

# Language ideologies on Spanish in Facebook pages and communities: language and social identity policies in contemporary Chile

## *Ideologías lingüísticas del español en comunidades y páginas de Facebook: políticas de lengua e identidad social en Chile contemporáneo*



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### **Abstract:**

This paper addresses discourses about Spanish and its development in 21st century Chile by analysing exchanges about language on Facebook between 2009 and 2019. The study focused on Facebook communities and pages administered from Chile, in which language and identity policies are discussed in the Chilean context. Research led to the detection of phenomena such as the minimisation of language problems as relevant within Chile's digital space; a scarce presence of ideological tropes of national pride; and, notably, the emergence of a renewal of the ideology that claims that in Chile “people speak poorly” based on political and identity necessities. There were also findings of a renewed appreciation of Chilean Spanish, especially the varieties perceived as belonging to the lower classes. All of this contrasts with a positive vision of the Mapuche or Mapudungun language, the most widely spoken native language in the country, and an expansion of its political reach.

### **Keywords:**

Chilean Spanish; Spanish language Glottopolitics in Social Media; language ideologies online; social media as linguistic corpora; social media critical sociolinguistics

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### **Resumen:**

*En el presente artículo se abordan los discursos acerca del español y su desenvolvimiento en el contexto de Chile en el siglo XXI mediante la observación de discursos sobre la lengua en Facebook entre los años 2009 y 2019. El estudio consistió en un rastreo de grupos y páginas con administración chilena donde se discuten políticas de lengua e identidad en el contexto chileno. Resultó en la detección de diversos fenómenos particulares, entre ellos, la minimización de los problemas de lengua como relevantes en el país; la escasa presencia de tropos ideológicos de orgullo nacional; y, notablemente, la emergencia de una renovación del ideograma en torno a que en Chile “se habla mal” a partir de urgencias de orden político e identitario. Hubo también casos en los que se detectó una revaloración del español chileno, en especial de las clases populares. Todo ello contrasta con una visión fuertemente positiva de la lengua mapuche o mapudungun, la lengua originaria más hablada del país, y una expansión de su alcance político.*

### **Palabras clave:**

*Español de Chile; Glotopolítica del español en redes sociales; ideologías de lengua en internet; corpus lingüístico de redes sociales; sociolingüística crítica en redes sociales.*

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## 1. Introduction

The ideological configuration of Spanish in contemporary Chile has a series of singularities difficult to summarise. Broadly speaking, this is fitting with how language-as-object is treated in a disciplinary moment, when attributes assigned to said object from linguistics (i.e. immobility, synchrony, internal organisation, diatopic distribution) enter, to some extent, in crisis. There is a disciplinary vision that pays increasingly more attention to mobility, temporal discontinuity, systemic instability, relocation and multipolarity of the production of discourses. In direct relation to this conception of the objects of sociolinguistic analysis as complex (Blommaert, 2014), social networks like Facebook constitute high-quality records of how socially relevant representations emerge, circulate, and are subject to debate and negotiation. This occurs largely because the Internet provides spaces where, par excellence, management and configuration of contemporary social changes take place, in the political, ideological, and social spheres (Phyak, 2015; Deumert, 2015, Blommaert et al., 2009).

This paper focuses on how notions of language and diversity are thought and challenged, thus exposing the complex ways in which they are articulated on Facebook, for and by Spanish speakers in Chile. Its main purpose is to account for the presence (or absence) of certain language ideologies in the corpus and their characteristics, in order to briefly describe their projection in the historical-political context of contemporary Chile.

The notion of *linguistic ideologies* ascribed here refers to “cognitive frameworks that coherently link language with an extralinguistic order, naturalising it, and normalising it” (Del Valle and Meirinho, 2016). That is, these frameworks do not only refer to language, but also to specific social and cultural orders (for example, some that refer to identity, community, nation, state, gender), which are deeply intertwined with power structures, in whose constitution and permanence actively cooperate. Arnoux and Del Valle (2010) propose that linguistic ideologies are sustained in *ideologemes*, “commonplaces, postulates or maxims” that operate as presuppositions of the discourse, such as, “In Chile people speak (Spanish) poorly”.

Woolard (2007) suggests that in the contemporary global world there is a prevalence of two Western-origin language ideologies that represent epistemological and moral notions. The first one, anonymity, understands a certain language as a public, de-personalised and de-localised voice and is frequent in cases of transnational hegemonic languages. English, for example, is positioned as the anonymous language by default, not only in the national states where it predominates but also in digital environments globally (Ricento 2015). Similarly, Del Valle (2007) provides evidence of contemporary hegemonic discourses around Spanish as a post-national, common, mestizo language, with privileged access to modernity, a vision common among linguistic management and planning agents, mostly from the institutionality of the Academies of the Spanish Language, but also in the publishing industry and the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language (Del Valle, 2014). Woolard (2007) suggests that recognising a language as “anonymous” requires the acceptance of the authority of such anonymity by the people, a process called *méconnaissance* by Bourdieu (1991), which occurs mainly at school. In this process, the dominant language variety is purged of its specific social origin and starts being imagined as a natural attribute of authority, transparent and guaranteed in social communication. From a critical perspective, this hides the fundamental fact that, inevitably, the anonymous language will necessarily belong more to some than to others, as the dominant classes typically have access and control of that language.

The second ideology of interest here, also discussed by theory, is the representation of language as something that confirms the cultural authenticity of the speaker (Woolard 2007). This is frequent, for example in the case of Catalan in the autonomous community of Catalonia (Woolard, 2016); Spanish among New York City Spanish speakers (García and Otheguy, 2014), or Mapudungun in Chile (Gundermann, 2014). It is frequently associated with political projects around the identity of minorities or the glorification of the national. Also, authenticity converges or complements discourses of pride (Heller and Duchêne, 2012), an exacerbation of what is considered particular or exclusive of a certain human group. Pride can lead to an essentialisation of this group's limits and the assumptions of intrinsic attributes, a tendency frequent in discourses of identity affirmation.

For the case of Chile, in particular, there is also the frequent language ideology that positions Chilean Spanish as incorrect or poorly spoken, a trope commonly reproduced inside the country but also on a transnational level, with varying implications (Sliashynskaya, 2019; Rojas, 2015). Specifically, we believe that this ideology varies according to scales: while in transnational spheres it reproduces symbolic asymmetries where certain Spanish varieties are considered superior ("central" or "standard"), on the national scale it is intimately connected to local modes to reproduce social class inequalities by the educational and cultural system. In this regard, the alleged poor quality of Chilean Spanish overlaps with an ideology of the standard language, which presupposes a hierarchy of language varieties where the most desirable form is the most similar to a supposedly neutral form (Milroy, 2001). On even smaller scales, we believe, the ideogeme of "Chilean Spanish is poor" is the consequence of micro-dynamics of power constantly updated in the practice of verbal hygiene (Cameron, 2012), subject to direct control over what is admissible in linguistic practice, rather than in the application of fixed rules. In this case, such control is linked to the perpetuation, through interpersonal interaction, of a system of symbolic and material inequalities firmly rooted in an extraordinarily unequal society.

This article discusses how these and other ideologies about language in Chile circulate on Facebook, as this digital space presents many valuable characteristics to document their negotiation. Given the textual configurations of the digital environment, language ideologies on Facebook inform about visions of Chile's society and identity firmly rooted in its history, which, nevertheless, persist in current modes of sociocultural domination that, perhaps as never before, are in a rapid process of transformation.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology utilised here is rooted in the textual analysis of linguistic ideologies from the critical sociolinguistic perspective of glottopolitics. It entails an understanding of language as a political fact, necessarily involved in the constitution of power, in all its scales and radiations. Significantly, a glottopolitical approach is directed towards linguistic actions beyond institutional frames, encompassing the diverse discourses that constitute subjectivity and identity (Del Valle, 2017; Arnoux and Del Valle, 2010). In accordance with this vision, the present analysis is qualitative in nature and focuses on characterising the configurations of social discourses at specific scales and through many points of entry. It uses *language ideology* both as an object and an instrument of study, in a way that renders operative the complex dimensions in which contemporary discourses are constituted, i.e. as both objects separable from the production of knowledge, and as

productive units in themselves (Gal and Woolard, 2001b). In this regard, we decidedly engage in a *complexity paradigm* of sociolinguistic analysis (Blommaert, 2014), which understands its object as permanently mutable, unlimited, polycentric, multidirectional, and unpredictable. In accordance with this vision, the present work does not aim to reduce complexity or concentrate it in static models but to demonstrate it and make it visible.

The qualitative nature of the present analysis, however, does not minimise the value of the absences and gaps in the corpus. Furthermore, it also incorporates a quantitative dimension as it indicates the *zero* value of some language phenomena. As seen below in this paper, the absence or presence of certain representations is highly informative of how the Spanish language is configured in the Chilean context, particularly if put into perspective together with other areas or scales of the Spanish language or other transnational languages.

During the initial exploration stage, before this study, documents were collected from Facebook groups and pages from three moments: immediately before, during and after 2009-2010, 2013 and 2017 Chilean presidential elections. These temporary closures helped to find testimonies of the gradual emergence of social networks and their broader impact as well as the rising political weight of historically marginalised groups, especially through digital multimodalities, in periods of intense national political debate.

Facebook was chosen as a data source rather than other virtual spaces of digital interpersonal communication (i.e., WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, or others) mainly because in the 2010s it had visibly emerged as the social network with the highest penetration worldwide. According to the British weekly newspaper *The Economist* (20th July 2019), by mid-2018 Facebook had easily exceeded 2 billion users and, unlike previous moments, a significant proportion of them are elderly. This is consistent with a moment when Facebook's influence is reaching politics on both global and local scales. In the 2010s, protests and social movements from all over the planet, of all political tendencies, have used Facebook as a key platform for articulation and mobilisation: both *Alt-Right* movements and *Black Lives Matter* in the United States; the protests that triggered the so-called Arab Spring in the Middle East and the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong; or the movements *Me Too* and *Ni una menos*. Similarly, in Chile, Facebook has been and is used by the most diverse sectors of the national society, and its impact on modes of association and cultural production is immense. For this investigation, the most favourable characteristic of Facebook lies in its capability to enable the constitution of interest groups specifically focused on community initiatives and the management of their own social and political projects (Phyak, 2015; Blommaert et al., 2009). This helps collect evidence regarding what interests concur in a given social environment. Those who participate in Facebook communities are constantly involved in debates around identity and the political, displaying in detail implicit and explicit language ideologies, as well as their extralinguistic correlates. Conveniently, content production on Facebook can be readily dated and localised, and its generators are (to a certain extent) traceable.

At the time of collecting the corpus, we focused on two modes of the Facebook interface: communities and pages. The latter ones are easily accessible portals that provide free and open information about companies, institutions, or groups with varying degrees of formalisation. On the other hand, communities (until 2018 called “groups”) are mainly aimed at interaction and contact between their members and can be either publicly reachable –i.e., of free access by anyone with a Facebook profile–, or restricted, which means that members require the permission of a moderator.

The analysis of communities and pages started with a stage of tracking, which consisted of a procedure to detect communities and pages of groups invested in language and identity problems in Chile, assisted by internal navigation tools of Facebook. It took place in four moments: August 2018, July 2019, November 2019, and May 2020. The process made use of keywords and temporary filters in the Facebook interface of browsers such as Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. As described above, the time filters correspond to the dates of every month of the presidential elections of 2009, 2013 and 2017, plus their previous and following months. These temporal frames were chosen due to an assumption of a greater amount of linguistic and political debate within their boundaries. However, given the reticular nature of Facebook content and the hypertextual reference systems that link digital documents (press articles; short texts and comments; images such as memes, graphics, videos, etc.), it was necessary to consider the temporality of hypertextual production as mobile, since it is not possible to establish limits of formal synchrony in the traditional sense. If a digital document (for example, an image and its comments) is posted on a certain date, it can be reposted or made accessible again at later dates, either because the person who produced the document did so voluntarily, or by a suggestion of the Facebook algorithm, which, among other actions, regularly remembers important events and celebrations, as well as texts associated with them.

The keywords searched in the first stages of analysis were: gramática, ortografía, lengua, idioma, diccionario, lingüística, lengua oficial, idioma oficial, oficialización, castellano, español, español de Chile. In the second round were also added lenguaje inclusivo and lenguaje feminista. In the last procedure, chilenismo, and diccionario de chilenismos were also searched.

Since the reach of a Facebook community or page is potentially global, to recognise its correspondence to the Chilean national sphere (that is, to the spatial-political scope of the object of this study), it was necessary to register the locations from where their administrators were operating. These data are available on every Facebook page or community in the “information” section. For the present work, only groups whose managers were entirely (or mostly) within the limits of Chile were selected, thus excluding groups and communities administered from other territories.

The objective of the keyword tracking stage was: 1) to detect groups and Facebook pages focused on language problems in Chile (not only Spanish but also foreign and indigenous languages); 2) appreciate the relative impact of these groups, according to the quantity (and quality) of participants, content and comments; 3) select groups susceptible to critical reading analysis, considering their level of impact.

The second stage of analysis consists of critical reading and includes the examination and discussion of some language ideologies found in the corpus. Particular attention is paid to ideologies described by previous literature, for example, *authenticity* and *anonymity* (Woolard, 2007), and *pride* and *profit* (Heller and Duchêne, 2012). At first, it was assumed that these categories of analysis in the configuration of Spanish in Chile were highly relevant, which, as discussed below, would not completely occur.

According to the methodology utilised here, the flexibility of access to data and modes of analysis is fundamental in both stages. As Blommaert (2014) suggests, methods leading to the description of *complexity* require the establishment of new notions of context that contemplate possibilities of meaning as broad as possible, for which it is necessary to

design flexible methods of data analysis. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that the search with keywords must constitute an entry point, a way of channelling the data, but should not be established as a system that restricts access to relevant information. Keyword lists and search scopes should not be seen as fixed; they must be conceived as open to the interconnected network of online documents. Likewise, the spatial and chronological closures, and the cultural, national, and ethnic dominions described in this research, are illustrative only if they incorporate possibilities of transformation and mobility and include the diverse levels of analysis that highlight the complexity of the system. As Blommaert and Rampton (2011) suggest, an inquiry into this complexity needs an analysis of the political and historical foundations of language policies active in a given realm.

### 3. Findings

The initial stage of research led to several interesting discoveries. First of all, Facebook groups mobilised around Spanish from an institutional framework during the period studied here are articulated transnationally and are not part of projects aimed at the Chilean sphere.

This was to some extent expected considering that Spanish is a language with a transnational scope. What is unique, however, is the omission on the part of traditional academic institutions when establishing digital spaces in Chile. It was expected to find communities or Facebook pages managed by public or private universities, and that ministries, other governmental organisations or educational institutions would engage in language policies, which did not happen. Notably, the *Academia Chilena de la Lengua* ('Chilean Academy of Language') did not maintain spaces on the social network in the period studied. Only at the beginning of 2020, the Academy started a Twitter account and a Facebook page, which by June of the same year had not reached 100 followers. The occasions when the Chilean Academy had been mentioned on Facebook were at the initiative of ASALE or the *Real Academia Española* ('Royal Spanish Academy'), which have been in charge of highly active accounts on the social network. This is consistent with the predominant language regime, according to which linguistic authority is assigned to transnational irradiation of a pan-Hispanic order (Del Valle, 2007; Lauria, 2017). The organisations in charge of this authority have tried to establish digital spaces that support and perpetuate this irradiation, which consist of Facebook communities and pages with a wide base of followers worldwide. The *Real Academia Española* (RAE) page had received 330,000 "likes" on Facebook in July 2019. *Fundéu* or *Fundación Español Urgente* ('Urgent Spanish Foundation'), a private organisation dedicated to promoting the language norm, with logistical and political support from RAE, had 100,000 followers by the same date. The *Instituto Cervantes*, an organisation that promotes the teaching of the Spanish language in the international context, dependent on the Spanish government, counted on 67,000 "likes". On the other hand, the *Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española* (ASALE, 'Association of Academies of the Spanish Language'), which includes all the Spanish language academies in the world, summoned only 5,200 "likes", in contrast to the visible popularity of RAE and Fundéu. This configuration reflects the hegemonic strength of institutions dedicated to the production of metadiscursive regimes, where the management of the Spanish language is firmly institutionalised on a global scale, in a geopolitical order where Spain continues to lead and Latin

America is relegated to a periphery. According to the same order, standard Spanish (and thus, Spanish imagined as *correct*) is symbolically located outside the limits of Chile.

However, a comparison of the number of adherents to the pages of RAE, ASALE, *Fundéu* and the *Instituto Cervantes* (administered from Spain) with those of Mapudungun language management groups on Facebook (administered from Chile) suggests that the transnational institutionality of the Spanish language reach a relatively moderate number of followers, especially considering their geopolitical size and economic resources. The community *Kimeltuwe* ('place for teaching'), associated to the organisation with the greatest influence on Mapudungun language policies in recent years, counts with 190,000 followers on Facebook in August 2019 and 217,000 in June 2020. They emerged in the digital context through the production of educational images on Mapuche language vocabulary and grammar, while also discussing cultural and political issues. *Kimeltuwe's* images are often in a meme format, they are eye-catching, didactic, and friendly to the general public, so they would spread quickly across social media. Because of its success, *Kimeltuwe* simultaneously acquired a regulatory role, becoming a key player in the 21st-century linguistic planning of Mapudungun. One of the community's leaders, Víctor Carilaf, stated in the Chilean newspaper *The Clinic* (Milos, 2019): "We have become a benchmark: if they have questions, they ask us. And if *Kimeltuwe* says it is said like that, that's the way it is". By 2020 *Kimeltuwe* had effectively managed to establish linguistic legitimacy and positioned themselves as an active authority on corpus planning.

Now, it is important to keep in mind that these numbers do not necessarily correspond to a greater or lesser level of influence. Undoubtedly, the *Kimeltuwe* project has much less institutional power than *Fundéu*, although it has twice the number of followers on Facebook. Comparing both groups sheds light on how social media leads to the creation of new areas from which emerging institutions are projected. Their discourses on political demands, transformation or reaffirmation are successfully established in communities that until a few years ago were not susceptible to being articulated. Organisations with consolidated economic and political support and historical weight (such as *Fundéu* or the *Instituto Cervantes*) may obtain a relatively small number of followers on Facebook, not because of low levels of social penetration, but because they already occupy well-established political spaces. This sets them apart from emerging digital communities like *Kimeltuwe*, constructed virtually from scratch, and focused on political-linguistic projects which are more localised, but with much greater potential for expansion.

Considering the emergence of Mapuche language management groups, it is worth wondering whether similar spaces around the management of Chilean Spanish can be detected in the corpus (especially if focused on its national singularities), and what happens with political demands towards transformative language policies regarding gender, power, and sexuality.

There is no doubt that the development of groups seeking to question and rethink assumptions on sex and gender in the Spanish language in pursuit of social justice have achieved considerable relevance since 2010. The appearance in Spanish-speaking countries of numerous guides for the use of feminist and inclusive language (i.e., non-discriminatory by gender or sexual identity) is demonstrative of this trend (Lagneaux, 2017). Significantly, in the tracking phase of the present investigation, only digital spaces established from outside Chile and conceived in a transnational scale were found. A

couple of examples are Facebook communities like *Campaña para la incorporación del lenguaje inclusivo* ('Campaign for the incorporation of inclusive language') with nearly 16,000 "likes" in October 2019, and the group *Lenguaje inclusivo* ('Inclusive language') with 2,500. Both initiatives started in Argentina and, despite that they have an evident resonance in some circuits in Chile, they do not have local equivalents. This absence is informative that, in parallel with other issues considered global in the management of Spanish, the discussion and administration of the political space where language, identity, gender and sexuality intersect tend to occur in a scalar configuration where Chile remains on the periphery.

On the other hand, a political redefinition of Chilean Spanish within a nationalist discourse was not found among Facebook pages and groups. The analysis carried out here did not detect groups specifically dedicated to exacerbating the link between language and national identity in Chile. This contrasts with some groups aimed at the revitalisation of the Mapuche language (such as *Kimeltuwe*) where there is a clear desire to create a symbolic link between language, culture and identity, frequently to emphasise or celebrate the national character of the Mapuche community.

However, this research found a few groups focused on the celebration of *chilenismos* (i.e., vocabulary considered as mostly or exclusively Chilean) or of the Chilean dialect of Spanish, often in a humorous or festive tone. After the August 2018 searches, only two communities and pages were documented: *No hablo español, hablo chileno* ('I don't speak Spanish, I speak Chilean'), with 980 followers in June 2020, and *Chilenismos*, with 3,600, also in June 2020. Although one can infer that, at some point, Facebook participants had the intention of including language and identity issues, it is obvious that their final purpose was to produce comedy content without mentioning such topics. Later, these communities and pages have not acquired notoriety, which probably suggests an absence of spaces specifically dedicated to the articulation of affirmative discourses of Chilean Spanish within Facebook.

There is, however, one notable exception. A community called *Hablai chileno?* ('Do you speak Chilean?' with a characteristically Chilean verbal conjugation), shows a number of innovations aimed at reimagining and even subverting the trope that in "In Chile people speak poorly". According to its description (checked in August 2019), the group is dedicated to the "grammatical analysis of Chilean speech" and to the production of "linguistic resources aimed to learn to speak Chilean". A critical reading reveals that *Hablai chileno?* congregates well-informed people interested in linguistic issues with the intention to refute negative ideas about the Spanish variety spoken in Chile. Strictly speaking, this community does not focus on grammatical analysis, nor on promoting the use of Chilean Spanish, but on questioning the assumptions that minimise its sociocultural value.

There is an example of this (dated on 18th November 2018) when a participant of the group published the image of a receptacle full of *pebre* (a raw dip consisting of chopped tomato, onion, coriander, and hot sauce) next to a red pepper. Chileans imagine *pebre* as a product typically representative of the national way of life, despite its affinity to the *chimichurri* from Argentina and Uruguay, the Bolivian *llajwa*, or the Mexican *pico de gallo*. The image is accompanied by a text that reads: "¿Cachabay que la palabra piper en latín se convirtió en pebre en chileno y pepper en inglés?" ('Did you know that the word piper in Latin became pebre in Chilean and pepper in English?', with Chilean verbal conjugation). The text ends with the statement, "puta que hablamos mal el latín los chilenos", ('bitch, we Chileans speak Latin so poorly') in addition to a mischievous, tongue-out emoji (👅).



Subsequently, the author of this posting incorporates in the comments section a brief chart of words in Spanish, Latin, English, Italian and French (i.e., *piper, pepper, pepe, poivre*) to which he attaches a bibliographic reference. This is informative of a remarkably novel representation of the Chilean language, one that situates it in a line of historical continuity with Latin, while excluding the Hispanic and indigenous elements as pertinent to its configuration. This constitutes a narrative whose main argument, based on comparative linguistics, is aimed to deconstruct the underlying assumptions of what is the exact meaning of “speaking poorly”. The narrative suggests that the Chilean language, even in its most banal and unpredictable aspects (such as the name of a spicy dip) participates in a historical-cultural continuum with prestigious international languages and that all of them are subject to related mechanisms of temporal transformation. Therefore, it is suggested that Chilean Spanish and English or French do not differ in their most intimate texture and that the divergent attributes given to these languages are undoubtedly due to extralinguistic factors. Finally, by inserting the comment that “bitch, we Chileans speak Latin poorly ...”, the author is making an ironic statement about the ideology of incorrectness often applied to the Chilean Spanish, as soon as he questions the very foundations that constitute it. When a language is thought no longer as a fixed, stable entity with defined limits, but as a concurrence of disparate linguistic facts in constant change, ingrained notions of norm and correctness are necessarily put into question. Note that he also adds the expletive “puta” (‘bitch’ or ‘whore’), commonplace in Chilean Spanish colloquial use and equivalent to other expressive voices referring to sexual taboo (*coño, mierda, fuck*). In consequence, the contrast between the questioning of historical notions of linguistic correctness and the interjective use of a vulgar word ends up magnifying the echoes of irony.

Now, *Hablai chileno?* has had relatively limited success. In August 2019, its “likes” barely exceeded 3,500. The number of posts it presents is quite small and they are also infrequent. Their comment sections are succinct. This entails that *Hablai chileno?* ultimately lacks resonance on Facebook and in the broader public sphere. The alleged “resources to learn to speak Chilean” announced in its description are also not available in its contents. There are registers of an enthusiastic promotion of *chilenismos*; an active defence of the use of Chilean *voseo*; and the proposal of orthographic regulations. None of these contents shows, however, a clear didactic intention.

This is consistent with the main conclusion after the tracking process in the digital corpus: that beyond the group *Hablai chileno?*, in the present analysis there were no findings of relevant groups that were dedicated to Spanish language issues in Chile or that incorporated national Spanish as a central element of their interests. This void is a sign of the high degree of depoliticisation of the Spanish language in the public consciousness, which contrasts particularly with the high degree of political vitality of Mapudungun.

Thus, the ideogeme that *in Chile people speak poorly*, at least as evidenced on Facebook, does not urge the population to adjust their language to the standard norm, nor does it force them to seek the autonomy or the formality of their linguistic difference. Does this imply that the Chilean population does not talk about their language and identity issues into the social network? What about the representations of anonymity, authenticity, and pride described by the theory elsewhere? In which Facebook spaces would it be possible to find this type of language ideologies?

It was, therefore, crucial to rethink how to obtain data by tracking and selecting corpus on Facebook, to find spaces where language ideologies were relevant and to intuitively resort to interstices of the social network where language

ideologies were codified in an illustrative way, which could lead later to a more informative critical reading. To solve this issue, it was necessary to track Facebook pages and communities intervened by national identity tropes where language problems were displayed in a dense and informative way. Those spaces needed to have a large following (an index of high social impact), which would encourage wide-ranging and extensive debates on various topics, including linguistics. After evaluating digital spaces dedicated to folklore, Chilean traditions, gastronomy, political parties, municipal and regional organisations, and others, we chose to analyse comedy sites focused on identity clichés. These humour pages or communities allow access to discourses about language, identity and social class that can quickly connect to the political. Communities of the “Es de...” type are characterised by the production and promotion of memes that consist of a single short text, usually a humorous statement, articulated with an identity premise, for example: “es de roto / depilarse el pecho” (‘It’s a *roto* thing/ to shave your chest’); “es de cuica / que tu mamá esté bronceada todo el año” (‘It’s a *cuica* thing/ if your mom is tanned all year long’); “es de mapushe (*sic*) / ser informante para una tesis” (It’s a Mapuche thing/ being the informant for a thesis). These articulations help the expressed ideologems to circulate smoothly in domains as Facebook or Twitter through hashtags (#esdecuica; #esderoto), making them easy to follow on digital media.

The two spaces of this type with the greatest dynamism and impact were chosen for this study: *Es de roto* (with 522,000 followers in August 2019) and *Es de cuica* (340,000, same date). While providing abundant explicit discourses about language, they have also transcended beyond the digital realm. Their producers have to their credit book publications and appearances throughout hegemonic media, particularly in newspapers and on television.

Also, the social class component constitutes the most relevant nucleus for a critical analysis of issues regarding language, nation and society in Chile, a country where class distinctions are extremely pronounced and belonging to a certain stratum almost completely determines the lifestyle and experiences of a person. In this order, language is key to the constitution and perpetuation of class boundaries, constituting a territory of permanent dispute and negotiation (Woolard, 2007; Gal and Woolard, 2001; Kroskrity, 2000). Conveniently, the contrast between the discursive figures of the *roto* and the *cuica* can be revealing because it addresses two different prototypical representations (and to a certain extent complementary) of authenticity and legitimacy of what is considered Chilean. Both are positioned in a complex dialectic where social class is the central element, but not the only one, in the production of meaning.

In Chile’s symbolic order of social class, the figure of the *roto* refers to a prototypically urban, working-class, mestizo man, historically vilified for his perceived lack of manners and education (Gutiérrez, 2010; Plath, 1957). The Facebook group *Es de roto*, however, does not stigmatise the popular classes; on the contrary, it is committed to celebrating their idiosyncratic singularities, understanding them as cultural missteps that belong to the Chilean people’s unique character. In contrast, the *cuica* is the prototype of a daughter and mother of a wealthy family, typically white, with surnames that unequivocally locate her in her social origin. A *cuica* identifies herself as a guardian of the traits that define both her class and her gender, and although she is usually seen as conservative, she is also deeply influenced by global culture and consumerism.

A critical reading of the documents that circulate in *Es de cuica* suggests that in this space the peculiarities that constitute class indices are highlighted in a light, sarcastic tone. Linguistic oddities, in particular, stand out. This is evidenced by a

meme (published on 31st May 2016) stating in both English and Spanish in the original: “#Esdecuica hablar spanglish, if you know what I mean”. Here, the knowledge of Spanglish (understood as a linguistic hybridisation that combines elements of Spanish and English) is brought out as an index of authenticity that demonstrates belonging to the upper class. The large number of comments (more than 800 in July 2019), “likes” (more than 5,000), and reposts (about 1,100) is demonstrative of the general attitude that the community and its followers have on this matter: they perceive it as something revealing (and somewhat laughable) of a cultural praxis.

The fact that a distinctive social class identity is articulated from the concept of “Spanglish” is noteworthy, especially considering that the most purist pan-Hispanic norm deplores this hybridisation. This is shown in the article of the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* (5th August 2012) titled “La pegajosa moda de hablar y vender con anglicismos” (“The catchy trend of speaking and selling with Anglicisms”) where language authorities (linguists and *académicos de la lengua* from Chile and Spain) express their concern about the “excessive” use of English, especially when there is “mixing” with Spanish. Exhibiting pride for the hybridisation implied in the concept of *Spanglish* should set off all the alarms among the guardians of the elite’s traditions. So why does the Chilean ruling class seem to turn a deaf ear to linguistic regulation? In the Chilean context, the ability to speak international languages of European origin —and English, in particular— is recognised as a feature of the upper class. This occurs because an important part of the elite has been able to travel and train in Europe, North America and Asia, and also because for generations many of them have attended bilingual schools (Menard-Warwick, 2012; Matear, 2008). Consequently, when *la cuica* declares that she “speaks Spanglish”, she is not promoting the hybridisation of linguistic forms; she is rather publicly announcing that English is part of her everyday language repertoire and that she can fluently switch between two languages in a way that people from other social classes could not. This notion of Spanglish, then, contrasts with the value described originally for the term, as a form of marginal language belonging to subaltern groups in the United States (Otheguy and Stern, 2010). A language ideology of pride about social class can be observed here, as soon as what is celebrated is not the mixture of languages, but the ability to distinguish oneself through a code generally forbidden to the majority of the population.

Another revealing case (10 May 2017) was the announcement on *Es de cuica* claiming “prohibido decirle ‘mami’ a la mamá” (“is forbidden to call your mom *mami*”). The document (with 1,900 “likes”) was widely shared and by July 2019 it had accumulated 364 comments. In the comments, it reads that a majority of participants consider the term *mami* vulgar or laughable and that, on several occasions, they directly ask that it not be used. As the comments section suggests, it seems that those who utilise the term *mami* are at the lower end of the social spectrum and that the upper class prefers *mamá*, *madre*, *mom*, and even expressions like *mi amá*. A perception of the speech of Chile’s ruling classes predominates as the form of highest value in the linguistic market and due to its positive connotations, it is quickly represented as “correct” or “pleasant” (Rojas, 2012b). It is opposed by the *flaite* speech of Chile’s working class, imagined as qualitatively inferior.

In many comments, however, some defend the validity of *mami*, especially due to its affective value, linked to a singular emotional bond perceived in the mother-child relationship. A participant claims: “A m[i] los 2 enanos me dicen mami [...] suena tierno en los niños chiquititos [...] En lo[s] grandes no me gusta, [...] [lo] encuentro flaite” (“Both dwarfs call

me *mami*. It sounds cute coming from little children. I don't like it from grown-ups. I think it's *flaite*). She finally adds "los regg[a]etoneros lo arruinaron" ('reggaeton artists ruined it'). This statement presents several matrices of meaning, which, when analysed together, reveal significantly political dimensions. First, *mami* is an infantile, affectionate term that resonates within a fundamentally feminine universe. Second, there is a marking of inferiority by social class, perhaps something new for the commentator. Finally, a possible reason that locates the origin of this inferiority is also apparent here: the wide use of the word among *reggaetoneros*.

Attributing the inappropriateness or incorrectness of the term *mami* to the influence of reggaetón's sexualised, foreign language makes sense since this music genre is associated with Latin American working classes beyond Chile's borders. Rojas (2012a) observes that in Santiago, Puerto Rican Spanish, in particular, is markedly valued as negative. Reggaetón, a genre originated in Puerto Rico, while fashionable among young people from all social groups, is generally imagined as distinctive of the lower classes. The widespread disapproval of the Puerto Rican dialect in Chile may not only be due to the marginal position of Caribbean Spanish within the pan-Hispanic order of linguistic correctness; it is also probably an iconisation established between a *taste* that predominates among the popular masses and the elite's constitutive strategies of their own identity, largely determined by contrast and exclusion.

Likewise, the counterpoint between one perception of the term *mami* as infantile and affectionate and another one as sexualised and strongly localised in lower-class subjects also reveals deep-seated issues on gender, nation, and identity. This is evident when in the comments section a woman declares: "mami en tono caribeño, lo amo" ('*mami* with a Caribbean accent, I love it'), a statement that situates the term *mami* in the realm of the erotic, giving rise to a complex, singular semiosis where language, social class, gender, sexuality, and geopolitics intervene. This goes hand in hand with certain specificities of reggaeton as a musical genre, loaded with erotic representations of the bodies (and the language) of Caribbean men and women, almost always racialised, youthful and heterosexual. In the Chilean context, these visions project the imaginary of a foreign cultural geography, that can, however, be decoded thanks to the common language, while it is also idealised as a territory where sensuality and pleasure prevail. The woman residing in such imaginaries (*la mami*) contradicts the racial, cultural, and moral order established by the national elites, especially when they think of themselves, which results in censorship. Additionally, the rejection of the use of *mami* coincides with a pattern of selective marginalisation of Latin American elements in the taste established by the ruling classes, something already demonstrated in other moments of history by the Chilean elite's revulsion for music genres like *cumbia*, *huaracha*, *ranchera*, and other cultural expressions widely spread among the general population but unacceptable for the ruling class. All these genres have in common being produced in Spanish and a geopolitical origin located far from the European ideal.

Therefore, the pattern where certain varieties of Spanish are imagined as either "superior" or "inferior" is here reproduced. And, notably, given the allegedly negative influence of popular culture, it is necessary to update the ideologeme that suggests that "in Chile people speak poorly", by adding the assumption that now Chileans speak "even worse" due to the effect of Caribbean Spanish.

Despite this view, there are signs that Chilean Spanish, especially the lower-class variety, is sometimes seen in a positive light, even celebrated, for example, on the Facebook page *Es de roto*.

In contrast with *Hablai chileno?*, the success of *Es de roto* probably relates to the fact that, in a carefree and festive tone, it includes references to habits readily identifiable as belonging to the lower classes, but that may also be more or less common across all strata. This allows community members to make fun of the inflexibilities and contradictions of societal norms without ignoring the firm persistence of Chile's stark social class divisions nor that inequality constitutes a fundamental challenge for the country.

An example of this is a meme posted by community administrators on 16th December 2016 stating: “#Esderoto decir ‘soy tu fanS’” (‘it’s a *roto* thing to say *I am your fanS*’), adding a colourful (and hyperbolic) *Fanssssssssssszzzz*. By July 2019, the meme had reached 5,300 likes, 680 comments and about 800 reposts. The text ironises on the use of the noun *fans* (with the meaning of ‘admirer’), common among lower- and middle-class Chileans, as singular (instead of the canonical, English-origin form, *fan*). The questioned term has probably appeared by hypercorrection, that is, because of the tendency of Chilean Spanish speakers to elide the phonemic *-/s/* coda, which leads to infer in certain foreign words a sibilant that is later added for corrective purposes. The phenomenon seems to recur in cases of other words of English origin among those who, presumably, are not familiar with speaking the language. For example, in the comments section of the meme, participants mention *babysister* for ‘babysitter’, and *tips* (meaning ‘hint’) instead of ‘tip’. Therefore, this document attests how the singular noun *fans* has become an index of social class in the context of contemporary Chile.

The importance of the case of “soy tu fanS”, however, lies in how it reveals a dimension by which *el roto*'s attributes acquire a new identity value. Among the most relevant comments is one of a woman who claims to have written on Twitter “I am your *fans*” to the English-speaking actor Robert Carlyle. Although she says that this also caused her a certain degree of embarrassment, the faux pas loses relevance in the face of true contact between a world-known celebrity and a *fans* from a remote country. In her comment, the admirer suggests that the communication happened not only regardless of her perceived lack of linguistic abilities, but actually because of them. As a result, when the statement “I am your fans” comes under scrutiny, it is celebrated with enthusiasm, repositioning the figure of the *roto* within the social scheme, associating it, at least occasionally, to a discourse of cultural pride.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the critical reading of Facebook spaces, in this article we have analysed microdynamics of social communication in digital environments that inform about macrosocial schemes of the Spanish language in/from Chile. It was observed, among other things, that when the *cuica* figure emphasises that she “speaks Spanglish”, she is also highlighting that voices of English origin are considered prestigious in her social environment and that she incorporates them as key elements to legitimise her identity. The ideology of authenticity (Woolard, 2007) is here permeated with the need to defend the limits of social class. On the other hand, after one *roto* says “I am your fans”, there is further evidence of their supposed cultural inferiority, due to their lack of knowledge of how to use words of English origin in the Chilean context.

The contrast between both linguistic operations is decisive for an unequal distribution of symbolic resources, whose fundamental inequity is not necessarily established by a formal authority or by institutional decisions. As Bourdieu (1984) suggests, the reproduction and control of linguistic capital occur according to processes that create distinction on the

part of the ruling classes in the broader context of society. These processes transform acquired social habits into impulses perceived as characteristic of the individual personality, such as taste in music or preferences on clothing. Impulses are naturalised in people's lifestyles thus forming *habitus*, while simultaneously becoming indices that codify social class, as well as modes of domination. In this regard, the rejection of Chile's upper class to the word *mami* (and to reggaetón) constitutes a tactic of distinction that separates such class from the *habitus* of the popular classes, underlining a difference that goes beyond culture as it becomes part of the realm of power relations.

It has also been observed here how the tactic of distinction is coupled with the preeminence of forms felt as "correct" or "superior", in apparent adherence to an ideology of the standard language (Milroy, 2001). Something peculiar about the cases seen, however, is that the members of Chile's ruling class do not seem to necessarily identify the transnational standard of Spanish with their own linguistic variety and they actively neglect purist demands on the part of the academic authority, in particular with respect to the use of words of English origin. Possibly, close adherence to the transnational norm –i.e. an anonymous and transparent Spanish– regulated by language academies, is less useful for marking social class in Chile, contrary to what happens, for example, in Peru (De los Heros, 2012) or Colombia (Chaves-O'Flynn, 2017). Significantly, although these countries' main language varieties are considered "superior", they are not necessarily felt as a linguistic model by the Chilean population (Rojas, 2012c).

This paper also reports the appearance of a trope of pride that criticises the ideological Eurocentrism of the Chilean national project, as it revalues the linguistic and cultural singularities of the popular classes of mestizo origin and the Mapuche community. In this regard, pride is located less in discourses that are functional to the traditional sense of the nation (historically driven by Chilean elites) and more in the deployment of emerging demands from historically marginalised groups. In accordance with this tendency, the celebration of the linguistic identity of the *roto* on Facebook and the success of *Kimeltuwe's* Mapudungun revitalisation project, both provide evidence of a constitution of new political subjects in the contemporary context. This is akin to processes where ideologies of pride have also been articulated in other countries, for example, in French-speaking communities in Canada (Heller and Duchêne, 2012).

For its part, the anonymous, transparent Spanish naturalised in Chile's educational system, sustained by the symbolic asymmetries of the pan-Hispanic model of linguistic authority, is rarely questioned in its hegemonic status. An exceptional case is found in the Facebook group *Hablai chileno?* which, in a rather marginal way, has sought to question and subvert the presuppositions of such asymmetries by using the same substance that constitutes them: the production of language discourses with social legitimacy. Notably, no other findings revealed initiatives leading to a rethinking of the authority model around the national language, not even contemporary mobilisations around political-linguistic issues, such as the problem of sexism in language and the strategies to combat it.

In this regard, the tracking stage also led to further relevant information. It showed evidence of the relatively low mobilisation around Spanish language policies in Chile, which demonstrates a possible depoliticisation and a minimisation of sociolinguistic problems as important within the nation. This phenomenon occurs in the population that participates in social media, as well as academic institutions, universities, and government organisations. However, this gap is probably also influenced by the relatively new nature of networks such as Facebook. As the use of these networks as primary means

of social communication becomes well-established, the traditional institutional framework of the Spanish language in Chile may also acquire an increasing weight and presence, emulating the path of emerging language management groups like *Kimeltuwe*. Given the saturation of political issues on social media already seen in this new decade, one can expect that soon other analysis will indicate a renewed politicisation of the Spanish language in the Chilean context.

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