

Castellano Rioplatense in Australia: The use of dialect in the Argentinean community in Australia

Castellano Rioplatense en Australia: el uso del dialecto en la comunidad argentina en Australia

STEPHANIE NATOLO

Griffith University

Australia

s.natolo@griffith.edu.au

Abstract

This article explores a dimension of dialect language maintenance of *Castellano Rioplatense* and identity within the Argentinean community in Australia as a distinct cultural and linguistic group within the broader Latin American community. This exploratory, qualitative and quantitative study uses the Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory of Giles and Johnston (1987, 1981) as its theoretical framework, investigating from an interdisciplinary perspective the dialect maintenance of first and second generation Argentinians in Australia. A mixed methods approach collected data from 100 surveys and 52 interviews from residents aged 18 to 75 in the cities of Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. Despite Argentinians as a migrant community being under-researched globally and even more so in Australia, results show the prevalence of informal language acquisition in Argentinean families in preserving and reproducing their dialect, rather than by formal organisations.

Keywords: Argentinians in Australia, castellano rioplatense, dialects, heritage language speakers, community language speakers

Resumen

Este artículo explora una dimensión del mantenimiento del dialecto *Castellano Rioplatense* y la identidad dentro de la comunidad argentina en Australia como un grupo cultural y lingüísticamente distinto dentro de la comunidad latinoamericana.

Este estudio exploratorio, cualitativo y cuantitativo emplea la Teoría de la Identidad Etnolingüística de Giles y Johnston (1987, 1981) como su marco teórico, investigando desde una perspectiva interdisciplinaria el mantenimiento del dialecto de los argentinos de la primera y la segunda generación en Australia. Un enfoque de métodos mixtos recopiló datos de 100 encuestas y 52 entrevistas a los residentes entre 18 hasta y 75 años de las ciudades de Brisbane, Sídney y Melbourne. A pesar de que los argentinos como una diáspora son poco investigados a nivel mundial y aun más en Australia, los resultados muestran la prevalencia de la adquisición del lenguaje informal en las familias argentinas en la preservación y reproducción de su dialecto, en lugar de por organizaciones formales.

Palabras clave: argentinos en Australia, castellano rioplatense, dialectos, hablantes de lengua de herencia, hablantes de lenguas comunitarias

Introduction

In Anglophone communities, migrant parents and children represent diverse generations, languages, cultures, and traditions. Many migrants remain linguistically, culturally and emotionally tied to their country and culture. The current Spanish-speaking community in Australia is one of the fastest-growing linguistic and cultural groups in Australia, making up of individuals from Latin America and Spain. Between 2001 to 2016, the Spanish-speaking community increased to 0.45% (a growth of 31,068 individuals) of Australia's total population (23.4 million people) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019, 2017). Spanish speakers have lived in Australia since the 1850s with large-scale migration beginning in the 1950s. The 1970s and 1980s saw more than 29,000 Central and South Americans move to Australia (Jupp, 2001). These expanding numbers continue to escalate to include individuals on work, student, and family reunification visas.

From an Australian perspective, little recent scholarly publications focus on community Spanish language learning and more so, Spanish language maintenance (see for exception Jones Díaz & Walker, 2018; Jones Diaz, 2016; Mejía, 2015). Due to this lacuna of Australian academic research, scholars turn to the United States of America for scholarship on Spanish as a heritage language. Yet, the study of dialects has been largely ignored. This is especially relevant as the use of dialects within a heritage language is often employed as an instrument for internal distinction denoting regions of origin to other members of their community.

A Spanish speaker's use of dialect differentiates themselves within a larger group that is highly heterogeneous while maintaining their membership in the 'Latin American' community. This is particularly central to the Argentinean community which is recognised by Spanish speakers as being distinct. At a national level, Australia's public Anglophone space categories all Latin Americans and Spaniards as one

homogenous *Latinidad*. Given the existence of numerous Spanish-speaking communities, *Castellano Rioplatense* is a linguistic symbol signalling Argentinians distinction, plurality, and diversity. Bearing these factors in mind, this case study forms the basis for future research into the use of heritage dialects elsewhere.

Australia's population as a microcosm of ethnolinguistic communities

Language maintenance within ethnolinguistic communities is essential for the preservation of their linguistic and cultural heritage and social vitality. Maintaining community languages can be challenging for migrants and their children, especially when the English language is given linguistic and cultural prestige. Sadly, community languages completely shift and adopt English in all domains by the third generation (Fishman, 2001). This language shift is predictable in Anglophone societies where English is the most dominant and prestigious lingua franca.

Globally, the metrics for Spanish ranks it as the second most spoken native/mother tongue after Chinese Mandarin and fourth in the total number of speakers, including language learners and those with varying degrees of language proficiency (after English, Chinese Mandarin and Hindi) (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020). In Australia, "this global status holds limited currency" (Jones Díaz & Walker 2018, p. 465), as the 2016 census ranks Spanish as the ninth top ten non-English language spoken at home (ABS, 2017). Consequently, the survival, transmission

and maintenance of community languages is a major concern, yet scholarly interest on the use of regional dialects is still ever so limited.

A Spanish Variant: *Castellano Rioplatense/ Español Rioplatense*

Español or *Castellano* among others is the official language spoken in 21 countries. The *Real Academia Española* acknowledges that *Español* or *Castellano* are equally valid terms when referring to the Spanish language but prefers the term *Español* in its publications¹. An individual's use of one term over another or used interchangeably depends on their origin, background, historical context, and usage. This paper has chosen to use the terms *Castellano* and *Castellano Rioplatense* as it is reflective of the community and the region studied here.

Various regional Latin American dialects derive from *Castellano* but vary from Peninsular Spanish in phonology, morphology, and vocabulary (Erker, 2017). The dialect popularly spoken by Spanish speakers in the Americas is *Castellano*, hence, this is the term commonly used. *Castellano Rioplatense* is in no way unique to Argentina alone, but it forms part of a cultural norm marking the nation's personality. Recognition must be made that Argentina is a prominent *voseante* nation (Benavides, 2003).

Despite its enormous sphere and influence, this dialect is predominantly used in and around the *Río de la Plata*² Basin of Argentina, parts of Uruguay, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Colombia. Argentina's large territory results in a lack of dialect

uniformity. For example, three main regional differences exist despite the city of Buenos Aires exercising a strong influence on how *Castellano Rioplatense* is used nationally. Coloma (2013) states that the first (North West) is used in the provinces of La Rioja, Catamarca, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero, Salta, Jujuy, and the northern area of Córdoba. The second area (North East) encompasses the provinces of Corrientes, Chaco, Misiones, and Formosa. The last area encompasses the Western region with provinces such as Mendoza, San Juan, and San Luis.

Argentina's *Castellano Rioplatense* features a variety of regional shibboleths. One distinctive shibboleth is that it *diverges* from *Castellano* through the *voseo* based on three syntactic variations: the authentic *voseo*, the mixed pronominal *voseo* and the mixed verbal *voseo* (Rouse, 2010). The authentic *voseo* exclusively uses the *voseo* pronoun and accompanying verbal forms (*vos encontrás*). The mixed pronominal *voseo* with the *vos* pronoun and the *tú* verbal forms (*vos encontrás*) occurs in Argentina's northern regions such as in Tucumán, Salta, and Jujuy (Rojas Mayer, 2008). The mixed verbal *voseo* variation utilises the *tú* pronoun alongside the verbs conjugated for *voseo* (*tú encontrás*). Considerable *tú* use in the Southern regions of Argentina (Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego) is attributed to its close geographical proximity with neighbouring Chile. The *voseo* is widely used without prejudice among individuals from all age groups, socio-economic and educational levels (Lydevik, 2014). These features (personal pronouns and verb conjugations) also pertain to *Castellano* in general, thus, are in no way exclusive to *Castellano Rioplatense*.

Another marking shibboleth is the use, intonation and pronunciation of certain consonants – such as ‘y’ and ‘ll’ – known as *yeísmo* (Colantoni & Gurlekian, 2004). *Yeísmo* is a phonic aspect that exists in many regions of Latin America and Spain, and the difference lies in each region's pronunciation of the aforementioned palatal phonemes (Lang-Rigal, 2015). Given the lexicon, morphology, syntax and the historical origin of *yeísmo* from Buenos Aires, Argentinians claim *Castellano Rioplatense* as theirs, with Uruguayan Spanish categorised as an extension of their dialect. Other features include alternative conjugated verb forms in the second person singular, in the present indicative, imperative and subjunctive tense (Cameron, 2017). This dialect is used in Argentinean mainstream print, broadcast, and online media (Carricaburo, 1999). Vocabulary is another distinctive shibboleth, resulting in an array of lexical terms and jargon known as *Lunfardo* which has permeated this dialect. Another marker is the Argentinean accent, which is possessed by approximately 70% of the population residing in the city of Buenos Aires, and in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Neuquén, Río Negro, La Pampa, Chubut, Santa Cruz, Tierra del Fuego, and the southern area of Córdoba (Hualde, 2005, pp. 23-31). Homogeneity in *Castellano Rioplatense* is thus impossible, as its morphological and phonological characteristics reflect the influence and contact of different cultures and languages over time. All these shibboleths are therefore recognisable to Spanish speakers, signalling a unique Rioplatense Argentinean identity.

Theoretical Framework

This article draws on literature focusing on ethnolinguistic vitality and identity in migrant societies and the extent heritage language aids in identity maintenance. It explores how domains of language maintenance support the ethnolinguistic vitality of community subgroups such as Argentineans. Preserving heritage languages is salient as more than 300 languages are spoken in Australian households, including various Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander languages in addition to those brought over through migration (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

An earlier study using the Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory is Gibbons and Ramirez (2004) research on Latin American adolescents in Sydney, Australia. Parents' positive attitudes and beliefs, Spanish language education, Spanish complementary schools, Spanish social and community clubs, and diasporic Spanish language media were all vital for the preservation and maintenance of Spanish. Therefore, the framework chosen to underpin this paper is the Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory by Giles and Johnson (1987, 1981). It focuses on interethnic contexts to explain how language and ethnicity interact to support a group's 'psychological distinctiveness,' with a focus on how migrant communities use language as a form of social comparison with other communities. This theory supplies a useful model to ponder on how sub-groups such as Argentineans are perceived to belong to a homogeneous Latin American population.

The Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory has its limitations and has been criticised in its conceptualisation and

application (McEntee-Atalianis, 2011). One such criticism is that the Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire inaccurately predicts language maintenance. More, it does not consider community ethnic media use and multilingualism (Ehala, 2011). This limitation is important when considering dialect, given the pervasive usage of multilingual media that cross particular groups' use of dialect. For Yagmur (2011), this theory only offers attitudinal data towards a community and their language, rather than on language maintenance. He notes that a low-vitality population will also maintain their language if individuals are committed. This paper acknowledges that this application on dialect studies may not be ideal. Despite these limitations, this theory is a valuable paradigm which improves our understanding of heritage dialect use in migrant societies.

Within this framework, ethnolinguistic vitality incorporates three key factors for a language community: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) institutional support, and (3) status. All these variables determine a migrant community's ethnolinguistic vitality, but also the subjective perception of ethnolinguistic vitality of its community members. Since languages are linked to social identity, a group's perception of language vitality may influence the way heritage language and culture evolve. These attitudes vary significantly depending on the sociability of group members but also on the preference of language itself (Liebinkin, Jasinskaja, y Teräsho, 2007). Understanding how ethnolinguistic vitality factors affect the perception of heritage languages and dialects is of great

importance, particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse societies.

Demographic characteristics

Migrant communities' demographic characteristics determine language maintenance and the situations in which the language is used. Within this factor, domains such as family, home practices and social networks are crucial (Connaughton-Crean & Ó Duibhir, 2017). Active community language use across multiple spaces increases its chances of survival (Hatoss, Starks y Janse van Rensburg, 2011), but is fraught in contexts of migrant populations lacking frequent socialisation due to low demographic density. In the case of intergenerational language, migrant families need periodic gatherings where the community language is used. The home is one of the most excellent predictors and vestiges for community language maintenance (Fishman, 2001). As Pauwels (2016, p. 25) writes, "the family continues to be the cornerstone for the acquisition and maintenance of CL [community languages] in Australia." Despite the home being the foundation of community language acquisition and maintenance, members require other factors and domains to achieve a solid command.

Institutions

This factor refers to the degree a migrant community is represented and has influence over their various institutions. Community-based organisations such as clubs and societies (often funded or controlled by governments) aid individuals to preserve, improve and strengthen social, linguistic

and cultural practices. The 1970s to the 1990s witnessed dramatic shifts in Australian society through the creation of public spaces, encouraging and expanding community languages and identities. Multicultural education was strongly supported by the Australian government through the creation of complementary language schools and the teaching of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) courses in primary, secondary and tertiary education (Leuner, 2010).

Spanish as the ninth popular community language spoken in Australia signals that its teaching preserves the cultures and identities of the Americas and Spain. It is a challenging task to define what is a homogeneous and standard Spanish language but more so as a teaching language model in the classroom³. This paper wishes to briefly point out the political complexity that underlies this statement. When this paper speaks of *Castellano*, it is referring to 'Spanish,' the language that the *Real Academia Española* has as its goal in the preservation and continuity of the Northern-Central Peninsular Spanish or *Castellano*.

During the 1970s, Argentines, other Latin Americans and Spaniards established their own cultural and sporting institutions primarily across Melbourne and Sydney due to the high density of Spanish speakers. In Melbourne, the Argentinean Social Circle and *Centro Argentino de Victoria* [Argentinean Centre of Victoria] continues operation since their establishment in 1974. Founded in Sydney were the Argentinean Social and Cultural Centre of NSW Inc. (established in 1974) and the Argentinean Lidcombe United Club. Noteworthy is the

degree to which these organisations can be successful conduits in supporting and encouraging the connection between Argentinean language maintenance and identity. Two issues need to be discussed when looking into the usefulness of institutions: the activity associated with the institution, and the type of members they target (Pauwels, 2016).

Status

The third factor is the valorisation of a language by a community. The status of a language can be important within a migrant community, but not necessarily outside of it. The degree to which host societies recognise and valorise heritage languages and their dialects are evident in their use, maintenance and transmission by migrants and succeeding generations. While larger migrant communities may enjoy higher ethnolinguistic vitality ratings and appreciation of their language, smaller communities may not. The 'Latin American' community is generally recognised and granted high status in Australia, even if the Spanish language is not.

Community Selection

To my knowledge, this is the first study exploring the language maintenance of first and second generation Argentineans in Australia. Nevertheless, other studies on the Argentinean community have explored: the processes of identity formation through interviews, observations and a blog analysis (Groh, 2013) analysing Argentinean language attitudes towards the *voseo*

using a survey and interview (Lydevik, 2014), and the treatment of *voseo* and dialect teaching in the language classroom (Cameron, 2017).

The Argentinean community studied here was selected for various reasons. First, it is large, accounting for 9.11% of Australia's total Latin American population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Second, it is a long-established community whose accelerated migration patterns aligns with other Central and South American nations (Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Colombia, Guatemala and El Salvador) during the 1970s and 1980s. On a cultural level, Argentineans have created Argentinean-Australian institutions, as well as participating in a plethora of Latin American and Spanish institutions. Finally, the author is a member of the community, providing trusted insider status.

Research Question

The present qualitative study uses the ethnolinguistic vitality factors taken from Giles and Johnson (1981, 1987). The principal research question for this study was: How and why does the transmission and maintenance of dialect occur within the Argentinean community in Australia?

Research Methodology

Data was gathered through a multi-stage mixed methods approach (Creswell 2014) by collecting quantitative data via a survey and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. First and second-generation Argentineans aged

18 to 75, residing in Australia's three largest cities of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney were recruited. For this research, a first generation Argentinian must be a person who was born in Argentina and migrated to Australia. As for the second generation, he or she must be an Australian-born person with one or both parents born in Argentina. By finding a representative sample and reducing bias, the recruitment of respondents was via a survey disseminated to 100 respondents (50 first and 50 second-generation Argentinians) through a variety of online and print sources. This was then followed by 56 face to face semi-structured interviews (26 first and 26 second-generation Argentinians).

Procedure and Data Collection Instruments

In the first phase, respondents completed a survey in either Spanish or English and this collected data on five themes associated with the Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory: (1) demographic variables, (2) languages, (3) previous Spanish language and Argentinian identity maintenance in Australia, (4) current Spanish language maintenance and identity in Australia, and (5) language status and identification. The survey composed of 121 questions featuring open-ended, dichotomous and multiple-choice questions, therefore collecting quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for a deeper understanding of respondents' attitudes.

For the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted in either Spanish or English, lasting one hour. Composing of 82 questions and divided into six parts, it probed respondents on: (1) demographics, (2) previous Spanish language maintenance and identity, (3) current Spanish language maintenance and identity, (4) identification, (5) attitudes and, (6) the future of the Spanish language in Australia. Interviews were undertaken in a relaxed atmosphere chosen by the interviewee. All respondents consented to have their interviews digitally recorded and these were transcribed to classify emerging themes. Due to the voluminous number of questions and themes, selected survey and interview results are presented in this paper in simple percentages with a discussion following.

Results

Factor 1: Demographics

Argentina's changing political climate and Australia's altered immigration policy led to a dramatic increase in Argentinian economic migrants and political refugees in the 1970s. A high migration rate of first generation respondents (64%) to Australia occurred between 1970 and 1976, with low migration numbers following from the 1980s to the mid-2000s (see Table 1).

Table 1
Migration of first generation Argentines to Australia (1971-2006)

	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Argentina	34%	30%	12%	8%	4%	5%	3%	4%

Many first generation respondents became permanent residents or Australian citizens after Argentina's restoration of democratic processes in 1983, given Australia's stable economy and political environment. Argentina's political and financial crisis in 2001 reinvigorated a new migration flow, once

again due to Australia's political and economic stability. First generation respondents from this study settled in Sydney (48%), Melbourne (30%), and Brisbane (22%). The second-generation also resided in Sydney (32%), Brisbane (32%), and Melbourne (36%) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Australian city of residence



Australian 2016 census statistics show that Argentines are urbanised, middle-class, and well-educated (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). First generation data in this study revealed that upon migrating to Australia they had a relatively high level of education, with 50% having secondary education

and a third being tertiary qualified. As for the second generation, more than half possessed tertiary education (60%), followed by vocational qualifications (40%). All first generation respondents claimed Spanish as their native language, while all second generation respondents indicated English as their native language.

As mentioned in the introduction, Australian census data do not question dialects spoken at home, nor the languages spoken by the second and later generations.

The Australian home is the first and foremost incubator for the maintenance and use of *Castellano Rioplatense*, in addition to revitalising elements of Argentinean culture and customs.

Los esfuerzos para garantizar la conservación de la lengua en Australia realmente caen sobre las familias, y más aún a los padres. Sin un lugar fijo y constante para utilizar su lengua de herencia y la cultura como por ejemplo tomar mate y comer asado. Creo que ni siquiera la enseñanza de idiomas y mucho menos que los chicos tengan una experiencia de la cultura afuera del aula al nivel institucional puede garantizar su futuro (First-generation Brisbane female respondent).

Parental commitments and positive language literacy practices ultimately fall on the shoulders of parents and this is reflected in their language strategies. These include using the dialect primarily at home, enrolling children in a complementary school, media and technology. There was great emphasis on the importance of knowing another language and culture, as expressed by first generation male interviewee from Sydney:

My personal thoughts are that if a child speaks more than one language, then he or she will grow up intellectually. From what I know, they possess another vision of the

world, which as a parent, is another aspect that I wanted to give them.

The strategies sought to maintain their language, culture and sense of identity were discussed by second generation respondents, with one female respondent from Sydney adding:

My parents considered it important and natural for me to learn Spanish. I spoke Spanish with my parents at home, with relatives, and friends. My parents purchased Spanish language books, movies, and dictionaries for me... Attending Spanish [complementary] school made me forge a common bond with other kids.

Another second generation Brisbane respondent discussed the significant role of her grandparents. “*Mi abuela* [My grandmother] had a major role in making the Spanish language part of my life. I remember she would constantly speak Spanish to me everywhere we’d go... even in front of my friends.” The importance of native Spanish-speaking family members for learners in their early years was seen in their support for multilingualism and their appreciation for a multilingual mindset.

Gender plays another key role in language maintenance and within endogamous and exogamous unions in Australia, affecting respondents’ linguistic practices. Across the intergenerational dataset, those in endogamous unions (93%) had greater opportunities for community language family interactions. *Castellano Rioplatense* plays a linguistic, social and cultural role for respondents. Mothers (68%)

in exogamous unions maintained and transmitted their dialect to their children more than fathers (43%) in the home. The main reason was that mothers were the primary homemakers and caregivers, with children being exposed to the dialect during mother-child interactions. Children were less exposed to *Castellano Rioplatense* from their Argentinean fathers in exogamous unions than mothers, as fathers were the main income earners. Last, exogamy in both generations contributed significantly to language loss and a shift to using English as the primary home language. Some spoke of how their sole Spanish-speaking parent interacted with them in English and to a much lesser extent in Spanish. Although these respondents understood to some degree what was being said, they would reply in English due to not possessing an adequate level of Spanish or their fear of committing errors.

The use of *Castellano Rioplatense* among second generation siblings offered interesting findings. Inter-sibling teaching during their childhood and adolescence provided opportunities to use their dialect by telling stories, playing, testing and making jokes. They believed that these interactions also contributed to their dialect skills at a young age. Another validation of their exclusive sibling in-group membership was using *Castellano Rioplatense* as a 'private' language outside of the home around non-Spanish speakers. Nevertheless, respondents from exogamous unions reported solely using English with their siblings. For them, the lack of dialect usage in the home negatively impacted their dialect acquisition at a young age.

For academics, extended family members are another source of language input, yet the complexity in nature and fractured dynamics in families are often negative factors. Overseas visits to Argentina were valued, yet these were infrequent. First generation survey data found a sense of guilt in their inability to afford their children frequent overseas trips during the 1970s-1990s — due to high airfare costs — limiting their children's exposure to *Castellano Rioplatense* to the home. Nevertheless, these trips retained a strong emotional resonance in the memories of the second generation by their rarity and familial memories. Recalling her travels, a second generation female respondent from Sydney told: "We would travel overseas for a couple of weeks [every few years]. I spent a lot of time with my Spanish-speaking family, so my proficiency improved..." Despite the lack of extended family and other spaces for linguistic and cultural immersion in Australia, these trips to Argentina were highly symbolic on a linguistic and cultural spectrum.

Factor 2: Institutions

Disinterest in clubs was found across the first (19%) and second generation (34%). The reasons varied from the non-existence of Argentinean clubs in their neighbourhoods, age disparities with older group members, a predilection for English language entertainment spaces, and their appetite for Latin American culture and music in general. Second generation male respondent from Melbourne said to the effect: "*No me gusta ir a los clubes porque quedan muy lejos de mi casa.*"

Además, los que van allí son mayores que yo y prefiero ir a otros lugares con gente de mi edad.” However, the linguistic and social value of Argentinean social and sporting clubs were valued more by the first (41%) rather than by the second generation (33%).

To maintain a language, you must have people and places you use can use it with on a regular basis... Apart from home gatherings, clubs are where we meet friends, eat, enjoy cultural events and holidays, and discuss various topics. That’s why I go to these clubs so I can celebrate my country’s holidays with my fellow compatriots (First generation Brisbane male respondent).

In Melbourne, one first generation male respondent described the different activities that the *Centro Argentino de Victoria* [Argentinean Centre of Victoria] offers the community.

El club, desde mucho tiempo, ofrece una amplia gama de actividades para todas las generaciones. Por ejemplo, con unos amigos, vamos al club y vemos los partidos de fútbol, sobre todo cuando juega el equipo nacional argentino. También para aquellas personas que les gusta jugar a las cartas, también se pueden anotar para participar en el campeonato de truco, y comer comidas típicas de Argentina como ‘asado’ y tomar vino argentino. Estas actividades hacen que yo siga manteniendo el castellano y también me hacen sentir orgulloso de ser argentino. El club es un lugar donde yo me puedo rodear con otros argentinos, donde hablamos el

mismo idioma, tenemos la misma cultura, costumbres y lo demás. El club es como nuestra tierra propia, donde pertenecemos a la patria argentina.

The social harmony of clubs allows the first generation to have another space where ‘*amistad y solidaridad*’ are present. These tokens allow individuals to gather and use their dialect while enjoying events, eating asado and drinking Argentinean beverages with family and friends. Participation, even if brief, instils a sense of commonality, separating themselves from the broader Australian Latin American community.

In terms of foreign language teaching, Australia’s embracement of its diversity is also seen in the teaching of Spanish as a LOTE from kindergarten to tertiary education. As mentioned in the introduction, Australian complementary schools transmit and maintain *Castellano*, not its dialects⁴ and this characterisation of a general Spanish language was echoed by survey respondents. Both generations (first generation: 94%; second generation: 86%) considered that the teaching and learning of Spanish is essential to both the language and a school’s overall survival and sustainability, ensuring the continued presence of Spanish-speakers in Australia. Recalling on her Spanish complementary school experiences in Melbourne, second generation female respondent relayed:

Tengo muy lindos recuerdos de mi tiempo en la escuela complementaria. Había chicos que tenían padres argentinos como yo, como así también había chicos uruguayos.

Aunque la profesora ya sabía que usábamos el voseo y los uruguayos lo mezclaban con el tuteo, aprendimos el castellano estándar.

Yet, another second generation respondent from Sydney recalled her shock when hearing that her Spanish teacher had difficulty teaching her own child the definite articles in Spanish. She praised her parents for their language teaching and their ability to explain Spanish grammar.

While Argentineans in Australia use *Castellano Rioplatense* in their homes, they recognised that a valid plurality exists among Latin American dialects. For respondents, linguistic differences should not take priority in Australian education, as they could weaken the survival of the Spanish language and the need for a robust Spanish-speaking community. Without substantial and continuous migration from Spanish-speaking countries, the Latin American community will become more developed and established, rendering language conservation increasingly more difficult.

Spanish language community media (made by and for the local Spanish-speaking population) has also historically been part of Australia's media landscape. With access to five online and four print Latin American newspapers, the first generation from Melbourne (29%), Sydney (33%), and Brisbane (14%) consulted these regularly compared to the second generation (Sydney, 32%, Melbourne, 16%, and Brisbane 12%). The key reasons for the first generation included access to news and entertainment from Australia, Latin America and Spain, in addition to remaining informed about

social events in their cities. In Sydney, first generation male respondent explained: "Yo emigré a Australia hace 36 años. Muchas de las personas mayores acá en Sídney leen los periódicos en español porque quieren leer y estar informados acerca de lo que está sucediendo en su país." Although hard copies of Spanish community language newspapers are vastly more popular with the first generation, their online outlets have strong readership figures from the second generation.

First generation respondents' hunger for *Castellano Rioplatense* was also accessed via transnational media. They wished to stay abreast with news from abroad as well as preserve and expand the modernising registers of their dialect. Despite living close to four decades in Australia, dialect homeland media instils a collective sense of belonging and revitalises their ethnolinguistic vitality. Nevertheless, a lower vitality existed among the second and older first generation respondents as they less frequently accessed Argentinean transnational media outlets. Yet, the use of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube) enables both generations to read, hear, express and share their emotions, thoughts and experiences through their dialect. More so, by liking and following social media accounts and groups of Argentinean news outlets, as well as sports players and teams, celebrities and TV shows, these digital tools are vehicles which preserve and revitalises language and culture without being physically present in Argentina.

Conversational applications (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Skype) have also largely substituted traditional

methods of communication (landline phone calls, posted letters and post-cards) which was non-existent for earlier generations. First generation male respondent from Melbourne expressed this factor during the interview: “Mis familiares crearon un grupo de WhatsApp para que mis hijos tengan otras personas con quien hablar y aprender nuestra lengua.” These technologies boost this dialect’s prestige in Australia through respondents’ access and exposure. Nevertheless, face-to-face interactions remain the prevailing means of experiencing *Castellano Rioplatense* and connecting with others which is irreplaceable by social media.

Whilst new technologies and social media platforms create collaborative spaces for language learning and maintenance with native speaking family, their effectiveness in supporting literacy remains to be seen. Criticisms expressed by the first generation include how both native and heritage speakers are changing the language by modifying spelling conventions, abbreviating words or adopting new ones. Yet, they acknowledged that these modernising tools build, maintain and (re)create social networks by utilising *Castellano Rioplatense* intentionally across geographical and physical boundaries, keeping languages alive for generations to come.

Factor 3: Status

Despite the international ranking of Spanish, both generations attributed prestige to the language. They added that globally, the Latin American community is a vibrant collection of communities. This Pan Latino community holds high status and is regarded

favourably in Australia, with Spanish and Portuguese being popularly studied languages, heard and used in the retail and hospitality industries with a growing interest in Latin America and Spain as travel and study abroad destinations. However, the Spanish language has little local economic importance at Australia’s national level, as few employment fields require it. Moreover, in the Australian context, *Castellano Rioplatense* holds little value outside of the Argentinean community. Respondents commented that in Australia their dialect is an invisible language variety, as it is not heard or used with a high frequency in various domains nationally.

Characteristics of *Castellano Rioplatense* in Australia

The use of the *voseo* throughout Australia’s social spectrum is the most noticeable characteristic across both generations. As such, the *voseo* is a central dimension in expressing and consolidating relationships of solidarity with other Argentineans in Australia. Findings reveal that in Australia, the *voseo* has been assimilated within families, leaving aside the *tuteo*. Nevertheless, its exclusivity is not universal, with respondents from Argentina’s West, North-West and North-East or those with a Spanish speaking partner with predominant *tú* usage, utilising a mixed pattern of the *vos* and *tú* pronoun with *tú* verb forms. For respondents, age and status are also important factors in their choice of pronoun. Symmetrical *Usted* usage occurs when there is mutual politeness and respect with older Argentineans or

professionals, while younger speakers are addressed using *tú* or *vos*. Within the extended family and social network, their use of *tuteo* and *voseo* alternate, yet across both generations the *voseo* signals greater *confianza*.

Lexical differences or *Argentinismos* differentiating the Argentinean community in Australia from others was another regional shibboleth found. First generation female respondent from Sydney stated: “*Es importante señalar que existen diferencias entre*

las palabras en todas las variedades del idioma castellano y el español rioplatense no es diferente.” Adding to this, first generation male respondent from Sydney relayed: “*El rioplatense contiene palabras, el lunfardo y frases típicas que siempre usamos. Los argentinismos son palabras que se suelen usar entre los argentinos, y en casa lo usamos bastante.*” Table 2 below reflects various *Argentinismos* used among respondents.

Table 2
Argentinismos used by Australian respondents

Che (hey)	Nafta (gasoline)
Valija (luggage/suitcase)	Bronca (anger, frustration)
Pibe(a)/ guacho(a) (guy/girl)	Plata/guita (money)
Baúl (del auto) (boot/trunk)	Cancha (sports field/court)
Lapicera (pen)	Dale (okay)
Pava (teapot)	Vereda (sidewalk)
Departamento (apartment)	Mozo (waiter)
Cartera (handbag)	Ruta (highway)

Among immediate family members and friends, *lunfardo* is primarily used by first generation respondents. The second generation reported knowing and using *lunfardo* because their parents taught them, or they learnt it

from extended family and friends. Others claimed not knowing if the terms they knew were *lunfardo* or not. Table 3 below lists terms primarily used by the first generation.

Table 3
Lunfardo used by Australian respondents

<i>Atorrante</i> (shameless, vagrant, lazy)	<i>Groso</i> (great)
<i>Boludo</i> : (stupid, idiot. Also used to obtain another person's attention with whom a certain degree of intimacy exists. i.e., <i>Che, boludo, ¿estás en casa?</i>)	<i>Guita</i> (money)
<i>Bondi</i> (bus)	<i>Laburar</i> (to work)
<i>Bronca</i> (anger)	<i>Mango</i> (refers to currency, i.e., bucks)
<i>Cana</i> (Police)	<i>Mina</i> (woman)
<i>Chabón</i> (guy)	<i>Morfar</i> (to eat)
<i>Chamuyar / chamullar</i> (to chat up)	<i>Papafrita</i> (idiot)
<i>Chanta</i> (an individual of little credibility)	<i>Perejil</i> (unimportant person)
<i>Cheto</i> (fancy)	<i>Pibe/a</i> (boy/girl)
<i>Engrupir</i> (to deceive)	<i>Piola</i> (smart, cunning)
<i>Fiaca</i> (laziness)	<i>Posta</i> (accurate, real)
<i>Garca</i> (dishonest person)	<i>Quilombo</i> (disorder, confusion)

During his travels to Argentina in 2012, Brisbane's second-generation male respondent recalled his exposure to *lunfardo* by native Spanish-speaking family and his desire to learn it.

When I was there [Argentina], my cousins would say things like *¿Qué hacés chabón?* or *Sos una piola*. So, I began learning *lunfardo*. Despite not having many Argentine friends here, I use it with my cousins when we message. It makes me feel more Argentinean.

Over 65% of first generation interviewees and less than 10% from

the second generation mentioned how *lunfardo* also features *vesre* (metathesis of syllables with the word *vesre* itself an example of *reves*). Words such as *ñooba* [*baño*], *garpar* [*pagar*], and *lleca* [*calle*] were used among the first generation with their family and friends. Another feature (not exclusive to Argentineans) is the use of *queísmo* (the omission of the preposition *de* before the conjunction *que*). A first generation interviewee and Spanish teacher from Sydney noted that *queísmo* is a feature used among the Argentinean community. She provided an example of this: “Tengo miedo de que no haya lugar en el auto” y en español rioplatense

decimos: “Tengo miedo que no haya lugar en el auto.”

This dialect's grammatical structure was evident in respondents' use of verb tenses. Data analysis revealed that the simple past was used by respondents from Argentina's South East, whilst those from Argentina's West, North-West, and North East employed the present perfect. For instance, Brisbane's first generation female respondent, born in Tucuman stated: “El pretérito se habla en la ciudad de Buenos Aires. En todas las demás provincias del norte, de donde vengo yo, optamos por usar el pretérito perfecto compuesto y se suele decir y escuchar ‘He ido, he tomado’ etcétera.” Yet, in Melbourne, according to Buenos Aires-born first generation female respondent: “A mis hijos les enseñé el pretérito. El pretérito perfecto es difícil y se confunden mucho.” The second generation was found to also inherit this hallmark of verb tenses from their parents.

Other grammatical structures used during interviews was the use of the present tense to express future actions with examples such as ‘*mañana venimos*’ (instead of *mañana vendremos*) o ‘*en un rato te digo*’ (instead of *te diré*). Despite not using the future or present perfect, respondents employed the present indicative to express future framed actions or events between interlocutors. During the interviews, the periphrastic future (*voy a ir*) was also exclusively used instead of the synthetic future (*iré*).

El Castellano Rioplatense tiene sus particularidades. Más que nada usamos *ir + a + infinitivo* ya que el futuro simple es demasiado

formal para usar en el ámbito familiar. Enseñe a mis hijos que con esta expresión (*ir + a + infinitivo*) expresamos una acción futura ya planificada, y que el futuro simple es para una acción futura no planificada (First generation Brisbane female respondent).

The second generation also inherited the periphrastic future with second generation female respondent from Sydney stating: “En lugar de conjugar el futuro, mis padres nos enseñaron esta construcción (*ir + a + infinitivo*). En lugar de ‘mañana comeré almuerzo,’ aprendí decir ‘mañana voy a almorzar.’ Y para mí me resulta mucho más fácil.” Both generations were found to adverbialise adjectives with examples taken from interview recordings such as *habla bonito* and *habla lindo*. In addition, the idiomatic expression ‘lo de alguien,’ referring to an individual's place of residence or work was also utilised.

En Argentina es lo habitual y esta expresión ‘lo de’ predomina. O sea, decimos ‘voy a lo del médico’ en vez de decir ‘voy al médico.’ No sé... es nuestra forma de decir cosas y forma parte de nuestro dialecto. Y mis hijos también lo usan porque lo escucharon mil veces en casa (First generation Melbourne female respondent).

Interestingly, the prefix ‘re-’ before adjectives was another characteristic commonly utilised among the younger aged first generation respondents, and less so for the second. Using this prefix was first generation male respondent in his 40s. When questioned,

he affirmed: “se usa predominantemente en Argentina y también se encuentra en Uruguay. Se utiliza más para intensificar algo como los verbos y los adjetivos en vez de decir ‘muy.’ Por ejemplo, si algo es lindo nosotros decimos que es relindo.”

Respondents touched on how Argentinean colloquial phrases and expressions are regional shibboleths used in everyday conversations. Forming part of the Argentinean identity,

these were utilised more by the first rather than the second generation. For the latter, the application of these phrases showed their linguistic competence as their fundamental objective is to be native-like. These phrases (see Table 4) were popularly used by respondents from Buenos Aires City and other provinces in South East Argentina. Consequently, Argentineans from other provinces may not interpret these expressions in the same way.

Table 4

Expressions and phrases used by Australian respondents

<i>Capaz</i> (maybe)	<i>Tener buena onda</i> (good vibes, good energy)
<i>Estar en el horno</i> (to be in a stressful situation)	<i>Tener fiaca</i> (too lazy to do something)
<i>Mira vos</i> (How about that! / Wow, look at you, really)	<i>Tal cual</i> (exactly: used in agreement with someone)
<i>Puede ser</i> (it could be/ we will see)	<i>Tomátelo con soda</i> (take something lightly)
<i>Pasa que</i> (the thing is: used when describing or explaining something)	<i>¿Viste?</i> (you see? / you know?)

Another peculiarity of this dialect in Australia was also found. The *vos* has replaced the *ti* (emphatic form of the singular second-person pronoun used after a preposition) in Australian homes, such as ‘*tengo algo para vos.*’ *Ti* or *vos* is used interchangeably by respondents from Northern Argentina and partners from other Spanish-speaking countries. The same result was found with the pronoun *contigo*. Respondents from South East Argentina utilised ‘*con vos*’, whilst respondents from North-eastern Argentina

frequently used ‘*con ti.*’ Overall, the morphological, syntactical and lexical features of Castellano Rioplatense is a marker of pride and articulation of distinctiveness (socially, culturally, historically, and linguistically) separating them from Latin American’s in Australia. This dialect, like others, provides Argentineans with a unique status within the Latin American community as a variety primarily used at home with family or with other Argentineans.

Identity

Linking back to the ethnolinguistic vitality factors, this dialect allows Argentineans to maintain and accentuate ethnolinguistic distinctiveness. For respondents, a national Argentinean identity is one by which is by default a mixture of multiple nationalities. Recognising their European origins, more than 80% of first-generation respondents self-identified as ‘Argentinean.’ Second-generation testimonials revealed that their identities have an aspect of essentialism. Also weighing in their European identification, this generation (25%) designated a hybrid Argentinean-Australian identity such as: “I’m Australian-born yet I’m a product of what came off the boats. A mix of Spanish, Italian and Argentinean” (Second generation female respondent from Sydney). Others claimed to be both 100% Australian and 100% Argentinian with positionalities shifting with their surroundings. Talking about how positionality influences their description and fluidity of identity, a second generation female respondent from Melbourne said:

I don’t mind getting asked ‘where are you from?’ I say that I’m Australian-born, I look European, my surname is Italian, but my parents are Argentine-born. I think it’s cool to have different cultures in my ancestry and I’m proud of that.

Argentinean identity was also conveyed via food and drink by both generations. Culturally based, these signified belonging to the Argentinean culture, thereby enhancing Argentinian identity, if only for brief periods.

Their dialect was not only a communication medium but also a marker of Argentinean identity in multicultural Australia, signalling their uniqueness from the general Latin American population.

Discussion and Conclusion

To date, this is the first case study exploring dialect maintenance within the Argentinean community in Australia. In line with the Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory, demographic, institutional and status factors influence respondents’ language maintenance and identity efforts. One key finding is that the home is the primary locus for the maintenance and use of *Castellano Rioplatense*. The home and family provide children with an atmosphere to hear, absorb and experiment with language, and with its structures, functions and uses. Nevertheless, challenges exist in its maintenance across generations if it is restricted to the home.

Extended family and other community members can fill this gap by not only expanding the input but also diversifying a child’s contact with more community language structures and ways of communication. For gender, the role of the mother is significant as the primary caregiver, transmitter, and gatekeeper of the community language across generations. In endogamous unions, interactions with children support intergenerational communication. Yet, there is evidence of a gradual loss and shift towards English in the second generation.

As for institutional factors, Melbourne’s and Sydney’s Argentinian clubs primarily support dialect

maintenance by fostering cultural and social participation for the first generation. Yet, the same cannot be said for the second or for individuals residing in other Australian cities who lack these institutions. As for media, community print and web media give status to *Castellano*, not *Castellano Rioplatense* via its presence and connection in unifying the Pan Latino population. Further, educational institutions teaching *Castellano* provides the second and later generations with another space to learn and be immersed in a Spanish-speaking environment. Yet, the use of *Castellano* is limited in these spaces and must be negotiated with the use of Rioplatense at home and (to a lesser extent) online.

In Australia, the multicultural category of 'Latin American' disrupts the traditional parameters of in/out-group membership by prioritising shared language over shared cultural attributes. Despite this multicultural context that publicly renders Argentineans as 'Latin Americans,' they have successfully continued since the 1970s to transmit and maintain *Castellano Rioplatense* across multiple domains to signal their uniqueness, allowing them to maintain a distinct Argentinean identity.

The most interesting findings have to do with the variety of shibboleths linked to *Castellano Rioplatense* that continue to be used and transmitted by the first to successive generations. This dialect differentiates itself from others in Australia through its morphological, syntactical and lexical features. The *voseo* is unequivocally the preferred form of informal address and is a token of *confianza* representative of positive cohesive social levelling. This paper does not intend to generalise its findings to reflect Australia's Argentinean

population as individuals come and descend from different Argentinean provinces. The novelty of this research and its findings call for further research into *Castellano Rioplatense* and other dialects, as well as the linguistic and cultural experiences of Spanish-speaking migrants globally.

Notas

1. For further reading on terminology and usage see (Real Academia Española, 2005 <https://www.rae.es/dpd/esp%2525C3%2525B1ol>).
2. No official statistics exist. These numbers are based on the census population the provinces of Buenos Aires and Entre Ríos (see <http://www.indec.gov.ar>).
3. See Bárkányi & Mara Fuertes Gutiérrez (2019) on their paper on dialectal variation and Spanish language teaching in the United Kingdom.
4. These arguments align with those of the Real Academia Española (Artículo I) in that there is a Spanish-speaking community that transcends dialect differences. (see Real Academia Española, 2019) <https://www.rae.es/la-institucion>

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