Exploring Miamians’ Perceptions of Linguistic Variation In Miami-Dade County and The State Of Florida

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

EXPLORING MIAMIANS’ PERCEPTIONS OF LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND THE STATE OF FLORIDA

A master’s project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

LINGUISTICS

by

Daniel Garzon

2017
To: Director, Linguistics Program  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This MA Project, written by Daniel Garzon, and entitled Exploring Miamians’ Perceptions of Linguistic Variation in Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this MA Project and recommend that it be approved.

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Melissa Baralt

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Ellen Thompson

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Phillip M. Carter, Major Professor

Date of Defense: April 12, 2017

The MA Project of Daniel Garzon is approved.

_________________________________________
Prof. Virginia C. Mueller Gathercole  
Director, Linguistics  
College of Arts, Sciences, and Education

Florida International University, 2017
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family; without their unwavering support this thesis would not be possible. I also dedicate this master’s project to my niece and nephew, whose diverse Miami surroundings I hope will spark in them curiosity in language.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to share my deepest gratitude to Dr. Phillip M. Carter for his expert guidance, encouragement, and exceptional example throughout my graduate career. He has changed the way I view linguistics and has, countless times, inspired me to think outside the box. I am grateful to Dr. Carter for he has been a tremendous influence and direction for my personal and academic goals.

I would also like to sincerely thank my committee members for their continuous insight, support, and enthusiasm both in the classroom and for my project. Dr. Melissa Baralt and Dr. Ellen Thompson have always provided me with a fresh perspective and optimism for which I am greatly appreciative.

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Many thanks to my participants for their extensive and very honest perceptions of language in Miami and Florida, for they have provided much of the motivation to do this study.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

EXPLORING MIAMIAN'S PERCEPTIONS OF LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND THE STATE OF FLORIDA

By

Daniel Garzon

Florida International University, 2017

Miami, Florida

Professor Phillip C. Carter, Major Professor

Scholarship in folk dialectology has successfully demonstrated that folk beliefs about language vary wildly according to geographical region. The current study, an analysis of non-linguists' beliefs toward language in Florida and Miami-Dade County, reports on the results of a study using Dennis Preston’s draw-a- map technique, processed with ArcGIS. Two maps, a map which depicted a minimally-labeled outline of the State of Florida, and a second map which depicted the outline of Miami-Dade County, were given to 46 participants. When collected, the maps were scanned and geo-referenced into ArcGIS, a Geographical Information Systems (GIS)-based tool used to process perceptual dialectology data using techniques outlined by Montgomery and Stoeckle (2013).

Analysis of the map data shows that participants perceive the state of Florida as a multidimensional language continuum from the state line in the north to the southern tip of the peninsula, and perceive multiple, distinct language communities in Miami-Dade County. These findings suggest that South Florida residents connect language varieties strongly with distinct geographic and perceived sociocultural spaces.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Background Information</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Florida and Miami</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Perceptual Dialectology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 GIS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Methods</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Participants</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Stimuli</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Data Collection</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Results</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Florida</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Miami-Dade</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Discussion and Conclusions</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Discussion</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Florida</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Miami-Dade County</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3 Draw-a-map task</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Conclusions</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Limitations</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

Figure 1. Dutch dialect areas with perceptual and production data combined ...................... 7

Figure 2. 'Subjective area' maps of Itoigawa ................................................................. 8

Figure 3. Draw-a-map task from Preston (1989) ............................................................. 9

Figure 4. Composite map of Hawaiian perceptions of U.S. dialect areas ....................... 10

Figure 5. Average ratings for 'correctness' of spoken English from SE Michigan students ................................................................................................................................. 11

Figure 6. GIS software, aggregate heat map ................................................................. 14

Figure 7. Areas labeled “Normal” in Texas ..................................................................... 15

Figure 8. Non-Standard and Standard areas in Korea ................................................. 15

Figure 9. Draw-a-map task, Miami-Dade County map .................................................. 18

Figure 10. Draw-a-map task, Florida map ..................................................................... 19

Figure 11. Example hand-drawn map by 18-year-old Hispanic female from Goulds ..... 20

Figure 12. Example hand-drawn map by 27-year-old Non-Hispanic White male from Hialeah ............................................................................................................................ 21

Figure 13. Example hand-drawn map by 20-year-old Non-Hispanic Black male who lived in Miami for less than 5 years ......................................................................................... 22

Figure 14. Example hand-drawn map by 18-year-old Hispanic female from Hialeah Gardens ............................................................................................................................. 23

Figure 15. Example hand-drawn map by 21-year-old Hispanic male from Sweetwater .. 24

Figure 16. Example hand-drawn map by 20-year-old Hispanic male from Kendall ...... 25

Figure 17. Georeferencing a participant’s drawn map .................................................... 26

Figure 18. Tracing a polygon in ArcGIS ........................................................................ 27

Figure 19. Attributes table of a participant's Miami-Dade map ..................................... 27
Figure 20. Composite map of areas labeled English speaking in Florida ......................... 32
Figure 21. Composite map of areas labeled Spanish speaking in Florida ...................... 33
Figure 22. Composite map of areas labeled both English and Spanish speaking in Florida ......................................................................................................................... 34
Figure 23. Frequency of areas in Florida identified as Standard ..................................... 35
Figure 24. Frequency of areas in Florida labeled Non-Standard ................................... 36
Figure 25. Composite map of areas labeled English-speaking in Miami-Dade County ... 38
Figure 26. Composite map of areas labeled Spanish speaking in Miami-Dade County... 39
Figure 27. Composite map of areas labeled both English- and Spanish-speaking in Miami-Dade County ...................................................................................................................... 41
Figure 28. Frequency of areas in Miami-Dade County labeled Standard....................... 42
Figure 29. Frequency of areas in Miami-Dade County labeled Non-Standard .............. 44
Figure 30. Frequency of areas in Miami-Dade County labeled "Cuba" or "Cuban" ......... 46
Figure 31. Frequency of areas in Miami-Dade County labeled “Venezuela” or “Venezuelan” ........................................................................................................................................ 47
1 Introduction

Humans have long been able to form judgments about others based on how they speak. A single utterance by an individual may help the listener judge how old the speaker is, where they are from, their ethnicity, and social class; based on lexicon, utterance speed, phonological characteristics and other linguistic features. One of the first studies to correlate a linguistic feature with a sociological variable was in Labov’s study of the presence of rhotic /r/ in the speech of department store employees in New York City (Labov 1966). In that study, he found the rhotic /r/ to be significantly more prevalent among people of high socioeconomic status than among those belonging to lower strata. This pioneering work in the field of sociolinguistics gave rise to questions of not only how social variables influence language, but with later studies, how people react to other varieties of language and what means in a sociolinguistic perspective.

While Labov’s study analyzed variation of speech production from a sociolinguist’s point of view, the data from the present study draw from perceptions of nonlinguists on language variation using a perceptual dialectology approach. This approach examines – geographically – where people believe different language varieties are spoken, and their attitudes, if any, towards these different varieties. Scholarship in this approach has successfully demonstrated that folk beliefs about language vary wildly according to geographical region (Preston 1987, 1989, 1999a). Recent studies in perceptual dialectology have analyzed the geographic distribution of nonlinguists’ perceptions of language in regions such as Texas (Cukor-Avila et al 2012), Korea (Jeon
2013), California (Bucholtz 2007), Washington (Evans 2011), and Northern England (Montgomery 2012), all using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software.

My second hometown (and the place I have lived the longest), Miami, Florida, has a complex linguistic history that has intrigued both linguists and non-linguists alike. Though a relatively young city (founded in 1896) for being a global metropolis, Miami’s close proximity to Latin America and the Caribbean has caused drastic changes to its population, both ethnically and linguistically, in the second half of the 20th century.

Immigration patterns to Miami since 1959 have involved Cubans, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans, and Haitians on a large scale, among many other nationalities; at the same time, a grand scale exodus of White Caucasians has been a continuous trend. The dramatic shift in Miami’s demographics has greatly affected the city as a whole in many aspects, including economic, political, cultural, and global positions, and its effects have rippled onto the rest of the state of Florida, especially in its southern region.

While South Florida has been a central site of language contact in the past few decades, little has been documented in the sociolinguistic literature to capture the effects of language shift, maintenance and loss. Language attitude and perception studies have been conducted in Miami (Alfaraz 2014, Carter & Lynch 2013, Carter & Callesano 2014, Carter, Lopez & Sims 2014), however no study to date has analyzed nonlinguists’ perceptions of language variation in Florida geographically. The goals of this study are to contribute to this gap in the literature by determining: 1) whether respondents geographically perceive any kind of language variation in Florida and in Miami, 2) where they associate these varieties to exist, 3) what features they associate with these varieties, and 4) what sociological and linguistic variables play a role in what is being perceived.
2 Background Information

2.1 Florida and Miami

The reason to study the perceptual dialectology of Florida goes back to the history of the area. Florida, the peninsular-shaped state in the southeastern United States, was a crossroads of people, cultures, and languages mainly due to its accessibility by marine travelers. Spanish was the first European language introduced to the peninsula with the establishment of the first European settlement in present-day U.S., St. Augustine, in 1565. Great Britain then seized the Spanish territory nearly 200 years later, in 1763, during the Seven Years’ War, introducing English to the same region. Spain reclaimed the land 20 years later as a result of the Treaty of Paris, to later cede the territory to the U.S. in 1821. Florida ultimately became a U.S. state in 1845.

The region that is now present-day Miami was settled in the late 1890s, with the incorporation of the city of Miami in 1896. The first half of the 20th century saw Miami as a booming city, especially as a popular tropical resort for Americans with the incorporation of Miami Beach. As European-Americans rapidly developed Miami, at the same time, African Americans built a significant, thriving area north of downtown called “Overtown”, which became known by the mid 1950’s as “Harlem of the South” (Dunn 1997). However, the demographics of Miami would forever change with the beginning of the “cubanization” phase (Lynch 2000) in the late 1950’s when Fidel Castro’s government rose to power, leading to a series of exodus’ from Cuba. The first mass migration of Cubans occurred in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, and the second during
the Mariel boatlift in 1981. Further mass migrations from other Latin-American and Caribbean nations to Miami-Dade County occurred thereafter, including Nicaragua, Venezuela, Haiti, and to a lesser extent, Colombia. As a result, Miami currently has a majority (and diverse) Hispanic population with a high bilingual Spanish-English status among its speakers.

To show the effect of continuous mass immigration in Miami-Dade County, the 2010 Census confirms that over 65% of the county’s 2.5 million residents is of Hispanic origin, and just over half of the total population is foreign born (Miami-Dade County 2011). 34% of the county population was of Cuban origin, with 4.6% and 4.2% being of Colombian and Nicaraguan origin, respectively. More than 4% of the total county population was of Haitian descent (Brookings Institution 2005); Haitian Creole is one of the three official languages of Miami-Dade County, along with English and Spanish. As a result of these immigration patterns, the state of Florida boasts a relatively high Hispanic population of 22%, compared to the national average of 16%, as well as a high foreign-born population of 19%, compared to 13% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census 2015).

Spanish holds a unique status in Miami as compared to other Hispanic-majority regions of the United States. While it is considered the language of immigrants in the western U.S. and is thus held to a lower status, Spanish in Miami is used in government, politics, the workplace, and in all social, economic and political structures. This is evidenced by the fact that Miami holds the biggest Spanish television, radio, and newspaper markets in the U.S., and controls a very large percentage of trade with the Caribbean, Central America and South America (Lynch 2000). As a result, Spanish is not a language of the elderly and poor (as immigrant languages result elsewhere), but as a
language of “all generations of speakers of diverse educational and socioeconomic backgrounds” (Lynch 2000). The English that is native to the Miami area is also directly affected by the adstratum status that Spanish holds.

For this unique situation, Miami (and Florida) presents itself as a grand sociological and linguistic subject for study. Sociological (McGuirk 2004) and perceptual studies (Carter & Callesano 2014) have shown the distribution of language use in Miami, the role that Spanish plays in the area, as well as how the diversity of language varieties in Miami alone has affected how residents perceive different dialects. While Spanish may enjoy de facto bilingual status in Miami, a study by Carter and Lynch (2013) showed, through a matched-guise experiment, that Latin@ participants perceived a spoken Spanish passage with significantly more negative language attitudes than when the same passage in English was heard. In addition, a study by Carter and Callesano (2014) tested participants from Miami of Cuban, Colombian, and Peninsular Spanish descent on their perceptions of spoken Spanish in the three mentioned dialects; they found that Cuban Spanish, by far the most prevalent dialect of Spanish in Miami, was perceived with the most negative language attitudes, even by participants of Cuban descent themselves. These studies begin to explore the remarkable phenomenon of language contact in Miami, and its effects on the population.

The present study aims to expand on these studies, and produce a geographical distribution of the perception of language varieties in Florida and in Miami-Dade County. Though some mental and perception maps of Miami-Dade County can be found online and can give a general sense of how residents feel about their surroundings (cf. Miami
New Times 2013, for example), no study to date has shown the perception of language differences according to geographical locations in Florida and Miami-Dade.

A pilot study was done following the questions used by Bucholtz (2007) in regards to where English and Spanish are spoken better or worse, in Florida and in Miami. With results pending on the latter study, the present study extends that research with the perception of language differences in geographical locations in Florida and Miami.

2.2 Perceptual Dialectology

The origins of perceptual dialectology are found in dialectology itself. Dialectology is defined as the study of the geographic distribution of language varieties. The goal of the dialectology researcher is to produce a map of dialectal differences of a region according to language features. The *Survey of English Dialects* by Harold Orton (Chambers 1993) and the *Linguistic Atlas of the United States*, published by Hans Kurath (1949), are among the major works in the field of dialectology of the English language in the 20th century. The latter work analyzed social factors as well as regional geography to examine the distribution of language in the U.S.

Studies with aims to examine the perceptions of non-linguists on language variation began in the Netherlands in 1886 (Rensink 1999 [1955]). Willems surveyed Dutch respondents with the following question: “In which place(s) in your area does one speak the same or about the same dialect as you do?” With the collected data, Goeman and later Rensink developed a perceptual dialect landscape of the Netherlands in which
arrows were drawn stemming from each observed dialects to indicate where people perceived a similar dialect to theirs (Rensink 1999 [1955]).

Figure 1. Dutch dialect areas with perceptual and production data combined (Preston, in Berns & van Marle 2002)

Studies in Japan in the mid-20th century took this notion to another level and surveyed how respondents perceived different dialects in degree of difference (Grootaers 1999). The question in the latter study consisted of “Does the language spoken in this hamlet differ in any way of the neighboring hamlet?” Participants in this study were to rate (in a Likert scale) how intelligible the perceived dialect was compared to their own.
Sibata (1999 [1971]) was able to use his results to create a perception map of two distinct dialect areas in the region of Itiogawa.

Figure 2. 'Subjective area' maps of Itoigawa (Preston, in Berns & van Marle 2002)

Dennis Preston took these and other strategies to initiate the study of perceptual dialectology in the United States. His pilot study examined the perceptions of Hawaiian college students on the distribution of dialects in the United States. He asked his respondents, 35 undergraduate students at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, to draw their idea of dialect boundaries in the U.S. on a map with state lines already drawn. This task, termed the “draw-a-map” task (Preston & Howe 1987), would be the method used for future perceptual dialectology studies as well as the inspiration for the present study.
Figure 3. Draw-a-map task from Preston (1989)

The data from the maps varied widely, with some maps containing just one drawn region with one label, and other maps with many divisions and elaborate descriptions of the language varieties of the indicated regions. However, using these data, Preston compiled and made a composite map of the general dialect areas as indicated by the Hawaiian students, as seen in Figure 4. This study also showed that Hawaiians could perceive well language use in the United States despite not having travelled to every part of the contiguous 48 states, if they had travelled at all.
Some respondents included descriptions of certain areas as having “standard” or “normal” language, which led to the question of whether generalizations could be made about where people perceive language is spoken “better” or “worse”, as well as other types of language attitudes. To answer this question, Preston led another study where he surveyed 76 white college students in southern Indiana on how states rank in terms of where people speak most correct, and where people speak the least correct. For this study, the majority of the respondents was given a list of states and was asked to rank in terms of their perception of language correctness, and the remainder was given a map of the U.S. with states drawn. The results showed that the North Central U.S. was perceived
as having the most correct English spoken, along with the Mid-Atlantic, New England, Colorado, and the West Coast regions. The traditional South was the region perceived to have the least correct English. These results showed that the ranking of respondents’ perception had areal significance (Preston 1989).

These studies by Preston gave rise to the contemporary era of perceptual dialectology studies in more specific locales in the United States. The questions posited by Preston, as well as future researchers, include the following:

1) *How are linguistic variations processed?*

2) *What are ordinary speaker’s understandings of language variation?*
3) What social characteristics are overtly regarded by a speaker as supporting linguistic differences?

4) Where does an ordinary speaker believe language differences exist geographically?

5) What do such speakers believe about the etiology and relative values of language varieties? (Preston 1989)

The last question, which focuses on language attitudes, includes how people perceive a language variety in terms of what degree the speaker or dialect is friendly, intelligent, warm, competent, and so on. Beginning with Preston’s study of Indiana college students and continuing on with his study on ‘language pleasantness’ (cf. Preston 1999), studies on language attitudes have generated valuable data on different regions around the world. Language attitudes play an important role in how people make unconscious judgments of others; perceived undesirable characteristics of a person’s dialect can affect their ability to develop relationships outside their social circle, with their teachers, their employability, and other important social situations. Since Miami has significant populations of speakers of varieties that are perceived negatively, such as Cuban-Americans on their own dialect (Carter & Callesano 2014) and teachers towards students who speak African American Vernacular English (Abdul-Hakim 2002), language attitude studies bring to attention the social consequences of unconscious bias, through which education or simply awareness may ameliorate.

2.3 GIS

Modern perceptual dialectology studies demand the use of technology to process and aggregate data from hand drawn maps. The software used in studies done by Onishi
& Long (1997) and Long & Yim (2002), PDQ (Perceptual Dialect Qualifier), was used to make composite maps of perceived dialect regions in Japan and Korea, respectively. The capabilities of this software, though useful, are limited compared to the technology that has been available to contemporary researchers. ArcGIS, the platform used for recent studies as well as to be used for the present study, enables researchers to examine different layers and types of data without diminishing quality of the visual representation of the results, as well as to have the ability to process very large amounts of data (Montgomery & Stoeckle 2013).

GIS allows for perceptual dialectology data to combine with linguistic and non-linguistic datasets and make high-quality visuals to represent data analysis (Montgomery 2011). The process is as follows:

1) Scan respondent maps and save as picture files.
2) Georeference the maps on ArcGIS onto a base map so that the locations of the perceived regions match the coordinates of the base map.
3) “Trace” the regions in ArcGIS onto different layer files and identify each region with the respondents’ language attitudes and descriptions.
4) Make heat maps of regions according to categories (language attitudes, dialect spoken, social class, etc.).
Bucholtz was among the first American linguists to use ArcGIS for the analysis of perceptual dialectology studies, specifically in California (2007). Further studies in the United States include Washington (Evans 2011) and Texas (Cukor-Avila et al. 2012).
Other studies using the modern GIS approach include studies in the UK (Montgomery 2011) and Korea, as shown below (Jeon 2013).

The present study aims to use the modern GIS approach for Florida and specifically, for Miami-Dade County. While previous studies have analyzed the perceptions of one language variety, Miami (and by extension, Florida) is an unusual case where two languages share nearly equal roles in many social domains. Perceptual
dialectology studies, especially with GIS, have not sufficiently explored this kind of language phenomenon; with rapidly changing demographics due to immigration and migration within the area, more research attention is deserved for Miami. In light of this, the following research questions are what guided the present study:

Research questions:

1) What do Miamians’ think about language in the Miami area and of the rest of the state?

2) Where do Miamians perceive differences in speech, and where do they associate these differences?

3) What features do Miamians associate differences in speech with?

I addressed the questions by incorporating methods from previous language attitude studies and folk linguistic (perceptual dialectology) studies. Participants were asked not only to identify areas where people speak differently, but also, were asked to comment on how they spoke, their views on the regions, and their attitudes towards what constitutes ‘standard’ and ‘non-standard’ varieties of language present in the area.

This study differs from previous studies in that the data looks at perceptions of multiple varieties of more than one language in both the state of Florida and Miami-Dade County. In previous studies, including those conducted outside of the United States, the data largely reflected varieties to one language. Given the de facto bilingualism of Miami-Dade County and its high, varied use of both Spanish and English in nearly all domains, the present study looks at varieties of both English and Spanish. The research questions remain the same, except for the fact that they pertain to two languages instead of one.
3 Methods

The present study uses the draw-a-map task (Preston & Howe 1987), where respondents were asked to draw boundaries on a map around areas where they believe differences exist, as well as indicate what dialect features may be present in those areas (see Appendix A & B).

3.1 Participants

The present study consisted of 46 respondents, of which 29 were female and 17 were male. All participants were college students, and the mean age was 21. 80% of respondents identify themselves as Hispanic, and 64% of all respondents indicate that they were born in the U.S. (86% of those were born in South Florida). Of all the respondents, 16 reported Cuban ethnicity, 10 reported a non-specific South American origin, 8 identified themselves as Venezuelan and another 7 respondents indicated Colombian origin.

3.2 Stimuli

For the present study, participants are directed to complete a draw-a-map task by following explicit directions. Before the present study was conducted, I collected data from 54 participants for a pilot study. The results from the pilot study showed that participants, on the whole, largely labeled areas according to what language people spoke (e.g. English, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.). This led me to add details to the instructions, shown in the following:

1) Draw boundary lines to indicate each part of Miami-Dade County where you believe people speak differently. You should only draw as many boundaries as you want to draw. Indicate as much or as little as you want; it doesn’t matter if you have been to a
place or not, we are still interested in your opinions of language there. The more information you can give, the better.

2) Then, **label the area, and if you can, describe how the people speak there.** You should write down anything you think is important about language use in that boundary. **The more you tell us about what you think about language in these areas, the better.** If you can, give an example of what’s unique about the way of talking in the areas you label. (Feel free to label particular words, pronunciations, anything that comes to mind.)

Participants were handed a map of Miami-Dade County with 15 municipalities labeled on the map: Aventura, Miami Beach, Key Biscayne, Miami Lakes, Hialeah, Doral, Sweetwater, Westchester, Little Havana, Brickell, Coral Gables, Kendall, the Hammocks, Cutler Bay, and Homestead. No other geographical information was given (highways, main streets, city boundaries).

Figure 9. Draw-a-map task, Miami-Dade County map
Participants were also given a map of Florida that was blank except for the following text labels at their correct geographical location: Miami, Orlando, and Tallahassee.

![Figure 10. Draw-a-map task, Florida map](image)

After completing the draw-a-map task, respondents were asked to answer a series of demographic questions (Appendix C).

### 3.3 Data Collection

All participant data were collected in front of the Green Library, in the Modesto Maidique Campus of Florida International University in Miami, Florida, located approximately 10 miles west of downtown Miami. Participants were asked to complete the draw-a-map task in a manner akin to Labov’s Rapid Anonymous Survey.
The following figures are samples of hand drawn maps collected at the FIU campus. All ages of participants were noted at the time of collection.

Figure 11. Example hand-drawn map by 18-year-old Hispanic female from Goulds
Figure 12. Example hand-drawn map by 27-year-old Non-Hispanic White male from Hialeah
Figure 13. Example hand-drawn map by 20-year-old Non-Hispanic Black male who lived in Miami for less than 5 years
Figure 14. Example hand-drawn map by 18-year-old Hispanic female from Hialeah Gardens
Figure 15. Example hand-drawn map by 21-year-old Hispanic male from Sweetwater
Figure 16. Example hand-drawn map by 20-year-old Hispanic male from Kendall

The maps were scanned into jpeg files, and each labeled region in the maps was categorized based on keywords. The following words were extracted from the maps to construct categories:

1) English
2) Spanish, Spanglish
3) Standard: Normal, American English, rich, educated, proper, not accented, Midwestern, high class, neutral, grammatically correct
4) Non-standard: slang, southern, drawl, accents, heavy accent, hick, country, ebonics, rural, redneck, blue collar, fast paced, unintelligible
5) Mixture: Both Spanish and English, bilingual, a bit of both

Separate ArcGIS files were made for the two draw-a-map tasks; one for Florida, and one for Miami-Dade County. The pictures of the maps were georeferenced to the base maps’ coordinate system on ArcGIS.

Figure 17. Georeferencing a participant’s drawn map

Georeferencing a participant’s drawn map, with two control points on the base map along the county border

Each layer was digitally traced on ArcGIS using the trace feature. I used the snap feature to be able to trace coastlines effectively.
Figure 18. Tracing a polygon in ArcGIS

The traced, highlighted polygon indicates an area drawn and labeled by a participant.

The data from each drawn region were input into each file’s attribute table, as well as categories based on the data.

Figure 19. Attributes table of a participant's Miami-Dade map
I used the Union function on ArcGIS to agglomerate the polygons into one file. The labels were input into an Excel spreadsheet, where I assigned the labels to categories. There, I wrote an Excel function that counted the number of instances the label appeared for a particular area. I saved the spreadsheet as a CSV file, and transferred the information back to ArcGIS by adding this file to the map. In ArcGIS, I was then able to make a heat map by quantifying the polygons based on the category in question (i.e. English) and how many polygons occupied each area.
4 Results

4.1 Florida

In the Florida maps, the most common words were found to correspond to the following Florida regions (from north to south):

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label (mere mention of word)</th>
<th>1. Panhandle Only (n=24)</th>
<th>2. North Florida (n=56)</th>
<th>3. Central Florida (n=59)</th>
<th>4. North South Florida (n=25)</th>
<th>5. SoFla M-D (n=61)</th>
<th>6. SW Florida (n=1)</th>
<th>7. South M-D (n=8)</th>
<th>8. Keys (n=1)</th>
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Based on the hand-drawn maps, regions were divided based on the areas drawn.

Most of the maps had either 3 or 4 regions drawn throughout the state of Florida; if there were 3 regions drawn, they would usually be drawn around the city labels, or subdivide the state into the three regions each which contained a city label. If there were 4 regions drawn, an additional region along with the three base regions was added, which most likely consisted of a subdivision of one of the regions. A few maps were divided into five
to seven regions, and some had only two divisions, in which the sole border divided South Florida from the rest of the state.

For the analysis of the data in Table 1, the state of Florida was divided into 8 regions, based on the map data and the major cities and regions in Florida. Northern Florida (region 1) was divided into two regions: the Panhandle excluding the capital, Tallahassee, and the rest of northern Florida (region 2) including Jacksonville (not pictured). Central Florida (region 3) remained as a region comprising the area south of North Florida and north of Lake Okeechobee. The next area (region 4) consisted of the area south of Lake Okeechobee and north of South Florida. Miami-Dade County was divided into two regions for the state map: Region 5 consisted of Northern Miami-Dade and Broward County, and Region 7 consisted of Southern Miami-Dade since 8 participants made this area a region in their maps. Southwest Florida (Region 6) was excluded from the rest of South Florida because of the boundaries drawn of the regions and the indication from one map of a separate Southwest Florida region. This area is also demographically different from the Miami metropolitan area. The last region, the Florida Keys (region 8), was considered as a separate region from South Florida because of map indications and demographic differences.

The most frequent labels on the maps, as shown in Table 1, include words that may indicate the language spoken in the areas indicated, as well as the manner in which the language spoken is perceived. The labels “southern” and “country” both refer to an English-speaking population and a distinct accent that largely incorporates “drawl” or “slang”. These labels were most frequent in the northern parts of Florida, with one indication in the Keys and none in South Florida. Both terms “English” and “Spanish”
appeared in almost all regions in the hand-drawn maps (except Region 6 and 8, which only had one label each in all the maps); however, the distribution of the term “English” differed from “Spanish” in that North and Central Florida mentioned “English” much more than south of these areas, and “Spanish” was mentioned much more in South Florida than in other parts of Florida, with a moderate frequency in Central Florida. In addition, “Spanglish” was mentioned as a label solely for the region of South Florida.

Race and ethnicity were frequently mentioned in the Florida maps, and in distinct distributions. The label “White” was mentioned for the Central and North Florida regions, but omitted south of these areas. “African American” was mentioned twice in all the maps - in Central Florida and Northern Miami-Dade. The term “American”, usually accompanied by the term “English”, was highly prevalent in the Northern and Central regions of Florida, with little mention in South Florida. The ethnicity term, “Hispanic”, was most frequently labeled in the South Florida region, with very little mention in North Florida. South and Central Florida were also marked for “Cuban”, indicating the predominantly perceived country of origin of the dialects found in these areas.
Figure 20. Composite map of areas labeled English speaking in Florida

After tracing the maps on ArcGIS, I extracted information from polygons according to the label that represented the area. 35 respondents marked the regions with a label of “English”; visually, the composite map shows that 26 polygons overlap in the region of North Florida, with less prevalence in the southern part of the state. Very few respondents marked South Florida as English speaking; we can infer that English is either
not perceived in South Florida compared to the northern part of the state, or that English is simply not spoken very much in the Miami area.

Figure 21. Composite map of areas labeled Spanish speaking in Florida

We see the opposite phenomenon for areas labeled “Spanish” rather than “English” speaking. 26 respondents labeled an area as “Spanish” speaking, with the largest concentrations of polygons over the geographic area of Miami-Dade County.
Figure 22. Composite map of areas labeled both English- and Spanish- speaking in Florida

10 respondents labeled areas as both either English and Spanish speaking, mostly in South and Central Florida. These regions were also labeled as either bilingual or “Hispanic and American”.
Figure 23. Frequency of areas in Florida identified as Standard

Besides language spoken, respondents also perceived how the language(s) was/were spoken. The words used in 16 respondents’ labels for these regions were categorized as described in pgs. 26-27. I took the polygons where information about language quality was found (for either English or Spanish) and created the composite heat map as shown above. The polygons overlapped heavily around Central Florida (Orlando area); respondents perceived Central Florida as having “standard” English (or
Spanish) spoken there, while North and South Florida were not as frequently indicated for having standard English or Spanish.

Figure 24. Frequency of areas in Florida labeled Non-Standard

With the same categorization methods as pgs. 26-27, I extracted the polygons with information regarding non-standard language and made a composite heat map. 21 respondents labeled areas as having non-standard speech. The resulting map showed that northern Florida had the most overlapping polygons out of the entire state, centered on
the city label Tallahassee. Over half of the maps contained non-standard labels in the Miami area. Very few maps contained these labels for the Central Florida area, contrasting how respondents labeled the same area more frequently with perceiving English.

4.2 Miami-Dade

The following composite maps pertain to the analysis of labels for Miami-Dade County.
First, I compiled the areas that were marked with the label “English” speaking, and those with “Spanish” speaking. 16 participants that labeled areas in Miami-Dade County as English-speaking, compared to 31 participants that labeled areas as Spanish-speaking. The color gradient for the heat maps of both perceived English and Spanish correspond to the same number of participants that labeled areas as Spanish-speaking.

Figure 25. Composite map of areas labeled English-speaking in Miami-Dade County
Comparatively, respondents grew larger regions for Spanish speaking areas than English areas. The areas with more than 11 overlapped polygons for “English” correspond to the Homestead area, Coral Gables, Aventura, and Miami Beach. Cutler Bay and Key Biscayne also contained a moderate amount of “English” labels than the rest of the areas shaded in a darker green.

**Frequency of areas labeled Spanish speaking**

![Map of areas labeled Spanish-speaking in Miami-Dade County]

Figure 26. Composite map of areas labeled Spanish-speaking in Miami-Dade County
Respondents overwhelmingly drew other areas in Miami-Dade County as either solely or predominantly Spanish speaking. The regions of Hialeah and Little Havana had the most overlapping polygons, while more than 15 participants marked Doral and Sweetwater/Westchester as Spanish speaking. By contrast, Kendall was labeled as predominantly Spanish speaking by less than 10 respondents. Miami Beach contained less than two “Spanish” labels and was not counted in the heat map. However, more than two respondents labeled Key Biscayne as “Spanish”.

In Figure 24 below, I compiled the areas that participants drew and labeled as “both English and Spanish speaking”, or where residents were bilingual (English/Spanish).
12 participants labeled an area in Miami-Dade County as both English and Spanish-speaking. These areas consisted of Homestead, Kendall, Coral Gables, Doral, and Miami Beach. Very few participants labeled Little Havana and Hialeah as bilingual, areas that were heavily labeled as Spanish speaking. However, participants did not perceive Aventura nor Key Biscayne as bilingual as Miami Beach.
Figure 28. Frequency of areas in Miami-Dade County labeled Standard

I compiled the areas that were labeled as standard and non-standard quality of language, according to the categorization methods mentioned on pgs. 26-27. I have based both heat maps on the number of respondents that labeled areas as non-standard since these had the most responses out of the two categories. Of the areas labeled “standard”, at least 10 participants labeled Homestead, Coral Gables, Aventura, and Miami Beach. The
latter three areas were marked by “educated”, “rich”, “upper-class”, while homestead contained labels such as “proper” and “American English”. Key Biscayne, Kendall, and Brickell/Downtown were also marked as “standard”, though less than the areas colored orange. The Hialeah area was labeled “standard”, but not by many respondents. Furthermore, “standard” in Hialeah referred to Spanish language, not English.
More participants labeled areas in Miami-Dade County as having “non-standard” language than “standard”, as is shown above in Figure 26. The areas that were frequently labeled with non-standard language were Hialeah, Little Havana, and Homestead. Hialeah and Little Havana were mostly perceived as having non-standard Spanish, while Homestead referred to English. Comparatively, the areas that were more frequently
labeled as having standard language were not labeled with “non-standard”, and vice versa, with the exception of Homestead.
Interestingly, participants labeled many areas in the county as having a “Cuban” dialect, or perceived an area as simply “Cuban”. 27 participants labeled one or more areas as Cuban, with the highest amount of overlapping polygons in Hialeah, a slightly lesser amount in Little Havana, and less so in Westchester. 16 Participants also labeled Doral heavily as “Venezuelan”, as shown in Figure 28.

Figure 30. Frequency of areas in Miami-Dade County labeled "Cuba" or "Cuban"
Figure 31. Frequency of areas in Miami-Dade County labeled “Venezuela” or “Venezuelan”
5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Discussion

The results of the present study show an impact on how Miamians perceive language spoken around them, and prove that they associate and differentiate language with geographic area. This has tremendous implications towards the perceptual and sociolinguistic literature of Miami and of Florida. Below, I discuss what the results mean for both the Florida and Miami-Dade County studies, by relating back to the research questions.

1) What do Miamians’ think about language in the Miami area and of the rest of the state?
2) Where do Miamians perceive differences in speech, and where do they associate these differences?
3) What features do Miamians associate differences in speech with?

5.1.1 Florida

In regards to Florida, participants perceived the state as having distinct dialectal regions: the north part of the state was mostly perceived as having “accented English”, Central Florida had Standard English or bilingualism, and South Florida was predominantly Spanish speaking. While Florida has a population that is majority white Caucasian, a quarter of the population is Hispanic/Latino (U.S. Census 2015). Miami-Dade County is 66% Hispanic/Latino, and it is for this reason that, compared to other areas of Florida, Miamians would perceive South Florida as predominantly Spanish speaking. Some respondents stated that Orlando and Tampa were perceived as being
moderately Spanish speaking, or bilingual, thus rendering the Central Florida areas as English as well as Spanish speaking.

The features that Miamians associated with geographical areas were also divided into three main regions: the northern and southern parts of the state were perceived with having non-standard language, and Central Florida with standard-language speakers (of either English or Spanish). Miamians themselves perceived the speech of their own region as more non-standard than standard; this was exemplified with their descriptions: “Miami accent”, “Mee-ami”, “improper”, “Cuba, fast paced Spanish”. These results align with previous perceptual studies (Carter & Lynch 2013, Carter & Callesano 2014); not only do Miamians perceive their home dialect as non-standard, but they also associate their home geographical region with this low quality.

Though participants may have not visited every area in Florida to report on it, especially the panhandle, they did frequently mention Northern Florida (see Table 1), and at the same time, have strong language attitudes towards the way people potentially spoke there. Such comments received about Northern Florida included: “very southern”, “how people who skin alligators talk”, and “white redneck”, among others. Central Florida was also mentioned frequently, but not as often as North and South Florida, and not as strongly opinionated. Some respondents even circled the area and placed a question mark or another comment that indicated that either they didn’t have enough information about what was spoken there, or that the language variety did not have enough remarkable features to distinguish it from a nonstandard variety.
5.1.2 Miami-Dade County

Looking back at the research questions:

1) What do Miamians’ think about language in the Miami area and of the rest of the state?

2) Where do Miamians perceive differences in speech, and where do they associate these differences?

3) What features do Miamians associate differences in speech with?

Miamians were able to associate distinct geographical regions with differences in speech variety within Miami-Dade County. The drawn maps showed strong indications of certain areas with predominantly English speakers, others with solely Spanish speakers, bilingual areas, as well as regions marked by standard and non-standard language. Participants also overwhelmingly noted a Cuban accent or origin for many areas of Miami-Dade County, and a strong presence of Venezuelan accents in Doral.

How perceptions compare with Census data from 2010 (all figures from U.S. Census 2015):

Miami Beach: Participants labeled this area as both English and Spanish speaking, in a rich, touristy, European context. This led to Miami Beach being perceived with standard language. Miami Beach is about 40% White Non-Hispanic and 53% Hispanic, with 52% of the city being foreign born. 68% of the households spoke a language other than English. To this extent, participants were accurate in perceiving Miami Beach as both English and Spanish speaking, due to the fact that, on the average, Miami Beach is more Caucasian and less Hispanic than the county.
**Aventura:** This city has the highest percentage of White Non-Hispanic (58%) of all cities observed for the present study. Participants overwhelmingly labeled this city as Standard English-speaking, with not much indication for Spanish. Other labels included upper-class, rich, “American”, “Jewish”, and “proper”. Miamians were able to accurately perceive Aventura with these features. It is interesting to note that North Miami Beach, the city adjacent to Aventura (to the southwest), has drastically different demographics; 40% Black Non-Hispanic, with still a relatively high number of Hispanics in the population (36%). The name of the city, however, was not included in the study, in order to reduce the amount of cities in a small area.

**Coral Gables:** This city contains the same demographics as Miami Beach according to race; however, the amount of foreign-born residents is much less, at 38%. The median income ($93,000) is also more than double that of Miami Beach. Respondents usually labeled Coral Gables as “educated”, “proper English and Spanish”, and “rich”, thus having a perception of standard language, though this could be attributed to both English and Spanish.

**Hialeah:** Participants overwhelmingly labeled this area with features such as “Spanish only” and “non-standard” language. Hialeah has a Hispanic population of 94.7%; the remainder of the population is 4% White Non-Hispanic and 2% Black Non-Hispanic. The median income is low - $29,000, and the percentage of foreign-born residents is 73%. Miamians frequently associated Hialeah with non-standard Spanish language, and also noted that the Cuban dialect had non-standard qualities; Cubans make up 62% of Hialeah. For these reasons, Hialeah is one of the areas where Miami can strongly perceive a dialect.
Sweetwater: This city has about the same demographics as Hialeah, with the exception that Cubans make up 40% of the population, while Nicaraguans have a relatively strong presence at 15% of the total. Participants labeled Sweetwater as predominantly Spanish speaking, though standard and non-standard labels applied, most likely due to its proximity to FIU and its slightly more diverse population. Sweetwater was also among the areas labeled bilingual or “both English and Spanish speaking”; the demographic differences from Hialeah are most likely strongly perceived by Miamians.

Kendall: This large suburb of Miami was frequently labeled as “both English and Spanish speaking”, with slightly more standard language. Kendall is 28% White Non-Hispanic and 63% Hispanic, with its median income slightly more than two times Hialeah’s figure. Compared to other areas in Miami, Kendall has a high percentage of White Non-Hispanic, and a moderate amount of Hispanic residents; 43% of residents are foreign born. Cubans made up 21% of the population, while Colombians made up 5%.

Participants in the study most likely perceived a sharp difference in demographics from other areas of the county, and therefore suggested that Kendall is more bilingual than other areas.

Doral: This town can be compared to Kendall in its demographics, with the differences in the percentages of White Non-Hispanic (at 14%) and Hispanic of any race (80%). In the study, participants labeled Doral as both bilingual and Spanish speaking, with a mix of standard and non-standard perceptions, probably due to indication that one would hear Venezuelan accents in the area (see Figure 28). Doral’s total population is 15% Cuban and 8.2% Venezuelan; there are slightly more Colombians in Doral (8.7%). Though there
are less Venezuelans in Doral than Cubans and Colombians, participants have noted its strong Venezuelan presence, and attributed the dialectal features as such.

5.1.3 Draw-a-map task

As the task stated, participants were to indicate areas where they thought people spoke differently, and state what they thought about language use in that area. Previous perceptual GIS studies have shown that participants indicated language attitudes for a particular language; however, for the present study, many respondents interpreted the question as asking which language was spoken in which area, and thus did not indicate their attitudes towards the language spoken. This points to the prominence of bilingualism in Miami (and South Florida) and the impact to locals’ perceptions of language, which is a unique facet of this study compared to previous studies.

5.2 Conclusions

Studies in perceptual dialectology help us understand how people associate language attitudes and beliefs according to dialects, communities and geographic location. The results from the present study suggest that not only do perceptions exist for language spoken in a certain area, but varieties of multiple languages can be perceived, and the overlap of different languages are also recognized and evaluated. This complexity reflects the fascinating mélange of language varieties in Miami, as well as in Florida, and shows how in touch Miami locals are with their surrounding environment.

The patterns of language perception in Florida followed two trends. Firstly, a language continuum of English and Spanish was generally perceived throughout the state; in other words, the more north in the state you were, the more English you would perceive, and the more south you were, the more Spanish was spoken. Second, a
standard/nonstandard continuum was also perceived; Central Florida was perceived as having standard English (and Spanish) spoken, whereas the northern and southern ends of the state had nonstandard varieties of both languages, where only English was spoken in the north, and accented English and Spanish were spoken in the south. Participants were able to strongly associate language with place, even if they had never visited the area.

The results of the Miami-Dade County maps also showed strong associations of language to place. In regards to language spoken, participants perceived the following patterns: English was spoken in tour sty and upper-class areas, Spanish was spoken in the rest of the county, and bilingualism was found in certain areas (especially middle-class suburbs) while Spanish monolingualism was perceived strongly in lower-class suburbs. These patterns show a perceived continuum of language according to neighborhood social class, a phenomenon that is common among minority/immigrant language areas in the U.S., even though Spanish is spoken by members of all social classes in Miami.

Participants also associated language standardness to dialect areas. The patterns were similar to those of language spoken: Standard English or Spanish was spoken in tourist areas and upper-class neighborhoods, nonstandard Spanish was perceived to be spoken in the lower-class areas (where participants also strongly associated Cuban dialects to be found), and non-standard English was found in these same areas, as well as other suburbs where the “Miami” accent could be found. Standard Spanish was also found in areas that corresponded with speakers of South American Spanish, especially Venezuelan Spanish speakers in Doral.

The fact that many participants perceived some areas strongly with certain features (i.e. Cuban Spanish in Hialeah, Little Havana, etc.) was not surprising; however,
it was interesting to see how strongly participants associated social class with the type of language spoken, as well as the perception of language spoken in areas that were never visited. These results mirror those found in Preston’s Hawaiian study (1989) and previous Miami perception studies. A further look would be needed to examine the demographic factors of the participants and differences in their perceptions.

5.3 Limitations

This study is the first to analyze perceptions of language from a geographical standpoint. That said, it does not go without limitations. First, the draw-a-map task for Florida contains labels for only three cities: Tallahassee, Orlando, and Miami. It is possible that the regions found in the participant maps were made according to the cities they found on the map. A future study could see other major cities on the map, such as Tampa, Jacksonville, Pensacola, Fort Myers, and Key West to name a few, to see if this would affect Miamians’ perceptions of language in Florida.

Second, in regards to Miami-Dade County, the draw-a-map task only included 15 names for municipalities, distributed as evenly as possible throughout the county. The study omitted parts of the county with relatively high Haitian and African American presence, such as North Miami, and North Miami Beach. One participant did include information regarding these populations in these areas; no other participant included Haitian Creole in their maps. For a future study, I would include these cities to get a truer sense of the perception of language of the county as a whole.

Finally, for the present study, I have only interviewed students at FIU. I would expand on this study by conducting the experiment in different locations throughout
Miami-Dade County, as well as other parts of Florida, and how the results compare. I would also set a goal of testing a more diverse population, with variety in race and age.

In continuing this study, I would like to analyze the effect of demographic characteristics of participants on perceived language spoken in Florida and Miami-Dade County.
REFERENCES


Appendix C

Respondent #: (this will be filled in for each respondent) ____

1. Year you were born: 19_______________

2. Sex:
o Male
o Female

3. Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino(a)?
   a. yes
   b. no

   3a. If yes, which of the following terms describes your family’s country of origin?
      a. Colombian
      b. Cuban
      c. Dominican
      d. Nicaraguan
      e. Puerto Rican
      f. Venezuelan
      g. other Central American
      h. other South American

   3b. If no, what do you consider your race to be?
      Non-Hispanic below
      o White (European/American)
      o Black (African/Caribbean/American)
      o Asian (Middle East/Asia/Pacific Islander)
      o Native American

4. Highest level of education:
   o Attending high school
   o High school
   o Some college
   o Bachelor’s degree
   o Graduate degree
5. Are you a student?
   a. yes
   b. no

Estimate to the best of your ability your family’s annual household income:
   a. Less than $10,000
   b. $10,000 to $19,999
   c. $20,000 to $29,999
   d. $30,000 to $39,999
   e. $40,000 to $49,999
   f. $50,000 to $59,999
   g. $60,000 to $69,999
   h. $70,000 to $79,999
   i. $80,000 to $89,999
   j. $90,000 to $99,999
   k. $100,000 to $149,999
   l. $150,000 or more

6. What languages do you speak? ______________________________
   6a. Which language do you speak most often? ________________________

7. Total time spent living in Miami-Dade County
   o <5 years
   o 5-10 years
   o 10-15 years
   o >15 years

8. What city/part in Miami-Dade County have you lived in the longest?
   ______________________________

9. Where do you live now? ______________________________

10. What place do you self-identify with? ______________________________

Where were you born?
   a. in South Florida
   b. in the U.S. outside of South Florida
   c. in a predominately Spanish speaking country outside the U.S.
   d. in a non-predominantly Spanish speaking country outside the U.S.