

## Abstract

Moriello, Beckie. "I'm feeksin' to move": Hispanic English in Siler City, North Carolina. (Under the direction of Walt Wolfram, William C. Friday Distinguished Professor)

This study is an overview of the emerging dialect of rural Southern Hispanic English. Siler City, North Carolina is the focus. The study examines the turbulent history of race relations in the area (including the February 2000 David Duke rally), and also provides a detailed account of race relations in 2002. The analysis focuses on the speech of 8 to 18-year-olds of Mexican decent of varying lengths of residency in the United States. Most children, even those born in the US, exhibit substantial Spanish transfer. Unglided /aɪ/ is used as an indicator of any local dialect (White or Black). Various speakers' /aɪ/ glides are measured, plotted, and juxtaposed with speakers' orientation toward the local culture.

As corroborated by the non-Southern production of /aɪ/ among the majority of speakers, most Hispanics in Siler City are by and large not interacting with local Whites and Blacks more than absolutely necessary. There are a couple of notable exceptions, however, which are discussed in detail. It's also concluded that among Hispanics under age 13 (13 is the oldest Hispanic located who was born in Siler City) length of residency (LOR) becomes nearly irrelevant after approximately two years in the US.

**“I’M FEEKSIN’ TO MOVE...”  
CHICANO ENGLISH IN SILER CITY, NORTH CAROLINA**

by  
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## Dedication

For my fabulous dead grandmother, Millie Meyers.

You rock.

Nanny, you're so cool. Thank you.

## Biography

BECKIE MORIELLO was born on May 16, 1979. She lived in Northbrook, IL until going to Pitzer College (BA 2001) and North Carolina State University (MA 2003). She lived in Spain for a year and a half, and gives a shout-out to the Catalans.

## Acknowledgements

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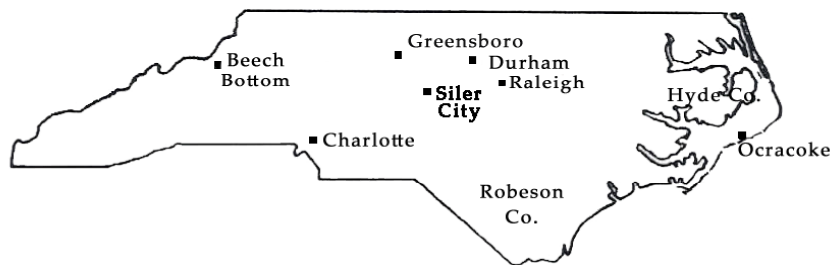
## **1. Introduction**

Although stable Hispanic populations have existed in some regions of the United States for centuries now (Peñalosa 1980; Fought 2003), rural regions in the Mid-Atlantic South are just beginning to witness the emergence of core Hispanic communities. For example, between 1990 and 2000, North Carolina experienced a higher percentage of growth in its Latin American population than any other state. This status is partly due to the fact that North Carolina, like much of the Southeast and some states in the Midwest, started out the decade with relatively few Hispanics compared to the rest of the country.

The development of Hispanic communities raises a number of important questions about the development of varieties of English. Who are they learning their primary English from and how does this affect the variety of English emerging among them? Is a new, regionally defined ethnic variety of Hispanic English developing in these settings? Do new Hispanic residents accommodate the local dialect traits of their cohort English-speaking communities, and if so, which community? What aspects of the local dialect are most prominent in their speech and how are they combined with other constellations of English language structures? Does the variety of English show a persistent substrate from Spanish transfer and fossilized interlanguage features? These kinds of new contact situations offer a unique opportunity to examine the process of ethnic dialect formation and dialect accommodation in its incipient stages in a localized, regional dialect setting.

### **1.A. Siler City, The Big Picture**

This thesis examines some of the issues associated with the emergence of new Hispanic communities in the South by focusing on Siler City, North Carolina, a relatively small, rural community located in the Piedmont. Siler City is situated between larger urban areas such as Greensboro, Raleigh, and Charlotte, as indicated on the map in Figure 1. It is about 40 miles southeast of Greensboro, 50 miles west of Raleigh, and 80 miles northeast of Charlotte.



**Figure 1. Location of Siler City, North Carolina**

In 1990, Siler City was a small rural area of 4,808 residents, 70% White, 27% Black, and 3% Hispanic. Within a ten-year period, the population rapidly grew to 6,966 residents in 2000, with 39% percent of the population Hispanic. As of March 2003, the Hispanic Liaison in Siler City estimates that the town has about 5,000 Hispanic residents, which is almost 50% of the population. The majority come directly from Mexico, followed by Central and South America, and a few from other areas of the US. Many are joining relatives who had recently moved there themselves. Young men tend to come first, then they send for their immediate families, and extended families eventually often follow. A middle-aged man named Roberto who works at Food Lion is said to be Siler City's first Hispanic resident, having arrived around 1975.

The Hispanic immigrants often work in one of Siler City's two poultry plants, or in furniture manufacturing, textile mills, lumber yards, construction, or the service industry (such as fast foods).<sup>1</sup> The poultry plants pay better for unskilled labor than similar jobs in most other areas of the country where the markets are already saturated. Wages start at \$7.00 an hour, with 10-cent raises after 3 months, then yearly (Salon), compared to \$3.35 an hour one Siler City man made washing dishes in Los Angeles (Yeoman). However, the work area is cold, physically detrimental, and has high rates of injury. According to the Department of Labor, 9% of poultry

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<sup>1</sup> 3/14/03, email from Ilana Dubester, director of the Hispanic Liaison.

workers suffer serious illness or injury each year, a rate which is second only to meatpacking (Yeoman). For example, some of the workers' jobs are to catch the chickens. This task consists of bending down and grabbing chickens by the neck in each hand. One man says he gets five per hand: one between each finger and two between the thumb and index finger.<sup>2</sup> Another claims to do eight in each hand: one between each of the smaller fingers, two between the first and second finger, and four between his forefinger and thumb (Cuadros 2001). At the end of the day the workers' backs and hands hurt. Those in the de-bone area stand all day cutting 18 chickens a minute. Some employees learn enough English to get better jobs, such as in one of the textile factories, or in a store or pharmacy with English-speaking customers.

Another reason many Hispanics are drawn away from large cities in the U.S. is that they miss the small-town life they left in Mexico. Siler City matches many Hispanic immigrants' hopes for a place to raise their family. It's rural, religious, quaint, and as one community member said, "Most people know each other... it's a close-knit community" (Burritt). For example, when Hispanics arrive in town they often stay with relatives who are already there—no matter how tight the relatives are for space—thus keeping with the Latin American tradition of housing extended family under one roof.

Siler City's immigration boom shocked many previous residents, sparked racial tensions, and invited a sea of reporters from across the US who were intrigued by what they saw as the potential for a train wreck: large numbers of Hispanics moving to what the Miami Herald described as a "conservative Bible Belt town that was formerly Klan territory" (Viglucci). Residents of Siler City indeed were confused when waves of Hispanics started arriving, and, according to the Hispanic Liaison's director, Ilana Dubester, initially assumed that the Hispanics would be there temporarily and move on. Even the more open-minded residents weren't sure what to make of the situation when it became clear that the Hispanics weren't leaving. One woman told the *Washington Post*, "I don't want to say anything against anybody, but they just came in and took over." In an area where Northerners who've moved to

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<sup>2</sup> Antonio 2, personal communication

the South are sometimes referred to as “immigrants,”<sup>3</sup> some city employees were unaware that Hispanics could be U.S. born citizens. For example, in 1999, a DMV clerk in Siler City accused Texas-native Ruth Tapia of forging her birth certificate and threatened to have her arrested (Yeoman). In 2000, UNC’s School of Public Health did a report on the social situation in Siler City entitled *A Community Diagnosis including Secondary Data Analysis and Qualitative Data Collection*, and determined that the tension was “caused by people’s resistance to and fear of change, their lack of cultural understanding of different groups, and language differences” (Burritt).

In September of 1999, County Commissioner Rick Givens decided to do something about the town’s immigration. He wrote a letter to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service asking for “help in getting undocumented aliens legalized or ‘routed back to their homes’” (Viglucchi). Although the INS never ended up making an appearance in Siler City, word spread about the letter and racial tensions escalated. For example, non-Hispanic shop owners started asking their Hispanic customers for identification. A couple months later, the North Carolina Center for International Understanding responded to Givens’ letter by sending him on a trip to Mexico to give him a first-hand look at what immigrants were leaving behind. After witnessing some of the poverty in Mexico and being moved to tears at one point (Yeoman), Givens ceased assisting the INS and stated that “It is a moot point here to think about legal or illegal. That’s a job for the federal government. I’m not going to push anything now except how to help our community.”

But the County Commissioner’s change of heart didn’t transcend all members of the community. That following September, in 2000, there was an angry school board meeting attended by hundreds of parents (mostly White and a few Black) who were protesting the immigrant children’s effect on classrooms and test scores. The parents claimed the issue was that their children weren’t receiving a quality education because too much time was spent helping Hispanic children who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) (Cuadros 2000). One woman complained to the school board that

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<sup>3</sup> From a homework assignment in an Intro to Linguistics class at NC State University, where a student wrote that he “grew up in an area with lots of immigrants,” when referring to Northerners.

her granddaughter was one of only two White children in their class, and said, “These two little girls were devastated and scared to death because no one spoke their language” (Yeoman).

David Duke, leader of the largest White civil rights group in the country, was upset by Givens’ reversal in attitude. Local service station owner, Richard Vanderford, had contacted Duke about the situation, and Duke responded by organizing an anti-immigration rally in front of the town hall on February 19, 2000. Estimates ranging from a few dozen to five hundred people attended the rally (with estimates as to the ratio of supporters to protesters varying as well). Some attendees held signs reading, “To Hell with the Wretched Refuse,” “Pollution of Our Population is Stupid,” “No way, Jose,” and “Recall the race traitor Rick Givens.” Rally attendee Dwight Jordan told a reporter, “I’m mad there ain’t no Greyhound buses here to load ‘em up and send them back where they come from, every goddamn one of them” (Cuadros 2000). Another man said that Duke had the guts to say what a lot of people think (Fitzsimon), and Vanderford doesn’t “believe there’s anybody who’s a White, working-class person who doesn’t support [him].”

Three days after the rally, Givens received a certified letter from Duke stating “Either change your policies and enforce the law of the land, or we will be forced to organize a recall effort and remove you from office,” (Yeoman). Givens replied to the letter affirming his new stance, and made no further attempts to contact the INS.

Despite the hateful nature of these events, Ilana Dubester believes that the hassles the town had with David Duke also have a positive side. She believes that people who were once not sure how they felt about the Hispanic immigrants started asking themselves if they “really need a new faction of the KKK marching in town” (Pressley).

David Duke currently (as of 3/03) has a direct link to an article he wrote about immigration in Siler City on [www.whitecivilrights.com](http://www.whitecivilrights.com) and [www.davidduke.com](http://www.davidduke.com), sites that appear to be the largest anti-immigration websites in the US at this time.

But most of those who were against Hispanic immigration maintained that the issue was not a racial one. For example, Richard Vanderford had written in his request for a rally permit that the “non-American workers” are creating “an

unburdenable strain on the indigenous residents here, our traditions, our institutions and our infrastructure.” Duke agreed with this sentiment and emphasized the economic and social burden Hispanics put on the community. And the fact is that the Hispanic immigration forced both Siler City and Chatham County (where Siler City is located) to raise taxes in order to hire more police officers, ESL teachers, and interpreters for courts and public health clinics.

But the tax hike wasn’t a reflection of a poor economy in Siler City. Property value in the area skyrocketed the few years before (and after) the rally. Since the rural South tends to offer more affordable property than in other areas of the U.S., many Hispanics have seized the opportunity to own a home. The story of a low-income family working hard in Los Angeles without any prospect of ever being able to afford a home and then moving to Siler City and saving enough for a down payment in three or four years, is not an uncommon one—hence the hike in property value. With so many people buying houses, in 1997 a two-bedroom, one-bath house sold for \$39,000, while in 2000 that same house would sell for \$59,000 (Cuadros 2000), and \$67,000 in 2003.<sup>4</sup>

Hispanic immigration has also helped the town simply stay afloat. The population had been stagnant for decades, with 4,455 residents in 1960 down to 4,446 in 1980, and much of the downtown boarded up. It wasn’t until 1990 that the population started creeping upward to 4,808, 184 of whom were of Hispanic origin (1990 Census).<sup>5</sup> Hispanics reopened the abandoned stores and have been pumping money back into the community ever since. And it’s probably not a coincidence that the local hospital didn’t construct a “state-of-the-art Emergency Department” until 1997<sup>6</sup> as a result of the increasing population.

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<sup>4</sup> 4/17/03, Personal communication with Holly Kozelsky, the realtor quoted in the Cuadros article.

<sup>5</sup> Data isn’t available on Hispanics in Siler City in 1980, as Hispanics aren’t recorded by the census unless the entire county has a minimum of 400 Hispanics. In 1990, Chatham County had 564 Hispanic residents.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.chathamhospital.org/>

## 1.B. Siler City, The Small Picture

One hindrance of interpersonal communication in the town is the language barrier. A report from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Burritt) believes that all the different sub-communities in Siler City should meet each other halfway. For example, everyone could increase their language skills, with English-speaking residents learning Spanish and vice-versa. And much accommodation has in fact been made on both sides. The town's high school, Jordan Matthews, established both boys' and girls' soccer teams in 2001 in response to suggestions by Hispanic students. The team consisted almost exclusively of Hispanic players, and by its second year the Jordan Matthews boys' soccer team had come in second in the conference. Their victory was recognized at a County Commissioner's meeting in the neighboring town of Pittsboro in November of 2002, and the majority of people in attendance (mostly Whites) gave the boys a warm applause and congratulations.<sup>7</sup>

However, not everyone in the community was as thrilled over the creation of the soccer team. I've heard accounts that there were race-related issues surrounding the team's inception, although the coach declined to comment on the matter, saying "I'm not going to dwell on the past." And while most people at the County Commissioner's meeting were quite proud of the boys, one attendee saw several people "flat in their seats silent" while others were standing and applauding.<sup>8</sup>

Arguably the main source of integration in Siler City is the bilingual Catholic church, St. Julia's. The enormous church was built in early 2001 and was modeled after historic Mexican churches. The White and Hispanic staff and pastors are all functionally bilingual. Masses are offered in Spanish and English, and there is also a bilingual mass. The bilingual mass is attended by English speakers who want to work on their Spanish and Spanish speakers who want to work on their English.

Yet even in this context, the Youth Minister, Crystal Williams, has this to say about the mass:

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<sup>7</sup> email from Paul Cuadros, 4/29/03

<sup>8</sup> Chatham County Chatlist post by Nancy Brown, 11/02

“Most members are very welcoming and more than anything, I love the bi-lingual [sic] and Spanish Mass. I could be the only American person in the midst of 300+ Spanish speaking people (and I don't speak it fluently) and they will make me feel like the most special person in the world for attending their Mass. It is an honor to be a minority at the Spanish Mass. **I wish and hope the Spanish could say the same at the English.**” (emphasis added)

St. Julia's also sponsors a four-day-a-week tutoring ministry that's open to the public. They primarily work with elementary school children who come after school for help with their homework. About two-thirds of these children are Hispanic. 13 computers and hundreds of children's books have been donated, and the kids play learning games once they finish their homework. After work, a small group of Hispanic adults come to the ministry to work on their English. The ministry is run by its founder, Crystal Williams, who is constantly recruiting local volunteers to come even once a week. In December 2002 there were over 30 volunteers: mostly 18 to 30-year-olds, high school students, middle school students, and some older/retired people. The majority of volunteers are White and Black, and one or two are Hispanic. Here's what Crystal has to say about the ministry:

“Typically what happens is the volunteer comes in and tutors about three children throughout the time with homework. After 2-3 visits, they have found a child that they fell in love with, and that becomes their focus for coming, their joy for working with that child. I will match them up and make a point that they spend time together. It's a beautiful thing to watch a wealthy American high school student to fall in love with a poor Hispanic child and watch those barriers of status, culture, or racism vanish. The children that come to the center are hungry to learn, hungry for attention and almost always have a positive child-like faith about them. Adults learn as much from the children as the children do from them.”

While many people, such as the volunteers at the tutoring ministry, are embracing the new diversity in Siler City, full acceptance for Hispanics is still a ways away. The St. Julia's sign was vandalized the Saturday night after the David Duke rally. The Spanish side was defaced and smashed, but the English side was left alone (Cuadros 2000).



And although there is huge pressure from the community for Hispanics to learn English, resources are extremely limited for those above high school age. St. Julia's tutoring ministry is one outlet for adults, but only about half a dozen people on any given day take Crystal up on her free English classes. Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) is where most adults in Siler City turn to learn English. Unfortunately, as of 2002, the college was tiny and under-funded, and the ESL faculty was mostly untrained in TESOL. There was only a beginning and intermediate/advanced class, so the beginning class had students who didn't speak a word of English mixed with those at a low-intermediate level, and the intermediate/advanced class had students who had difficulty forming simple sentences mixed with those who were fine-tuning their fluidity. Under these conditions, students learn much less quickly than those in, for example, neighboring Wake Technical Community College.<sup>9</sup>

One of the areas in Siler City where the influx of Hispanics is most noticeable is in the public schools where, like in the rest of the town, most of the increase occurred just recently. In 1987, there were only two Hispanic children in the entire Chatham County School System (Burritt). In the 1997-1998 school year, Hispanic enrollment at Siler City Elementary was 28%, and by 2002-2003 it had shot up to 62%. One reason for this disproportionate number of Hispanic children in school compared with the population as a whole (~50%) is that many White parents send their children to the local Charter school.<sup>10</sup> The other reason is that the Hispanic immigrants tend to come as young adults, so there isn't a large older adult Hispanic population in the area yet.

Teachers and administrators at both Siler City Elementary and Jordan Matthews High School have been working diligently to make children of all backgrounds feel welcome in their schools. They have bilingual receptionists and diversity posters in the hallways. They are very protective of their students since the David Duke visit

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<sup>9</sup> Based on my own teaching experience in Siler City, and observing classes and talking with teachers at Wake Tech.

<sup>10</sup> Chatham Charter has a limited number of openings each year, which it fills on a lottery basis from all applicants. However, the school first fills available slots with students from the previous year and those students' siblings. It will therefore take several years for their demographics to catch up with those of the community. (Personal communication with April Potter, Chatham Charter Media Specialist)

and try their hardest to keep bigotry away from their schools. Shortly after the Duke visit, Siler City Elementary enlisted the help of the Latin American Resource Center in Raleigh. The Center staff worked in classrooms using art as a means to help the children confront prejudice and as a means of learning about different cultures (Burritt). Still, there remain underlying racial divisions among the students. Confirming my own observations, a middle-aged Black woman who had been working with migrant populations in Chatham County since 1978 (a time when they were Black migrant workers) responded to the question of whether she had noticed the Hispanic children hanging out more with White children or with Black children by saying, “Neither.” I said, “Really? Not at all?” She repeated that they kept to themselves.

### **1.C. Overall Race Relations**

Some other adults in the area, outside the schools and churches, have actively put forth efforts to improve race relations. For example, in December of 1997, someone posted the following message to the Chatham County Chatlist: “I wanted to mention that some interested citizens in Chatham County are forming a Community Relations group to explore ways of improving human relations within the county – and to open up a public dialogue about race issues. If you are interested in attending informal monthly meetings to help, contact the Chatham County Manager’s office (542-8200) and ask to be added to the mailing list. Anyone in Chatham is welcome and invited to attend!” However, these meetings failed to accomplish much due to dwindling interest.

One sign of integration in the town is people’s choice of restaurants. Before 2002, there was only one Mexican restaurant in town (aside from Taco Bell). I’ve eaten there about a dozen times, and never once saw another non-Hispanic person inside the building, aside from occasions when I had a coworker with me; then the two of us were the only non-Hispanics. The downtown Sidewalk Café is just the opposite. I’ve eaten there about half a dozen times, and never once did I see a Hispanic person inside the always-crowded café.

But in mid-2002 something changed. Romero's opened. Romero's is a chain Mexican restaurant whose colorful menu reassures the diner that "Not all Mexican food is spicy!" The two times I was there, the all-Hispanic staff was serving the almost exclusively White clientele.

Furthermore, although some immigrants and their advocates had complained of police harassment during the months surrounding the Duke debacle (Herald), by 2002 the Hispanic community in Siler City tended to view the police positively and believe that they are fair, particularly in contrast to the bribery system that seems to be well-established among police in Mexico. Several fondly told me anecdotes of being caught speeding and having the cop just tell them to slow down, without issuing a citation.

The Black reaction to the Hispanic immigrants in Siler City has been mixed. Some bonded with Hispanics against David Duke (former KKK National Director), while others dislike the competition for housing, jobs, and limited social services and medical care once focused mainly on Blacks (Viglucci). It does appear, however, that the adult Hispanics are interacting on a positive level with Blacks more often than they are with Whites. It seems this way because I came across several mixed Black/Hispanic children at Siler City Elementary, but no mixed White/Hispanic children. One of the Black/Hispanic children is included in my corpus.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.A. Conducting Interviews**

Participants for this study were located almost exclusively through Siler City's education system. I met the young adults in this study while teaching ESL at CCCC, and the younger participants volunteered to be taken out of their classes at Siler City Elementary and Jordan Matthews High School to be interviewed.

After teaching ESL for a few weeks, I told my students that I was working on a school project on Hispanics in Siler City, and that I'd like to interview those that had learned English in the area. (Some had first lived in Texas or California.) My first interview was with a man whose level was average for the class. However, after listening to it with Walt Wolfram, we decided that a higher level of English proficiency would be more beneficial for our study, as the second language acquisition (SLA) elements of his speech were so strong that any regionalisms couldn't be detected. I subsequently restricted participants to those with higher English proficiency. Fortunately, there were a few members of my class who had both learned English in Siler City and were rather proficient, and since enrollment was continuous, I received several more of these specified types of students in subsequent months.

After teaching class and sometimes conducting an interview in the morning, a few times I went to St. Julia's tutoring ministry in the afternoon (see chapter 1). There I helped children with their homework, and when their parents came to pick them up, I told the parents how well their children were doing. I hoped to eventually conduct interviews at the tutoring ministry, but the children were with their friends and had computers to play on, so that scenario didn't pan out. However, Crystal knew some of the faculty at Siler City Elementary School and agreed to take me there and introduce me to some teachers.

At Siler City Elementary, Crystal introduced me to a third grade teacher. After conversing for a few minutes, the teacher agreed to let me interview students in her class, and introduced me to another third grade teacher, who in turn let me interview

students in his class. However, I first had to get permission from the principal, and the principal wanted to meet with Dr. Wolfram after having talked with me. The information relating to the project and permission slip given to the parents is in the Appendix.

Once granted permission, I gave a brief presentation to each class, stating that I wanted to talk to children that speak another language besides English, but that also speak English pretty well. The elementary school children were eager to show off their English skills, and most of them brought their permission slips back. I soon started going to Jordan Matthews High School as well, and followed the same procedure. The teachers and principal there were easier to convince to let me interview their students than at the elementary school, and most of the high schoolers also brought back their permission slips.

I started going to either Siler City Elementary or Jordan Matthews High School every day after teaching ESL, and continued going to the 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade summer program at the elementary school throughout the summer as well. Each time I was able to do one interview, occasionally two, and sometimes none at all. Factors such as lunch, recess, field trips, and the afternoon bus were significantly greater hindrances than expected.

The interviews were 45 minutes long, except occasionally when they were cut short due to the students needing to be somewhere. The interviews with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders always consisted of two of them at once; some of the high schoolers were interviewed in pairs and some individually; and all of the adults were interviewed individually. I always tried to gear the interviews to whatever they wanted to talk about. I used school as a starting point, then asked about items such as like games, movies, TV shows, books, friends, gossip, favorite/least favorite teachers, vacations, differences between the US and Latin America, foods, clothes, jobs, cars, families, free time, etc., depending, of course, on what was age-appropriate.

During the academic year, I went to two 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes, an English 1 class at the high school, and an English 3 class. The English 1 class was designed for freshmen, but it included Hispanics who had just moved beyond ESL and were often older than the native English speakers in the same class. English 1 was about 75%

Hispanic. The English 3 class had only two Hispanic students, Monica and Ana, who I discuss in detail in Chapter 3.

Over the summer I interviewed students from one more 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class, and two 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders were the least likely to bring back their permission slips right away, and I had to bribe them with promises of a pizza party if two-thirds of the class brought theirs back (which they didn't). Siler City Elementary was hosting a summer program for children of migrant families. There were biweekly meetings for the parents to orient them with the school's academic system. At the first meeting I was given time to speak to the group of parents about the project I was doing and what I wanted to talk to their children about. I was the only speaker that they applauded, and my guess is that they were applauding the fact that I was the only White person who didn't need a translator. In any event, afterward I mingled with the parents and got the ones whose children spoke good English to sign permission slips saying I could interview them. I later tracked down some of those students and interviewed them.

I also attended another meeting they had later in the summer, during which the classes performed songs and dances, played a soccer tournament, and ate pizza. I brought my friend's puppy along, as I had on two of the interviews, which the children loved playing with. This evening helped me establish visibility in the community.

The elementary and high school interviews took place either in an office, the lobby, the hallway, or in one case, outside. The students held the microphone and passed it back and forth in instances where there were two of them. The students didn't appear self-conscious from the microphone or bothered by passing it.

I also conducted one interview at St. Julia's Church. I attended the bilingual Saturday night mass one week, and afterward Crystal introduced me to many of the congregants. Interestingly, none of the bilingual employees of the church were willing to be interviewed. The only other Hispanic person at the mass with a high level of English was a 1<sup>st</sup> grade girl whose parents I was chatting with after the mass. Her parents let me interview her right then and there in a room in the church. Her interview was the only instance where the microphone was a hindrance, as she kept

swinging it around causing significant interference on the tape. For future studies, I suggest only handing a microphone to children over 8, and ideally using the lavalier clip-on microphones.

The other interviews I conducted outside of an academic setting were with the three children in the Gallegos family. The Hispanic Liaison in Siler City mentioned that they might be good candidates for my study, and in fact they were. I'll discuss the Gallegos family more in depth in Chapter 3. They were the only ones whose house I went to, and the only ones who I used the lavalier microphones with.

Preliminary interviews were also conducted with local Black children and a local White man in order to get an idea of what kinds of peer English dialect models might be available for Hispanics. Although I haven't undertaken an extensive analysis of these benchmark English varieties, I feel confident in saying the Southern European American regional dialect falls well within the parameters of rural Southern Piedmont speech. This includes a vowel system characterized by Southern breaking, fronted back vowels, ungliding of the /aɪ/ diphthong, and back-upgliding of the vowel of *bought* and *caught*. Syntactic features such as double models, *fixin' to*, adverbial *but*, and so forth, are also typical of this variety along with a host of Southern lexical items. African American Vernacular English in the region is quite like that described for other areas of the North Carolina Piedmont such as Robeson County or Warren County, with core morphosyntactic and phonological features such as habitual *be*, inflectional *-s* absence, both *is* and *are* copula absence, consonant cluster reduction, and so forth.

## **2.B. /aɪ/ Measurement**

To examine the potential influence of particular regional dialect variables, I've undertaken a detailed analysis of the use of the /aɪ/ diphthong, perhaps the most salient feature associated with Southern American English. Within the regional South, there are two patterns of /aɪ/ weakening: one in which it is weakened regardless of the following phonetic environment and one in which weakenings

occurs only in prevoiced environments (e.g. *tide* and *time*) and in syllable-coda position (e.g. *bye*, *tie*) (Thomas 2001; Anderson 2002)<sup>11</sup>. The Piedmont region of North Carolina and the Siler City area, in particular, are characterized by the weakening of the glide only in prevoiced phonetic contexts such as *time* and *tide* (Thomas 2001:194). The weakening of /aɪ/ is a pervasive dialect trait that seems to cut across social class and ethnic boundaries in Siler City. Accordingly, /aɪ/ may serve as a kind of icon of dialect accommodation for Hispanic residents who learn English in this Southern context. Spanish phonology includes the diphthong /aɪ/, but it is produced somewhat differently from the /aɪ/ of American English phonetically (Borzone 1979). In particular, the glide tends to have stronger syllabic prominence than the American English counterpart, and its trajectory tends to be longer, with its endpoint closer to the high front vowel [i] than its Standard American English correspondent.

I did an acoustic analysis of the production of /aɪ/ for the 37 speakers in my corpus. Using the Computer Speech Lab (CSL), I extracted up to five tokens of /aɪ/ in pre-voiced environments and up to five tokens in pre-voiceless environments per speaker from natural conversation with the participants.<sup>12</sup> I omitted tokens that were pre-word boundary and next to nasals and [l], thus reducing my sample size to the 30 speakers who had a minimum of two pre-voiced tokens (not counting pre-/z/) in the given environment. Pre-/z/ items were grouped separately, due to the difficulty in categorizing them as voiced or voiceless among Hispanic English speakers. Tokens that were after [r] I measured starting where F<sub>3</sub> started to flatten out, and for tokens after [w] the transition was reduced to the point at which the vowel sounded as if it started with a [b]. I measured the length of the entire vowel, the length of the glide, and the F<sub>0</sub>, F<sub>1</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, and F<sub>3</sub> from points 35 milliseconds from the beginning and end of the vowel. The point 35 milliseconds in from the beginning of the vowel tends to be

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<sup>11</sup> Technically, this phonetic context is non-prevoiceless, but for convenience here I simply designate it as prevoiced.

<sup>12</sup> “Up to” because some speakers had fewer than 5 instances on the tape. After doing about half the interviews, I started specifically asking what they liked to do outside, if they had to write a lot in school, and where they liked to drive to, in order to elicit /aɪ/ tokens.



in the nucleus of a diphthong, and the point 35 milliseconds from the end of the vowel tends to be a valid measuring point in the glide and cuts out most coarticulation effects from adjacent segments.

I then took the mean  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  of pre-voiced /aɪ/, the mean  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  of pre-voiceless /aɪ/, and the mean  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  of pre-/z/ /aɪ/ for each speaker, and graphed them using Microcal Origin.

I also measured the length of the entire vowel in relation to the length of the glide. The entire vowel's length was relatively easy to measure, as the beginning and end tend to be rather salient. However, some subjective judgments had to be made with the glide, as it can be difficult to ascertain where a glide "begins." For example, do you choose the point where the  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  make huge leaps down and up respectively? Or do you choose the point at which they start moving down and up at all? In some cases, those two scenarios are the same location, in which case there's not a problem. However, in many cases the  $F_1$  and  $F_2$  would begin creeping away from each other early in the vowel, and then make huge leaps later on. An argument can be made for taking the measurement in either place. I chose to take it where  $F_2$  first started moving up, as  $F_2$  typically showed more movement than  $F_1$ .

I then took the mean of the lengths of the glide and the lengths of the vowels, divided them to get the percent of the vowel that was glide for each speaker, and graphed both sets of results using Microsoft Excel.

### 3. Data Analysis

#### 3.A. Overview

The question of influence from the regional rural dialect (or dialects) of English turns out to be fairly complex and fluid. For the young Hispanic speakers, particularly those who have lived the majority of their lives in Siler City, I'm impressed with the relative resistance to extensive accommodation to the local variety. Nonetheless, there are signs of accommodation, particularly with respect to certain regional lexical items. For example, there is evidence of the early adoption of *y'all*, regardless of the length of residency (LOR). The adoption of *y'all* and other token lexical items can, of course, take place fairly readily and be easily incorporated into heavily accented English. I learned this firsthand one afternoon as I waited for a parking space in town. The thoughtful driver of the pickup rolled down his window and informed me in heavily accented English that he was "[fiksintu] (*fixin'* to) move in a minute."

The Hispanic community in Siler City is obviously still in the formative stages of development and negotiating its dialect accommodation with respect to the local variety of English. Speakers represent a full range of proficiency in English, from recently arrived speakers who know minimal English to those who are highly proficient in both English and Spanish. Given the continuing influx of immigrants and the stage of community development, Spanish remains the primary language for communication within the Latino community. However, elementary and middle-school aged children usually speak to each other in English and don't always make allowances for children with low English proficiency, as will be seen in the discussion of code-switching. This social setting sets the stage for widespread language transfer from Spanish and interlanguage in the English of residents throughout the Hispanic community. Consider, for example, the incidence of unmarked past tense, a prominent interlanguage phenomenon for second language learners, in examples from two speakers: (1) a 9-year-old Hispanic girl who was

born and raised in North Carolina and (2) a 9-year-old girl who came from Mexico a couple of years ago. All cases of unmarked past tense are italicized, underlined, and in bold, while marked cases of past tense are simply in bold. Instances of pleonastic tense marking, a by-product of interlanguage, are marked with an asterisk \*.

(1) Nine-year-old girl, born and raised in Siler City

The little mermaid when, um, she rescue a boy. And then they, they-she, um, help im, then she start singing to him. Then um, cause the boat they **were** on, they-it **started** on fire and it go underwater and he **couldn't** breathe underwater so she **took** him over there, and her daddy **said** to them, "Rescue humans or nothing." And she don—and then a bird **came** and he **said**, "He's dead." Then, um, his grandpa **came** and he wake up the boy and he **was**, uh, he **said** a girl **was** singing. Then she turn into a human.

(2) Nine-year-old girl, two-year LOR in Siler City

Like the other day I **went** to WaltMar [sic] and she **was** there, and we say hey to each other, and we **wanted** to spend the night one time at my house but she **couldn't** cause she **\*haded** to go with her family. They **were** gonna go somewhere. But I don't when she's gonna spend the night with me. One time I spend the night at her house. Oh, it **was**, um, a sleepover. We **had** all kinds of friends we invite all of her friends, I invite mines so she invite hers and we **had** a sleepover. Whoever—whoever, um, sleeps, whoever wake up late, they **were** the ones who gotta, who gotta, um cook for them and clean up the room, and paint their face. So, I know I wake up early. I always wake up at five o'clock. So I **\*didn't had** to clean the room. I **\*didn't** even **had** to go in back.

Despite the difference in their country of birth and their LOR in Siler City, both speakers show the type of variable tense unmarking found in the interlanguage of second language learners (Wolfram 1985; Wolfram and Hatfield 1986), though there are, of course, some differences in the relative frequency of unmarked (6 out of 16 cases for [1] and 11 out of 23 for [2] in the sample passages). We also find cases of pleonastic tense marking as in *I didn't had* or *haded*, a fairly common trait in interlanguage (as well as L<sub>1</sub> acquisition). Other studies indicate that pleonastic tense marking is one of the traits of interlanguage that may fossilize as a kind of persistent substrate influence (Thomason 1988; Wolfram 1974:158). While speakers who have

just been in the United States a couple of years have more obvious transfer from Spanish, both speakers show a significant overlay of Spanish influence. This is probably a by-product of the relative insularity of the Spanish community in Siler City, where children raised by Spanish-speaking parents use Spanish almost exclusively in the home. Many children are not exposed to extended verbal interaction in English until they go to school, so LOR may not be as significant a factor as it is in less densely populated ethnic communities.

The extent of systematic incorporation of Southern dialect patterns, however, is more complicated. Some items may be learned from the onset in their Southern dialect production, so that if the prenasal [ɪ/ɛ] merger is coupled with the Spanish transfer of [i] to [ɪ], and item like *pen* would be produced as [pin] instead of [pɪn].<sup>13</sup> For example, Myra, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader who lived in Mexico until she was 4 years old, produces *ten* as [tin], while 8<sup>th</sup> grader Noel, who lived in Mexico until he was 10 years old, produces it as [ten]. This example follows the pattern that individuals with more non-native features also have fewer local dialect features (Moriello and Wolfram 2003). Noel has one of the lowest English proficiencies of those that I interviewed, and has many instances of Spanish transfer as seen throughout this chapter. Myra, on the other hand, is relatively indistinguishable from Hispanic children her age born in Siler City.

It is unusual in Siler City for a Hispanic not to be immersed with other Hispanics at school or at work. I would think this handful of individuals might acquire more extensive Southern features. Aside from the Gallegos siblings (who will be discussed in detail later), the only person I encountered who fit this description was Roberto, the supposed first Hispanic resident of Siler City. He interacts with a cross-section of people from all local ethnicities as part of his job as a cashier in the supermarket. My colleague, Becky Childs, and I conversed with him briefly in the checkout line. Although he declined to be interviewed, both of us impressionistically heard his English as spoken with a heavy foreign accent but at the same time decisively more “Southern-sounding” than local ESL students at a comparable level. A further

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<sup>13</sup> I'd like to thank Walt Wolfram for writing most of the above section.

explanation for Roberto's impressionistic Southernness is that he learned English in Siler City in the late 70s and 80s—a time when there were no other Hispanics in the area for him to identify with.

### **3.B. /aɪ/<sup>14</sup>**

In this section, I set out to determine what the production of the /aɪ/ diphthong is among young Hispanics in Siler City, and what that pronunciation signifies about the developing Hispanic community. The production of /aɪ/ may indicate how the speech community in general is accommodating to local dialect norms as well as how individual speakers symbolically align with local and mainstream American culture. I juxtapose these findings with a yes/no decision on whether each speaker is “Anglo-oriented” (using “N” as the default, and labeling a speaker “Y” if they have any close White friends), with a 1-3 rating of their proficiency in English for a subsample of 12 representative speakers (Table 1).<sup>15</sup> The only correlation between speakers' accentedness/ proficiency in English and their “Anglo-oriented” status seems to be that those with a 1 to 1.3 rating (high proficiency) were definitely Anglo-oriented. The converse is not true, as Antonio 1 is “Anglo-oriented” but has low proficiency.

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<sup>14</sup> Thanks to Walt for writing about half of the following section.

<sup>15</sup> Proficiency was determined through impressionistic analyses of one-minute speech samples of the speaker not saying anything related to their home country, things they find different about the US, or any other topic that might give a clue as to LOR. Walt Wolfram, Philip Carter, and I each rated the speakers on a scale of 1-3 in foreign accentedness and in proficiency in English. The mean was then taken for each speaker in each category. My terminology in this section is based on those results. An average of 1 = high proficiency, 2 = mid-range proficiency, 3 = low proficiency.

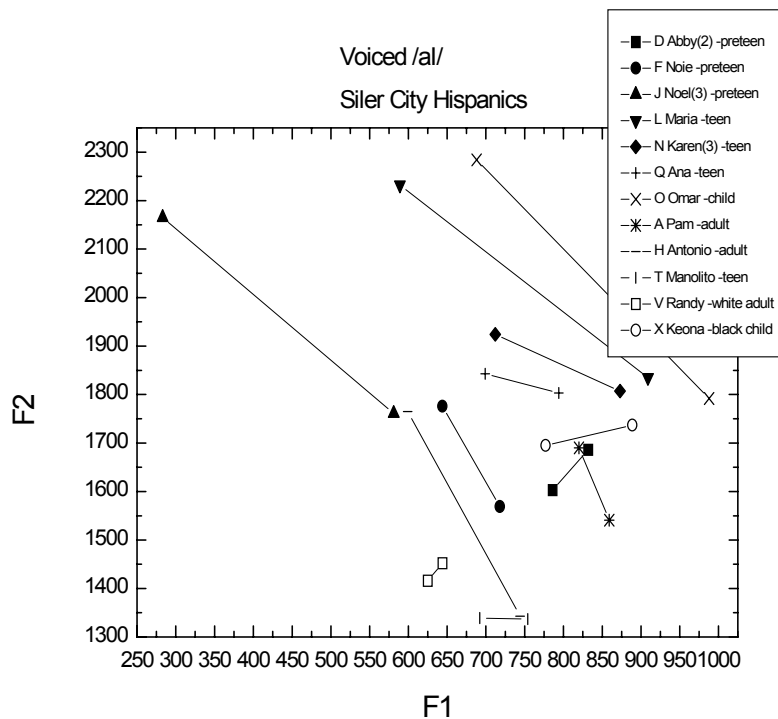
**Table 1**

	Accentedness	Proficiency in English	Anglo-Oriented?
Abby	1	1.3	Y
Ana	2	1	N
Antonio 1	3	2.3	Y
Karen	3	2.3	N
Manolito	1	1	Y
Maria	2.3	2	N
Noel	2.7	2.3	N
Noie	1	1	Y
Omar	1.7	1.7	N
Pam	1	1	Y

Figure 2 shows the location of the nucleus and trajectory of the glide for this same group of speakers. For comparison, I include measurements of a White adult speaker (indicated by the empty square) from the region and a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Black child cohort (indicated by the empty circle).

Both the White and Black speakers show the kind of ungliding we would expect in the rural Piedmont region of North Carolina. The Hispanic speakers, however, show a much wider range of variation, including speakers who have a more backed nucleus and relatively long glide trajectory. Low proficiency speakers, such as Antonio 1 -Y (horizontal line) and Noel-N (filled triangle) show a longer and higher glide trajectory, whereas speakers with high proficiency in English such as Manolito Gallegos-Y (vertical line) and Abby Gallegos-Y (the filled square), indicate a much shorter glide. It is noteworthy, however, that we do not find the wholesale accommodation of the type of prevoiced /aɪ/ glide weakening typical of the regional variety represented by the non-Hispanic residents of Siler City. In fact, prevoiced /aɪ/ ungliding is not pervasive among Hispanic residents, even among those who have been born and raised in rural North Carolina. In part, this may be due to the

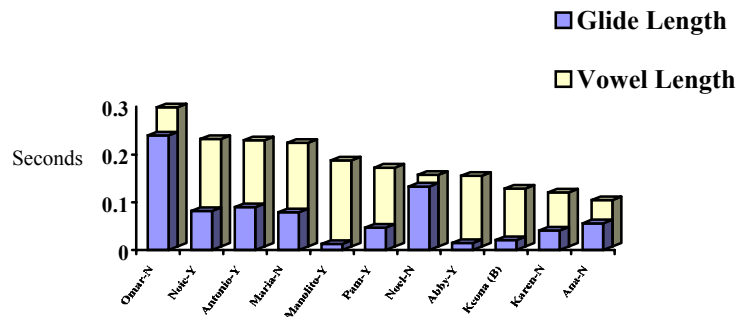
insularity of the Hispanic community, where social interaction, apart from school or work situations, is often limited to other members of the community. For example, “Anglo-oriented” speakers Abby-Y, Manolito-Y, Pam-Y, and Noie-Y have short glides comparable to those of the Black and White speakers. The other “Anglo-oriented” speaker, Antonio 1 -Y, has a much longer glide, although it’s not as long as that of other speakers with English proficiency comparable to his such as Maria-N and Noel-N. Interestingly, Omar-N, while having mid-range proficiency in English, has a long glide comparable to those with lower proficiency. This finding corroborates the earlier hypothesis that Hispanic children in Siler City, after approximately two years LOR, all talk more-or-less the same.



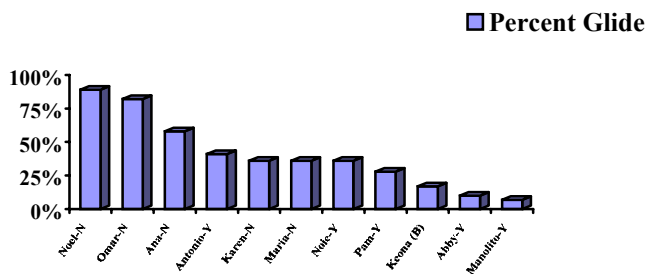
**Figure 2. Acoustic samples of prevoiced /aɪ/ glide<sup>16</sup>**

<sup>16</sup> The numbers in parentheses next to Abby, Noel, and Karen indicate that these speakers had fewer than four prevoiced tokens.

The overall duration of the vowel segment and the duration of the glide in relation to the vocalic segment are displayed graphically in Figure 3, where the measurements are given in tenths of seconds. In Figure 4, the measurements are converted into percentages, so that each bar represents the percentage of the vowel segment occupied by the glide.



**Figure 3. Relationship of the glide to the overall vowel production**



**Figure 4. Percentage of the vowel occupied by the glide**

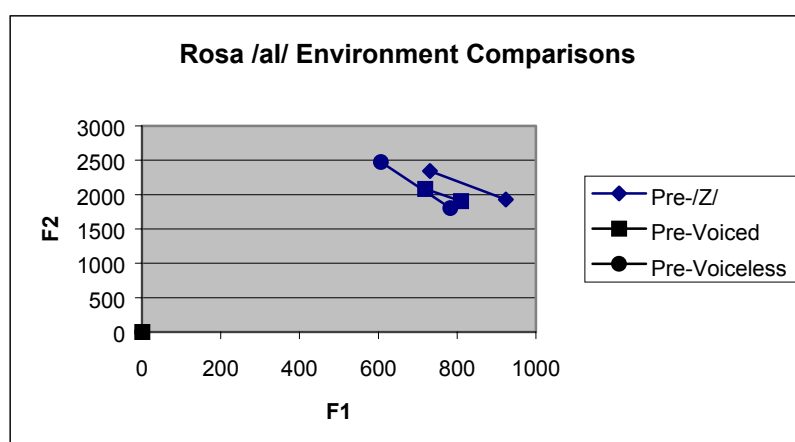


Figures 3 and 4 indicate that the more Hispanicized production of /aɪ/ is likely to involve a longer, more prominent glide segment, whereas the American English production, including but not limited to the Southern, glide-weakened version, shows a less prominent, shorter glide. The figures thus suggest a phonetic transfer effect in terms of the proportion of the vowel occupied by the glide. However, this correlation is not as neat as we might predict based on our understanding of the differing productions of /aɪ/. The speaker who has the highest percentage of vowel occupied by a glide (Noel-N) is not very proficient in English but the speaker with the next highest percentage for the glide (Omar-N) has mid-range proficiency in English. Notwithstanding such exceptions, speakers with lower glide-vowel ratios tend to be more proficient in English and “Anglo-oriented.” For example, Pam-Y (19), Manolito-Y (16), and Abby-Y (12) Gallegos are siblings, and are by far the most assimilated to the non-Hispanic culture compared to all other Hispanics that I met in the area. The family moved to North Carolina from Mexico in 1989, when Pam was 5 years old. She has retained her knowledge of Spanish, and Abby knows Spanish from having spent a year in Mexico when she was 8, but Manolito has rather low Spanish proficiency. Their mother speaks to them in Spanish (but switches to English when Manolito doesn’t understand), and they answer in English. None of them have any close Hispanic friends, and, impressionistically, Walt Wolfram and I agree that none of them sound Hispanic. I believe that the reason for these siblings’ lack of identification with the Hispanic community (linguistically or otherwise) is their socio-economic status, coupled with their early arrival. Their mother was a doctor in Mexico, and they moved to the US because their father got transferred. As seen in figures 2 and 4, all three Gallegos children have glides that resemble those of Whites and Blacks.

### **3.C. /aɪ/ Before /z/**

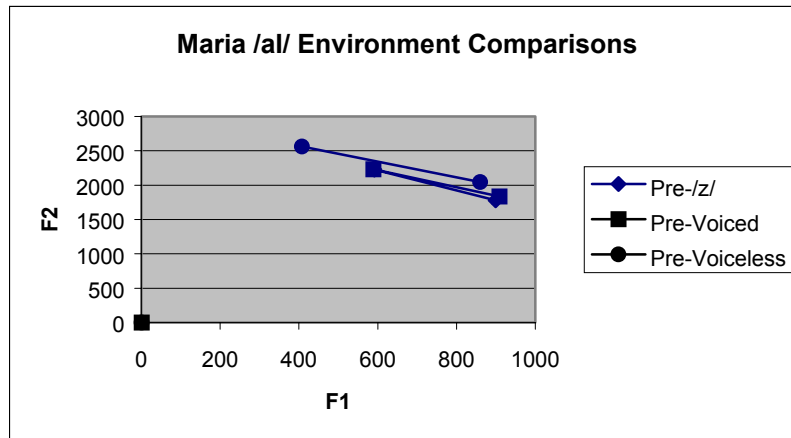
The devoicing of /z/ is a common feature of Chicano English (Fought 2003). In an area such as the North Carolina Piedmont where voicing is the key factor in

determining whether the preceding /aɪ/ will be glided, it's interesting to see how a Hispanic's devoiced /z/ affects their glide.<sup>17</sup> Do they first acquire the rule that says to glide before a voiceless consonant, do they acquire each lexical item along with its phonology, or, as discussed in section A, is the phonology of only certain items acquired along with the word, sometimes contrasting the pronunciation of that word with the rest of the individual's speech? Figures 5 and 6 show two speakers, Maria and Rosa, who have interpreted the phonetic context in opposite ways. Rosa's pre-/z/ /aɪ/ has a long glide similar to that of her pre-voiceless /aɪ/, while Maria's pre-/z/ /aɪ/ is almost identical to her pre-voiced, albeit glided, /aɪ/.



**Figure 5**

<sup>17</sup> I thank Erik Thomas for pointing out that a word-final /z/ is actually devoiced by native English speakers, even though it's mentally categorized as voiced. What I'll refer to here as "devoiced /z/" is, impressionistically, a stronger [s] than I hear from native speakers.



**Figure 6**

While no definitive conclusions can be drawn from this small sample size, these two contrary examples show that variation is indeed possible. An interesting future study could further examine not only the pre-/z/ environment, but also the distribution of devoiced /z/ as well, a feature I did not tab for, but believe I heard in the majority (if not all) potential cases while listening for other things.

### **3.D. Phonology Other Than /aI/**

This paper doesn't deal extensively with the overall vowel system employed by any of the Hispanics in Siler City. I will, however, touch on a few instances of non-native sounding pronunciation.

I will start with "pizza." Eight out of 11 people who mentioned "pizza" during the interview said either [piksə] or [pɪksə]. This realization of a voiceless stop + [s] as [ks] is also common among Chicanos in Los Angeles, as in [pɛksi] for "Pepsi"- a pronunciation mocked by comedian George Lopez.<sup>18</sup> Diana 1, Edward, Patricia, and Hortensia, all born in the US, have the [k] pronunciation, as do Karen, Hugo, and Monica. The three exceptions with the [t] pronunciation are Leslie, who was born in the US, and Cesar and Nayeli. Nayeli's non-Hispanic pronunciation of "pizza" is

<sup>18</sup> Carmen Fought, personal communication

possibly influenced by the fact that she lives with her White stepmother and stepbrother. Leslie and Cesar, however, despite their high fluency in English, do show transfer from Spanish in their syntax, so it's surprising that they'd have such a non-Hispanic production of "pizza." A hypothesis is that these two children have a particularly keen ear for sounds. A follow-up study could include a more detailed analysis of their individual phonologies.

The word "Catholic" came up several times in the interviews, and rarely in the standard English pronunciation. As we see later in the code-switching section, some of the Hispanics were embarrassed about code-switching. Apolinar, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader who came from Mexico to Siler City when he was 5 years old, stops himself in the middle of the Spanish word *católica* and collapses into a fit of giggles at his unintentional code-switch before spitting out, "Catholic." His friend that he was being interviewed with, Myra, also laughs at his use of Spanish in an English sentence. Karen and Marilu both produce the word as [katolɪk] (Karen stresses the second syllable, Marilu stresses the first), which, given the three syllables in both of their pronunciations, seems to be a blend of the English and Spanish lexical items rather than a transfer of Spanish phonology to an English word.

A few examples of Spanish phonology in individual words, where the pattern used isn't adopted by the speaker elsewhere, are as follows (the most salient Spanish phonemes are underlined):

Nayeli: [bɪɪlədʒi] (biology)

Juan: [rɒsɪst] (stress first syllable)

Juan: [bojɛŋɡls] (bojangles)

Noel: [mehɪko]

Karen: [mɛksɪko]

(10 seconds later) [mehiko]

The above speakers have been in the US for 3 years or less and have low to medium English proficiency, which explains the lexically (and sometimes, as in Karen's above example, contextually) restricted Spanish phonological transfer.

Finally, although not as obviously a Spanish pronunciation, Edward's repeated production of "ship" as [ʃɪf] is likely due to Spanish not allowing words to end in stops<sup>19</sup>. An interesting future study (perhaps acoustic) would be to see if Edward has problems with other words ending in stops, if he usually disguises the problem better than he does with "ship," and if other Hispanic speakers have similar difficulties with word-final stops.

### 3.E. Syntax and Lexicon<sup>20</sup>

In this unique setting of an emerging dialect, it is interesting to see not only what phonological system is being acquired, but also what syntactic and lexical features are being acquired. Are young Hispanics with high proficiency in English retaining trace elements of Spanish syntax? What are some areas of Spanish transfer that are common among Hispanics with lower proficiency? I'll explore these questions using a number of examples that came up during my interviews.

There were many instances of obvious transfer from Spanish in the English of Siler City Hispanics with both low and high levels of English proficiency. The errors<sup>21</sup> of those just learning English are of interest to those teaching ESL in that, foreseeing specific problems, teachers can place more emphasis on these areas early in instruction. On the other hand, errors made by those with otherwise high proficiency in English may have long-term implications for this emerging dialect. In

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Darhower, personal communication

<sup>20</sup> I'd like to thank Agnes Bolonyai and Mark Darhower for their insight throughout this section, as well as section H.

<sup>21</sup> *Errors* are distinguished from *mistakes* in this paper following the definitions set forth in Corder (1967).

this section I explore some types of non-native sounding language used by Siler City Hispanics and compare speakers with varying lengths of residency, proficiencies in English, ages, and levels of contact with non-Hispanics.

The third grade Hispanics at Siler City Elementary show an amazing amount of linguistic similarity to each other, regardless of LOR. This is likely due to the fact that they socialize almost exclusively with each other, as discussed in Chapter 1. Once the children have been in the United States approximately two years, they're impressionistically indistinguishable from those born in Siler City.

For example, below are typical errors in language acquisition spoken by 3<sup>rd</sup> graders born in the United States. Diana 1 and David translate Spanish idiomatic expressions (*poner un gol*, *poner un nombre*, *por respeto*, *poner el freno*<sup>22</sup>). Patricia uses Spanish syntax to show possession and inverts an English statement so that it follows Spanish structure. David illustrates the dual meaning of *hacer* in English ("to make" and "to do") when he says "make tricks in the air". Leslie also shows direct translation from Spanish (*me enseñó usarla* = "he showed me how to use it") and illustrates the multiple English meanings of the Spanish preposition *a* by translating it both correctly and incorrectly in a single sentence ("to" and "in"). Diana 2 transfers the Spanish use of hair as a count noun.

Diana 1: "They cannot put me a goal."

Diana 2: "I haven't put them a name."  
"She was always brushing my hair because they were sticking up."

Patricia (CA until 5yo): "I have some books of my sister she gives them to me."  
"the friend of my sister"  
"I forgot what's their name."

David: "My cousin, well, we just call him cousin for respect,"  
"and make tricks in the air"  
"I always tell my mom to bring it to the park so I can do races."

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<sup>22</sup> to score a goal, to name (to give a name to), out of respect, to break (in a car/on a bicycle)

“When she put the brakes, she flipped over.”

Leslie (FL until 4yo):

Int: “Do you have a bicycle?”

L: “Yes, my dad showed me to use it and I use it with four wheels.”

“She took me to Greensboro, in Wet ‘n Wild”

These five US-born 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have been in English-speaking classrooms since kindergarten, yet still produce sentences with non-native English syntax that show obvious signs of being influenced by Spanish. This situation leads to the question of whether these speech patterns continue as the children progress in school. However, as there currently aren’t (to my knowledge) any Hispanics who were born in the US at Jordan Matthews high school, this question will have to be addressed in the upcoming years.

Interestingly, a non-native sounding sentence was even produced by a boy who doesn’t speak Spanish. Kier lives with his father, who’s Black. His mother is Mexican and he pronounces her name, Mari, with what sounds like perfect Spanish pronunciation. Most of Kier’s friends are Hispanic. This fact may or may not explain his production of the following joke.

Kier: “What kind of cake you can drink out of?”<sup>23</sup>

His question shows typical inversion to be expected from Spanish transfer. However, Kier asserts that he doesn’t speak Spanish at all, and that his dad does “some.” I see several possibilities in explaining how he could come up with the preceding sentence. 1) He heard the joke from one of his Hispanic friends and is repeating it verbatim, 2) Since most of his friends are Hispanic, he’s acquired some of the grammar prevalent in that speech community, 3) Similarly to #2, he solely forms sentences such as these to accommodate, and this interview took place with him and a Hispanic friend, 4) He actually does speak Spanish and it may even be his first language, 5) It was just a slip of the tongue. It would be interesting to talk to

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<sup>23</sup> For those who are interested, the answer to the joke is “A cupcake.”

more of the mixed Black/Hispanic children to see if there's further evidence of Spanish transfer—particularly among those that don't speak Spanish.

As the Hispanic community is a recent addition to Siler City, the older people are, the greater the likelihood that they were born elsewhere. The oldest person I met who was born in Siler City was 13 year old Hortensia. She was born in 1989—well before there was any substantial Hispanic population in Siler City (see Chapter 1). Her speech, like that of the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, shows multiple instances of syntactic transfer from Spanish, particularly among prepositions, which are known to be among the most difficult items in a second language (Gass and Selinker 1994:22). For example, she uses “married with” and “jealous at” from *casarse con* and *celoso a*. She also uses the English verb “to be born” in a way similar to the Spanish usage of *nacer*, “\*to born”.

Hortensia: “This wise man tells her that she shouldn’t get married with him.”  
“She had just got married with the little girl’s dad.”  
“They were jealous at each other.”  
“I never lived there. I just born there.”<sup>24</sup>

Rosa and Jasmin are 13-year-old good friends who came from Mexico to Siler City when they were seven years old (but didn’t meet each other until they were 10). They too show instances of Spanish syntactic constructions in their English. (These two girls were interviewed together and in many instances it’s difficult to ascertain who’s talking.) They translate the Spanish idiomatic expressions *tener razón* and *ponerme* [something].<sup>25</sup> In instances where a single Spanish word or phrase means two different things in English, sometimes they chose the wrong translation such as *en* (“in” and “on”) and *cuidarse* (“to take care of” and “to be careful”). There’s also an instance of subcategorical transfer<sup>26</sup> where they used the English infinitive “to dance” in a context where the infinitive would have been used in Spanish, “for”

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<sup>24</sup> Refers to Sanford, a neighboring town whose hospital has a maternity ward.

<sup>25</sup> to be right, to put [something] on me

<sup>26</sup> Mark Darhower, personal communication



instead of “about” where in Spanish it would be *por*, and an inversion of typical verb/adverb order that also parallels that of Spanish.

Rosa: “Since they older they have the reason.”  
“My brother was sitting in the couch.”  
“The teacher used to put me headphones.”  
Jasmin: “Girls they need to take care more from guys.”  
Rosa/Jasmin: “People from Mexico came and see us to dance.”  
“We got in a fight for anything, we argued for anything.”  
“If someone got lost they would know easily who it was.”

At Jordan Matthews High School during the 2002-2003 school year, Hispanics comprised 25% of the student body. The majority of these students were either in ESL or English 1, regardless of their grade level. Two exceptions were 17-year-old Ana and Monica, who were both in English 3 in the 2001-2002 school year. Ana was born in Mexico and moved to Arlington, Virginia, at age 7, then to Siler City when she was 13. Monica was born in Mexico and came to Siler City when she was 11. Both girls are upwardly mobile. They both love school and are eager to go to college. Ana has a summer job as an interpreter paying \$9/hr, which is extremely high for a high school student.

These girls also exhibit Spanish transfer. Ana calls her shoelaces, “strings”, because *cordones* means both those things in Spanish. She also uses *conocer* (“to know”/ “to be acquainted with”) in a way that implies a different sort of knowledge in English. Although this example falls near the “native-like” end of the native versus non-native spectrum, native speakers tend to use the construction, “I know *x place*,” to mean that they’ve heard of it or that they know something about it, not that they’ve been there. Ana means that she’s been to a couple of counties in Virginia.

Monica uses the Spanish idiomatic expressions *tener x años aquí* (“to be here *x* years”), *clickear por* (“to visit a website”), and *pasar por la tele* (“to be on TV”). Monica also calls the beach “contaminated” instead of “polluted”, parallel to the Spanish *contaminada*, uses “in the end of the year” instead of “at” and “for” where *por* would fit in Spanish (another example of difficulties with prepositions), and she

incorrectly uses the English infinitive “to be” where the infinitive would be used in Spanish. She also treats “brothers” as gender-inclusive as it is in Spanish.

Ana: “the strings I let them hang out” (referring to shoelaces)

Int: “Have you traveled around Virginia?”

Ana: “I know a couple of counties in Virginia.”

Monica: “I have 6 years here.”

“It was contaminated.”

“You had the exams in the end of the year.”

“It have stuff that passes on TV.”

“and for the point, we didn’t win.”

“one hour and a half”

“mans” (2x)

“She always dreamed to be here.”

“They discovered that they brothers.” (one’s female)

Int: “What do you like to do on computers?”

Monica: “I click for *univisión punto com*.”

Marilu is 25 years old and came from Mexico to Siler City when she was 10. She has several instances of transfer from Spanish such as *dar clases* (to teach classes; literally ‘to give classes’), Spanish word order, and the confusion of “bored” and “boring” which are the same adjective in Spanish, with the distinction made by the verb. The confusion of “bored” and “boring” is widely known among ESL as an error that tends to last a long time in non-native speakers’ repertoires.<sup>27</sup>

Marilu: “I think Jimmy was giving, like, ESL”

“She was 6 months with the babysitter.”

“the day care where she goes to”

Int: “What’s Siler City like?”

Marilu: “Very bored.”

In addition to many Spanish idioms that are translated into English, English idioms are, not surprisingly, sometimes used in non-native sounding ways by Siler City Hispanics, and not just by those who weren’t born in the US. For example,

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<sup>27</sup> Agnes Bolonyai, personal communication

Edward, who was born in California, says, “You could catch up the other cars,” Hortensia, who was born in North Carolina, says, “They were jealous at each other,” and Lenin, who speaks native-sounding English<sup>28</sup>, says, “He’s a very rounded person,” (means: well-rounded). It will be interesting to follow statements such as these in coming years to see if they take root in the dialect.

Here are some examples of non-native sounding productions of idioms by those with less fluency in English:

- Noel: “The girl came in love with him.”
- Rosa/Jasmin: “My mom was going back and forth the kitchen.”  
“There’s some White girls that hang around very much  
and there’s like some Hispanics that hang around very  
much and some different race people all over.”
- Nayeli: “They make a fun the teacher.” (means: make fun of)
- Antonio 1: “He don’t put attention.”  
“I think I had a friend one time when I turn around...  
go back something else, he knife the back.”

Noel’s example is perhaps doubtful to become a permanent fixture in the dialect, as Nayeli, who’d been in the US eight months at the time of the interview, uses that idiom correctly. Although granted, her first eight months were probably more English-intense than that same period for other Hispanics in Siler City, as she lives with her White stepmother and stepbrother.

Karen has an interesting use of an English idiom:

- Karen: “In Mexico we celebrate sweet 15.”

It’s doubtful that this usage will catch on though, given that it hasn’t in other areas of the country with sizable Hispanic populations, coupled with the fact that many Siler City Hispanics seem to want to distance themselves from non-Hispanic, American culture, which “sweet 16” is a part of.

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<sup>28</sup> An impressionistic judgment made by Walt Wolfram and myself.

One item that's a common problem to ESL learners is the distinction between "him" and "her", and between "she" and "he." It's not uncommon to hear even the most fluent Spanish-speaker misrepresent the gender of the person they're talking about. That said, logic would dictate that the more beginning learners would have even more problems with this distinction. However, my corpus of speakers contradicts this assumption. Juan has only been in the US for seven months and is still very uncertain of his English, as discussed below in relation to code-switching. He corrects himself, and finds the mistake funny. Monica also corrects herself, as she does on several occasions during the interview, which puts her toward the high end of the high/low monitor spectrum, per Krashen's 1982 monitor hypothesis.<sup>29</sup> Ana, however, grew up in a more diverse place (Arlington, VA) with a more established Hispanic community. She's not only confident of her English, but also carries herself, dresses, and talks with a high degree of self-confidence. During the interview, she switches gender pronouns several times, even when telling a single story and talking about the same people, thereby theoretically giving her time to mentally solidify which pronoun to use with which character in the story.

In Juan's example, the feminine and masculine possessives in Spanish are both *su*, which would explain the confusion. In contrast, Monica's and Ana's examples are both instances where, if you chose to use a pronoun in Spanish, it would be *él* ("he"). However, use of a pronoun isn't required in either Monica's or Ana's example in Spanish, as it isn't in English.

Juan: "He find her father, HIS father." (laughs)

Monica: "Roberto, she discovered that they brothers, he discovered."

Ana: "Chandler, she was gonna marry Monica." (several times)

### 3.F. Language and Ethnicity Attitudes

Ethnicity and language are hot topics for Hispanics in Siler City. Patricia, who was born in California, **implies** that she can't speak Spanish very well.

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<sup>29</sup> Mark Darhower, personal communication

Int: "Do you speak Spanish?"  
Patricia: "Not a lot."

In other words, a native English speaker who's asked, "Do you speak Chinese?" could answer, "Not a lot," if they spoke elementary Chinese, but not if they were highly proficient in Chinese and only spoke it on the weekends or only with certain individuals, unless they were deliberately misleading the listener. Patricia does exactly that. Since her parents don't speak English, she's obviously highly proficient in Spanish. Her response signals that she wants to emphasize that she doesn't speak Spanish very often, and she's probably fine with the potential misunderstanding of her response.

Although I never asked about race relations, several people started talking about it without prompting. Here is an example of a negative impression of race relations in the US.

Juan: "Here there is, uh, racist, many American people don't like Hispanic people."

The few people who spoke positively about Blacks and Whites did so only in the sense that they were included in "liking everybody."

Karen: "Many people don't like to – Hispanic people, but I think all all cultures has some important to to learn, and that good, to learn about something else. And I like to talk to everybody."

Carlos: "Sometimes I say 'hi' to people that I don't even know."

Antonio 1: "I like knowing new persons, ah, new peoples."

There also appears to be a barrier between the newly-arrived Hispanics (who are less proficient in English) and those that are more linguistically assimilated. Monica and Rosa each comment on how, their first couple of years here, the other Hispanic children wouldn't translate for them, and Hugo illustrates the unwillingness of the

more proficient to help the less proficient during his interview with Juan. Hugo ignores Juan's repeated requests for translations, preferring to let them sit in silence.

Juan: "and he tra- travel? Is? *¿Viajar?*  
Hugo: (grunts)  
Juan: "*Sí, ¿no?* (2 sec) Um, I don't know how you do say.  
Hugo: "Travel."  
  
Juan: "Different *¿acento?* *¿Cómo se dice?* (3 sec) Assent. I don't know."

In this environment where race can be a hot-button issue, it's interesting to see what terminology is prevalent to describe members of different races, and who uses which terms. There are three main ethnic groups in Siler City<sup>30</sup>, which I refer to as "Black", "Hispanic," and "White."<sup>31</sup> Two words for each of the preceding groups came up during the interviews: the terms that I mentioned, plus "African American," "Spanish," and "American." No other terms for describing these three ethnicities were used. The more recent immigrants tend to use "American," while those who've been in the US over a couple of years use "White." Maria and Juan, each with shorter LOR, use "American," while Ana, Rosa/Jasmin, and Monica, each with over six years residency, use "White." The use of "American" is discussed further in Fought 2003, as are the different words used to describe people from Latin America.

"African American" versus "Black" follows a different pattern than "American" versus "White." Juan also uses "African American," Monica uses "Black," and Ana uses "African American" when listing the different races in Siler City, but then later says, "There was a fight between this Black guy and this Spanish guy. I think there was something with Black people and Spanish people that day." "African American" seems to be more of a formality or attempt at political correctness. Juan (7 months LOR) uses it because he's eager to use what he's been taught, Monica doesn't use it because we're talking in an informal situation, and Ana (who, as mentioned previously, is extremely upwardly mobile and anxious to do what's prestigious; 10

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<sup>30</sup> All other races combined are less than 1% of the town's population (Census).

<sup>31</sup> I use "Black" and "White" since these are by far the most commonly used terms in Siler City. Although "Spanish" is used more often than "Hispanic" in Siler City, I use "Hispanic" because it's the preferred term among Hispanics.

years LOR) uses “African American” when she’s listing races, but doesn’t when she’s remembering a fight at school and is preoccupied with recalling the details of the fight—an informal situation.

The use of “Spanish” versus “Hispanic” is particularly interesting due to the different meanings the two terms have both in English and Spanish (*español* and *hispano*). While “American,” discussed above, could be argued to mean “anyone from the Americas,” it’s not usually used that way in the United States (or in Canada or Latin America). Hispanics’ use of “American” to mean “White” coincides with what *americano* usually means in Spanish. “Spanish,” on the other hand, means something very different from “Hispanic” to many (though not all) English speakers, just as *hispano* means something quite different from *español* to Spanish speakers. So, when a Hispanic uses “Spanish” in reference to something other than the language (or something/someone from Spain), it’s almost certainly the result of hearing a White or Black person use it that way. In fact, Ana, the most assimilated person in my 37-speaker corpus after the Gallegos siblings, Noie and Lucy (also siblings), and possibly Lenin, **is the only one to refer to “Spanish people.”** She also talks about “Spanish food,” which parallels in meaning to “Spanish people.” “Spanish music” is a different sort of usage since “Spanish” refers to the language the music is sung in. Ana refers to “Spanish music,” as does Rosa/Jasmin. However, unlike Ana, Rosa/Jasmin later use “Hispanic” when referring to people. Juan and Monica also use “Hispanic” for people.

It’s uncertain to what degree Siler City Hispanics may be influenced by the local African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Most speakers exhibited some 3<sup>rd</sup> person -s absence, but that’s also a feature of second language acquisition (SLA). Given the low instance of /aI/ ungliding among speakers, it would be surprising to find a significant quantity of other regional or ethnic features that are common to either Whites or Blacks in the area. However, Rosa/Jasmin produced the following sentence, which Walt Wolfram believes “could also be acquisitional but more than likely good AAVE,” due to the habitual *be*.

Rosa/Jasmin: “Y’all need to be knowing each other very well before you start going out.”

A further indicator of how assimilated Hispanics in Siler City are to other races in the area is in their word choice for their parents. In North Carolina, Whites and Blacks of all ages and genders typically refer to their parents as “Mama” and “Daddy.” However, Rosa and Myra use “Dad,” Maria uses “Mom and Dad,” and Marilu uses both “Daddy” and “Dad.” Diana 1 and Antonio 1 are the only ones who exclusively use “Daddy,” and Antonio 1 also says, “Mama.” Karen uses “Father.” The idea that “Mama” and “Daddy” signify stronger alliance with White/Black culture is affirmed through Antonio 1’s and Rosa’s parental name choices. In addition to his quote earlier in this chapter about talking to everybody, throughout our conversations prior to this interview he’d mentioned various White people that he’s gotten to know, and how he likes to go to clubs and talk to White girls. In contrast, Rosa and Jasmin are almost exclusively friends with other Hispanics, and have somewhat of a “social director” role among Hispanics at the middle school. It therefore follows that they wouldn’t use the lexical item, “Daddy,” which would associate them with local Whites/Blacks (although granted, she is the one who produced the one AAVE sentence on the previous page). The only person whose word choice is an anomaly is Marilu. Although she and her brother, Lenin, were very nice to me, they didn’t have the nicest things to say about White people. It’s therefore surprising that she would use “Daddy” at all.

### **3.G. Self-Correction**

Many of the speakers in my corpus corrected their own speech. Even the youngest (the 7-year-old at St. Julia’s whose name I forgot and therefore refer to as “Kid”) successfully changes her grammar to Standard English. Maria has the habit of verifying her corrections with me.

Kid: “and we had to come in, come in”



- Apolinar: "I born, I was born in"
- Noel: "I do, I did"
- Nayeli: "see TV, watch TV"
- Juan: "Here there is there are many jobs."  
"I get up like six and a half, six thirty."
- Maria: "My little brother he go to elementary school, and my older sister she goes, she GOES, yeah?"  
"The American people just don't cook. Does? Don't cook?"

The above self-corrections may or may not have been a result of the fact that they were speaking to a White person slightly/significantly older than them. However, the following examples are almost undoubtedly a result of the presence of someone outside their peer group. Rosa/Jasmin initially takes pains to say the English idiom, "to get married to" correctly, but then gets caught up in the story and forgets to monitor herself. And David, born in the US, corrects himself from "bucks" to "dollars", which he likely wouldn't have done with his friends. Hortensia miscorrects herself because she's probably also feeling formal in front of me.

- Rosa/Jasmin: "that she didn't want to get (slow) married to. (fast) She wanted to get married with someone else."
- David: "My uncle gives my brother 10 or 20 bu- dollars."
- Hortensia: "When he finds it, founds it"

Rosa/Jasmin further emphasizes the fact that she values prestige and/or formality through her use of "whom," and possibly also through her pronunciation of "February."

- Rosa/Jasmin: "They were arranging her marriage to whom she was gonna marry."
- Rosa/Jasmin: [fɛbruəri]

Carlos also shows that he's trying to be formal through his use of "he or she," a phrase he probably doesn't hear among his peers. Carlos had a particularly helpful and accommodating personality throughout the interview. He tried to answer questions the way I wanted them answered, and never interrupted the shyer person, Ben, he was being interviewed with, but also worked to keep the conversation going when Ben couldn't think of anything to say.

Carlos: "The first one who shoots, if he or she doesn't make it"

Some of the Hispanics I interviewed, like Maria in the first set of examples in this section, were actively seeking approval of their English skills and seemed to want to be corrected. However, not everyone fell into this category. For example, Rosa/Jasmin told a story about how in 4<sup>th</sup> grade a Hispanic peer kept telling her that she was saying things wrong in English, and that that really annoyed Rosa/Jasmin. Myra, like the Hispanic peer in Rosa/Jasmin's story, corrects Apolinar during their interview. He doesn't appear to mind though. It would be interesting to further explore the dynamic between the newcomer children and those already assimilated, as we've seen that they both correct each other (sometimes whether or not the correction is well-received) and ignore each other's requests for assistance.

Apolinar: "How you can?"

Myra: "How can YOU."

Apolinar: "How can you?"

### **3.H. Code-switching<sup>32</sup>**

Code-switching is the act of using more than one language during a single speech act, and many bilingual communities regularly employ this conversational device (Myers Scotton 1993; Poplack & Sankoff 1988; Gumperz 1982). In this section, I document the instances of code-switching that came up during my interviews and

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<sup>32</sup> As in section E, I'd like to thank Agnes Bolonyai for substantial insight throughout this section.

form some preliminary hypotheses about the nature of these switches. I actively ignore the vast literature available, as this paper doesn't attempt to be a critical analysis of code-switching.

I do, however, feel that it would be a waste of data from this important research site to ignore it completely. Considering the current growth trend in Siler City, the Hispanic population could easily reach 80% of the town's population by 2010. By that point the dynamics among races may have changed considerably due to both the greater percentage of Hispanics, and the longer LOR of many residents. It will then be interesting to look back at the initial linguistic situation, thus providing a more complete picture of the new dialect formation. The 2010 estimate is entirely an educated guess on my part, and I continue to speculate throughout this section. I attempt to analyze the following questions: How comfortable are Siler City Hispanics with using Spanish while talking to a White person? Do their attitudes toward Spanish have any influence on their code-switched word choices? How about their attitudes toward American culture?

The following is the only instance where someone discusses an act of code-switching with me. It's in the context of Lenin making fun of his sister Marilu's English-speaking abilities.

Lenin: "She's talking, like, pure English and then out of nowhere this Mexican word comes out, and she stays there and she's like, what is this word in English?"

As seen in the above example, almost everyone's reasons for switching into Spanish seem to be that they didn't know the English word and were asking me or the other interviewee if we knew it. Most people didn't seem comfortable code-switching. According to Bhatia & Ritchie (1996:668-669), "The vast majority of bilinguals themselves hold a negative view of code-mixed speech. They consider CM as a sign of laziness, an inadvertent speech act, impunity, linguistic decadence, and potential danger to their own linguistic performance." Part of this groups' discomfort may *possibly* have been that they weren't sure whether or not I understood Spanish. I'm pretty sure I had mentioned it to everybody, but it's possible

I didn't as most of them didn't speak to me in Spanish during the interview until I specifically said that it was okay. Then again, even Antonio 1 (Garcia), who I'd had many previous conversations with in Spanish, was uncomfortable using Spanish during the interview, so it's also possible that everyone was indeed aware that I spoke Spanish.

Most people showed one or more of the following signs of being uncomfortable with code-switching: pausing or saying "um" before the Spanish word, whispering the Spanish word, saying the Spanish word with rising intonation, or correcting themselves after saying it. A question mark signifies rising intonation, ellipses signify pauses, and the words "whispered," "stuttered," or "regular voice" in parenthesis signify that the following word(s) are spoken in that manner. Phrases that are underlined are those that don't display any signs of hesitation or uncomfortableness.

Marilu doesn't demonstrate during the interview what her brother describes above. She does, however, switch briefly into Spanish while describing when her 2-year-old daughter combined an English and Spanish word.

Marilu: "and for 'more' we say '*más*', and for 'more' she would say [most] *como*<sup>33</sup> '*more*' and '*más*.'"

Maria, Karen, and Rosa/Jasmin eventually code-switched without breaking fluency after I told them it was alright to do so. The progression of their degrees of comfort with code-switching is seen in the following examples.

Int: "What's the main religion in Mexico?"

Maria: "(stutters) ¿*Católica*?"

M: "I like this state because you (whisper) ¿*Cómo es*?<sup>34</sup>"

Int: "You can say it in Spanish."

M: "Okay, yeah is... *más tranquilo*."

"We don't like, *bueno*<sup>35</sup>, okay, I don't like spicy food."

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<sup>33</sup> like

<sup>34</sup> How do you say it?

<sup>35</sup> well

- Karen: “I think that’s more fight, fighting? ¿*Peleas*? Here.”
- “They have more... uh ¿*Vigilancia*?<sup>36</sup> I don’t know.”
- Int: “What does she do?”
- K: “¿*Cómo se dice gatea*?<sup>37</sup>”
- “I like electronic music... o salsa<sup>38</sup>.”
- “There is one, se llama<sup>39</sup> (stutters) Escolastic?
- “tingas con<sup>40</sup> cream and cheese<sup>41</sup>”
- Rosa/Jasmin: “Once or twice he make me do the, um, the *masa*.<sup>42</sup>”
- “You make a big ball first of the whole *masa*.”

Antonio 1 also has a single instance where he code-switches without hesitation. His final example shows him, like Karen above, employing a common device among bilinguals. When he can’t think of a word while speaking L2, he switches to L1 while looking for the word. Most times when he doesn’t know a word in English but does in Spanish, or wants to verify the English word, he whispers the inquiry to me in Spanish. Remember, Antonio 1 is the one who has had many previous conversations with me in Spanish.

- Antonio 1: “I’m very (whispered) ¿*Cómo se dice cuando...divertido... divertido*...<sup>43</sup>? Yeah, fun, right, I’m fun.”
- “She is very strict (whispered) ¿*Es correcto* strict?<sup>44</sup>”

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<sup>36</sup> police

<sup>37</sup> How do you say “to crawl”?

<sup>38</sup> or salsa

<sup>39</sup> that’s called

<sup>40</sup> with

<sup>41</sup> There were many instances of code-switching for food names, but I didn’t include them here because they were just telling me dishes that have Spanish names. I included this example because she uses both English and Spanish to describe the dish.

<sup>42</sup> dough

<sup>43</sup> How do you say when... fun... fun...

<sup>44</sup> Is strict correct?

“That’s very cool because (whispered) *¿Cómo se dice una meta, una de esto... alto...*<sup>45</sup>? (regular voice) Well, it’s the good experience been there.”

A: “Yeah, I got a (whispered) *¿Una meta cómo se dice?*

Int: “Goal.”

A: “No, I have to think what I want in the future.”

A: “I want somebody to (whisper) *confiar*.”

Int: “To trust.”

A: “Oh... find somebody can trust.”

Antonio 1: “*Es que, hay una palabra que no me acuerdo como se dice*<sup>46</sup>...mm... oh forget.”

Juan had only been in the US seven months at the time of the interview, and had rather low English proficiency. This interview was conducted by my coworker, Becky Childs, who told them that her Spanish was bad. But before she mentioned anything about Spanish, Juan answers her, *Sí*. He later naturally code-switches while thinking about distances, and corrects himself when he slips into Spanish. Unlike Antonio 1, he doesn’t appear ashamed to ask for definitions, as he doesn’t whisper those requests. Here we again see Hugo not coming to Juan’s aid even when asked for it.

Int: “Right?” (Referring to spelling of last name)

Juan: “*Sí*”

Int: “Where you’re from is it close to Cancun and Cozumel?”

J: “Um... como<sup>47</sup>... eight, ten *hor* hours.”

J: “Some people play football, soccer, basketball, and other people only... (to Hugo, regular voice) *¿Se queda? ¿Cómo se dice?*<sup>48</sup>”

(Hugo doesn’t answer. Conversation continues.)  
(1 minute later)

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<sup>45</sup> How do you say a goal... one of those... high...

<sup>46</sup> It’s just that, there’s a word I can’t remember how to say

<sup>47</sup> like

<sup>48</sup> Stay here? How do you say that?

J: “Nobody... (to Hugo) *¿Se queda? ¿Cómo se dice?*  
H: Stay here.  
J: Stay here because Siler is boring.

Code-switching is also common when bilinguals are quoting someone in other language (Gumperz 1982). Hortensia used Spanish once when quoting something her sister said in Spanish. Noel uses the onomatopoeic word in Spanish for a dog’s bark. But then, this was a dog in Mexico, so perhaps he was quoting the dog.

Hortensia: “The... *familia Sánchez* died.”

Noel: “The dog start barking *guau guau guau guau*.”

In the following example, Monica isn’t sure how to describe *encapuchado*<sup>49</sup> in English, but after I tell her she can say it in Spanish she describes it in Spanish and then immediately translates those same words to English. In other words, it seems here that when she can’t think of how to describe something, she and I immediately attribute it to a language problem, rather than a general difficulty describing the particular thing.

Monica: “They call him *encapuchado* because he’s wearing a mask. Not a mask it’s a (5 seconds).”  
Int: “What’s it in Spanish?”  
Monica: “*Es una mascara, pero cuando vas a esquiar* when you go to ski”  
Int: “Oh, a ski mask.”  
Monica: “Yeah, he’s wearing that.”

Monica then produces this example, where she exhibits a strong mental connection between lexical items with similar meanings in the two languages and their corresponding definitions. She believes that a *nana* is “one who babysits.” However, she can’t use “babysitter” in the same context, probably because the particular woman she’s talking about is Hispanic and *nana* is her title. Following this logic, I’m curious as to what Monica calls other professions when she’s speaking a

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<sup>49</sup> hooded

language other than the language she associates with that profession. When she's speaking Spanish does she call her teachers "*maestros*" or "teachers"?

Monica: "The babysitter, (quickly, realizing it's wrong) the babysitter (regular speed) their *nana*, that's what we call the one that babysit them."

Unlike Maria, Karen, and Rosa/Jasmin from the beginning of this section, the following four speakers don't, over the course of the interview, ever become comfortable using Spanish with me. The following examples of code-switching include one or more of the elements described at the beginning of this section that show Noel's, Ana's, Monica's, and Nayeli's discomfort with switching to Spanish.

Noel: "I used to go to the (whispered) *¿Cómo se dice* <unintelligible>?" (regular voice) I used to go to the cornfield."

Ana: "And the new *novela*, oops Spanish. Soap opera."

Monica: "He works in, uh <indecipherable Spanish> I don't know how to call them it's where they work with woods and stuff like that."

"They're like, uh, the *novelas*."

Nayeli: "You cook with *pollos*, I mean chickens."

Above, Ana and Nayeli's instincts are to substitute a Spanish word naturally into an English sentence. However, they immediately correct themselves. A situation that I didn't have the opportunity to witness is how my informants talk when an outsider isn't present. It's possible that they code-switch significantly more when they aren't around Whites/Blacks, and particularly when they aren't being observed. It's unlikely that they don't code-switch at all, given Ana and Nayeli's above examples.



#### 4. Conclusions<sup>50</sup>

Although my investigation of the sociolinguistic situation in Siler City is still incipient and many of the details of the emerging language variety are yet to be described, several points seem clear. To begin with, this situation provides an ideal opportunity to examine principles of new dialect learning—such as those set forth by Chambers (1992)—with a second language acquisition twist. For example, we see the prominent role of dialect lexicon in the early stages, and the potential role of lexical diffusion as particular lexical items may be acquired in a localized dialect production before the systemic adoption of a phonological rule. Thus, some speakers may acquire a glide-weakened production of the /aɪ/ vowel in the lexical item *Carolina* well before they acquire a generalized version of prevoiced glide weakening. In terms of the overall community in Siler City, I have been impressed with the general reluctance to accommodate to the general Southern-based vowel system. There are certainly exceptions based on individual choice and cultural alignment; however, at this point in its development, the Hispanic community does not exhibit pervasive accommodation to the local rural Southern variety. There are a couple of possible reasons for this lack of accommodation. One may be the relative insularity of the community, and the continuing language divide may augment this ethnic segregation. The steady stream of immigrants proficient only in Spanish fosters the need to maintain Spanish as the dominant means of communication within the community and within the home, even among children who were born in the United States. These factors may be exacerbated by the history of (and present day) xenophobia in Siler City.

It may also be that the model of English in the situationally restricted use of English contributes to the relative lack of local dialect accommodation. In this regard, the ESL programs may even play a role. I have observed, for example, that ESL programs in Siler City often employ instructors who are from outside the community, and in some cases, not Southerners themselves. Thus, the models of English that students are exposed to in these ESL settings would not be the Southern

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<sup>50</sup> I'd like to thank Walt Wolfram for writing part of this chapter.

dialect norm. This pattern of dialect use is contrary to that observed for many regular teachers, administrators, and political leaders of the Siler City community, who reflect strong local Southern norms. And, of course, it may simply be a stage in the life cycle of the incipient community, which has just emerged during the past decade and is still in the process of establishing its sociolinguistic identity.

With or without local dialect accommodation, aspects of language transfer and interlanguage may serve as a base for the perpetuation of an ethnic variety of Hispanic English. At this stage, it is still too early to predict where the mix of local speech accommodation and substrate will end up. As the Hispanic population of Siler City becomes a more established speech community within the overall dialect landscape of the rural Piedmont, it will establish a more stable sociolinguistic relationship to the longstanding White and Black speech communities. My observation of this process in its early stages should provide insight into the linguistic and social mechanisms at work as the Hispanic speech community becomes an increasingly significant type of speech community in the rural Southeast.

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## Appendix

## Hoja de Permiso

El *Proyecto del Idioma y la Vida del Carolina del Norte* hace entrevistas con estudiantes en Jordan Matthews High School como parte de un proyecto para entender como se aprende el ingles en esta zona. La entrevista entre su hijo/a y nosotros consiste sobre sus actividades favoritas, juegos, y programas de television. Nos gustaria entrevistar a su hijo/a en la escuela y guardar grabacion de la conversacion para que nos ayude en nuestro estudio. Toda la informacion en la entrevista se guardara confidencialmente. Si Usted acepta que su hijo/a participe en el estudio, por favor, firme la forma.

### Forma de Consentimiento Parental

He leido la informacion sobre el estudio con el *Proyecto del Idioma y la Vida del Carolina del Norte*.

Permito entrevistar y guardar grabacion de mi hijo/a (nombre)\_\_\_\_\_.

La fecha de nacimiento de mi hijo/a es\_\_\_\_\_. Comprendo que toda la informacion se guardara extrictamente confidencial y que puedo retirar a mi hijo/a del proyecto en cualquier momento, por cualquier razon.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma Padre/Madre

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre Completo

Para mas informacion sobre el *Proyecto del Idioma y la Vida del Carolina del Norte*, vea <http://www.ncsu.edu/linguistics>. Mas preguntas sobre este proyecto o sobre el *Proyecto del Idioma y la Vida del Carolina del Norte* pueden ser respondidas por Walt Wolfram a (919) 515-4151.