

“Eres un no sabo kid”: How linguistic discrimination online is shaping young Heritage Spanish speakers’ language attitudes, identities, and community connections

Social media has become a key space for the reproduction of ideologies that subordinate and discriminate against the linguistic practices of US Spanish speakers. The most recent and popularized phenomena of the “no sabo kid” meme has become a trend among US Latinx youth as a means to criticize the language practices of other US Latinx youth which has exacerbated negative attitudes and racialized, discriminatory discourse (Stransky et al., 2022). This phenomenon can ultimately contribute to the loss of language maintenance, widen community disconnectivity, and strengthen social power dynamics (Andrade et al., 2021; Tseng, 2021).

We explore how a social media phenomenon may impact the identity, language development, ideologies, and sense of community and self among Heritage Spanish Speakers (HSS) at a Predominately White Institution in the Midwest. Using a qualitative study framework based on sociocultural theory, we will examine to what extent posts and publications representing the aforementioned “no sabo kid” meme play a role in the formation of language and identity ideologies among HSS. Data will be collected from participants in a university level Heritage Spanish community conversational group through participant interviews, observations, and surveys. The researchers believe that the collected data will reveal the unique experiences and challenges faced by HSS in Iowa and their perspective of how language ideologies online have affected them.

This study intends to contribute to and build on work in language ideology and social media, with a specific focus on HSS who live in the American Midwest. The findings will generate awareness of obstacles faced by HSS in this digital era and can provide guidance for appropriate pedagogical practices that address them. The findings will contribute to the development of educational interventions and support systems that foster a sense of community for HSS to feel empowered and encourage sociolinguistic agency.

Key words: Spanish as a Heritage Language, Social Media, No Sabo, Language Ideologies Community Connections, US Spanish, Identity, Language Attitudes, Linguistic Discrimination

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