Counter-hegemonic language practices 
and ideologies 
Creating a new space and value for Spanish in 
Southwest Texas* 

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This article examines how local norms for Spanish use in a multilingual Southwest Texas border setting respond to and contest dominant monolingual ideologies. The analysis focuses on notions of what languages are legitimate for use in the public sphere in this community and on the benefits of engaging in particular communicative practices. The corpus analyzed comes from interviews with key members of the university (president, program director, professor) and from newspaper articles published in the local newspaper. The article shows how institutional actors from the media and education contest dominant monolingual language ideologies by situating these views historically and connecting them to key conceptual metaphors that encapsulate language ideologies. In doing so, these institutional actors challenge national ideologies that construct monolingualism and standard 'English' as the natural and only option connected to social and economic success, offering Spanish and bilingualism as legitimate alternatives. 

Keywords: language ideology, Spanish in the U.S., conceptual metaphors, bilingualism 

1. Introduction 

The rise of Spanish1 to the status of second most spoken language in the U.S. as well as the growing economic opportunities associated with Spanish are evidenced in the emergence of new domains of use. People of Hispanic heritage are the largest growing minority in the United States. According to the U.S. 2000 Census, 35.3 million Hispanics live in the U.S. and 28 million report speaking Spanish at home (Roca & Colombi 2003). Their estimated buying power is said to exceed nearly
$700 billion (USHCC 2005). But, if Spanish is now a ‘legitimate language’ (Bourdieu 1977) in the U.S., do Spanish speakers in the U.S. have the ‘power to impose reception’ (Bourdieu 1977)?

Spanish and its speakers in the U.S. are a minority that has not had the same rights and opportunities as speakers of the dominant language. This is a particular case since Spanish is spoken by more than 400 million people around the globe (Mar-Molinero 2000, 2004) and in the past has been a dominant language in other areas of the world. The case of Spanish in the U.S. is also unlike that of other minority languages in the country, since Spanish speakers have a long history in the region (since 1512). Some lived in areas conquered by the U.S. (Mexico loses half of its territory after the war with the U.S., 1846–1848) and others have come as immigrants. This particular socio-historical context is where perceptions of the role, value and place of Spanish and its speakers have been constructed.

Language ideologies represent the views of language constructed to serve the interests of a particular group (Kroskrity 2000). By investigating the prevalent language ideologies in a particular community in the Southwest border region, this paper points to the ways in which Spanish speakers in that community contest the monolingual English-only ideology which limits “the right to speak, be believed, obeyed, respected and distinguished” (Bourdieu 1977: 648) to those who have traditionally been in power (i.e. white Anglo middle class speakers). One of these ways is through the emergence of counter-hegemonic language ideologies that challenge the dominant view of Spanish as an ‘illegitimate’ language in the U.S.. The situating of this counter-hegemonic ideology within the greater context of dominant monolingual language ideologies highlights the fact that debates about the place and value of Spanish in the U.S. are part of larger debates about language ‘standardization’ vs. language variation and about language as an index of class and race differentiation.

2. Dominant language ideologies in the U.S.

The ways in which speakers think about their language and about languages in general affect their practices and attitudes. Language ideologies have direct consequences on people’s lives. The notion of ‘correct’ or ‘proper’ language skills is used to justify social difference and inequalities. One of the dominant language ideologies in the U.S. is that of the standard language, characterized by the belief that languages exist in idealized forms (Milroy 2001).

The standard language ideology imposes uniformity and invariance in language with particular economic and political goals (Milroy 2001). This idealized language becomes naturalized and is taken as the unmarked option against which
all other varieties are evaluated and compared. Standard varieties usually have more social prestige because they are associated with speakers who are in power. The standard needs to be constantly maintained through processes of legitimation (Milroy 2001). Through the promotion of the standard other varieties are made 'illegitimate'.

In multilingual settings languages are perceived to be in competition (Wiley 2000) and the tendency is to search for uniformity and invariance around one language instead of the standard. In the U.S., this standard language ideology is coupled with the monolingual ideology, whose central tenet is that knowing and using only one language is the ‘natural’ or default linguistic behavior. This coupling of language ideologies constitutes a culture where bilingualism or multilingualism is seen as abnormal and problematic. In the U.S., people understand the exclusive use of English to be the ‘natural’ language choice in their community (Silverstein 1996).

This monoglot, standard-language culture requires the maintenance of certain valued discursive practices that systematically exclude some and privilege others. In the U.S. this ideology has been conflated with nationalism to the extent that maintaining a foreign tongue means being backward or even un-American (Wiley 2000). English is seen as a symbol of national identity, pride, unity, support and devotion typical of nationalistic ideology (Billig 1993 in Shannon 1999). Clear illustrations of this conflation of ideologies are the success of Ron Unz’ initiatives against bilingual education in California, Arizona and Massachusetts, and the legal case in Tennessee against a Mixtec mother who was ordered by a judge to learn English in six months or lose her parenting rights (Los Angeles Times, February 14, 2005).

Language ideologies connected to Spanish in this contact situation have also supported purist conceptions that want to safeguard ‘the language’ from English. These views also reflect a monoglossic culture that strives towards homogeneism and standardization (del Valle & Stheeman 2002). National communities are seen as culturally and linguistically homogeneous. Differences are seen as problematic and need to be erased or ignored.

The situation of Spanish in the U.S. has put to the test some of the premises of this ideology that equate language and culture. Studies by Zentella (2002) and others have shown that the link between heritage cultural identity and Spanish is not a reality for all Latinos. Class and educational level seem to affect the perception of that link. For those who belong to the working class and have bought into the idea that English is the key to social mobility, it is possible to conceive of a Latino cultural identity without speaking Spanish. On the other hand, for those belonging to the middle class and with higher educational levels, the link between the Spanish language and heritage cultural identity remains intact (Zentella 1990).
The validity of the concepts of linguistic norm and standard have also been questioned in studies of Spanish in the U.S. (e.g. Zentella 1990). These concepts imply that there is a ‘correct’ form or language variety and it assigns lower status to other varieties. The standard variety is the one spoken by those in power, not what is ‘linguistically correct’. As Zentella puts it, “if the working class had the political and socio-economic control that the dominant class does, the language of the poor would be the standard and the correct” (my translation, 1990: 157). In contrast, the alternative is to think of language in functional ways that highlight the inter-connection between meaning and form.

The majority of scholars agree that standard language ideology is dominant in the U.S. Debates about ‘correct’ language use or ‘proper’ language are attempts to legitimate the standard variety. Thus arguments about the ‘correct’ or ‘appropriate’ use of English or Spanish are not truly about codes’ qualities, but about perceptions of language and its speakers. Political groups that strive for homogeneity, like the U.S. English Only movement, use language as a symbol of national unity and group membership. As a result, those who speak languages other than English and whose English language proficiency is considered ‘low’ are seen as suspect and un-American. Even though groups like this present the establishment of English as their primary goal, their agenda is connected to that of immigrant restriction groups (Schmid 2000), revealing the homogenizing nature of its underlying ideology. In a similar manner, Samuel P. Huntington’s most recent book, Who are we? (2004b), focused in particular on Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S. as having unprecedented rates of native language and cultural maintenance. This is seen as a lack of interest in integrating to the nation and trying to ‘re-conquer’ the territory. The ‘loss of a common language’ is seen as a threat to a homogeneous national identity. More recently, during the debate of the new immigration law (Senate Bill 2611, CIRA), the U.S. congress passed an amendment declaring English the national language and promoting the patriotic integration of prospective U.S. citizens (Amendment SA 4064 proposed by Senator Inhofe, voted on 5/18/06 agreed on 56 in favor to 43 against). This linguistic nationalism paradigm is dominant in the U.S. as evidenced by the number of states that have declared English as the official language (28 so far), the voter endorsed propositions passed in recent years that abolish bilingual education in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, as well as the expiration of the Bilingual Education Act (January 8, 2002) through the school reform measure proposed by the Bush administration and supported by both parties (No Child Left Behind). As these acts and choices demonstrate, the struggle is about conceptions of society as homogeneous or diverse and about language as a symbol of that homogeneity or diversity. At the same time, the debate over language ideologies revolves around the value and place in society of speakers of certain varieties and the fear that a refusal to integrate threatens the values of the majority.
3. Contesting dominant language ideologies in the Southwest border

The value of a language always goes hand in hand with the social status of the communities that use it (Mar-Molinero 2000). Over time, valuations of languages and communities shift in response to changing socio-historical circumstances. To understand the present value and status of Spanish as a legitimate language in the Southwest border region it is important to have a sense of the history of the language in the area.

Spanish speakers in the Southwest are not just another immigrant group; they have lived in that region far longer than Anglo-Americans. After the Mexican War (1846–48), Spanish speakers in the area became second-class citizens and lost their property and cultural rights, despite the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which was an attempt to protect them. Then, during the late 19th century, Mexican immigration began to grow exponentially in order to satisfy the labor demands of a growing U.S. industrial economy. In addition, the flexible immigration policies and practices of the beginning of the 20th century encouraged the immigration of Mexican workers looking for economic opportunities as well as of political exiles looking for a safe haven.

This Southwest border community:

The city of El Paso was one of the major ports of entry in the Mexico-Texas border (García 1981; Sánchez 1993). El Paso railroad connections to Mexico and the rest of the U.S. also made it a strategic point for several economic sectors: railroad, smelting, ranching, agriculture and international commerce (García 1981; Sánchez 1993). Not all Mexicans in El Paso were wageworkers, there was also a growing Mexican population constituting a middle class of merchants and professionals that serviced the segregated Mexican community living in the barrios (Mexican neighborhoods). However, the class divisions in the area functioned, and for the most part still do, along distinct racial divisions (García 1981; Richardson 1999). Mexicans were primarily blue-collar workers and Anglos were mainly white-collar employees and professionals.

El Paso school system segregated Mexican children, not allowing those who did not speak English to attend school. This produced the ‘Mexican Schools,’ which only provided classes in the early grades and functioned as transitional programs to develop English language skills. The goal of Mexican schools was, besides teaching English, to contribute to the students ‘Americanization’ (García 1981; Sánchez 1993; Richardson 1999). It does not appear that most teachers in these schools knew Spanish or valued Mexican culture (García 1981). These schools did not offer a well-rounded curriculum because it was assumed that Mexican-origin
students would eventually serve the local labor market and therefore did not need a quality education. Even when Mexican children learned English, only a few were able to attend the regular schools because they needed to work to supplement the family income. As a result, education did not contribute to social mobility and Spanish was seen as an impediment to full social integration for children of Mexican origin. In contrast, middle class Spanish speakers were not considered a threat to the economy or the cultural integrity of the place and most of them were bilingual which allowed them to have access to a wider range of social networks and resources. For example, parochial schools offered local Spanish-speaking children of the middle class an alternative that allowed access to an academic curriculum in a less segregated environment (Burciaga 1993; García 1981). In addition, local public schools emphasized Spanish as a ‘practical’ language for American English-speaking students in order to prepare them for careers in business within the community and in Mexico. “By 1913 the school board authorizes the teaching of Spanish but only in predominantly American schools and beginning in the sixth grade” (García 1981: 120). This is a clear example of the difference between bilingualism for linguistic minorities and elite bilingualism (Romaine 1995).

These ideologies had clear material consequences. There was a criminalization of speaking Spanish in public schools (fines or loss of teacher’s licenses) until the end of the 1960s when the Bilingual Education Act was passed. Today, although there have been changes towards a more inclusive education, ‘subtractive schooling’ (Valenzuela 1999) is still part of Mexicans’ and Mexican-Americans’ educational experience in this area. “Consequently some students appropriate the ideology that learning English at all costs is the way to guarantee success in life. The result is the great illusion of American education: that to learn English (and have academic success), it is necessary to shed Spanish and the intimate social relations created through that language” (Moll & Ruiz 2002: 365). The ways in which formal and informal practices and structures of school divest students of essential resources such as language and culture are connected to an ideology that links English and monolingualism with success.

In addition to the clear separation of the two ethnolinguistic populations in El Paso, the proximity to a monolingual metropolis like the City of Juarez has created an environment where it is easy to retain the Spanish language and culture (Mejías, Anderson & Carlson 2002). People and products in the area move back and forth (García 1981; Richardson 1999; Sánchez 1993; Staudt & Coronado 2002). Families and businesses have established networks that ensure a circular migration pattern. There are people in the area that work on one side and live on the other. About 1600 students cross the border from Juarez everyday to attend the university in El Paso.4 There is fluidity and interdependence between these border communities. The interaction and exposure to both cultures has resulted
in adaptations and transformations that help constitute a particular border culture that cannot be defined in reductionistic national terms, it is neither Mexican nor American (García 1981; Martínez 1994).

Recently, this border area has undergone another major demographic shift after NAFTA. The *maquilas* (export processing factories), the war on drugs and the socio-economic situation have produced opportunities to use and value Spanish in the area (Staudt & Coronado 2002; Teschner 1995). Nowadays the percentage of El Paso’s population of Mexican or Spanish-speaking origin constitutes the majority: around 80% according to the 2000 Census.

These changes in the linguistic and socio-political landscape have translated into different attitudes and a stronger linguistic marketplace for Spanish. Although the Hispanophobia (Crawford 1992; Huntington 2004a) that characterizes the U.S. is still felt, the expansion of domains of use of Spanish to the more valued public sphere is challenging the stigma attached to Spanish as a minority language. For middle class professionals at the border, there are opportunities to use their bilingual talents, and their knowledge of two cultures, as well as of two business and legal systems.

Even though Spanish can no longer be avoided, as in the past, Anglos and English still dominate the government, big business and schools (Staudt & Coronado 2002; Teschner 1995). According to Teschner (1995), few Anglos learn Spanish beyond mere survival competencies. However, the demographic and socio-economic changes have made bilingualism more desirable for all.

This constant flow of people and contact between cultures represents a diversity of voices and points of view with regard to language issues and policies. This particular context provides the ground on which the paradigm of linguistic nationalism and its imposition of homogeneity can be contested with a heteroglossic, border paradigm that represents a lived example of multilingualism, multiculturalism and diversity.

4. Language ideologies in conceptual metaphors

In order to exemplify this emerging counter-hegemonic language ideology, I draw examples from a larger corpus of a longitudinal study of a bilingual academic community in this border city, El Paso. This is an ongoing project studying the role of Spanish in the construction of a professional identity, how attitudes towards language varieties influence behavior and identity construction, and the ways in which available linguistic resources are used and valued. The project started in January 2003, with about three visits per semester to the community. During these visits, I conducted over 23 interviews with professors, students, university
authorities and people in the community, collected documents, observed classes and extra-curricular events and interacted with members of the community in informal gatherings. For this particular paper, I selected three interviews representative of the various views and opinions of members of the academic community and a corpus of newspaper articles from the local English newspaper. These data were selected because they represent the perspectives of members of important institutions, designed to transmit and reproduce society’s beliefs, values and practices (i.e. university, newspapers). Correspondingly, the folk theories of language constructed by these sources provide valid information about how a community understands the role and value of language in its daily practices (see for example Kroskrity 2000; Santa Ana 2002).

The data was analyzed searching for conceptual metaphors that link cognitive models to culture mediated through language (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Santa Ana 2002). Metaphors are “ways of partially structuring one experience in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 5). For example, the metaphor Spanish as barrier constructs a mental representation that associates other languages besides English as handicaps and physical challenges to be overcome (Santa Ana 2002). Looking at language ideologies from the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory provides an opportunity to identify concrete images that convey abstract concepts in institutionalized ways. Metaphors mediate our understanding of things (Knowles & Moon 2006), and can contribute to identifying dominant conceptualizations of experience. These metaphors are culture specific, so we should expect to find differences between groups. Metaphors describe, explain and evaluate to construct a point of view and an ideological positioning. To analyze metaphors we need to identify the source (semantic area from where the metaphor is taken) and the target (semantic area to which the metaphor is applied) (Lakoff & Johnson 1983; Knowles & Moon 2006).

The following examples show concrete instances of resistance and illustrate the many forms in which counter-hegemonic language ideologies develop in El Paso. The first three examples show a redefinition of the value and meaning of Spanish and bilingualism in contrast to dominant U.S. language ideologies in the educational setting. The interviewees highlight the importance of Spanish and, in particular, of bilingualism in the area. They point to particular practices that signal this different value and the legitimacy of this language in the community.

The first example comes from the president of the university who is a linguist and a bilingual speaker of Spanish and English herself. Language has a prominent role in the vision and mission of the university. Here Spanish is seen as part of the reality of the region. It is an asset; something to be valued. The operating metaphor is economic: Spanish language as valued commodity.
(1) Our location and our demographics offer a context for this university to create opportunities for young people in this region to capitalize on their bilingual, bicultural assets and pursue emerging career options. The fast-growing Latino population in the U.S. has created an increased need for and interest in native Spanish speakers in the workforce. In a society that has often appeared to be militantly monolingual, this is a perfect time to try to change attitudes. (Dr. Campodónico, President of the university)

Spanish speakers and the Spanish language are seen as sources of ‘capital’ from which to benefit. The development and enhancement of linguistic resources translates into more opportunities in the job market. The focus here is on the economic advantages of being bilingual. Even though bilingualism is not directly mentioned, the reference to society being “militantly monolingual” implies an alternative: bilingualism. In this case bilingualism is seen as the reasonable and ‘profitable’ response to the economic needs of the market.

The second example comes from the chair of the Communication Department at the same university who is a native Texan from a family of German descent. This example constructs the Spanish language and bilingualism as individual talents. From this perspective the Spanish language and Hispanic culture are seen as ‘gifts’ that need to be valued and preserved. The operating metaphor here is Spanish language as exceptional individual ability.

(2) I was looking when I first came to the university to the demography of this country, you know. We have an increasing number of individuals all through the country who are Hispanic individuals it is not just along the border; it’s not just in Texas or California, it’s not just in Florida. There are now Spanish language newspapers in Chicago, Dallas and Fort Worth. And of course Miami, they have been there for a long time. There and in a variety of cities in California and in just a number of places. There are even now newspaper chains, in the Spanish language yeah, media… and of course there are also stations that are Spanish language, television stations… and so it seemed to us that we were sitting here with a group of people that for their own interests and success [have wonderful opportunities]…here are some wonderful opportunities for our students. I think in many respects, it’s my perception and it is only my perception, so this is not… I am not speaking on behalf of the University, but it’s my perception, and I’m a native Texan, that a lot of young people along the border and certainly some that I’ve talked to felt they had to apologize for … being Hispanic or apologize for being from the border or apologize that their parents or grandparents you know came within the last 20 years from across the border… they had to apologize because they could speak Spanish. Well, not only do they not have to apologize, they are being celebrated and we want them to be celebrated.
We want them to know that they are celebrated because they do have that bicultural experience because they are able to speak more than one language at whatever level. So what we decided was let’s do a degree program that will enhance their native talents. (Dr. Braunfels, Department Chair of the Communication Department)

In this example, Spanish is seen as an ability that enhances personal value and increases opportunities. The argument in support of Spanish and its speakers is that of its demographic importance and the expanding spheres of use, in this case, expanding Spanish language media. There is also an acknowledgement of prevalent language ideologies that have discriminated and underestimated the value of this population and the Spanish language. In contrast, the institution wants to “enhance native talents”, work with what students bring instead of denying them any previous experience. This resembles the idea of “funds of knowledge” (González, Moll & Amanti 2004) that encourages the incorporation of community expertise and knowledge into the curriculum. In this ideology previous experiences with other languages and cultures are valued and rewarded.

The third example comes from an interview with a professor in the bilingual creative writing program in the same university who is a Chicano from the local community. In this example Spanish and bilingualism are presented as creative advantages and opportunities to experience another world-view:

(3) No se trata de escribir en español o en inglés. No, es que los estudiantes en este programa… pueden… escuchar las voces de otras tradiciones para enriquecer la voz propia de ellos… y total… if you don’t know some of the most important writers even in translation… of the last century which [sic] are Latin American, then how can you be a writer? Then you have to, what happens is that specially North Americans are very insular and parochial… and every culture is insular and parochial, but what [an] arrogant group… so our students, even the English speakers… gain the most because they are thrown together with people who are not only writing in Spanish but writing in other traditions which they may not be aware of their existence… y se tiene que, se les tiene que pegar algo… (Carlos Salinas, Professor in the Bilingual Creative Writing Program)

In this quote, the meaning of bilingualism is connected to the idea of developing one’s repertoire: enriching your voice by hearing that of others. Bilingualism is valued over monolingualism, which is directly associated with English speakers. The monolingual English speaker is described as “insular” and “parochial”, lacking experience. On the other hand, Spanish speakers and writers are presented as multilingual and with a broader appreciation of others’ experience and culture. Furthermore, instead of an economic or psychological value, this quote reveals an
association of the creative realm with a positive self-identity and view of one's heritage. By participating in a bilingual community, artists develop a different sensitivity and awareness of their place and style in relation to others. Finally, in capturing the use of both languages, the quote is an illustration of what a bilingual member of this community represents: the seamless integration of traditions and expansion of the linguistic and cultural repertoire.

These examples demonstrate the existence in higher education of counter-hegemonic linguistic ideologies that challenge the view of Spanish as an ‘illegitimate language’ and that, in turn, construct positive ways of thinking about Spanish speakers, their language and bilingualism. These alternative metaphors emphasize the value of Spanish and bilingualism in economic, cognitive and creative terms.

Mass media provides another means by which to explore public opinion about language and document counter-hegemonic language ideologies in the community. Newspapers, for example, are an important venue wherein groups disseminate messages, express opinions and interpret reality. As such, they have the unique ability to access, shape and reflect public opinion (van Dijk 1988; Santa Ana 2002). Opinions expressed in newspapers are the ones considered worth being heard; the ones that impose reception. The press decides what events deserve to be covered, in what way they are described, what focus they receive and who the experts, witnesses or participants will be who are called upon to comment on them (Iadema Feez & White 1994). The choice of sources to be quoted or deemed as authoritative in the subject represents a positioning of the newspaper with respect to the ideologies available in the community. The views about language that appear in articles represent and inform the public about legitimate ways to understand languages and their users.

Articles were selected from the local newspaper (1999–2005) doing an archival search with the key terms: language, Spanish, bilingualism. These articles were analyzed searching for conceptual metaphors about language. In general the articles show a general appreciation of Spanish and particularly of bilingualism in the community. However, the newspaper articles also demonstrate an existing rift over the value and legitimacy of Spanish for some members of the community. The emerging language ideologies that favor bilingualism and value Spanish and Spanish speakers are dominant but not hegemonic. Remnants of the English monoglot ideology, which prevails in the rest of the country, remain.

Examples 4 and 5 illustrate perceptions of the role and value of Spanish in the workplace and as a workforce issue. In these examples language becomes a key element in obtaining a job or in describing workers’ rights. Example 4 demonstrates the importance attached to Spanish and bilingualism for assessing the qualifications of a job candidate.
(4) The Ysleta Independent School District Board of Trustees Wednesday night rejected the recommended candidate to fill the principal position at Del Valle High School, saying that the area needs a bilingual leader. “In this community, we need someone who can speak Spanish,” Trustee Rosa Caballero, who represents that area, said. “It is very important in a community like Del Valle.” (*El Paso Times*, May 11, 2001)

Although Spanish language proficiency had not been part of the published job description, the board considered it an important ability for the candidate to possess in order to ensure proper relations with the predominantly Spanish-speaking community the school serves. This implies that Spanish was considered a ‘legitimate’ language, one that certified the candidate’s commitment to the local community and operated as a sort of ‘warranty’ that provided credibility.

Example 5 is from a state level legislative proposal aimed at protecting workers from being punished by their employers for using languages other than English in the workplace. The debate seems to be over language rights and workers’ rights. Speaking Spanish, or other languages, is seen as a legitimate and valid practice in a multilingual community. The dominance of English as the only legitimate language in public spaces is challenged directly.

(5) “Water-cooler conversations and conversations during the lunch break — whether they be in Spanish, whether they be German in New Braunfels or Vietnamese in Houston — should not be a reason to promote any kind of stigma against people who are bilingual or multilingual,” Chavez said. (*El Paso Times*, April 9, 1999)

References to the fact that speaking other languages is stigmatized, reveal the otherwise operative tendency to racialize language and how dominant language ideologies construct bilingualism and multilingualism as problems. Even though the law reclaims workers’ right to choose the language they speak the privilege is not total, and it in fact still yields to the dominant position of English, since the use of other languages is limited to particular settings: “water-cooler conversations and conversations during lunch break”. That is, counter-hegemonic ideologies here do not totally debase the dominant view of English as the only legitimate language for the public sphere.

These struggles between language ideologies also appear in debates about education. The following examples discuss bilingual education and the learning of Spanish in schools. However, the term ‘bilingual education’ as used in these discussions refers not only to dual-language programs whose goal is to develop both languages by using them both to learn content, but also to those programs that use the native language as a mere stepping stone to the ultimate goal of monolingual education in English. The debates about language and public education
exemplified below are typical of those in other parts of the country, although, in this community, more programs exist that support dual-language education and more value is placed on the development and maintenance of Spanish.

In example 6, a reporter cites the personal story of a new Anglo resident who moved from the northern part of the country and has a favorable view of dual-language education.

(6) “Living in a community like El Paso, it is important to know both languages and know them well,” Crouse said. “I think this will open doors for children and allow them to be more global in their careers.” (El Paso Times, September 10, 2001)

Here bilingualism and the Spanish language are seen as assets that increase professional and job opportunities. At the same time, the benefits are not only assessed in local or national terms but at the “global” level. For this resident, learning Spanish is “open[ing] doors”. This is an alternative metaphor that is opposed to the language-as-barrier ideology that depicts other languages as obstacles in the path of development.

Example 7 is another personal account; but this time, the voice is that of a Mexican immigrant that has just moved to the community and fears her children will lose their native language. The headline of this article is “Losing Spanish: U.S. students may neglect native language”, pointing to the loss of language as a problem. The article presents an alternative reading of the situation since this phenomenon is usually interpreted in positive terms within the dominant language ideology which strives to move students as quickly as possible into the ‘mainstream’ English monolingual classrooms and positions English as the only necessary tool for success in this society.

(7) Nelly Dominguez is proud of how much English her two sons have learned in the year and a half since the family moved from Juarez into a South Side home. But as time passes and she notices the two boys talking to each other in English more, she wonders what will happen to their Spanish. “I wanted them to learn English because I know it would be hard for them if they didn’t know that language,” Dominguez said in Spanish. “I didn’t think that eventually I wouldn’t be able to understand them.” (El Paso Times, January 4, 2005)

This example points out the problems of losing a language: family members loose touch as one is “not … able to understand” the other. The article also highlights how the myth that English ensures success (and that not learning English results in failure) does not correspond to the lived reality of those who experience it. The rest of the article criticizes public education for not helping students maintain and
develop their Spanish: a message which contrasts with those typically offered in national newspapers like the *New York Times* where schools are singled out for failing to teach English (e.g. July 14, 2004).

Finally, example 8 reveals that dominant language ideologies are still present in the community. Here there is a different conceptualization of bilingual education, defining it as transitional programs whose goal is to move students into the English monolingual class, giving them access to the language of power. The metaphors operating here are *Spanish as a problem* and *bilingualism as a barrier*.

(8) “The bottom line is that parental support needs to be there. Otherwise, it will be hard for them to learn,” she [Arias] said. “I see children spend many years in bilingual education, and that’s because there is no parental support.” Arias said the summers could be critical in eventually getting students out of bilingual education and into regular English courses. “If the student continues to learn through the summer, he or she will be more than ready to take on their second or third year of bilingual education,” she said. “After that, they’ll be ready to learn in any language.” (*El Paso Times*, May 26, 2005)

The title of this article, “Students in bilingual classes can lose their English during the summer”, provides an interesting contrast with that of the previous article which focused on the loss of Spanish. Both articles characterize language loss as a relevant community issue. The latter article, however, does not construct the consequences of this problem in terms of family disconnect, but in terms of a loss of learning opportunities. Bilingual education is presented as a remedial program that students need to “get out of” to move into “regular” courses. “Bilingual” is contrasted with “English” and is seen as lacking or less valuable. In addition, here the ones being presented as responsible for the loss are parents who offer no support: a claim typical of dominant language ideologies which often blame speakers of other languages and their culture for the high drop out rates and failure in school. In other words, it is *bad parenting* not *bad schools* that cause this problem.

These examples all reveal that the perceptions groups have of the role of language and the value of language in society translate into concrete practices and consequences for people. The material consequences of these ideologies affect those who do not speak the dominant language at home by limiting the children’s possibilities of developing bilingualism and biliteracy, and also by regulating the ways of communicating in public places such as work. Dominant groups exercise their power to determine who belongs, who has the right to decide and who has the obligation to conform to the ways of being and doing established as legitimate in the community. The people who use this minority language, Spanish, are the ones being negatively affected by perceptions of what is a legitimate language and who is a legitimate speaker.
Yet in this community there are counter-hegemonic language ideologies that challenge the dominant monoglot view that the only ‘legitimate’ language in this society is English. Here bilingualism is also conceived as a societal and individual goal that benefits everyone on various levels: economic, creative, personal. This is a heteroglossic community where members choose from a wide range of linguistic resources depending on what a situation calls for. Despite this, the last example demonstrates that language ideologies which value English over other languages and that consider the educational goal to be mainstreaming students into English monolingual programs continue to abound. Dominant monoglot beliefs cannot be totally subverted by demographic changes alone, but must arise from everyday practices. The counter-hegemonic language ideologies that exist in this community are the result of everyday practices that value and open spaces of use for Spanish and propose bilingualism as the goal for the community.

5. Conclusion

The multiplicity of language ideologies that coexist in this particular community reveal the tension between the homogenizing forces of the paradigm of linguistic nationalism and the heterogenizing forces of the heteroglossic/border paradigm. The linguistic culture of monoglossia equates language with the spirit of the people and the nation, and aims at uniformity (del Valle 2000). This ideology dominates Western thought and has been widely accepted by most. Nonetheless, this particular community in the Southwest of the U.S. demonstrates that there are alternative ways of conceptualizing and enacting the relationship between language and group membership. This community is characterized by a multiplicity of norms and linguistic practices that create a culture of heteroglossia (del Valle 2000).

Power relations between groups that represent these two ideologies are manifested and reproduced through language. Challenges to power differences are also enacted through language. As the previous analysis revealed, resistance to dominant language ideologies in this context does not imply the replacement of English with Spanish. “Resistance is not through monolingualism in the minority language but rather through bilingualism. Proficiency in both languages is the successful strategy of resistance” (Suárez 2002: 515). Spanish in this context does not mean one language, but rather, it implies bilingualism or the expansion of the linguistic repertoire. The fact that Spanish is considered a legitimate language takes as a given the fact that speakers already know English. The real challenge is to monolingualism and standardization ideologies that want to impose a monoglot language.

Another issue at stake is the racialization of language and the association of Spanish speakers with a non-human, out of control, uneducated, enemy mass. As
Santa Ana (2002) and Urciuoli (1996) have demonstrated, Latinos in the U.S. are seen as outsiders, not part of the national fabric or the in-group. The marginalization of Latinos in contemporary discourse reinforces a social order that defines citizenship rights and social hierarchies in cultural and linguistic terms that encode class differences. That is, social injustice and inequality are explained as linguistic or cultural problems instead of resulting from socio-economic structures that privilege some over others. The counter-hegemonic language ideologies presented here question the association of bilingualism with deficit and as the cause of inequality, opening the space to look at other sources of social injustice such as oppression, discrimination, and economic exploitation among others. They also make us question the value and meaning of bilingual discourse practices. As Zentella (2003: 60) documents, bilingual practices such as code-switching, calquing and loans constitute responses to the dominant racializing discourse Latinos are subjected to. What people think about language (its value, its meaning and its legitimate uses) together with the concrete discursive practices they engage in opens new spaces to contest dominant monoglot standard English ideologies and practices.

The extent to which counter-hegemonic language ideologies like those emerging in this Southwest community represent a concrete challenge to the monolingual English-only ideologies that have dominated this country since the 19th century remains to be seen. Language ideologies and language practices are dynamic and historically constructed, so it is important that we continue tracking and observing how this phenomenon develops. The erosion of dominant ideologies can only occur through sustained and continued challenges, either from inside… or from the borders.

Notes

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1. Spanish (although given a label) is not a single code. In this particular context, this label represents a wide range of regional varieties from Latin America, especially Mexico, as well as the local Southwest variety of Spanish. There are also several norms co-existing, which represent the diversity characteristic of all speech communities, even monolingual ones (Santa Ana & Parodi 1998). For the purpose of discussing language ideologies, I use 'language' in the sense of an abstract, idealized entity.

2. For more detailed information see James Crawford’s web page (cited in References).
3. Although, the founder of the first ‘Mexican school’ in El Paso was a Spaniard, Olivas V. Aoy, who in 1897 independently supplied English instruction to the Mexican community. Later, after his death and when the Spanish-speaking community became almost half of the district’s population, the School Board incorporated that school and supplied it with teachers and principals who did not know or value Spanish or Mexican culture (García 1981).

4. The PASE Program is a regional program developed to increase the enrollment of universities in this area by charging in-state tuition to Mexican citizens living in the border region. For Mexicans, even paying the in-state tuition fee is an enormous amount, so the people who benefit from this program are mostly from the middle and upper-middle class (from interview with the Assistant Director of PASE at the University).

5. All names are pseudonyms to protect the participants’ identity.

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