



Talking Hip-Hop: When stigmatized language varieties become prestige varieties



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ABSTRACT

Focusing mainly on contrasting methodological approaches, this article presents a study on language attitudes in New York City toward Spanish heritage language in an urban context characterized by inequity. It is anchored in Labov's (1966) language stratification theories and builds on the work of several authors to explain why heritage language speakers in New York City perceive their variety of Spanish as being less prestigious compared with the Spanish varieties imposed in formal/academic contexts. The methodology used included an innovative matched-guise technique with rap followed by an interview. In the context of Hip-Hop, the results suggest that the stigmatized vernacular variety becomes the prestige variety. The social and educational significance of these findings is discussed. Furthermore, reflection on the research methods adopted in the study lends support to qualitative approaches for studying language attitudes.

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The discussion presented in this article consists mainly of an evaluative comparison of quantitative and qualitative methodologies for studying language attitudes, understood as "any affective, cognitive or behavioral index of evaluative reactions toward different language varieties of their speakers" (Ryan, Howard, & Sebastian, 1982, p. 7), with a particular focus on Spanish heritage students. The main focus of the study reported on was to identify the challenges associated with designing and conducting a matched-guise technique and interviews to study language attitudes. Additionally, this investigation also makes an incursion into linguistic ideologies, understood as "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (Irvine, 1989, p. 255), in order to be useful for the development of valid pedagogical tools for Spanish heritage students. Although language attitudes and linguistic ideologies are fields of study on their own, this article understands language and attitudes as epistemologically compatible since attitudes are influenced by ideologies and both fields feedback on each other. Moreover, the definition of attitudes proposed by Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) explicitly links ideologies and attitudes: they define attitudes as "a socially derived, intellectualized or behavioral ideology" (p. 61).

The study was carried out in a Spanish heritage language class at a public university in New York City (NYC from now on). The participants were Dominicans or Dominican descents belonging to low or middle-income families.

This work has a double theoretical anchor. First, the theories of language stratification and the concepts of overt and covert prestige (Labov, 1966) are drawn on to study both attitudes and linguistic ideologies. In sociolinguistics, prestige is the respect granted to a specific language variety within a particular speech community, in relation to other varieties. Labov's theories explain that prestige can be separated into overt prestige and covert prestige. Both are used when changing speech to gain prestige but do so in different ways. Overt prestige is linked to the linguistic practices of the culturally dominant group. Covert prestige is related to membership in an exclusive speech community, rather than in the dominant cultural group. For example, using inner city language varieties with covert prestige, such as some varieties of African American Vernacular English, would grant more 'street cred' than those with overt prestige, such as academic English. Even though the dominant cultural group generally sees the variety with covert prestige as being inferior, using language fitting with the local community would lead to earning respect among those members in the community too.

Second, this study is rooted in the conclusions drawn from the work on Spanish heritage language students in the United States conducted by García, Evangelista, Martínez, Disla, and Paulino (1988), Zentella (1990), Urciuoli (2008), and Del Valle (2007). These authors explain that Spanish-speaking students in the United States often perceive their own Spanish as lacking prestige. Such students

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are frequently less privileged socioeconomically, as is discussed in the aforementioned studies. This is particularly true in NYC, where ideologies of linguistic standardization make their way into the classroom setting.

On the one hand, Spanish heritage speakers bring their linguistic varieties to the academic setting. These varieties come from everyday and family contexts. They have different dialectal features depending on their country of origin (for example, Dominican Spanish, Colombian Spanish, etc.) and particular diastratic features associated with the socio-economic conditions where these speakers live (for example, Spanish spoken by working class Dominicans versus Dominican Spanish spoken by university professors). The study reported on in this article involved NYC Dominican Spanish speakers.

Therefore, the selection of NYC Dominican Spanish speakers was based on methodological reasons: having a more homogeneous group regarding their diatopic features increased the chances of controlling this variable compared to having students from different national origins. Moreover, it is important to take into consideration for the present study that these varieties share what Zentella (1990) has called New York Spanish inter-dialect, a process of dialect leveling as a result of the accommodation of lexicon among the largest Hispanic groups in NYC: a “New Yorker Spanish’ lexicon” (Zentella, 1990, p. 1094). Furthermore, as Otheguy (2011) explains, these varieties of Spanish usually coexist with English, the language of formal education and professional environments, in a similar way to Fishman’s (1967) diglossia. In this case, Spanish would be the low language/variety and English the high language/variety. Nevertheless, the use of Spanish in public spaces (usually stigmatized varieties) connotes solidarity and camaraderie among speakers (Gibson, 2004). Other speech communities share this practice, for example, certain African-American communities which use African American Vernacular English (Rahman, 2008).

On the other hand, standard Spanish is the variety that accounts for prestige (at least in academic/formal settings), although depending on the region of origin, multiple standard Spanish varieties exist (e.g. academic Spanish of Peru, Spain, etc.). However, with the exception of certain regional dialectal features such as the use of /θ/, vosotros, voseo, etc., these varieties tend to be relatively homogeneous as they are part of a highly standardized code. It is also important to mention that these standard Spanish varieties, regardless of their geolocal base, generally index middle-class speakers with formal education.

For the matched-guise test used in this study, a central Peninsular variety was selected. The following two reasons justified this choice: first, the voice in the matched-guise test was capable of interpreting this variety naturally; second, of all the standard Spanish varieties, because of inherited language ideologies, this variety is, perhaps, the one that is most indexical of standardization and accuracy (which, as we shall see, is reflected in informants’ responses to the test).

Particularly relevant for this research is how popularly discredited vernacular varieties are used in cultural practices associated with Hip-Hop, creating a space where language conveys identity, affiliation, solidarity, and representation of the familiar, as well as emotional proximity. Studies on code-switching between Spanish and English in New York Bachata music (Flores-Olson, 2009, 2011), on the one hand, have pointed out how the use of Spanish is a tool used by artists to express emotional closeness. On the other hand, the switch to English is used to represent distance, which is also a practice used in NYC’s Hip-Hop in Spanish (Magro, 2013, in press). Thus, among heritage speakers, standard varieties of Spanish would play a similar role to English in code-switching, emotionally distancing interlocutors. Due to the enormous prestige of Hip-Hop within the target group of this research (NYC Dominican

young males and females) and taking in consideration that “the rap made in Spanish is starting to have an important influence in areas where Spanish isn’t the majority language” (Corona and Kelsall, 2016), this study focuses specifically on Hip-Hop rap.

Based on these arguments, this study tested the hypothesis that, in the informal context of Hip-Hop in Spanish, stigmatized varieties become the prestigious one. Although theories of linguistic stratification in sociolinguistics predict the confirmation of this hypothesis, it must be demonstrated empirically in the context of Spanish (language) Hip-Hop in NYC. Different linguistic ideologies could affect the hypothesis in the opposite direction. It is possibly the subject of a separate study, but the explanation may be that standard varieties could also be the prestigious ones in the context of Hip-Hop in response to particular language ideologies. For example, influenced by these ideologies, an artist might think that a standard variety would be more appropriate to index intelligence and academic background. Similarly, a given artist could think of a broader audience than his/her immediate social or regional community when recording. In this case, s/he could try using, for example, a more similar variety to that of a television news broadcaster than the one used on his/her street corner.

Thus, this study was based on a matched-guise technique and a semi-structured interview. The goal was to find out if the perception that the participants have regarding their variety compared to others is modulated depending on the context, and how. The results stimulated an illuminating analysis of the methodology used to investigate linguistic attitudes.

My long-lived Hip-Hop career (as a Graffiti artist first, later as an MC) provided me with a unique perspective that has been enriched through numerous artistic experiences and the consequent development of a social network of Hip-Hop artists and activists from all around the world. This career started in the late 1980s and it was launched through the publishing of my first album with my music group El Club de los Poetas Violentos (CPV), Madrid Zona Bruta (1993, Yo Gano), a pioneering album in introducing “real” Hip-Hop to Spain through an innovative rap style that adopted and adapted lyrical structures from American East Coast rap in a process of translocality (Alim, 2009). These new rhyme patterns and structures, alongside heavy social content that reflected the realities of Madrid Sur and other working class neighborhoods of Madrid, laid the template for upcoming MCs and were foundational elements for the current established scene of Spanish Hip-Hop and the development of it in different Latin American countries such as Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, or Cuba. Likewise, CPV led the struggle to legitimize Hip-Hop as the cultural production of underprivileged youth in a country that in the 1990s started to fulfill its neoliberal aspirations while creating different forms of otherness within its borders due to the growing incoming population of African and Latin American immigrants.

This triple positionality, as a sociolinguist, teacher, and insider in Hip-Hop, is particularly important to understanding the Hip-Hop in Spanish community of NYC, which is part of the wider Latin Hip-Hop community and is different (sometimes even explicitly opposite) from the reggaeton scene (although on occasions, such as festivals or music conferences, they share spaces; see Corona & Kelsall for a discussion on Hip-Hop and reggaeton in Barcelona). Since I moved to NYC in 1999, I helped to develop this community with concerts, festivals, recording sessions, meetings, and other activities. Artists from different Spanish-speaking countries, but mostly Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Mexicans who were first and second generation immigrants compose the Hip-Hop in the NYC Spanish community, sharing their passion for rap in Spanish over Hip-Hop beats. Furthermore, my experience developing and implementing an educational program, which articulated Hip-Hop with critical thinking and literacy, also contributed to understanding the

phenomena researched in this paper. Moreover, this program was carried out in The Bronx, NYC, which allowed me to work with Dominican students of very similar characteristics to those in this study.

Likewise, this privileged position as a sociolinguist, teacher, and Hip-Hop artist is especially important to understanding the development of Hip-Hop in Spanish in NYC, as well as in the countries of origin of the Hispanic immigrants that shaped it, its development, prestige, and language varieties. Artists from different Spanish-speaking countries, but mainly first and second generation Dominican immigrants and Puerto Rican migrants, make up the largest body of production of this genre in NYC.

To understand the significance of the link established between the participants and Hip-Hop, it is necessary to be aware that Hip-Hop in Spanish adopts and adapts elements of NYC Hip-Hop to the experience of the Spanish speaker and his/her identity. This adoption/adaptation is something that has been considered a global phenomenon. [Condry \(2001\)](#) exemplifies this global phenomenon with Japanese Hip-Hop as follows: "On the surface, Japanese music seems a perfect example of the way American popular culture is taking over the world. But a closer look reveals that there is a dynamic process by which the meaning of Hip-Hop is reinterpreted to fit into the Japanese context" (p. 372). Currently, there is a circle of artists who produce Hip-Hop in Spanish in NYC and that, as in the case of every local Hip-Hop community, have created a translocal style community that is part of the stylistic whole that [Alim \(2009\)](#) has called "Hip-Hop Nation Language" (p. 106).

As explained by [Alim \(2009\)](#), "Hip Hop style does not impose a homogenized "one-world" culture upon its practitioners," rather "the global style community of Hip Hop is negotiated not through a particular language, but through particular styles of language, and these styles are ideologically mediated and motivated in that their use allows for a shared respect based on representin (sic) one's particular locality" (p. 111). [Pennycuok \(2007\)](#), regarding the central idea of authenticity in Hip-Hop ([Terkourafi, 2010](#)), describes Hip-Hop as "a culture of being true to the local, of telling it like it is," with "the constant pull toward localization that this implies" (p. 14). This idea of authenticity, argues [Pennycuok \(2007\)](#) is linked to specific linguistic varieties. In this sense, following [Morgan \(2004\)](#), membership in a global community of style may have as much to do with ideologies of language and transidiomatic practices, as it does with local forms and shared linguistic systems.

Furthermore, these "street varieties" or "resistance vernaculars" (as described by [Potter, 1995](#)), have achieved recognition and obtained symbolic capital, becoming the variety of prestige, the valid vehicle of expression in Hip-Hop ([Potter, 1995](#)). Thus, the use of vernacular varieties in rap could be understood in a similar manner to the way Spanish is used as a resistance tool in the public space of the United States. In this sense, [Cobas and Feagin \(2008\)](#) explain in their work how Spanish is used to resist the groups and social values that the standard variety represents. These standard varieties, imposed by a small sector of the society ([Dorian, 1994](#)), would represent the antagonist values of Hip-Hop as the dominated social group and popular/working classes culture Hip-Hop is.

This last statement may be seen as an uncritical idealization of Hip-Hop. However, my intention is not, and cannot be, to establish what Hip-Hop is and what it is not. Since its origins, especially in the case of rap (but also in Graffiti and Breakdance), there has existed both a collective and individual consciousness which has distinguished between real Hip-Hop artists and "sell-outs" (those who drop out and betray the ideological values of Hip-Hop because of business goals, whether or not they are met). Already in 1979, The Sugar Hill Gang appropriated and sold the popular raps written by renowned MCs from the emergent Hip-Hop scene of the Bronx, such as Grand Master Caz, to record them and turn them into the prefabricated commercial success that was

Rapper's Delight. Although the festive and popular elements have been constant themes in Hip-Hop culture, also, since the beginning, Hip-Hop has had a vindictive element of political and social commitment. In the late 1970s, the Universal Zulu Nation organization made this element explicit, calling for unity, peace, and love as a form of resistance to racism and marginalization suffered by young people from underprivileged neighborhoods in NYC. Many other artists, especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, proposed more aggressive models of social activism and resistance in their productions. Regardless of the style or political position taken by the Hip-Hop artist, authenticity is the main concept that awards credibility to Hip-Hop productions. An important aspect of this authenticity is the socioeconomic background of the artist. In this sense, the Hip-Hop locus of origin and production is located undoubtedly in underprivileged neighborhoods, regardless of the contradictions that may arise in its artistic content.

Finally, I consider necessary to make explicit my positionality as a researcher to explain the epistemological roots of this study. As a Hip-Hop fanatic and artist, the integration of Hip-Hop and pedagogy has guided and informed my professional practice and research including this study. This positionality as a Hip-Hop scholar is epistemologically linked to my positionality as a critical applied linguist, which, at the same time, is linked to my long history of anti-racist activism. Therefore, this research intended to spur social change as one of its objectives, something that should lead our goals in research on Hip-Hop and Education.

1. Language attitudes and heritage Spanish speakers in NYC

The area of language attitudes has been studied extensively over the past twenty years ([Rivera-Mills, 2000](#)). However, although the topic of how Hip-Hop language gains prestige against formal varieties has been addressed extensively over the last two decades (for example, [Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2003; Cutler, 2007](#)), no reference could be found as to how the varieties used in Spanish Hip-Hop gain prestige compared to formal varieties of this language.

Examples of previous studies in the area of attitudes are Labov's pioneering work (1966) of English stratification in NYC, which is a phenomenon that [Trudgill \(1972\)](#) also investigated within the context of England. Other examples are the investigations carried out in situations of diglossia between French and English in Canada ([Heller, 2006, 2011](#); although she does not use the term diglossia in her work, that is an interpretation), or between standard and vernacular Arabic (e.g. [Chakrani, 2010](#)).

[Hill and Hill \(1996\)](#) documented how young Mexicano speakers abandon their native language to use exclusively Spanish when they are faced with the "powercode" used by older and more economically prestigious speakers in their communities. This phenomenon is similar to the abandonment of Spanish by heritage speakers when they face the insensitive imposition of a standardized Spanish code by teachers. Numerous works on the contact of Spanish with English in the United States have been published too. These usually focus on a particular variety of Spanish ([Rivera-Mills, 2000](#)), and only a few have focused on the attitudes toward different varieties of informal Spanish in relation to formal/standard varieties of Spanish in NYC. [Zentella \(1981, 1990\)](#) studies this topic shedding light on the negative perception that some groups have regarding their variety, and the existing relationship with the social stigmatization of these groups because of race and socioeconomic status. However, Zentella's work did not focus on perceptions of the standard variety, but on dialect leveling when she observed the creation of a "New Yorker Spanish" lexicon, one shared with the majority of Hispanics" ([Zentella, 1981](#), p. 1094). This conclusion is, nevertheless, relevant to understanding some particular linguistic

features appearing in heritage speakers' varieties that do not correspond with some regional features of their varieties of origin. This is a factor that was taken into account when designing the methodological tools for this study.

Guitart (1982), although not accurately defining what radical dialects are (he defines them as vernacular varieties of Caribbean Spanish), "has found conservative speakers who became radical speakers because of their identification with a group of radical speakers" (p. 192), either by family or ideological links. He recognizes that covert prestige underlies explicit expressions of negativity about a linguistic variety binding it with affective variables such as sincerity and trustworthiness, and/or how it relates with coolness or toughness (Labov, 1972). These "conservative speakers" (p. 192) incorporate them in their speech for these reasons (Guitart, 1982). Likewise, Otheguy and Zentella (2012) emphasizes the importance of covert prestige of vernacular varieties. He argues that the accommodation of other varieties of Spanish to the NYC Caribbean varieties is the result of the covert prestige awarded by cultural forms such as Caribbean music, and "the covert prestige of urban youth culture, in which Caribbeans play a leading role" (p. 796), as in the case of Hip-Hop.

These ideas about covert prestige initially led the researcher in this study toward the formulation of the hypothesis that in the academic context, the standard Spanish variety is the prestigious variety while the heritage speakers' varieties are stigmatized from the perspective of those unfamiliar with the basic tenets of linguistic inquiry. However, in the arena of Hip-Hop, heritage speakers' varieties should function as the legitimate ones due to their covert prestige.

In addition, Del Valle (2007) explains that the stigmatization of linguistic varieties is a common practice depending on which minorities speak them, mainly due to the popular association of this stigmatization with marginal social positions. Hispanic residents in the U.S. are no exception. This group is linguistically convicted because of their use of structurally different Spanish varieties when compared to standard Spanish (especially because of the use of Anglicisms and code-switching). Del Valle (2007) explains how this results in linguistic insecurity. Therefore, to figure out how this population of Spanish users perceives its varieties compared to those that are considered standard is a relevant issue in regard to fostering Spanish among them. Moreover, these attitudes need to be studied not only in the academic context, which has already been done, but also in non-formal settings such as in cultural production practices. Hopefully, as García et al. (1988) conclude in their study on the use of Spanish and its attitudes in two communities in NYC, this will motivate research avenues suggesting alternative "socio-educational and language policies for Hispanics in the United States" (p. 510).

In sum, much research has been done in the area of language attitudes and heritage Spanish speakers. The main findings of this study relate to: the psychosocial consequences resulting from the stigmatization of less prestigious language varieties; how the stigmatization of these varieties in situations of language in contact can neglect the first/heritage language in favor of the dominant language (in this case English); the importance of covert prestige for stigmatized varieties; and how, considering that attitudes result from ideologies (Irvine & Gal, 2000), they affect the domination and subordination relationships of some social groups over others. Although this topic has been addressed extensively, the present research is pioneering in studying the qualitative perception that heritage speakers have toward their linguistic varieties in the non-academic context of Hip-Hop in Spanish. In this sense, the study of attitudes among this urban youth group is vital for both the continuity of the use of Spanish in NYC, and the acquisition of standard varieties, with the cultural and economic benefits that this entails for these users of Spanish.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

This study was carried out in a NYC public university. As a requisite for participation, the informants had to be either bilingual or monolingual Spanish speakers. There is an enormous body of literature and controversy regarding the difficulty to offer definitions for terms such as Spanish speaker (or user), heritage speaker, or native speaker. This difficulty responds to theoretical positions which, at the same time, respond to ideological positions. In this sense, this work assumes a heteroglossic position focused on the speaker, which is similar to the one offered by García and Otheguy (2015), "an approach skeptical of the discreteness of named languages and viewing linguistic resources as disaggregated in the sense that features are separable and not integrated into single linguistic systems" (p. 645), which, these authors argue, is probably compatible with many linguistic theories. Following the arguments of these authors, this study considers its participants as "translingual" García and Otheguy (2015). However, for practical purposes, the definition offered by Valdés (2000) will be used here. She refers to heritage speakers as "individuals raised in homes where a language other than English is spoken and who are to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language" (p. 376).

The data was collected in a Heritage Language Speakers Spanish class. All the participants were first and second generation immigrants. Although the most numerous Spanish-speaking communities in NYC are Puerto Rican, Dominican, Mexican, Cuban, Colombian, and Ecuadorian, in that order (Otheguy and Zentella, 2012), this study focused only on Dominican students. This selection was not a random one. It not only simplified the methodology controlling a good number of dialectal variables, but this group is also the second most numerous in NYC. Although both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans have influenced NYC Hip-Hop, and this musical genre has enormous prestige for both, the Dominican population in NYC is still growing and has a greater constant flow of immigrants than Puerto Rican migrants, whose migration has stabilized (Bissainthe, 2003). The fact that the Dominican Republic is a country independent from the United States, and the socio-cultural and historical characteristics of this group, are factors that have contributed to a higher use and resistance to abandon Spanish by Dominicans than Puerto Ricans (Nguyen & Sanchez, 2001). In the Dominican Republic, roughly 90% of the population is of African descent (Haggerty, 1991:xxviii, in Bailey, 2001), while in Puerto Rico it is roughly below 10%. Such ancestry has very different social significance than for "Black" or "African Americans" in the U.S. It is not the purpose of this study to enter into the complexities of how language, ethnicity, and race interact differently among Dominicans and Puerto Ricans (see Bailey, 2001, for a detailed explanation of how Spanish is used by the children of Dominican immigrants and how they resist the phenotype-based racial terms "Black" or "African American," applied to them by others in the United States, to maintain their Hispanic ethnicity). As a result of these characteristics, there is a greater presence of Dominicans than Puerto Ricans in heritage programs.

Following the post-stratification variables proposed by Moreno-Fernández (2007),¹ the target group was composed of males and females, between the ages of 18 and 31, and they were first or second generation immigrants. Their parents had a low or middle socioeconomic level. A survey was used to collect this information.

¹ As defined by Moreno-Fernández (2007): low status would be workers, seasonal workers (temporeros), and low-skilled employees with no education. Medium status level would be qualified employees with primary education, unqualified level.

In addition to these characteristics, the informants considered themselves as part of the Hip-Hop culture, or at the least, had a broad understanding of this culture because of its popularity among the most economically disadvantaged youth of NYC. Although statistical data to support this fact was not found, during my experience in an educational program in the Bronx (2009–2012), for all my students (hundreds), without exception, Hip-Hop was their favorite genre. Many also produced in one discipline or another (graffiti, dancing, DJing, rap). This affiliation with Hip-Hop was observed in this study through the analysis of the data collected with the interviews in this study.

2.2. Procedures

Ihemere (2006) proposed two approaches to the study of language attitudes: a behaviorist and a mentalist one. The present research followed the latter as most research on language attitudes is based on it (see Ihemere, 2006).

The mentalist perspective is not free of methodological problems. However, following the conclusions of Agheyisi and Fishman (1970), and Fasold (1984), regarding the studies on language attitudes, the techniques used in this study are the matched-guise technique (Lambert, Hodson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960), and the semistructured interview. The studies of scholars such as Lieberman (1975), regarding bilingualism in Saint Lucia, and those of Bentahila (1983), Labov (1966), and Trudgill (1972, 1983), are excellent examples of the use of a matched-guise technique followed by an interview.

However, this study includes an innovation: the matched-guise technique was built with two recordings of a rap rhymed in two varieties of Spanish. After the listening sessions, the questionnaire usually used in this test followed. However, this questionnaire was adapted to the semiotics of Hip-Hop culture. The matched-guise technique was designed aiming to collect quantitative data to compare statistically, while the goal of the interview was to collect qualitative data.

Before administering the final test, a pilot study was carried out. This was useful to adjust various methodological problems. If the direct study of language attitudes is problematic, the matched-guise technique is not problem free either. According to Ihemere (2006, p. 124), Fasold (1984) states that as a result of reading the same passage in each language in its translated version, the speakers can be judged by their performance, rather than the type of variety that they are using. Thus, a mismatch between recordings in volume and intensity in rapping affected the results of the pilot study contradicting the hypothesis.

All these aspects were crucial when developing the final test. Thus, considering that rap is an artistic expression, and therefore, the threshold of the respondents to react to the quality of the performance is much lower than in a traditional matched-guise technique,² the design of the test was as follows.

The test for this research was designed based on the one developed by Anisfield, Norman, and Lambert (1962), who adapted it from Lambert et al. (1960, p. 64) to varieties of the same language. This test used the same speaker to produce the two voices, thereby eliminating potentially intrusive factors, such as differences in the message, the voice frequency, or the speed of reading the text, which could affect the judgment of the participant when listening to the test.

First, a 16 bar rap verse rhymed by a NYC Dominican artist, where all the lexical items could appear naturally in both varieties of Spanish chosen for this study was selected. Only the lexical item

"tigre" changed to one of its peninsular equivalents, "macarra". The rest of the text was identical. The chosen verse was extracted from Sofrito (2005), rapped by Juju, artist from Queens, NY, of Dominican descent (second generation in USA).³

Second, Juju's verse was phonetically transcribed using IPA. Afterward, this verse was converted into the corresponding phonetic version of the standard Spanish variety, a central Peninsular variety. However, it was necessary to adapt some phonological features of Juju's performance to a new version in which the traits of Dominican Spanish were stylized and made more salient, more "dominicanized" (all coda /s/ was aspirated or elided, and all simple vibrants were lateralized to /l/), to amplify the contrast between the two varieties. The pronunciation of a few coda /s/ and vibrants was due, perhaps, to the following reasons: (1) Daily contact with Psycho Les (the Colombian group member); (2) a process of over-correction (probably due to language ideologies that would be the subject of another study⁴); (3) a possible interdialect leveling process that occurs among NYC Latinos (explained by Otheguy & Zentella, 2012). Although it could seem strange to artificially modify Juju's performance since local authenticity is central to Hip Hop ethos, Juju's natural linguistic behavior was not the best representation of his local rapping style such as it was. As explained before, there are reasons to believe that, although only in very few instances, a process of overcorrection influenced Juju's linguistic behavior in his performance. After many years interacting with, and listening to, NYC's Dominican MCs (including Juju), it seems that Juju changed his linguistic features in this verse, consciously or unconsciously. See Table 1 for a transcription of the texts.

Third, several recordings were assessed by several natives and specialists.⁵ The volume (measured in decibels), the structure of the verse (every word falling into the same beat of the music), the voice intensity, and flow (cadence) remained almost identical. Only phonological features were different in both versions so that, in this way, informants could respond to the linguistic variety used and not the quality of the performance. The musical instrumentation was the same for all versions. In this sense, my insider status was vital to overcome the challenges presented by Fasold (1984). My career as a Hip-Hop artist, my immersion for 15 years in various underprivileged neighborhoods in NYC with a strong Dominican presence, and a rich social network within the Dominican Hip-Hop community in NYC, was crucial to the success of this test design (especially to verify the credibility of my Dominican Spanish rap). Likewise, I am a native speaker of a Madrid Sur working class Spanish variety, which facilitated the development of this test.

Fourth, after recording a credible rap for each variety (see note 10), two different versions of each were created: one with a deeper tone of voice, getting the tracks "Dominican Spanish Low Pitch", and "Standard Spanish Low Pitch"; and one with a sharper tone of voice,

³ Juju is half of the popular rap group The Beatnuts. The other half, Psycho Les, is also from Queens and a second generation migrant, but of Colombian descent.

⁴ In Juju's attempt to pronounce the coda/s/ and not to lateralize the simple vibrant in some words, there could be implicit ideologies of linguistic normativity (Kroskrity, 2000), and/or verbal hygiene (Cameron, 2000). However, this analysis is beyond the scope of this research.

⁵ Without providing any information about my research, not even that the recording was part of a research, they were asked if they were able to identify where the singer was from. Although all Dominican listeners agreed that the SSV rap version was from Spain, none of them recognized the Dominican version as authentic. As an example, professor of Sociology and Caribbean Studies at Rutgers University, Zaire Dinzey-Flores (Puerto Rican born Dominican living in NYC), said it sounded like "a Spaniard trying to pass as Dominican" (2013, communication by email, my translation). The Dominican version was recorded again, and this time was identified as such even among Dominican listeners living in the Dominican Republic. Linguistics professor at Queens College (CUNY), Juan Valdez, Dominican from NYC, assumed that the interpreter in this second version was "of Dominican origin with some features of contact" (meeting in December 2013, my translation).

² Other scholars have attended to these issues. See, for example, Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) and Fasold (1984).

Table 1
IPA transcription of Sofrito Mama (The Beatnuts, 2005).

Sofrito Mama (The Beatnuts, 2005). Standard Spanish rap phonetic transcript
[je.γ ó el mo. í.no líñ.d o má.no ð. é pi. é.ð. í.a só.lo kon ú.na i. ð.x.ki. é.ð. a t.e sá.ko la mi. é.ð. a] [él ál.β. un+bi. é.ne nō t.e me pi. é.ð. as bi. é.ne kon. d.i.β. i.ð. í.i. ú.na fun. d.i.t.a ð. é.i. é.ð. a] [nó sói. ma.ká.ra ni t.u p. í.mo el ló.ko pe. í.o mí. í.a nō ái. mi. é.ð. o ð. e eks.plo.t.á. í.t.e el kó.ko] [t.i. fá. í.t.e en la ká.je kon el kú.lo ró.t.o en+ku. é. í.oz j.je.ní.t.o ð. é sán+.g í.e i. mó.kos pe. í.o] [d.é. xá.me ð. é.ð. e. xá. í.me ð. é.so ne.θxe.sí.t.o ú.na flá ka ke me t.i. fé ú. n u. e.só] [u..na ke kó.ma múa.t.jo pán+kon+ké.so kon. t. í.e.mén. d.o kú.lo ke me β. ái. le.é.so ai.]] [mo. í.e.ní.t.a kon los ó. xos klá. í.os ke me a.pláu. ð. a ku. an. d.o jó ð. is.pa. í.o] [i. sí nō á. ß. u. é.no pa. í.a el ka. fá. xó po í.ke mí. í.a já nō sí. bo múa.t.jo pa. í.a el re.lá. xo]
Sofrito Mama (The Beatnuts, 2005). Dominican rap phonetic transcript
[je.γ ó el mo. í.no líñ+d.o má.no ð. é pi. é.ð. í.a só.lo kon ú.na i. ð.x.ki. é.ð. a t.e sá.ko la mi. el.ð. a] [él ál.β. un+bi. é.ne nō t.e me pi. é.ð. a bi. é.ne kon+ d.i.β. i.ð. í.i. ú.na fun. d.i.t.a ð. é.i. el.β. a] [no sói. t.i.γ. í.e ni t.u p. í.mo el ló.ko pe. í.o mí. í.a nō ái. mi. é.ð. o ð. é.plo.t.á.i.t.e el ko.ko] [t.i. fá. í.t.e en la ká.je kon+ el kú.lo ró.t.o en+ku. é. í.oz j.je.ní.t.o ð. é sán+.g í.e i. mó.ko pe. í.o] [d.é. ha.me ð. é.hán.me ð. é.so ne.se.sí.t.o ú.na flá ka ke me t.i. fé ú. n+ u. e.só] [u..na ke kó.ma múa.t.jo pán+kon+ké.so kon+ t. í.e.mén. d.o kú.lo ke me β. ái. le.é.so ai.]] [mo. í.e.ní.t.a kon+lo ó.ho klá. í.os ke me a.pláu. ð. a ku. an. d.o jó ð. ih.pá. í.o] [i. sí nō á. ß. u. é.no pal ka. fá. ho po.ke mí. í.a já nō sít.bo múa.t.jo pal re.lá.ho]

resulting in “Dominican Spanish High Pitch”, and “Spanish Standard High Pitch”. The recording software for this investigation was Pro Tools L8. Fundamentally, Pro Tools, as in the case of all digital audio workstation software, is similar to a multi-track tape recorder and mixer, with additional features that can only be performed in the digital domain. One of these features is the pitch shift, which allows changing the pitch (commonly known as tone) of any sound wave. To create the change of tone in both tracks, the pitch shift tool in the audiosuit plug-in of Pro Tools was used. The two high pitch voices were altered by adding a value of +2 semiton in the course window. For the two low pitch voices the value used in the same window was -2 semiton. The two reasons to do this were: the participants would not recognize the researcher’s voice in any of the four versions, and according to Newman, Trenchs-Parera, and Ng (2008), the test would have more than one voice per variety.

Based on Lambert et al. (1960), the informants were introduced to the task by the following prompt: “People’s judgments about a speaker are determined by his voice, you are about to hear (four) recorded voices” (p. 64). Three males and two females were eligible and took the matched-guise test in a classroom. One of the females, Evelyn,⁶ was interviewed but was disregarded because her mother was not Dominican (only her father). Instructions were provided in English as a strategy to control the effect that the use of a particular variety of Spanish by the researcher could cause in the results. During the test, no evidence was found suggesting that none of the participants noticed that the same speaker recorded the four tracks. The tracks were played once and in random order. The informants filled out a questionnaire (a Likert scale of five points) after listening to every track (see Appendix A).

The initial questionnaire was inspired by those developed by Ihemere (2006), Loureiro-Rodriguez, Boggess, and Goldsmith (2012), and Woolard (1992), but due to the innovative condition of this test, particular attention was paid toward how the questionnaire traits were adapted to the particular sociocultural context of Hip-Hop and its semiotics. Thus, after carrying out a pilot study, some features that made no sense in the semiotic field of Hip-Hop were discarded, or their value reversed based on the explanations provided by Alim (2009) regarding the long tradition in Hip-Hop to switch the meaning of some words/expressions. One of the examples that Alim provides is the popular rhyme by legendary Hip-Hop group Run DMC in Peter Piper (1985): “Bad not meaning bad but bad meaning good!” In this study, the traits used for social correctness were altered completely since Hip-Hop works with different symbolic devices and rituals. What is socially correct in Hip-Hop differs enormously (sometimes it is the opposite) from mainstream culture social correctness. Hip-Hoppers give special importance to personal appeal and capability, something that they use to brag about in all Hip-Hop artistic modalities (MC-ing, DJ-ing, Breakdancing and Graffiti). As a result, the questionnaire adapted for this study includes traits such as “authentic-fake” or “hard-soft” that are not included in the original ones.

Following Lees (2000), after completing each questionnaire, the respondent answered three questions: (1) “estimate the age of the speaker”; (2) “where do you think this speaker comes from?”; (3) “guess the marital status of the speaker.” All these questions initially acted as distractors, but the disparity in the participants’ responses revealed that they thought four different speakers rapped, adding validity to the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation, since all of them believed that each speaker spoke only once. It was also confirmed that in all the cases the informants accurately identified each track as Peninsular or Dominican. The interview later reconfirmed this data.

Once the participants listened to the four tracks and answered their questionnaires, these were collected to avoid the possibility of changing their responses once they realize the actual purpose of the investigation. These questions followed immediately after:

1. Which rapper would you prefer?
2. Which rapper sounds more authentic?
3. Which one sounds better?
4. If you would want to buy the song, which one would you buy?
5. Why?

The pilot study carried out before this investigation was of great utility to confirm what Bellamy (2010) had already pointed out regarding the benefits of using the interview to collect data, and the problems of collecting data indirectly through the matched-guise technique. Therefore, each participant was interviewed individually after the matched-guise technique. The interviews lasted from 9 to 15 min each and were digitally recorded. Before starting each interview, each participant was asked in English if s/he preferred to do the interview in English or Spanish. All of them decided to do it in Spanish. Although all the participants code-switched to English frequently, Spanish was the matrix language in which English was embedded.

Most statements from informants during the previous pilot study were about their experiences in taking Spanish classes, and their feelings regarding self-esteem, anxiety, frustration, and identity. In all the cases except one, when asked about the reasons that led them to abandon their formal education in Spanish, they mentioned these psychosocial problems.

Thus, noting the enormous potential of the interview, and in agreement with Bellamy (2010), the collection of qualitative data was maximized by structuring the interview with questions such as “what type of variety do you think you use?” As proposed by

⁶ All names were changed to protect the identity of my participants.

[Bellamy \(2010\)](#), if the respondent claims to use a non-standard variety, the answer should be followed by inquiries about the type of variety that s/he thinks s/he normally uses. Also, which type of variety should be used in Hip-Hop, in the streets, with family, in academic contexts, etc. Furthermore, the interview inquired if the participants had tried to avoid using their linguistic variety, and if so, they were asked to explain the situation and the reasons. According to [Bellamy \(2010\)](#), this inquiry is based on two grounds: since the informants have already responded that they speak with a particular variety or accent, the interview will try to find out if they attempted to speak a variety approaching the standard or the vernacular depending on the circumstances, and if that was the case, under what circumstances.

Each interview ended with questions regarding which type of music the participants listen to, which one they love and feel passionate about. These questions aimed to verify their music affiliations.

Reflecting on the interview process and how participants perceived the researcher and responded in this communicative situation, I should note that I was able to implicate my own stance and role as an insider in Hip-Hop. This was possible, in spite of being presented to the participants as a researcher, through the subtleties of interview talk and my (nowadays subtle) Hip-Hop esthetics. Although there was no mention of my career and so-called fame in Spanish Hip-Hop, I was able to present myself as professional sociolinguist and a knowledgeable (not famous, one of them) Hip-Hop head. While I would be foolish not to recognize my own privilege as a player in a role of power and prestige in these focused conversations considering my role as a researcher, the communication was enormously facilitated by being able to understand and relate to the information provided by the participants. To consider the inclusive "you" and "us", the use of these pronouns was predicated on the assumption that as a Latino Hip-Hop head and a Spanish speaker with a history of immigration in the United States, I was the researcher yet still presumably on "their" (participants') side in this unspoken game to maintain the collection of relevant data not contaminated by the Hawthorne effect.⁷ This double role as a researcher and Hip-Hop head, complemented by my role as a teacher, was fundamental to understanding the different contextual layers beneath the surface in order to elicit and analyze rich answers that contributed greatly to the phenomenon studied.

3. Results and discussion

The results obtained through the matched-guise technique suggest the confirmation of the hypothesis.

The overall averages indicate a predilection for the Dominican variety within the context of Hip-Hop in Spanish, although a study with a greater number of participants and a more comprehensive statistical analysis would be necessary to ensure that the statistical differences are significant. However, since the goal of this study was a qualitative comparison of quantitative and qualitative methodology, after discussing it with well-known scholars in this field, it was considered that the sample size was adequate for this study. In addition, all previous theories suggest validity of the hypothesis. The results, not surprisingly, pointed toward the hypothesis, but the goal was to compare a qualitative approach to a quantitative approach to studying linguistic attitudes. The qualitative results (obtained with the interview) are far more illuminating than the quantitative results (obtained with the matched-guise).

⁷ The Hawthorne effect (also referred to as the observer effect) is a type of reactivity in which individuals modify or improve an aspect of their behavior in response to their awareness of being observed ([Adair, 1984](#)).

The Dominican variety received a higher score than the Peninsular one, although not by much (0.15 points). However, if we compare the Dominican variety in a high tone with its Peninsular parallel, the difference is a little higher: Dominican Low Pitch is 0.11 points higher than Peninsular Dominican Low, while Dominican High is 0.17 points higher than Peninsular High. This greater difference between the High Pitch varieties than among the Low Pitch varieties can be explained. In support of the criticism made of the matched-guise technique (see [Fasold, 1984](#)), a small imbalance in the sound equalization while playing the first track (Dominican Low) could affect the participants' responses to this track. Comments during the interview about the Dominican Low track were related to the poor quality of the sound. Therefore, in the analysis of the results, those obtained with the two Low Pitch tracks were dismissed, and only the two High Pitch tracks were considered.

Precisely, it is this sensitivity of the informants to respond to the quality of the performance, and the recordings, which makes the methodological validity of this test questionable, at least in this rap format. The interviews confirmed in all cases that the listeners respond to the artistic quality of the performers more than their linguistic varieties. These findings lead us back to those warnings made by [Fasold \(1984\)](#) about this test. The time between words, intonation, the energy spent, and even the ideology of the interpreter and his/her attitudes toward the varieties that s/he records can skew the results in one direction or another. Although the results point slightly in the direction of confirming the hypothesis, a difference of 0.17 points on a scale from 1 to 5 is not significant. All respondents preferred the High Pitch voices, something that the results of the matched-guise technique and the interview reflected. Nevertheless, during the interview, they explained that this was because, in the words of a participant named Damian, "que él tenía la voz más... como se oía lo que estaba diciendo" ("he had the voice more... like you could hear what he was saying"). Or in Manuela's, who preferred "no sé, la dos o la cuatro... tiene una voz más juvenil y suena más auténtico" ("I don't know, number two (Peninsular high) or four (Dominican high)... he has a more youthful voice and sounds more authentic"). Something similar already happened during the pilot study when, after recording the Dominican variety for the second time to make it credible, it was performed with less aggressiveness and clarity than the standard Peninsular Spanish variety, which should have been recorded again to match the delivery of both voices to make both tracks more similar. This technical issue in the pilot study resulted in contradictory data. The participants judged the rapper who used standard Peninsular Spanish more positively because, according to them, he had more confidence and was more serious: "more live [sic] than the others" and "sounds like he truly believes it, he is convinced".

However, the matched-guise technique was not entirely useless. It pointed slightly toward the hypothesis, or at least, it did not contradict it flatly. Additionally, both during the pilot and the final study, the following phenomenon was observed that would be interesting to investigate in greater depth since I believe it had positive and negative effects while collecting the data. Although it would be necessary to prove this causal relationship empirically, I had the impression that, on the one hand, the experimental environment raised the student's interest in participation, thereby stimulating the production of quality answers both in the matched-guise technique and the interview. Moreover, listening to rap tracks, followed by questions about them in an experimental setting, seemed to be a fun task, as it was confirmed during the interview. This phenomenon perhaps helped to reduce possible resistance to participate in this research. On the other hand, it is possible that the Hawthorne effect occurred, influencing the sincerity of the answers of some of the informants.

The interpretation offered here is that, by using an experimental test, the data collection situation is awarded a halo of prestige.

Table 6B Total averages..

	Dominican Spanish Low Pitch	Dominican Spanish High Pitch	Standard Peninsular Low pitch	Standard Peninsular High pitch	Dominican average	Peninsular average
Total average	3.49	3.60	3.38	3.43	3.55	3.40

This is something that perhaps is related to those ideologies that grant positivism a scientific legitimacy in contrast to more qualitative approaches. However, perhaps the researcher's perception has been affected by the very same ideologies that we assume affect informants, making the investigator suspect that the matched-guise test caused these effects and not other variables that have nothing to do with the use of an experimental test.

It is, however, during the interview, which granted agency to the participants (see [Kroskrity, 2000](#)), when everything suggests the confirmation of the hypothesis. Explicitly, all the informants affirmed that in Hip-Hop in Spanish their variety should be used, such as Dominican Spanish, or another Caribbean variety, as in the case of Manuela. Manuela answered that Puerto Rican Spanish should be used, something most surely due to the prestige acquired by longtime Puerto Rican leadership in international sales in Spanish rap music (reggaeton genre in particular).

All respondents except one—Miguel, almost certainly due to the Hawthorne effect, which also appeared to a lesser degree with Manuela—, described their variety of Spanish as a non-standard vernacular variety. Damian describes it as “slang, de como donde yo vivo, del barrio, no el proper” (“slang, like the one where I live, from the hood, not proper one”), while Manuela, “muy informal, como dicen spanglish” (“very informal, as they say, Spanglish”). They both made it explicit that, in a Hip-Hop setting, the variety that must be used is “not the proper one, el de la calle, sí, porque así el que lo está oyendo lo puede oír bien y sabe lo que está diciendo, se conecta más a la canción” (“not the proper one, the one from the streets, yes, because in that way whoever is listening to it can listen to it right and knows what he is talking about, it is more connected to the song”) (Damian), “con mucho tigeraje, tener frases que tengan como lo que oímos” (“with a lot of street talk, with phrases that have something like what we listen to”) (Manuela). Likewise, they consider that in the streets and with friends “la de la calle” (“the one from the streets”) (Damian) should be used, while in academia “the proper one” (Damian) should be used, in accordance with [Fishman's \(1967\)](#) diglossia.

In the family context, according to the informants, the variety that should be used is “el regular, para que tus papás puedan entenderte, como diciendo palabras que son palabras verdaderas y no cortando las palabras en mitad o diciendo palabras que no significan lo que tú crees” (“the regular one, so your parents can understand you, like saying words that are real words, and not cutting the words in half or saying words that do not mean what you think”) (Manuela), “pero el del país que es de uno” (“but from the country that one is from”) (Manuela). Manuela's “but” reveals that there is an awareness of the stratification of their regional varieties, considering the variety spoken at home with higher rank family members (parents, grandparents, etc.) a more formal variety than the one spoken among their peers. All of the participants claimed to change their variety with their parents and in Spanish class due to reasons of comprehension. They think this is the only way to make themselves understood, and besides, “tú no te quieres ver como que no estás educado” (“You do not want to look like you're not educated”) (Damian). With family, Manuela says, “aunque diga algo mal dicho siempre puedo cambiar al inglés y ellos me dicen [sic], pero a veces no quiero ofenderlos y cambiar a un lenguaje que ellos no entienden” (“even if I say something badly, I can always switch to English, and they always tell me [sic], but sometimes you don't want to offend them and change into a language they don't understand”).

This demonstrates the awareness these students have about their use of Spanish, its different varieties, and different registers. Thus, the possession of this plurilectal repertoire enables them to position themselves in a complex communication environment that, by adding English and its many varieties to the equation, makes us think of García and her translanguaging theories to understand how these students use language.

The participants' favorite music genre was rap, and they all said (except Miguel) that in this genre the “de la calle” (“from the streets”) variety should be used (Damian, Manuela). Damian thinks it would be useful to include his variety in the Spanish class, but he wants to be corrected to learn the formal code, especially reading and writing Spanish. In this regard, Manuela and Elías agree. Damian thinks that it would be helpful to sometimes include lexical items from their regional varieties. In a virtual ranking of Spanish varieties, the informants (including Miguel) positioned their own variety with the lowest prestige: “la dominicana como en el medio y 10 de España porque es el origen del español, no es que hablen mejor, pero hablan de la forma correcta” (“the Dominican one in the middle and 10 for Spain because it is the origin of Spanish, not that they speak better, but they do it in the right way”) (Damian). Damian's “not that they speak better” denotes an unsubmissive and resistant attitude that, on the other hand, coexists with the internalization of the imposition of certain inherited language ideologies when he says “but they do it in the right way.”

Delving into the reasons that lead these students to take these Spanish courses, Manuela wants to feel “... más cómoda con el lenguaje, porque aunque es mi primera lengua, el sistema de la escuela me ha hecho como olvidarlo un poco, también poder escribirlo mejor y sentirme más cómoda” (“... more comfortable with the language, because although it is my first language, the school system has made me kind of forget it a little, also to write it better and feel more comfortable”). Under Manuela's claim, we can observe the consequences of a prevailing monoglossic ideology in American society, which has treated bilingualism as a deficiency rather than as an advantage, and the agency of my informants to be aware of it.

Finally, regarding the inclusion of my participants' language varieties in the classroom, all the participants offered positive feedback. Manuela states: “porque creo que nos ayudaría a entender más el slang en español, porque creo que lo hay, ¿no? debe de haberlo y eso es importante también” (“because I think it would help us to further understand slang in Spanish, because I think it exists, right?, I think it does, and that is important too”). Damian and Elías agreed, it would help to “entenderlo más” (“understand it more”) (Adrian). The interviews reveal how all informants create an identity around a particular way of speaking, their own, the one from their “hood”, from where they live, closely linked to the music they listen to. They consider it different from the regional varieties their elders use and from which theirs separate. But as noted by [García and Otheguy \(2015, p. 649\)](#), languages are not only markers of identity, solidarity, and empowerment; unfortunately, they are also sites for the exercise of discrimination to implement the domination and subordination of groups. In this sense, it would be interesting to study the effects of utilizing these heritage speaker varieties within the Spanish classroom, legitimizing them based on their functionality within a heteroglossic perspective of bilingualism such as the one proposed by [García and Otheguy \(2015\)](#).

[Del Valle \(2007\)](#) believes that the stigmatization of linguistic behavior of heritage speakers can be harmful to the survival of Spanish in NYC. This stigmatization increases their linguistic insecurity and breaks off their linguistic behavior from the idiomatic whole that we understand that it is the Spanish language. Consequently, those pedagogical strategies that take into consideration what was revealed in this study could be beneficial for their permanence in Spanish courses, and their linguistic and educational development. However, this needs to be proven empirically. Therefore, I recommend further research on the development of materials for Spanish classes where the students' varieties would be integrated, and as proposed by [Del Valle \(2014\)](#), to open the discussion in the classroom about the different Spanish language varieties. These new lines of investigation would benefit issues regarding identity, self-esteem, resistance, and not least, language development.

4. Conclusions

The findings of this study are consistent with those of [Fasold \(1984\)](#). The matched-guise technique is far from being exempt from methodological problems, issues that are greatly amplified when adapting it to a rap format. It is possible that this technique may be of some use to observe, when starting an investigation, if language attitudes point to one direction or another. But the difficulty in obtaining recordings in which the informant only responds to different dialects, and not to the rap quality, as well as the difficulty to semantically adapt the questionnaire that accompanies this test to the semantic field of Hip-Hop, demonstrate its inability to rigorously measure language attitudes in the context of Hip-Hop.

However, it is during the interview when language attitudes are manifested explicitly. In the field of Hip-Hop in Spanish, these attitudes point in the following direction: the stigmatized way of talking of Dominican heritage speakers becomes the prestige variety, the proper one in this context. The results indicate that the authenticity and locality linked to the linguistic practices of NYC Dominican heritage speakers is a theme underlying their linguistic ideologies. As a sociolinguist reflecting on my experience as a Hip-Hop artist before I became a sociolinguist, I notice the agency demonstrated by those into Hip-Hop. Rap is a linguistic behavior constantly trying to prove and improve particular standards of authenticity and credibility adapted to each local context ([Alim, 2009; Pennycook, 2007; Terkourafi, 2010](#)). Reflecting on my own experience, and in agreement with [Alim \(2009\)](#), Hip-Hop heads have a remarkable awareness about language in general, but particularly about the links between language and authenticity and credibility. These students, Hip-Hop heads all of them, were no exception. They demonstrated their agency when identifying the proper ways of speaking in different contexts, recognizing their own dialect, sociolect, and register of Spanish as an authentic way of speaking within the context of Hip-Hop, a linguistic market where they see themselves and their linguistic practices as the legitimate ones.

But these students also reveal inherited linguistic ideologies that grant prestige to (standard) Spanish varieties that are not their own, expecting to find these in academic contexts assuming them as the valid ones. The stigmatization of linguistic behavior of heritage speakers by curriculum developers (Spanish program directors, policy makers, administrators, instructors, etc.), or even by the general population, can be harmful to the survival of Spanish in NYC. These varieties spoken by NYC heritage speakers are rejected during instruction based on their supposed lack of authenticity as "real" Spanish and their lack of validity as pedagogical tools. The stigmatization of these speakers increases their

linguistic insecurity and breaks off their linguistic behavior from the idiomatic whole that we understand as the Spanish language, pushing them toward the abandon of this language ([Del Valle, 2007](#)). This consequence is socially and economically pernicious for this population because of the consequences that stigma brings and the limitations in a job market where Spanish is a paid skill.

The conclusions of this research open potential avenues of investigation to bridge and transform these practices occurring in educational settings with top-down standard demands. One of these is to assess empirically the psychosocial effects pointed out by authors such as [Urciuoli \(2008\)](#), and [Del Valle \(2007\)](#), while utilizing a series of contents about the socio-political nature of language in the classroom. These contents about language would show the students, for instance, how the mechanisms of constructing prestige and stigmatization work. That is to say, prestige would be presented as a social construct, not as something "natural" or inherent to a language variety. The goal would be to assess how the inclusion of these contents would influence their linguistic insecurity, self-esteem, abandonment of Spanish, and motivation.

It is in the field of motivation in language acquisition where other promising research avenues could be considered. [Masgoret and Gardner \(2003\)](#) pointed out that motivation to learn a second language (L2) requires a positive attitude toward the L2 community, and a positive motivation is associated to the desire to continue learning. Moreover, the model proposed by [Dörnyei \(2000\)](#) has some explanatory power in the abandonment of the study/use of Spanish by heritage speakers. [Dörnyei \(2000\)](#), following Heckhausen and Kuhl's Action Control Theory, argued that "the action sequence process in motivation has been divided into three main phases: preactional phase, actional phase, and postactional phase" (p. 526). Therefore, taking into consideration the conclusions of this work, further investigation is recommended about how the integration of students' heritage varieties in the classroom could affect these motivational phases in heritage language students.

Further research is also suggested on how to incorporate home varieties into daily classroom instruction through materials that are socio-culturally close to the students, as is the case of Hip-Hop in this study.

Finally, I consider necessary to emphasize my positionality as a Hip-Hop artist/scholar. I consider the integration of Hip-Hop and pedagogy/research as a useful, necessary, and legitimate field of study capable to spur social change, turning educational settings with top-down demands in "arenas of contestation and struggle among differently empowered cultural and economic groups" ([Giroux, 1983](#), p. 74). To bridge and transform these practices, all actors involved in the educational process (such as educators, those being educated and their families, Hip-Hop heads, institutions, policymakers) should understand and get involved in the integration of pedagogies that incorporate Hip-Hop.

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Appendix A. Matched-guise questionnaire

This rapper seems...

	5	4	3	2	1
Has a sense of humor					
Credible	Has not a sense of humor				
Bad flow	Not credible				
Smart	Good flow				
Gangsta	Not smart				
Able	Not gangsta				
Successful	Not able				
Confident	Un-successful				
Modern	Not confident				
Suburban	Not modern				
Fronting	Urban				
Stylish	Real				
Sophisticated	Not stylish				
Boring	Not sophisticated				
Fake	Entertaining				
Original	Authentic				
Soft	Not original				
	Hard				

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