, is in a precarious position at the radio station. The final snapshot is of Néstor. Néstor was a university lecturer in Colombia but had to leave the country due to death threats. He is not paid for his work at the radio station, but is highly dedicated to this organisation. For Néstor, who is positioned at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy, the role of the radio is to raise the listenership’s awareness of everything that is going on in the UK that may impact their lives to which older Latin American migrants may not have access because they often not speak English. As well as this, he believes it important to create a Spanish language resource for younger Latin American migrants who *do* speak English as for him “Spanish language is a marker of the community”. The chapter closes with a coda in which Patiño-Santos puts all the work of Alberto, Vanessa and Néstor in stark relief. The author explains the precarious position of diasporic media organisations, many of which have been forced to close after facing economic hardship. In this challenging economic environment, she appreciates the migrants’ activities as being shot through with “radical hope” (Lear, 2006) for a better, imagined future.

The volume closes with a coda *Language practices and processes among Latin Americans in Europe: Some thoughts on authenticity and belonging* in which David Block pulls together some of the threads cast out by the contributors. Block’s coda draws a connection with his own, previous research carried out with Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Europe thus anchoring the volume in a longer history of scholarship. Focusing on the axes of “authenticity”, “authentication” and “sense of belonging” the coda outlines these shared concerns between the chapters and recognises that the volume represents a new stage in research into Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Europe. Block closes his coda with an important reflection. For Block, moving forward the study of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans must not treat the presence of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans as anomalous and as exceptional, but rather recognise the “communities” that have been constructed by these groups. Future research then, must pay attention to the conformation and maintenance of these communities and the plurality that exists within them.

Taken together the chapters in this volume make an important contribution to the sociolinguistic study of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Europe and begins to redress the scholarly balance which has, until now, been weighted in favour of work carried out in a US context. Not only does the volume make visible the language practices and processes of this often-overlooked group, a number of commonalities and themes emerge that can inform future research including: the importance of mobility and immobility on language practices; the constellation of language with other cultural practices, especially food; the role of “authenticity” and “community” as organisational principles in diasporic relations; and the role of affect and hope in migrants’ experiences. As such, the volume is programmatic in positioning and demonstrates the value of a slow, ethnographic practice when addressing these questions and underlines the importance of anchoring the study of language practices in the political-economic regimes in which they emerge. In the context of the rise of the far-right across Europe and the entrenchment of anti-migrant sentiment, such an approach will be essential to future studies of Spanish-

speaking Latin Americans as they continue to negotiate their position and participation in society.