

Title: Speaker investment and oral proficiency in heritage speakers of Spanish: a quantitative approach

Keywords: Investment, Heritage, Identity, Oral Proficiency

The concept of investment has been used to expand the understanding of language learning beyond the acquisition of language competence, grammar, pronunciation, etc. to also consider how the speaker/learner is socially positioned to navigate social contexts and the impacts this has on their opportunities for language learning and use (Norton-Pierce, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Darvin & Norton, 2015 further develop this work by proposing a trio of components that contribute to speaker investment- (1) speaker identity, (2) linguistic ideologies and (3) social capital. Scholars in linguistics and education have used investment and its component constructs to show how the social context of speaker/learners can differ significantly due to race, gender, migrant status and other ascribed identities and, as such, either facilitate or dissuade a speaker from using a particular language (Ali, 2021; Anya, 2016; Ballinger, 2017; Morita, 2004). While the current literature makes a clear case for a role for investment in language development, the lack of a quantitative measure has meant (a) limited ability compare and understand the relative importance of the proposed components of investment and (b) difficulty making inter and intra community comparisons to better understand the role investment plays in language development. The current project aims to address these two limitations through the development and validation of an investment questionnaire and an investigation of speaker investment and oral proficiency as measured by the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) among heritage Spanish speakers. Preliminary results show: (1) an association between speaker investment and oral proficiency, (2) an association between the identity component and oral proficiency that is independent of the composite investment score and (3) the three component scores, identity, ideology and social capital trend together. Implications for heritage language policy and pedagogy will be discussed.