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Language TikTok-ologías: Representations of Language Ideologies Among U.S. Bilingual Spanish-Speakers on TikTok

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Abstract

The present study examines how language ideologies related to U.S. English-Spanish bilingualism is represented and negotiated on the social networking site (SNS) TikTok. Drawing from a data set of 100 highly engaged videos tagged with #Spanglish, the analysis applies Fuller & Leeman's (2020) framework of U.S. language ideologies to identify and interpret emerging patterns. The most prominent ideologies identified were the standard language ideology, differential bilingualism, heteroglossic language ideologies, and Spanish as essential to Latinx identity. Although many videos often implicitly reproduced dominant linguistic hierarchies, many others offered critique, resistance, or even reappropriation through humor, storytelling, and layered multimodal creativity. These patterns reveal how TikTok is not only for entertainment, but it serves as a discursive space where younger bilingual users navigate issues of legitimacy, identity, and belonging. The findings underscore the ideological significance of digital participation and suggest a shifting sociolinguistic landscape in which stigmatized varieties and bilingual practices continue to gain greater visibility and affirmation through online interaction.

Keywords: TikTok, language ideologies, bilingualism, social networking sites, U.S. Spanish

> "Llegaste a Spanglishtok. If you're seeing this, you're probably first gen., or you were brought to the U.S. when you were very young y creciste aquí. You've struggled with your identity casi toda la vida, never really felt like you fit in anywhere yet you're so proud of who you are, tus raíces y tu cultura. It can feel lonely at times. It also feels like you have to try twice as hard to get half as far as everyone else. Y es raro conocer a alguien que entienda la lucha. You also probably grew up being told mixing English and Spanish was bad, but guess what? No lo es. It's what we do. It's who we are, y lo vamos a seguir haciendo. Some words just sound better in Spanish. Okay? No me grites." (TikTok User, 2021)

In a world where criticism is plentiful, there are spaces—both physical and virtual—that offer the contrary. "Spanglishtok" extends its welcome and offers a safe space for community through the recognition, the celebration, and the sharing of sociocultural experiences, specifically including plurilingual practices; it is a safe, judgment-free space separated from the standard language ideology permeating society (Fuller & Leeman, 2020). This space offers a perspective that, while perhaps not as shared by most nor easily identified within society, amplifies alternative narratives waiting to be shared. It is within these spaces where both validation of experiences and resistance to hegemonic ideologies can manifest and, in turn, reflect movement towards new waves of thought.

Language, in one of its simplest forms, is a method of communication, yet critical turns in pedagogy, particularly in the fields of Spanish as a heritage language such as critical language awareness (CLA), reveal its inherent connections with various social dynamics, including notions of prestige, power, and language ideologies (Beaudrie & Vergara-Wilson, 2022). The use of language in certain contexts might carry ideologies that are reflected in the language use itself. According to Irvine (1989, as cited in Fuller & Leeman, 2020), language ideologies are "the cultural [systems] of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (p. 64), highlighting language as a form of communication intertwined the social, cultural, moral, and political realms. The eight language ideologies presented by Fuller and Leeman (2020) represent this characteristic of language, particularly in relation to the U.S. Nonetheless, literature on language ideologies within the ever-growing context of social networking sites (SNSs) is a space for further research particularly due to its diverse and ever-changing nature.

SNSs are unique in the fact that they are characterized by three main features which potentially affect the portrayal of language ideologies:

1. Allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system.
2. Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection.
3. View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

(Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211)

While Boyd and Ellison's (2007) definition has shaped foundational understandings of SNS, recent scholarship (e.g., Dovchin, 2022; Tagg & Seargeant, 2014; Zappavigna, 2018), critiques the static nature of this definition and highlights how contemporary SNSs facilitate identity construction, community building, and ideological performance, particularly through algorithmic amplification, hashtags, and visual-verbal interplay. These insights expand upon Boyd and Ellison's (2007) definition and are especially relevant for platforms like TikTok, which offer distinct affordances beyond earlier text-based SNSs. TikTok, for example, is a contemporary SNS that offers rich and multimodal forms of interactions. Users can share short video and audio clips, add text overlays,

subtitles, and engage in public comment sections, live streams, and more. These features allow for the expression and negotiation of identity and language ideologies in ways not previously possible. For these reasons and more, TikTok's capacity for fostering virtual communities became especially visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, as users turned to online platforms to maintain sociocultural connections and expression.

TikTok is a relatively recent platform in the U.S., as is the generation that most characteristically uses it: Gen Z which is described as a "global, social, visual and technological" (Generation Z, 2021) generation that is also said to be the last predominately white generation with a population composed of 52% white, 25% Hispanic, 14% Black and 4% Asian (Casey Foundation, 2021). Not only did this generation grow up with technology, but they also grew up with diversity. From watching Obama win the presidency to the legalization of gay marriage and a greater recognition of gender fluidity, among other occurrences, this generation seems to welcome differences and diversities, which may shape how they interact with language online.

While the data from the current study are limited to a specific context and platform, they suggest the potential for shifts in language ideologies. The multimodal and interactional affordances of TikTok, combined with its appeal among a younger and diverse user base, may create spaces where dominant ideologies are questioned, reimagined, or rearticulated. These spaces also appear to allow fewer dominant voices, ideologies, and perspectives to emerge, circulate, and gain visibility through participation and engagement. These patterns underscore the importance of considering both the technological and generational contexts when interpreting the data.

Further research is necessary to determine whether these shifts reflect broader ideological shifts or are isolated trends amplified by TikTok's unique platform and algorithmic dynamics. Nonetheless, this study observes moments of empowerment and ideological challenge that may reflect a broader pattern. Through the analysis of TikTok videos, I suggest some language ideologies may be evolving alongside new modalities of expression, greater access to idea and perspective exchange, and generational shifts in attitudes. These findings ultimately align with and expand on Aboh and Ezeudo's (2020) conclusions that platforms like Facebook and Twitter, and increasingly newer SNSs, serve as spaces for individuals to reveal and negotiate ideologies. Moreover, from a research perspective, such platforms may offer researchers access to more organic, interactional language use than a traditional interview setting. Ultimately, this study aims to encourage further research on social networking sites as spaces of empowerment where potentially more inclusive and affirming language ideologies can be observed and circulated.

In the following sections, the current study is contextualized. First, a discussion on dominant language ideologies in the U.S is presented, followed by a discussion of the sociopolitical context of Spanish in the U.S., and lastly, language ideologies in social networking sites (SNSs). After this contextualization, the framework and methodology for the study are presented, while the results and conclusions are discussed at the end.

Literature Review

Dominant Language Ideologies in the U.S.

Understanding dominant language ideologies in the U.S. is essential for contextualizing how they might manifest and reproduce in both offline and online spaces. Lippi-Green (2004) links the rise of standard language ideology in the U.S. to nativist sentiments and shifting notions of

prejudice following the Civil Rights era. This ideology promotes “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, non-varying *spoken* language” (p. 293). She illustrates how prejudice and assumptions about language are often used to justify judgments rooted in race, ethnicity, and class, rather than in communication itself (Lippi-Green, 2004, p. 292). In other words, language does not stand alone; it is interconnected with diverse social aspects and the standard language ideology in the U.S. is an example of said interconnections which, in this case, manifest in problematic results. The standard language ideology finds its roots in the idealization and homogenization of a certain language variety, consequently leading to its privileged status and its construction as a “standard” variety. Achugar (2008) notes how this characteristic of prestige is related to social prestige as the standard variety and is inherently associated with the speakers of said variety which highlights power dynamics within language use. It is not just the English language that is perceived as dominant; it is a particular variety and its speakers that become associated with notions of power. In the U.S. this is the white upper- and middle-class (Lippi-Green, 2004).

Unfortunately, this concept of a standard language often begins in the formative space of the education system in the U.S., where students are expected to speak a certain way and leave “non-mainstream languages” (and varieties) at home. This dynamic further perpetuates the dominance of English and privileges certain varieties over others. In this way, the education system plays a crucial role in the construction, standardization, and perpetuation of linguistic hierarchies, often through this dominant ideology of a standard language. Furthermore, debates regarding “correct” or “proper” language and language use function as mechanisms to legitimize the standard variety, revealing how deeply and systematically it permeates society (Achugar, 2008). Through the hypervaluation, legitimization, and privilege awarded to the “standard” variety, there simultaneously occurs a devaluation, subordination, and delegitimization of other varieties and languages (Achugar, 2008). Wiley (2000) highlights the connection between the standard language ideology (SLI) and the monolingual ideology, offering the perspective that languages are viewed as being in competition with each other. For example, in the United States, monolingualism (specifically in English) represents the “norm,” while multilingualism is the exact opposite and can be perceived as “abnormal and problematic” (Achugar, 2008, p. 3). Milroy (2001) mentions how this perspective also exists within the same language, where speakers often believe that one standard variety or form exists. This belief shapes not only how speakers perceive their own variety but also how they view language more broadly, potentially sustaining social hierarchies that frame linguistic differences as deficiencies and, at times, even as justification for xenophobic attitudes.

Martínez (2006) elaborates on Milroy’s claim noting the “systematic attack on the use of Spanish in the United States” (para. 1) beginning in the 1960s with anti-immigrant sentiment, the desire to make English the official language, the efforts to eradicate bilingual education, and movements to take away the right to vote of those who do not speak English along with Roosevelt’s “one language” doctrine. These actions, and the consequences of internalization of the standard language ideology are elements of what Martínez defines as the “Mexican American Language Experience.” These aspects have a strong influence on the community’s bilingualism, language maintenance, and ideologies about their own varieties because “while many perceive bilingualism as an asset, others view it as a barrier to becoming fully American” (Martínez, 2006, para. 4) due to its minority status in the country. The internalization of the dominant language ideologies within the U.S. directly affects the language and the people of this community, whether it be inhibiting students from wanting to use Spanish in school (sometimes without even the option of using it), or even in the workplace, ultimately impacting language maintenance. This language experience as described by Martínez (2006) is characterized by feelings of language pride and panic.

Stigmatization of bilingual practices often surfaces through "dialect dissing" as well as the devaluation and deficit perceptions of diverse varieties and plurilingual practices such as code-switching. Martínez (2006) frames these stigmas within the notion of language pride and panic, where panic often reflects internalization of these discriminatory and deficit-based perception of language use. Language panic includes the concept of "dialect dissing" as well as the idea that "code-switching" reflects a deficiency in knowledge of the language. Here, one can observe that this ideology forces "us to accept that language (or a language) is not the possession of the native speakers" (Milroy, 2001, p. 537) as linguistic discrimination exists within the real communities that speak a language. Conversely, language pride is just the opposite. Pocho.com is an example of language pride, showing how a group of speakers take on a stigmatized, stereotypical, and pejorative term that often refers to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans who have become "Americanized." Linguistically, this often references those who speak Spanish with frequent use of code-switching and linguistic borrowings or those that perhaps don't speak Spanish at all. Despite the fact that the term carries negative connotations that imply a loss of "authentic" culture or heritage, Pocho.com shows how the term has been reclaimed with pride and turned into a positive representation of oneself through semantic inversion. These speakers who identify with Pocho.com are proud of how they speak; it is who they are, and it is part of their community (Martínez, 2006).

As early as 2001, Milroy observed that legitimization was beginning to extend more widely to traditionally stigmatized varieties of language "including urban varieties, certain southern U.S. varieties and AAVE" (p. 551). Villa (2002) also recognized early efforts towards variety legitimation and perhaps a turn towards more accepting ideologies from within the community of those that speak U.S. Spanish. However, Villa also recognizes the pushback that speakers of U.S Spanish face in relation to language ideologies which affects not just the Mexican-American community but those of other origins (Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central American, etc.). These speakers experience a "double jeopardy", in which

> they face strong, vocal, public disapproval of Spanish… promulgated by organizations such as U.S. English… At another level, they are confronted by certain language experts who explicitly or implicitly assert that their Spanish language skills are inadequate for any meaningful educational experience and are best reserved for talking with grandma and grandpa back home. (Villa, 2002, p. 228)

It is clear that these dominant ideologies have long shaped how Spanish and its speakers are perceived in the United States. Understanding the historical and sociopolitical presence of Spanish provides a foundation for examining how ideologies are navigated, resisted, or challenged today.

The observations made by scholars such as Milroy and Villa alike laid early groundwork for what has become increasingly visible, including across digital spaces. More recent scholarship for example, continues to document this shift in diverse contexts like social media platforms where stigmatized forms are becoming more visible, normalized, and at times even celebrated (e.g., Chun, 2017; Rosa, 2017). Sánchez-Muñoz and Retis (2023), as well as collaborating scholars, emphasize bilingual contexts in diverse communicative spaces including the digital realm. The scholars featured in *Communicative Spaces in Bilingual Contexts* (2022) document bilinguals, their bilingualism and bilingual practices specifically with Spanish-language media in diverse contexts and reveal that Latino communities leverage these contexts and communicative spaces to (re)present themselves and challenge monolingual standard ideologies. These studies underscore

the dynamic role of digital and multilingual spaces that becomes even more salient when situated within the broader sociopolitical context of Spanish in the U.S.

Sociopolitical Context of Spanish in the U.S.

The United States has never been purely monolingual. It is quite characteristically the opposite; the U.S. is a multilingual and multicultural country (Cashman, 2006). The land of what we now know as the "United States" was first (and still is) home to the many indigenous Native American tribes, and now, it is shared by many others. This multilingual and multicultural land can be seen in the Southwest, where the first settlements were Spanish-speaking. The territory of Mexico once extended into the southwestern states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and even up to Wyoming—the equivalent of 14.9% of the U.S. today. Likewise, in the northeastern part of the U.S., home of the original 13 colonies, languages such as English, German, Cajun French, French Creole, and other varieties spoken by enslaved Africans were all present (Cashman, 2006). Together, these examples emphasize the deep multilingual and multicultural histories of the United States, which long preceded debates about linguistic legitimacy. Yet, at times, this history is lost in dominant narratives, even though the territory that is now the United States has always been characterized by a multilingual and multicultural reality. In a parallel sense, English is not native to the land at all; rather, it is quite foreign (Leeman, 2004). Leeman (2004) highlights how the United States didn't begin constructing itself as an English-speaking country primarily until the late 19th century when nativist sentiment had gained popularity after the Civil War era and as immigration increased. These sentiments were strong and represent the precursors of ideologies and actions to come such as the English language requirement for naturalization in 1906 (Leeman, 2004). Here the role of English in the sociopolitical perspective was clear; to become a citizen of the United States, you must learn English.

Despite this sociopolitical power of the English language, the 2019 U.S. Census indicated 22% of the U.S. population speaks a different language other than English at home, highlighting the country's diversity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). One of these languages is Spanish, the second most spoken language in the country. Despite the normative monolingualism ideology—monolingualism is the "norm" as opposed to multilingualism—that exists in the U.S., Lozano (2018) argues in *American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States* that Spanish is not foreign to the United States but a defining "American language," alive and active, that shapes the nation's history, its present, and its future. In 2019, the U.S. Census American Community Survey approximated that there are 41 million Spanish-speakers in the U.S., which is an estimated 13.5% of the total U.S. population, speak Spanish at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Despite its variety of use within the country, nativist sentiments are still present, and some have concretized into dominant language ideologies in the United States. As this section details, Spanish has been shaped by sociopolitical forces offline, yet new digital platforms have opened up novel spaces for language use and ideological expression. These digital spaces provide valuable insight into how speakers express ideologies and negotiate identity and belonging in contemporary contexts.

Language Ideologies in Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

As this study involves a SNS, it is important to clarify the difference between SNSs and social media as they are often confused (Bridges, 2019). SNSs fall under the category of social media, but it is particular in a specific defining characteristic: the interconnectivity of members and

their profiles with other members and other profiles (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). This element is important to understand because the interlinking of members and their profiles implies communities, relationships, and connections. On a broader note, Bridges mentions how social media is “all electronic media” that facilitates “interactivity, mobility, abundance, and multi-modality” (Schejter & Tirosh, 2015, as cited in Bridges, 2019). Examples of social media include SnapChat and WhatsApp, while examples of SNSs are Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok.

Despite the popularity of social networking sites and the growing interest in language ideologies, little research addresses these ideologies on platforms like TikTok. This study is among the first to examine them in this particular context. TikTok is especially important to consider because of its rapid circulation, algorithm-driven “For You Page,” and participatory culture, all of which intensify how language ideologies and attitudes are produced, shared, and contested. Vessey (2016) notes how the role of language ideologies in social media is still not clear, especially due to its complex nature, “plurality, heterogeneity, and polycentricity in language use” (p. 4). Chau (2020), in “Spreading Language Ideologies Through Social Media: Enregistering the “Fake ABC Variety” in Hong Kong” explores the language ideologies found on public Facebook posts about the specific group of people known as “fake ABC girls.” Chau expands the complexity of SNSs by emphasizing how social media encourages participation, as there are few barriers and many opportunities for expression, interaction, and community engagement. This, in turn enables forms of social interaction and connection between users (Jenkins, 2009). Blommaert (2018) describes this dynamic on social media as forming “light communities,” which are “brief moments of tight but temporary ephemeral groupness” (p. 65). These fleeting yet powerful interactions are central to TikTok’s role in shaping ideologies. For instance, Chau’s work offers insight into how ideologically loaded labels (“fake ABC girls”) can circulate as a form of social gatekeeping and reinforcement of hierarchies related to language, identity, and belonging. In his study, a few conclusions were drawn; one mentioned the link between the spread of social ideologies and social hierarchies that are in turn used to marginalize others (Chau, 2020). Chau also calls for more research regarding the exploration of language mocking and its presence on social platforms, including SNSs. This insight is particularly relevant to the current study’s findings concerning terms like “no sabo kid,” which function similarly with respect to community policing through these tools that stigmatize and, in some cases, are even reappropriated for identity negotiation. One framework that helps to explain these associations is the concept of “iconicity,” a concept proposed by Irvine and Gal (2000), which refers to how social groups or linguistic features are ideologically associated with perceived characteristics, often exaggerated and stereotyped. These associations can carry both implicit and explicit social meanings, with the potential to perpetuate and reinforce language ideologies across media platforms.

Centering the platform of TikTok, its affordances set it apart from earlier versions of SNSs like Facebook and Twitter (now called X). Its algorithmic curation, emphasis on short-form video, and multimodal composition tools allow users to creatively combine visual, auditory and textual elements in ways that can amplify identity/identities (Lee, 2014) performance (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014), foster community engagement/building (Zappavigna, 2018) and perspective exchange overall. These layered modalities create opportunities for negotiation, performance, and dissemination of language ideologies in this context, especially in bilingual communities where language use is often deeply tied to questions of identity, agency, belonging, and resistance (Dovchin, 2022; Lam & Christiansen, 2022). Furthermore, scholars Darvin and Norton (2015) highlight how identity, investment, and ideology intersect in digital spaces. TikTok and its users offer a compelling example of this intersection through interactional practices that reframe

stigmatizations of language varieties as authentic and valuable and expand the range of identities and opportunities available to users.

These findings highlight how participants in these digital spaces may develop agency to question and potentially resist dominant ideologies which ultimately contributes to their transformation as they learn to navigate these platforms, (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Meanwhile, scholars like Blommaert (2018) note the phenomenon of "content collapse," in contrast to expansion (Blommaert et al., 2018), in light communities where fleeting and remixable texts blur the lines between public/personal and formal/informal interactions. Content collapse refers to the merging of traditionally separate contexts (e.g., academic discourse, everyday speech, pop culture etc.) within a single communicative action or platform. These dynamics may influence how ideologies are negotiated and how identities are both performed and ascribed in algorithmic spaces where users can participate in both voluntary and involuntary communities in diverse manifestations. In the case of TikTok, users interact in blended ways with humor, critique, storytelling, and linguistic commentary in a single video, underscoring the interpretive and multimodal complexity that is the layered nature of ideological stance-taking which is particularly essential to the current study.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Fuller and Leeman's (2020) framework of U.S. language ideologies. As Woolard (1998) explains, ideologies are representations of implicit or explicit beliefs linking language to the social world, thus emphasizing how linguistic practices are shaped by power, identity, and social meaning. Irvine and Gal's (2000) concept of iconicity adds that linguistic forms are often ideologically associated with the social traits of speakers. These perceived associations, often based in stereotypes, can carry both implicit and explicit meanings that reinforce broader ideologies. For example, media representations of Latinx community are often linked to passion, sensuality, or criminality, which may seem positive or neutral on the surface, but carry problematic implications (Fuller & Leeman, 2020). These ideological associations illustrate how language is never just a tool for communication but a site of contestation, identity, and power.

To guide the analysis, the study draws on the eight language ideologies outlined by Fuller and Leeman (2020) which articulate key discourses that structure language ideologies in the U.S., with particular consideration to English and Spanish. These ideologies include the standard language ideology, One Nation-One Language Ideology, Normative Monolingualism, and others that reflect how language is policed, valued, or stigmatized.

Table 1

Summary of the Eight Language Ideologies Within the U.S.[1]

The Standard Language Ideology	"A bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language" typically modeled after the upper-middle class and institutionalized through education and media (Lippi-Green, 2011, p. 67).

[1] Adapted from Fuller & Leeman (2020).

One Nation-One Language Ideology	The expectation that speaking the "national language" is a requirement for full societal belonging, excluding those who do not speak it and devaluing other languages in the process.
Normative Monolingualism and the Zero-Sum Ideology	The assumption that monolingualism is the societal "norm," and that bilingualism is marked or problematic. The zero-sum ideology sees an individual's linguistic repertoire as limited and gaining proficiency in one language comes at the expense of another. In this view languages compete for space, rather than coexist.
Monoglossic and Heteroglossic Ideologies	Monoglossic views treat languages as discrete, countable, and bounded entities with boundaries between them, while Heteroglossic views see language practices as overlapping, intersecting, and fluid (Fuller & Leeman, 2020).
Language Commodification and Instrumentality	Language is primarily valued for its utility or economic benefit (such as employability) rather than cultural or identity-related purposes. This type of commodification of the language relates to capitalistic language ideologies.
Differential Bilingualism	The value assigned to bilingualism is not intrinsic to the language but rather to the speakers. For example, Anglo bilingualism is often praised, while immigrant bilingualism is often stigmatized.
The Relative Worth of English and Spanish	The relative worth of English and Spanish relates to the symbolic values that are associated with them (and with language practices). For example, English is often seen as global, modern, and successful, while Spanish is sometimes associated with outdated values or negative stereotypes.
Spanish as Essential to Latinx Identity versus Language as Choice	A tension and dichotomy between the belief that speaking Spanish is essential to being Latinx, and the view that language choice (especially English) is a valid expression of identity in the U.S.

This framework was chosen for its clarity in outlining the ideologies that circulate within the U.S. and for its adaptability to examine digital media and discourse. The categories provided by Fuller and Leeman (2020) offer a guided lens through which TikTok content can be examined. More specifically, this framework helps identify how users position themselves and others in relation to dominant or resistant ideologies regarding bilingualism, identity, and belonging. Furthermore, this framework supports the exploration of multimodal performances through language choice, humor, hashtags, and visuals, reflecting broader ideological patterns in the U.S.'s sociolinguistic landscape. With a grounding in this framework, the following three research questions guide this investigation:

1. How is bilingualism (English-Spanish) in the U.S. presented and represented on TikTok through the hashtag #Spanglish?
2. What language ideologies are most present and represented on TikTok by and about the English-Spanish bilingual community within the U.S.?
3. What patterns or trends emerge in the language ideologies identified across the dataset?

Methodology

To address the three research questions mentioned above, a mixed-methods approach is employed to explore public social media content within TikTok. Data retrieved from TikTok follows the "screen-based" methodology proposed by Androutsopoulus (2013), in which the analysis of public videos and comments on TikTok is observed via the "screen" (digitally) and not prompted nor observed in person. Here, the focus is on analyzing the language ideologies present on TikTok within the online bilingual U.S. community and identifying any potential trends in language ideologies reflected in the videos examined. To best answer the guiding research questions a total of 100 videos were retrieved from TikTok for ideological analysis grounded in Fuller & Leemans (2020) outlined ideologies. The data were sourced and collected through the use of TikTok's user experience features to filter and sort content, specifically with the search of the hashtag #Spanglish. The 100 videos were selected through a content-based thematic analysis based on a like count of 100k or more (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data were identified as having ideological themes presented in alignment with those outlined by Fuller & Leeman. The following paragraphs present a detailed discussion of data collection procedures, data, and data analysis.

Data Collection Platform

TikTok is a social networking site that experienced a boom in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic when our world went almost completely online. TikTok is a unique platform in the sense that it is multifaceted in its nature, allowing for short videos to be created with overlapping audios, shared audios amongst users, the use of text, filters, stickers, music, and more to add to the multimodal design and creation of digital content. Furthermore, the platform offers an opportunity for connection and community formation between its users through the profile experience in which users can follow each other, repost videos, and interact in comment sections among additional features. These TikTok designs can take the form of photos, slideshows, and short videos; there are even live video options for some creators. Additionally, the TikTok platform offers a "For You Page" where users can discover new content and content creators over time through a personalized algorithm generated by their activity and usage. Overall, the social networking platform has become one of the most prominent and important in today's day and age and is especially salient among younger generations. This current investigation analyzes videos sourced from TikTok following this important boom during the pandemic. TikTok is the site of the research investigation and also the platform used for data collection, primarily due to its multimodal interface and its popularity.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for this investigation was carried out in December of 2021 and included a detailed and specific use of TikTok and its search bar features. Firstly and most importantly, the

investigator created a new TikTok account to prevent any previously designed algorithm interference. To carry out the data collection, TikTok's search bar, the filter and sort features, and the search category of "top videos" were utilized. The search bar allows for the targeting of related content. For the current investigation, the target word "Spanglish" was selected to conduct the data collection. The search word "Spanglish" was utilized to access the videos concerning the content of interest, with its counterpart "#Spanglish" as a final review for additional content selection. At the time of the investigation, TikTok had separate filter and sort features that offered ways in which users could search, narrow down, and identify content of their particular interest. In the case of the current investigation, the filter selection was utilized to filter videos by "relevance" with an intention that the content of each video might best reflect the target word searched, and the sort selection was utilized to order the videos by like count which facilitated data collection of the most liked videos found through the target word. Lastly, the category through which the search was conducted was through that of "Top." This search category is key in data collection as one of its alternatives, "Videos," which offers a tailored selection of content based on the users algorithm.

With these features selected, the first 100 TikTok videos that had received over 100k likes were retrieved for data collection. While 100k likes was the inclusion threshold, two videos with 90k+ likes were included due to their strong thematic relevance to the study's focus on Spanglish and language ideologies. Furthermore, while not the focus of this investigation, the most popular (e.g., most liked) three to five comments on these videos that also presented language ideologies were recorded for further contextualization of video content and potential secondary analysis. This search and data collection method was chosen to potentially target the most representative, distributed, and user-interacted videos relating to this target word and community of interest. The quantity of 100 videos allowed for a relatively large sample size to overview the diverse videos and ideological content distributed through this target word, while the 100k+/- like count was used to identify videos that had reached popularity (this was often reflected in their view count as well). While like count does not necessarily equivocate to the endorsement of the ideological content noted within each video, it does indeed suggest the support for (or the popularity of) said video. Further endorsement of the ideological content within each video might further be analyzed through the comment section which provides additional opportunities for discursive analysis into specific reactions towards viewed content. Nonetheless, the current study emphasizes and categorizes the most popular content sourced through the search of Spanglish thematically and ideologically.

It is valuable to note that "Spanglish" is often associated with the United States, and therefore the videos found through the search of this target word would theoretically yield content related to this community. Videos of interest to this study concerned themes such as Spanglish/codeswitching, Spanish in the U.S., bilingualism, and cultural experiences. Moreover, videos including parodies, opinions, venting, among other styles were diverse in their nature (Zappavigna, 2018). While these themes did not necessarily reference or mention strictly "Spanglish," all did indeed reference this term or reflect interrelated themes, meaning both explicit and implicit content was included in this analysis. It is important to note that completely irrelevant videos that did not correspond to Spanglish or any of its interrelated territories were deemed as lacking ideological content pertinent to the study and therefore were excluded from the data collection of the 100 videos. This is because despite the use of key terms to source data, users of TikTok may include whichever hashtag (#) and caption of their choice, which could result in content misaligned with the focus of this study.

Data Recording and Analysis

The 100k videos were recorded utilizing a storage method inspired by Bridges (2019) who utilized Microsoft OneNote for its functionality of sections, subsections, and tags. This methodology, along with the framework used to guide the ideological thematic analysis, allowed for a storage organization based on the eight language ideologies found within the U.S. (Fuller & Leeman, 2020). Data was either recorded in a video download format or saved as a hyperlink to the specific video if the download option was unavailable due to creator preference. Comments were recorded via screenshots and added to the same presentation slide as the video. The data was initially clumped, recorded, and stored in a Canva presentation without any specific organization, however, general notes and tag words most representative of each video were recorded to assist in nuanced analysis.

The thematic data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), guided by the ideological framework by Fuller & Leeman (2020), focused on identifying explicit and implicit representations of language ideologies across the dataset. Upon data collection, the data were organized in a Canva presentation by ideology. Ideological coding was conducted manually through iterative thematic review of the video content and accompanying comments, guided by the eight language ideologies presented by Fuller & Leeman (2020). Some specific words, phrases, and discursive patterns were associated with particular ideologies; for example, phrases like "no sabo kid" or "speak proper Spanish" were often linked to the standard language ideology, while phrases like "Spanglish is just how we talk" or fluid code switching between English and Spanish were reflective of the Heteroglossic Ideology. The classification of an ideology as primary was determined based on the central focus or message of the video, while secondary ideologies were tagged when ideologically relevant but not dominant.

Following the primary classification, a secondary layer of analysis accounted for co-occurring ideologies within individual videos since it was common for a single TikTok to reflect more than one. For instance, many creators highlight the importance of speaking Spanish in relation to their Latinx identity, sometimes as a form of empowerment, and other times as a critique of those who do not speak the language or who might not be as fluent (often referred with the stigmatized label, "no sabo kid"). Additional salient features across multiple videos included references to accent and to "no sabo kids," noted as intersecting with broader ideological themes rather than as standalone categories. In an example taken from the data, a creator shares how she has been told that she is not "Spanish enough" because she speaks "Spanglish." In the sharing of her story, she not only affirms her ethnolinguistic identity through cultural references and plurilingual practices that are oftentimes faced with stigma, but she also resists and criticizes the standard language ideology held by others. These secondary ideologies were tracked alongside the primary analysis within the coding spreadsheet. Colleagues from the same graduate program also reviewed a subset of the videos, confirming the ideological classification. While the data collected may not fully represent the entirety of U.S. bilingual TikTok discourse, it provides grounded insight into how language ideologies are manifested, negotiated, and circulated within this digital context.

An important distinction to make with respect to this study is its aim and direction. While an in-depth multimodal discourse analysis could be conducted on data collected, this investigation aims to specifically explore and examine how the eight outlined language ideologies in the U.S. manifest on the social media platform of TikTok, specifically regarding the target word Spanglish. Nevertheless, future studies might consider a more detailed multimodal approach to investigate how these interactional elements (visual, auditory, textual, and more) on TikTok further shape and

contribute to ideological positioning. For this reason, the aim and scope of this investigation are intentionally narrowed to focus on the eight identified language ideologies. The decision is not meant to minimize or erase the great diversity and complexity of ideological expressions online, but it rather reflects the need, given the large sample size, to classify and to analyze the videos in a way that offers an overview of how (and with what frequency) these ideologies manifest in this particular context. In doing so, the study aims to reveal potential patterns or shifts in language ideologies, especially among the younger generations.

Results

The distribution of principal language ideologies found in the 100 analyzed videos is shown in Figure 1. In this study, principal ideology refers to the dominant ideological theme identified in each video. Some videos did not fit the eight ideologies and were coded as Miscellaneous; see Figure 2.

Figure 1
Distribution of Principal Ideologies

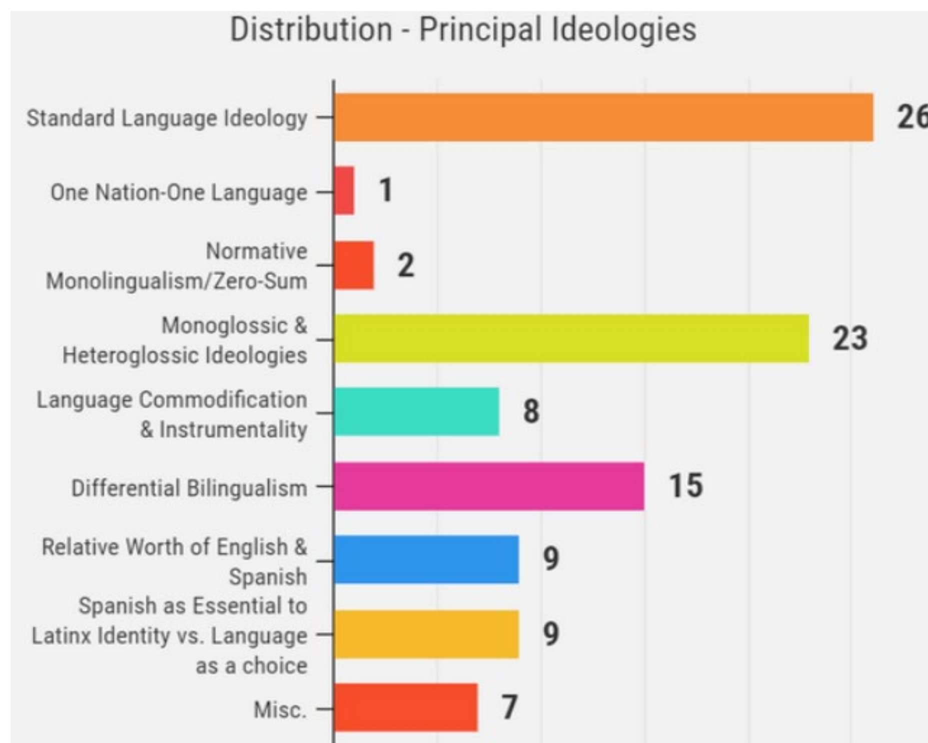
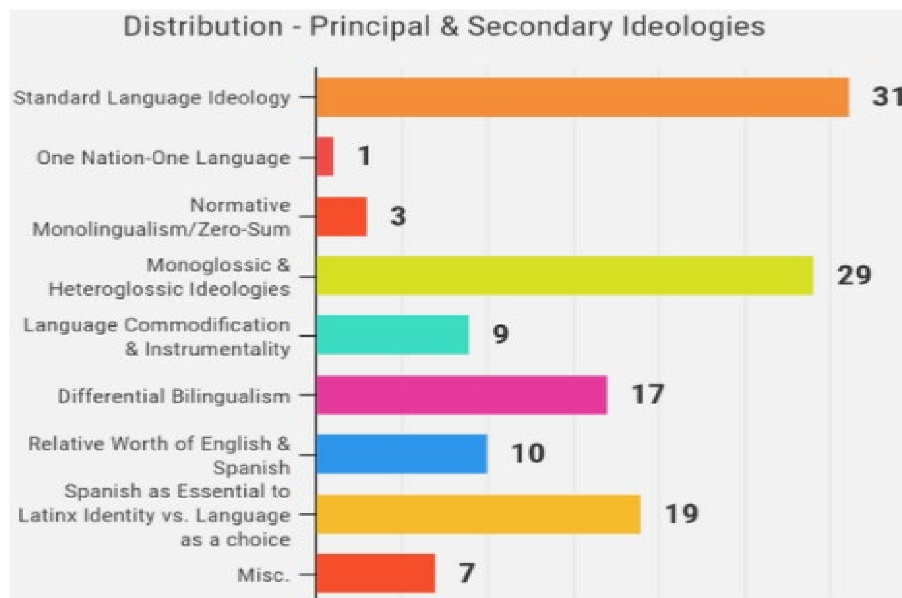


Figure 2

Distribution of Principal and Secondary Ideologies



The results above offer insight into which ideologies are most represented. The three most present principal ideologies are standard language ideology, monoglossic and heteroglossic ideologies, and differential bilingualism. Spanish as essential to Latinx identity also emerged as significant in secondary analysis of ideologies. The principal language ideologies were also analyzed based on their stance, whether they reproduced, resisted, or negotiated the dominant ideological message. Results from the top four ideologies identified and their stance identified are presented below; see Table 2.

Table 2

Stances Taken Toward Language Ideologies

IDEOLOGY	REPRODUCING	NEGOTIATING	RESISTING
Standard Language Ideology	37.5%	37.5%	25%
Monoglossic & Heteroglossic Language Ideologies	75%	18%	7%
Differential Bilingualism	38%	53%	9%
Spanish as Essential to Latinx Identity vs. Language as a Choice	22%	56%	22%

Note. Because Fuller & Leeman (2020) group monoglossic and heteroglossic ideologies together, the stance categories in Table 2 primarily reflect heteroglossic orientations. In this dataset, resistance to heteroglossic ideology was also interpreted as a reproduction of monoglossic views, which were otherwise very limited (only 2 cases). For the category “Spanish as Essential to Latinx

Identity vs. Language as a Choice," negotiation refers to creators who navigated the tension between these two poles. Creators often affirmed the importance of language for identity while simultaneously pushing back against rigid gatekeeping, often expressing frustration or affirming hybrid practices as valid forms of cultural belonging.

Standard Language Ideology

The videos classified under the standard language ideology were grouped by stance, specifically, whether they reproduced, negotiated, or resisted the ideology. Reproducing videos affirmed "correct" or "proper" Spanish and framed non-standard varieties as deficient. Those coded as negotiating often reflected internalized beliefs or tensions regarding language use and linguistic insecurities, particularly when speakers perceived their Spanish as "improper," despite being bilingual. Finally, videos coded as "resisting" actively challenged or critiqued those norms of correctness, often through humor or critique. The following examples illustrate each stance.

Reproducing the Standard Language Ideology

37.5% of the videos were classified as reproducing the standard language ideology. These videos reinforced dominant beliefs about an idealized "correct" (or "standard") Spanish, often through ridicule or comparison. For example, in the first Video #1, the text is written on the video while an audio sound is playing in the background. The text reads "My family when the youngest sibling speaks Spanish," while the speaker lip-syncs an exaggerated mix of Spanish and English. The family members pictured appear confused or disappointed, and the caption includes hashtags like #spanishtok and #spanglishtiktok implying a broader commentary on bilingual speech. The audio that plays is shown below:

Video #1: 598.7k likes	"Hola, mama! Okay, yo tengo mucho hunger, y si no me das food ahora. Le voy a decir a dad y dad cuando él sepa, él va ser bien angry y me va a llevar a mi a la tienda y no te va a llevar [exaggerated L2 accent] a ti al estore." Caption: "whatdishesayyyyy #spanishtiktok #spanglishtiktok…"
Sample Comments	● "How you guys don't learn Spanish if your parents only speak Spanish????" (61 likes) ● "The no sabo kids are gonna be mad about this one" (35 likes) ● "Wait you guys didn't learn Spanish in school Here in California (in the central valley) were learning Spanish and English from pre-k to 3rd grade" (19 likes)

In example 1 shown above, the standard language ideology is promoted (indirectly) within the English-Spanish bilingual community, as the family seems to judge the youngest sibling whose Spanish does not closely represent that of a monolingual Spanish speaker. Particularly, this judgment stems from the exaggerated "L2 accented" speech demonstrated in the audio that overlays the family's expressions. The video was coded as reproducing the standard language ideology as it reinforces the notion that hybrid or "accented" language practices is deficient or laughable, despite comprehensibility. The confused reactions and audience comments contribute to this framing of the

speaker's bilingualism as inadequate. This reflects how humor can implicitly reproduce linguistic hierarchies, even when framed as relatable content.

Other videos also reproduce this ideology, including examples from non-native speakers of Spanish. One such video received 889k likes, personifying world maps in a skit-like performance. In the video, an L2 speaker of Spanish (depicted as the U.S.) asks Spain, "How do you say 'I put' in Spanish?" which is a setup leading to the Spanish response "puse," which sounds like an English vulgarity. The U.S. character is giggling while asking the question, clearly anticipating the joke, while Mexico is shown rolling their eyes at the U.S.'s predictable setup. Regardless of the creator's intent, the fact that the U.S. character directs the question to Spain rather than Mexico becomes ideologically significant in light of audience responses. Top-liked comments explicitly questioned this choice ("Why didn't you ask Mexico – he's so much closer??"), with another reply affirming, "Cuz the original Spanish is from *Spanish flag emoji*". The video subtly reproduces the standard language ideology, while audience responses reinforce this stance by positioning Peninsular Spanish as the authoritative "standard" variety.

Negotiating the Standard Language Ideology

Another 37.5% of the videos were classified as negotiating the standard language ideology. These videos often revealed internalized beliefs about linguistic "correctness," tension between pride and insecurity in one's bilingualism, and mentions of linguistic legitimacy. Creators often described their Spanish as "not proper," or "rural," reflecting internalization of dominant ideologies despite valuing their variety. In example 2, the main text of Video #2 is written on the video while audio plays in the background. The text reads, "When my friends ask for help in Spanish class," while the audio says,

Video #2: 246.5k likes	"How do you say moisturizer in Spanish? Mmm? Well, I say crema. I'm kinda more like the hood Mexican. Like [*in the background* "creeema"] my parents are from the rancho, so like, uh, we don't like speak proper Spanish." Caption: "Don't come to me for help"
Sample Comments	• "Bro that aint hood that's just countryside" (1082 likes) • "I speak Spanglish" (325 likes) • "Being fluent in Spanish as all fun and games until your put into a professional setting and only know Spanish del rancho" (32.7k likes) • "Why did I think "moisturuzador" (18.4k likes) • "I thought it was crema for real" (10.5 k likes)

In Video #2 negotiation of the standard language ideology is manifested in the form of an internalized reflection on notions of "proper Spanish" in direct contrast to the speaker's variety, labeled as "from the ranch." The most liked comments in this example reveal a range of responses, some that reinforce the internalized hierarchy (distinguishing "countryside" from "hood"), while others shared recognition of Spanglish use or rural Spanish varieties. The popularity of comments expressing doubt ("Why did I think 'moisturuzador?'" or "I thought it was crema for real") continues to further this common uncertainty and negotiation of legitimacy among bilinguals.

Another video portraying the internalization of standard language ideology (SLI) features Becky G, a Mexican-American singer who sings in both Spanish and English. In the video, Becky describes her variety as "Mexican-American Spanglish," and expresses insecurity about not understanding other varieties. She jokes about experiencing "pánico" and "miedo" if a fellow artist (or "reguetonero" in this case) were to say something like "Oye ya tu sabe" and that she "no sepa." Although humorous, the video reflects internalized anxiety tied to deficit perspectives and comparisons to a monolingual "norm." Becky's public admission of anxiety resonantes with viewers who have had similar experiences and feelings toward their linguistic repertoires being perceived as insufficient. This example reinforces how linguistic legitimacy is also a concern for public and professional identity formation.

Resisting the Standard Language Ideology

The remaining 25% of videos were classified as resisting the standard language ideology by explicitly or implicitly critiquing dominant views of linguistic legitimacy or prescriptive norms of "proper" Spanish. These creators often used humor, parody, or simply direct commentary to call out prescriptive norms or linguistic hierarchies. In Video #3 a young woman is shown dancing to a Spanish-language song while getting ready to leave her dorm for her Spanish class. Overlaid text reads,

Video #3: 246.5k likes	"Omw[2] to Spanish class to learn words that only work in Spain." Caption: "Spanish Class will not help you!! Coger ≠ to take #hispanic #wera #americana #guera #translation #bilingual #mexican #spain #mexicanos"
Sample Comments	• "It's bc we speak slang Spanish 😭" (727 likes) • "Spanish was my first language and the lady literally failed me" (126 likes) • "They teach SPAINISH not Spanish" (85 likes) • "That's why a lot of Hispanics still fail Spanish class cause we don't know half them words 😅" (65 likes)

The example in Video #3 above provides a critique of the standard language ideology through humorously pointing out a disconnect in formal language classrooms. Students critique learning Peninsular Spanish rather than their lived sociolinguistic realities (as affirmed by the #mexican #mexicanos tags used by the creator). In addition, the reference to "words that only work in Spain" (i.e., a verb with neutral meaning, might have vulgar connotations in other countries, such as Mexico), highlights how educational settings might (un)intentionally prioritize one specific "standard" variety over others, simultaneously devaluing diverse linguistic variation.

Although the disconnect is humorous, it also holds a piece of frustration, as shown in the comments ("Thats why a lot of Hispanics still fail Spanish class cause we dont know half them words"). This aligns with broader critiques of how institutional settings reinforce hegemonic norms about language correctness, ignoring the diverse realities of Latinx students for example (Lippi-Green, 2018). At the same time, one comment ("it's bc we speak slang Spanish") reveals how the

[2] On my way

standard language ideology is internalized and subtly reproduced, in this instance through framing different linguistic practices as "less than" or informal. This tension illustrates how negotiation, resistance, and reproduction of language ideologies can co-exist within the same piece of interactive digital content.

Heteroglossic Language Ideologies

While Fuller and Leeman (2020) combine this category with monoglossic ideologies, the analysis here focused on heteroglossic stances, as only two videos reflected clearly monoglossic views. As such, the stance percentages reported in Table 2 for this category primarily reflect heteroglossic ideologies. In the dataset, most videos (75%) reproduced heteroglossic ideology by celebrating fluid, bilingual language practices and by rejecting rigid language boundaries. These videos often featured creators embracing code-switching and Spanish as natural, empowering, and part of their identity. Yet, a small portion (18%) negotiated these stances by highlighting the tension between such practices and monoglossic expectations. Only 7% resisted heteroglossic orientations outright, aligning with monoglossic views, a noteworthy result given the broader dominance of heteroglossic stances. Examples 4 and 5 below illustrate different stances.

Video #4: 431k likes	"Amigos, muchos me preguntaron que como mi cuñada me estaba entendiendo sí me estaba escribiendo en inglés. Muchas de ustedes saben que yo vivo en el p**che [expletive] United States para empezar, y aquí nos hablamos en el espanglish—que chingados traigo en el pelo. O sea si yo te hablo en español y tú me hablas en inglés, pues nos entendemos porque las dos sabemos los dos idiomas y así de divertido y chido es ser bilingüe. Es-es así de divertido, wey. Que estas junto a unos gringos y quieres hablar *shet* [expletive] de ellos pues a huevo que le hacemos (*shet*) y cambiamos el idioma sin ningún problema y nos entendemos entre las personas con las que estemos hablando. Y nuestras conversaciones usualmente salen así. 'Oh my God, Lori, ya viste que la Estefani está pregnant?' 'I know, dude. Sipi a ver quien será el baby daddy porque she been with a lot of vatos.'"
Sample Comments	• "Like si ablas spanglishhhhhhh " (91 likes) • "we love bilingual queens te amo lauri " (1273 likes) • "I no dud" me morí " (706 likes)

In the example in Video #4, the creator directly addresses common questions about bilingual communication, beginning with "Amigos, muchos me preguntaron que como mi cuñada me estaba entendiendo si me estaba escribiendo en inglés." She continues to affirm the normalcy and richness of multilingual communication practices, in this case, Spanglish: "aquí nos hablamos en el espanglish," emphasizing bilingualism and fun, fluid and strategic. The creator in this example clearly celebrates bilingualism as a resource, and she demonstrates this perspective through the same practices—namely with casual profanity and a playful tone. The video overall strongly celebrates heteroglossic practices by framing Spanglish as effortless and empowering and utilizing "Spanglish" to do so.

Video #5: 90.7k likes	"I always think I speak really good Spanish until I'm around my Mexican family. For example: Aunt: 'No se cómo puedes vivir en este aire seco, no manches.' Me: 'Sí, ya sé pero en los winters no es tán horrible.' Aunt: '¿Como que winters? Invierno, pe***ja [expletive].' Me: 'Perdón, se salió así.' Aunt: 'Decirlo bien o no hables.' Me: 'Perdón tía, es que tengo dos idiomas en mi mente, inglés y español. O sea a veces es más fácil de decir algunas palabras en español.' Aunt: 'Y ese acento ¿de dónde salió eso?' Me: 'Perdonme tia, [in an exaggerated L2 accent] ¿prefieres que yo hablo así?' Aunt: Mira *unidentifiable* ¿quieres un golpeado? Me: 'No, no, estoy y bien, gracias. Perdón.'" Caption: #MakeitCinematic #halfmexican #peliroja #fyp #latina #mexicantiktok #fy #fyp #halfgringa #spanishtiktok #spanishproblems
Sample Comments	● "hit them with the valley girl accent speaking Spanish is a tried and true method" (2488 likes) ● "its tough being Mexican American you gotta be more American than the American and more Mexican than the Mexicans its tough ifkyk 😂" (736 likes) ● "Shes a no sabo kid 😂" (518 likes) ● "as if mexicans spoke proper Spanish either" (486 likes)

Video #5 portrays an internal dialogue where the creator navigates and negotiates criticism from her Mexican family for speaking Spanish with an "accent" and using English words. The creator presents a humorous and exaggerated dialogue, dramatizing the tension between her bilingual reality and her family's expectations of "proper" Spanish. However, rather than rejecting or suppressing her speech, the creator leans into the comedy and the contradictions she is often faced with and affirms her bilingual identity. This video represents negotiation of heteroglossic ideology, as the creator both affirms fluid bilingual practices and lived bilingual realities, while acknowledging the pressure of monoglossic and standard language ideologies, as voiced by her aunt and reflected in her repeated apologies. In sum, most examples celebrated heteroglossic orientations, with some negotiating under monoglossic pressures and few resisting.

Differential Bilingualism

Videos classified under differential bilingualism revealed how bilingualism is not valued equally but rather is valued on the basis of the speaker and their identity. While Anglo L1 speakers of Spanish are often celebrated for using the language, heritage speakers and even monolingual native speakers of Spanish are frequently criticized or delegitimize when their Spanish does not align with prescriptive norms or dominant hierarchical views regarding linguistic practices. In the dataset, just over half the videos (53%) negotiated the ideology of differential bilingualism, often

highlighting the stigma and tension surrounding how bilingualism is valued. Just over a third of the videos (38%) reproduced this ideology, often portraying Anglo L2 Spanish speakers as celebrated while heritage speakers, especially in classrooms, faced critique. A smaller set (9%) resisted the ideology outright, explicitly calling out inequities and affirming the legitimacy of stigmatized bilingual practices. These videos show the unequal value of bilinguals, grounded in various sociocultural factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, accent, and community affiliation among others.

Video #6: 227.9k likes	"The most bull sh*t [expletive] grade I ever got in my life was my junior year of high school and my Spanish teacher gave me a bad grade on a speaking test because they couldn't understand my Mexican accent. O sea, mira, cuando hablo en español y estoy hablando con alguien que es de México, ellos saben que tengo un acento gringa, okay? But my teacher was super gringo—like gringisimo. Okay, so I forgot at the beginning of the freaking semester. He told all of us native speakers to 'gringo-fy' it for him. O sea hablando como un pe***ja [expletive]. And so when I got up for my speaking test, I was paired with another native speaker, and we just started talking with our native tongue. Y el pin**e [expletive] pe***jo [expletive] no entendió nada. Like how can you teach a Spanish Class when, you know, you're going to get native speakers, and you can't understand their accent? Like, I get that there's different accents in the Hispanic community—like Cuban Spanish is different from Mexican Spanish, okay? But that's just insulting. It'd be like, if somebody went up to them, and they said, 'Oh, you need to speak with a hillbilly accent so I can understand your English. But everything turned out okay, you know why? Cuz I have a Mexican mom. 'Mira, pin**e [expletive] pe***o [expletive]. Okay, no es culpa de mi hija que no puedes entender ninguna pin**e [expletive] palabra. Okay, con ese acento tan poco, no mames. O sea si hablas bien, mijita. Pero también tiene acento en español, no mames.' 'Gracias, Ma. Esperate. ¿Qué dijiste sobre mi acento?' 'Nada, mijita, estas hablando muy bien. Ya vámonos ¿no?"
Sample Comments	• "Girl what?? I have a degree in Spanish and you are so easy to understand. Like what??" (13k likes) • "Imagine teaching a spanish class and asking ur students to simplify for u" (9081 likes) • "Dam. Its funny. I got kicked out of Spanish for constantly arguing with the teacher. I got kicked out mismo sentimientos." (7600 likes)

In Video #6 a heritage speaker describes an experience that she had in a high school Spanish class. She recounts receiving a low grade on a speaking test because the teacher (described as "super Gringo"), could not understand her Mexican accent. The creator portrays frustration in a rant-style video, switching fluidly between English and Spanish. Moreover, she contrasts her natural accent with the teacher's preference for a "gringo-fied" version of Spanish, ultimately mocking the expectation that she is to modify her speech to be deemed intelligible. This example not only calls out the ideology of differential bilingualism, but the creator strongly resists this ideology, mocking the structural bias that privileges white L2 speakers while delegitimizing heritage speakers. Additional examples continued to highlight how classroom dynamics often favor

L2 learner norms. In a particular video for example, a teacher is shown correcting heritage speakers for using terms like “carro” instead of “coche.”

Video 7 below exemplifies the same language ideology but this time coming from an L2 speaker’s perspective.

Video #7: 896k likes	“This Mexican girl I was talking to didn’t wanna go out with me because I don’t speak Spanish [*giggles*]. Carne asada. ¿Adonde esta el baño? Uno mas cerveza, por favor. Quesadilla” Caption: “Your all invited to the carne asada…”
Sample Comments	● “hes invited to the carne asada right?” (7 likes) ● “Imagine dating a Mexican girl but she didn’t know how to speak Spanish no sabo kids where you at.” (21 likes) ● “Boy u need to say… vamos por unos tacos… and u willl have that girl on your feet” (4 likes)

In Video #7 a white L2 speaker of Spanish records a monologue style video in which he jokingly lists stereotypical Spanish phrases (“carne asada,” “adonde esta el banyo,” “uno mas cerveza por favor”), after being rejected by a Mexican girl for not speaking Spanish. The creator plays out this skit as a sort of response to this rejection, “proving” that he can indeed speak Spanish. Despite the fact that the speaker presents himself as lacking Spanish skills, he is still met with approval and cultural inclusion by others, specifically Spanish-speaking individuals. This example subtly reproduces the ideology, as the creator receives praise regardless of limited linguistic ability. This is in direct contrast to many experiences of heritage speakers of Spanish or second language learners of English who often experience judgment, critique, and even exclusion from community for speaking varieties perceived as “non-standard” or “incomplete” in linguistic abilities. This exemplifies raciolinguistics, where language value is tied to race and legitimacy (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

A Peruvian creator parodied the same premise (this time for not knowing English) but was criticized for lack of English, highlighting asymmetry. Commenters focused on her lack of English proficiency, positing her as deficient rather than celebrating her bilingual parody through an additive lens. This example illustrates a negotiated stance toward differential bilingualism, as it reveals the asymmetry in how bilingual practices are valued. Whereas the humor of “broken Spanish” performed by a white L2 speaker circulates as valued additive bilingualism, the same joke performed by a Latina creator is read through deficit lenses tied to the prestige of English and raciolinguistic hierarchies.

The examples shown above emphasize how differential bilingualism is resisted, reproduced, and negotiated in unequal ways. Anglo bilingualism is frequently celebrated despite limited proficiency, while heritage speakers face critique or exclusion, and Latinx creators who parody bilingualism expose asymmetrical receptions that reflect broader raciolinguistic ideologies.

Spanish as Essential to Latinx Identity vs. Language as a Choice

Although this ideology was not among the most frequented as a primary theme, it emerged prominently in the secondary ideological analysis and carried significant emotional and identity-based implications. In this dataset, just over half of the videos (56%) negotiated this ideology, reflecting ambivalence and tension through mentions of frustration, hurt, community judgment, and even stigma surrounding whether Spanish is required for cultural authenticity. Creators often valued Spanish while also rejecting rigid gatekeeping, positing identity as more complex than a simplified either/or. A smaller portion (22%) resisted the ideology outright, rejecting the belief that Spanish or high proficiency in it is required for Latinx authenticity and pushing back about linguistic policing and cultural gatekeeping. Another 22% reproduced it by equating Spanish proficiency with authentic belonging. The following examples illustrate the range of stances and their affective dynamics.

Video #8: 89.4k likes	"Llegaste a Spanglishtok. If you're seeing this, you're probably first gen., or you were brought to the U.S. when you were very young y creciste aquí. You've struggled with your identity casi toda la vida, never really felt like you fit in anywhere yet you're so proud of who you are, tus raíces y tu cultura. It can feel lonely at times. It also feels like you have to try twice as hard to get half as far as everyone else. Y es raro conocer a alguien que entienda la lucha. You also probably grew up being told mixing English and Spanish was bad, but guess what? No lo es. It's what we do. It's who we are, y lo vamos a seguir haciendo. Some words just sound better in Spanish. Okay? No me grites."
Sample Comments	• "No me grites only sounds right in Spanish 🤣🖤🖤🖤" (566 likes) • "Am I- you? Are you – meeee? 😂 I'm shook I finally made it to the right side of tiktok" (377 likes) • "I fight back the tears through this whole video" (401 likes)

In Video #8 the creator welcomes viewers to "Spanglishtok," declaring: "Aquí hablamos español, Spanglish, español mal hablado, español con inglés, inglés con español, español con acento, español sin acento" (TikTok User, 2021). The creator's tone is inclusive, she poetically lists, the language varieties and dynamics that frame linguistic diversity as valid but, more importantly, as central to the space and the community, affirming hybridity as central to belonging. This stance represents negotiation of the ideology, as she affirms hybrid practices like Spanglish as authentic markers of belonging without equating Latinx identity strictly with Spanish proficiency or dismissing language altogether. By reframing hybridity as both culturally legitimate and emotionally resonant, the creator highlights the complex realities of many heritage speakers navigating identity. Through this act of naming traditionally stigmatized forms ("accented" or "broken" speech), the creator actively affirms the legitimacy of many bilingual speakers, specifically relevant for heritage speakers of Spanish.

Video #9: 385k likes	"If one more f**king [expletive] Spanish person tells me that I'm not Spanish enough because I speak "*Spanglish*," I'm gonna *f**king* [expletive] fight you and your abuelita, cabr**a [expletive], and that's on pernil, bi**h [expletive]."

Sample Comments	“They way she says ‘tEELLsss me’” (32 likes) “lmao when you just learned all the bad Spanish words” (25 likes) “This energy” (20 likes) “Spanish people are from spain latinos are different people” (18 likes) “glad you know the difference!” (13 likes)

Video #9 above illustrates a raw and real frustration as the creator states in a frustrated-angry state, “If one more f**king Spanish person tells me, that I’m not Spanish enough because I speaker “Spanglish,” I’m gonna f**king fight you.” The creator’s confrontational and unapologetic tone directly resists the idea that speaking Spanish in a perceived (prescriptivist) “standard’ way is required for cultural authenticity. Her emotional response highlights frustrations around being told she’s “not enough” for speaking her language variant, Spanglish. She resists this ideology through affirming that identity cannot be reduced to linguistic ability, particularly within hierarchical norms that legitimize some speakers while devaluing others.

Another video that is now deleted, circulated a common gatekeeping claim—“How tf [expletive] are you hispanic and can’t even speak Spanish?”—specifically targeting bilinguals within limited linguistic abilities in Spanish. This video was coded as reproducing the ideology that Spanish is required for Latinx authenticity and questioning the notion of awarding cultural belonging or inclusion based off of one’s language proficiency by framing cultural belonging as contingent on language skills. The deletion underscores the sensitivity of such language-based identity policing. In sum, the examples presented reveal how Spanish as essential to Latinx identity versus language as a choice emerged as a contested and deeply affective ideological terrain. While some content reproduced gatekeeping discourses that tie cultural legitimacy and authenticity to Spanish proficiency, the majority of creators (78%) negotiated or resisted these norms, affirming English, Spanish, and hybrid practices (such as Spanglish) as legitimate and powerful expressions of Latinx identity.

The four main ideologies identified above portray how English-Spanish bilingualism is represented and contested within the U.S context. While many of the videos were presented by heritage speakers, simultaneous bilinguals, and native speakers of Spanish, some also reflected the perspectives of L2 or foreign language learners. As anticipated, a majority of the data centers on the Mexican-American community, although a smaller portion includes content by or about the Puerto Rican community. Videos resisted, negotiated, or reproduced ideologies in varied ways, revealing TikTok as a site of bilingual negotiation. These diverse stances reveal how TikTok functions as a discursive site where bilingual users publicly navigate the complexities of language use and stakes.

Across these categories mentioned above, various thematic patterns surfaced regardless of their specific ideological classification. These patterns include the use of humor and satire to expose linguistic double standards, expressions of frustration, or pride related to language gatekeeping through the sharing of reflections and personal experiences, and naturally, the strategic use of TikTok’s multimodal affordances (e.g., audio overlays, textual overlays, background music, video, visual elements, captions, and more) to convey one’s stance and solidarity. These patterns show how bilinguals use TikTok to shape discourse around English-Spanish bilingualism and legitimacy, often beyond traditional ideological boundaries.

Discussion

Language ideologies found in the U.S., especially as expressed on SNSs, remain underexplored. The current study analyzed videos on TikTok and classified them according to the previously identified language ideologies in the U.S. to explore which of the eight ideologies outlined also appear in this digital space (Fuller & Leeman, 2020). Results are suggestive of ideological trends regarding bilingualism that particularly consider four of the eight language ideologies outlined by Fuller and Leeman. The analysis shows ideologies that reproduce dominant hierarchies, stigmatizing "non-standard" varieties or reflecting shame. However, many of these ideologies were also presented critically, through humor, storytelling, or commentary, showing that while some reproduced dominant discourse, most (over half across ideological categories) negotiated or resisted them. These patterns highlight the role of TikTok as a space where dominant ideologies are reproduced (and resisted and reimagined), often through shared experiences that foster solidarity and reflection.

While the videos analyzed may appear casual or humorous at times, the data is rich and socially meaningful. This content is arguably more authentic than traditional interview data due to the absence of researcher interference. As scholars (e.g., Achugar, 2008; Lippi-Green, 2004; Martínez, 2006) have previously noted, the standard language ideology has long shaped language attitudes in the U.S., and it also was the most identified ideology in this study. Only 37.5% of videos affirmed the SLI, while 62.5% negotiated or resisted it, pointing to a shift in awareness and emerging tendency to challenge linguistic hierarchies. These critiques also extend to systemic issues in U.S. education, where classrooms often reproduce dominant ideologies (Achugar, 2008). Yet, this same space holds the potential to foster more equitable and inclusive understandings of bilingualism. Expressions voiced on TikTok suggest a grassroots call for institutional support and, more importantly, for heritage speakers.

The connection to community and promotion of ideologies that embrace and normalize variation and bilingualism are also shown in the videos categorized under the heteroglossic language ideology. Within this category, recognition of "non-standard" varieties was prominent, whereas monoglossic views were almost absent (only two clear examples). This scarcity reveals that while monoglossic and SLI often dominate in classrooms, policy, or even media, TikTok amplified heteroglossic stances. In this sense, bilingual speakers who identify themselves with "Spanglish," heritage speakers of the language, and various types of bilinguals express themselves in their own way and in a potentially affirming environment. This is particularly visible in the way popular TikTokers dedicate content to exploring bilingual identity and the use of Spanglish. In fact, 93% of videos reproduced or negotiated heteroglossic orientations, compared to the 7% that resisted.

By contrast, videos that fall under differential bilingualism often highlight and praise second/foreign language learners of Spanish. Unfortunately, support for the opposite—those learning English—is few and far between. In this category, 53% of the videos negotiated the ideology, 38% reproduced it, and 9% resisted it outright. This reflects raciolinguistic dynamics emphasizing how bilingualism is celebrated when associated with whiteness or foreign language learners yet stigmatized when associated with racialized and minoritized speakers (Alim et al., 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015). The majority (62%) negotiated or resisted, suggesting that TikTok creators often challenge inequitable evaluations of bilingualism more often than reproduce them.

The videos classified under Spanish as essential to Latinx identity reflected both affirmations of bilingual identity and internal community tensions around language use. Spanish

and bilingualism in this category are often celebrated as connections through cultural experiences. However, some videos also exist in which Spanglish and non-Spanish speaking Latinos are criticized and mocked with the pejorative “no sabo kid” (Stransky et al., 2022). This type of name-calling trend within the community creates a divide and excludes the non-Spanish speaking Latinos—and potentially the heritage speakers of Spanish whose variety may not resemble that of a monolingual Spanish speaker. These criticized speakers are at times not even considered to be “fully Hispanic,” yet L2/foreign language learners of Spanish are “invited to the carne asada” or are “más Argentino que los Argentinos” because they listen to music in Spanish or use common Argentinian words/phrases (TikTokers).

This dynamic aligns with Rosa’s (2016) analysis of Mock Spanish, which argues that stigmatization is more often about the ethnoracial positioning of speakers; practices like Spanglish can be celebrated when performed by some, but delegitimized when tied to “no sabo kid” discourse, for example. The term “no sabo kid” emerged as a recurring discourse in this category and others, often functioning as a mechanism of internal community gatekeeping that reinforces stigma around language variation and perceived illegitimacy. In several videos, the term appears in text overlays, often paired with humorous skits and exaggerated accents, yet these comedic multimodal elements simultaneously reinforce stigma and notions of linguistic inadequacy. However, notably in some cases, the term was also reappropriated as a form of identity negotiation or empowerment, particularly among those who have experienced linguistic discrimination. Overall, 56% of videos in this category negotiated the tension between Spanish as essential and language as a choice, 22% resisted gatekeeping, and 22% reproduced the ideology by equating authenticity with Spanish proficiency. Thus, most content (78%) challenged gatekeeping norms to affirm hybrid and identities.

The examples demonstrate how language ideologies are enacted through layered multimodal stances, often extending past a single ideological label. Although the study was guided by an ideological framework (Fuller & Leeman, 2020), patterns emerged that transcended individual ideological categories as well. For example, across the different ideological stances, creators used humor, storytelling, and multimodal creativity to critique dominant linguistic norms and to also affirm and utilize their hybrid linguistic abilities and identities. These patterned practices suggest that stance-taking, rather than the presence of a single ideology, may be a key mechanism through which bilinguals negotiate legitimacy, belonging, community, and shared experiences on TikTok.

While the dataset included diverse bilinguals, the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican communities were most prominent. This was somewhat anticipated, as Villa (2002) notes that U.S. Spanish speakers include both groups, and their linguistic practices, including Spanglish, are long-standing sites of pride, critique, and stigma. The visibility of these groups on TikTok suggests a re-centering of their linguistic experiences in the public digital space. It also indicates that Spanglish, while oftentimes dismissed or mocked, is increasingly affirmed as a legitimate and culturally grounded mode of expression among younger users.

The findings of this study might reflect broader shifts in generational attitudes toward language and identity. Gen Z users, who are digital natives (Seemiller & Grace, 2016) and more likely to engage in multicultural and multilingual environments, use TikTok to assert complex and fluid identities that challenge traditional linguistic norms. The platform’s algorithm, multimodal affordances and participatory culture create ideal conditions for both the reinforcement and disruption of language ideologies. Ultimately, TikTok emerges as more than just a site of representation; it is a discursive space where younger bilingual speakers critically explore,

reimagine, and resist dominant ideologies tied to legitimacy, belonging, and cultural pride. Across the four ideological categories, exclusionary discourses appeared, yet the majority of content negotiated or resisted, pointing to a broader generational shift toward affirming bilingual and hybrid practices.

Conclusion

This study examined how bilingual TikTok users engage with and challenge dominant language ideologies through short-form video content tagged with #Spanglish. An analysis of 100 highly engaged videos details the complex ways in which speakers negotiate themes of linguistic legitimacy, identity, and belonging. While the standard language ideology results are the most salient in the dataset, many TikToks resist or critique this ideology, indicating a potential shift towards ideologies that validate linguistic diversity and challenge dominant norms in representations of U.S. Latinxs, English-Spanish, Spanglish, and bilingual identities. TikTok emerges in this study not only as a site of entertainment and data collection, but also as a discursive space where bilingual users find spaces to challenge hegemonic norms and create visibility for their language practices. In parallel with Mendoza-Denton's (2016) observation, cyberspace can function as a political arena where youth critically engage with questions of race, language, and power. Such videos show TikTok's potential for forming meaningful communities. As Blommaert (2018) suggests, these "light communities" may be temporary in structure, but their ideological impact, reach, and emotional resonance can be lasting.

One limitation of this study is that not all relevant videos use the hashtag #Spanglish, while others using it may be unrelated. Future research should continue to explore how U.S. Spanish and Spanglish gain legitimacy in digital discursive spaces and in educational contexts, especially for heritage speakers of Spanish in the U.S. This work is essential to advancing language pedagogy, critical language awareness, and language maintenance. Related to SNSs, topics such as language attitudes, identity, iconicity (Irvine & Gal, 2000), and the "no sabo kid" phenomenon (Stransky et. al., 2022) deserve further exploration, in line with Chau's (2020) call for more research on language mocking and digital discourse. Future research might consider furthering research on how TikTok's diverse multimodal features are shaping these ideological stances. This research could continue to deepen our understanding of how meaning is collaboratively constructed across modalities and, in this case, specifically among bilingual creators engaging with traditionally stigmatized language varieties and practices. In sum, the legitimation of U.S. Spanish and Spanglish on TikTok echoes Milroy's (2001) and other scholars' observations about the increasing recognition of stigmatized varieties, such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the U.S. The platform offers not only community visibility but also representation and stance-taking for speakers who use these varieties. At their core, the linguistic practices in this study reflect growing recognition of bilingual identities as expressions of resistance and affirmation in a changing U.S. sociolinguistic landscape.

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