

Sociolinguistic Capital and *Fresa* Identity Formations on the U.S.-Mexico Border

Capital sociolingüístico y formaciones de identidad *fresa* en la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes sociolinguistic styles among Mexican women in the northern border cities of Juarez, Chihuahua and El Paso, Texas. These speakers' grafting of sociolinguistic elements that resemble particular U.S. English styles reflects what are understood in Mexico as *fresa* stereotypes. These linguistic innovations signal emblems of social prestige under the increasingly extensive influences of the neoliberal political economy. Through an examination of bilingual speech patterns in Spanish and in English, along with consideration of other sociolinguistic practices, I document how U.S.-centered ideologies of upper-class white feminine consumer culture are absorbed and rearticulated by women in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

Keywords: 1. U.S.-Mexico border, 2. stylistic variation, 3. identity constructions, 4. gender, 5. whiteness.

RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza estilos sociolingüísticos entre mujeres jóvenes en la frontera norte en Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua y El Paso, Texas. Estas hablantes retoman elementos sociolingüísticos empleados por jóvenes estadounidenses y manifiestan formaciones de identidad mejor conocidas en México como el estereotipo *fresa*. Estas innovaciones lingüísticas señalan emblemas de prestigio social influenciados por la economía política neoliberal. El análisis documenta cómo estas jóvenes en la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos absorben y rearticulan, por medio de sus prácticas bilingües, ideologías anglocéntricas referentes a feminidades blancas y clases sociales altas dentro de la cultura global de consumismo actual.

Palabras clave: 1. frontera entre México y Estados Unidos, 2. variación estilística, 3. construcciones de identidad, 4. género, 5. identidad blanca.

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INTRODUCTION

In Ciudad Juárez, across from El Paso, Texas on the other side of the U.S.-Mexico border, young people can be heard speaking Spanish in ways that call to mind hip protagonists from popular Mexican TV sitcoms and soap operas. Their speech patterns combine new and old forms of Mexican slang with specific discursive particles in Spanish as well as in English. In a Mexican cultural context, the language practices of these youth—along with their fashion choices, makeup, taste for expensive sushi, and other forms of social posturing—mark them as *fresas*. *Fresa* is a term used throughout Mexico to refer to a person (usually a teenager or young adult) who conforms to a widely circulated mass media and social media stereotype of someone who aspires to or affects a stance of cosmopolitan, upward mobility. In the 21st century, the *fresa* (denotatively *strawberry*, connotatively *snob*, *upper-class prep*) social identity formation is already a widely circulated stereotype in the Mexican (social) media. In some cases, being labeled as a *fresa* can be interpreted as a back-handed compliment; yet this labeling, along with the associated teasing and stigma, also projects a particular kind of social refinement rooted not only in traditional Mexican categories of class, race, and gender (Echeverría, 2007) but also in white, upper-middle class culture as well as consumer and leisure patterns extracted from the U.S. cultural landscape of late capitalism (Bucholtz, 2011).

As my research indicates, young women from distinct social networks and with a wide range of sociocultural capital, employ novel Mexican sociolinguistic elements in negotiating their own social positions. Through these sociolinguistic performances, they signal social meanings of whiteness, privilege, and upper-class femininity (independently of their own perceived social class) by creating and recreating these sophisticated cosmopolitan persons. By performing these *persons of privilege* through language and discourse as social and linguistic capital, speakers signal their ability to access resources inaccessible to others (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, this research underscores the importance of studying the ways in which a culture of whiteness and privilege gets operationalized by individuals among groups. To these young social actors, whiteness as the dominant cultural expression in the U.S. is perceived as a commodified identity formation and as means through which they may differentiate themselves. How these young people position themselves socially—through distinct speech, patterns of consumption, and other cultural practices—indicates a major shift in what is considered prestigious, and what is not, in late 20th and early 21st century Mexico. Historically, class, gender, and racial ideologies in Mexico, including those of the northern border region where Juárez is situated, have traditionally

centered on whitening through marriage as a class aspiration (Urías, 2007). Today, however, the well-established Mexican stereotype of the *fresa* as tastemaker reveals to what degree ideologies of whiteness—as constructed and privileged in U.S. society—have eclipsed traditional Mexican ideologies.

In my own research, I have identified and considered the production of particular linguistic elements that have emerged as salient and interactional identity markers within the *fresa* stereotype. Among other findings, I have observed that the constructed social categories that function as indexical targets can be more accurately defined and theorized to include relevant language features such as: Spanish-English code switching; English pragmatic markers in otherwise Spanish conversations; and Mexican Spanish pragmatic markers and taboo expressions reinterpreted in new co-textual environments. To the extent that a sociolinguistic style can be defined by three or four emblematic tendencies that may or may not occur simultaneously, the combination of this highly stylized code-switching and the use of these specific pragmatic markers function together as a recognizable language variety. In these ways, I maintain that young Mexican women in the border cities of Juarez and El Paso make repeated membership claims through these stylistic language practices.

In this paper, I first contextualize sociolinguistic and theoretical notions of bilingualism, identity, and stylistic variation in relation to language uses by members of particular social networks in Juarez and El Paso. Later, I explore notions of gender, class, race, and ethnicity—particularly the concept of *whiteness*—in order to consider how these categories relate to the sociolinguistic identity formation of the Mexican *fresa* and associated stereotypes, particularly among the young women described in this study. Finally, I analyze the results from a broader qualitative and ethnographic study conducted in the cities of Juarez and El Paso (Holguín, 2011a).

The present analysis is based on data obtained from five female participants of the aforementioned ethnographic study. The interrelated goals of my analysis in this paper include: 1) to consider how young women from three distinct social networks express their unique identity formations through the linguistic elements outlined above, and 2) to investigate how the social meanings indexed by these linguistic elements are made relevant through discourse. Through a sociolinguistic examination of stylistic variation of young Mexican women, the current study documents how local and global ideologies of whiteness work to normalize hegemonic cultural practices in the U.S.-Mexico border. While the more salient linguistic elements represent the modern bilingual along the border influenced by valorized English

discourses transmitted through (social) media, access to this socio-cultural capital also functions to marginalize a speaker's ability to participate in esteemed social networks. Thus, the performance of *fresa* identity embodies contested spaces of authenticity and membership to particular social structures.

BILINGUALISM, IDENTITY AND STYLISTIC VARIATION

Silverstein (1979) defines language ideologies as “any set of beliefs about language articulated by the users as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 35). In the development of western nation states, the social constitution of *one-language, one-nation* has institutionalized an ideal of language homogeneity and monolingualism. In a study on the relation between Mexican national identity and the use of English in several Mexican border cities, Bustamante (1981) finds that the use of English was most prevalent in Juarez, although Mexican values and traditions, as well as the use of Spanish, were still essential for Juarenses. Additional research on language and identity in Juarez has shown that speakers from traditional middle and upper-middle-class families—women in particular—tend to show negative attitudes towards the use of Spanish-English codeswitching (Hidalgo, 1988, 1995; Vila, 2000). Mixing both languages has been considered a trait associated with the experiences of members of families who have migrated to the U.S. as laborers and who have acquired partial linguistic proficiency in English. These working class forms of bilingualism effectively socially isolate or stigmatize the speakers, who—by breaking from established language ideological and socio-cultural order of this region—are commonly represented as inauthentic in their Mexicanness (Vila, 2000). From this ideological framework social stereotypes and derogatory labels such as *pocho*, defined by Richardson (1999) as a “Mexican American who is overtly Americanized in speech and culture” (p. 15). A class-conscious Mexican society employs this term against those speaking a nonstandard variety of Spanish, one that not only incorporates English elements but also utilizes stigmatized Spanish elements perceived as uneducated. In this way, class-conscious Mexican society itself fails to understand the cross-border impact of the loss of standard Spanish that has been forced on Latino/as living in the U.S. (Richardson, 1999).

Nevertheless, in a more recent study on language attitudes and perceptions in the twin cities of Reynosa, Tamaulipas and McAllen, Texas, Martínez (2003) observes that young people increasingly use language as cultural capital in order to build up a novel border regional identity and to exclude newcomers from the

Mexican south who more closely associate themselves with indigeneity and subsistence farming. He notes that young people secure for themselves a more local and urbane ethnolinguistic identity, one that includes elements of Mexican-American border language (Martínez, p. 48). These bilingual innovations may represent a reaction against the massive effects of abrupt industrial urbanization on the Mexican border cities from the last three decades, along with the population increases as a result of southern and indigenous migration to the U.S.-Mexico border region. A similar situation plays out in other twin cities on the U.S.-Mexico border (Fernandez-Kelly, 2007), including Juarez and El Paso, the focus of this study. Zentella (2008) maintains that current emergent language ideologies underlying people's linguistic attitudes and behaviors under global models of capitalism are producing newer forms of bilingualism. The cultural effects of neoliberalism bring with them an emphasis in mass consumerism on the global scale; in these ways, bilingualism as an asset becomes a commodity (Zentella, 2008; Heller, 2003; Commaroff & Commaroff, 2009).

Among the oral discourses of youth along the border, codeswitching—understood in this case as an alternation between English and Spanish in the same conversation—stands as a salient emblem of hybridity and fluid identity claims. As Auer (2005) notes, this may be due to the fact that codeswitching in relation to social identity “considers mixing/switching itself a style which indexes different types of social membership beyond the memberships indexed by the monolingual varieties involved” (Auer, p. 406). Bell (2001) similarly defines codeswitching and stylistic variation as design features intended for imagined audience figures. Linguistic *style* is therefore constituted through the targeted impressions managed by individual social actors through speech (2001). Bell's audience-design model operates as part of a more general theory of dialogic meaning-making, through which interlocutors mutually authorize and authenticate the “codes and repertoires within a speech community, including the switch from one complete language to another in bilingual situations” (Bell, 2001, p. 144).

As with the codeswitching phenomenon discussed by Bell, the young Mexican *fronteriza*¹ women in one of the social networks (network A) in this study were observed using codeswitching (among other semiotic practices). Their codeswitching indexes specific social meanings of prestige, including cultural whiteness and

¹ The label *fronterizo/a* was consistently used among participants in this study. Many Juarenses choose to self-identify as *fronterizo/a* as a way to reflect their border lifestyles and identity.

upper-class femininity in order to create a particular impression on the listener. However, some speakers from another social network (B) in this study are sanctioned for including English in their speech and find themselves unable to produce the desired effect from *fresa* speech. As Davies (2005) notes, failure to accurately manipulate language codes is often policed for authenticity and belonging within specific communities of practice, affording us insight into the social meanings and language ideologies behind particular sociolinguistic performances.

*WHO ARE THE FRESA?: DYNAMICS OF GENDER,
CLASS, RACE, AND ETHNICITY*

In her ethnography *White Kids*, Bucholtz (2011) discusses the extensive use of innovative linguistic elements as indexers of a *preppy*, white identity performance among youth in the San Francisco Bay area. In this study, she traces the origin of the term *preppy* to the elite East Coast college-preparatory boarding schools; it denotes those associated with “wealth and privilege” (p. 91). Bucholtz also elaborates on how, within her own ethnographic research, she observed that *preppy* students’ styles were highly gendered. *Preppy* young women tended to wear commercialized and expensive brand-name clothing that is both sexual and infantilizing at the same time. According to Bucholtz, so-called “preppies” are socially powerful because of the symbolic authority that manifests in their practices of “social exclusion and evaluation” (Bucholtz, p. 92). She notes how these practices have already been observed (Eckert, 1989 quoted in Bucholtz, 2011, p. 98) among young women in the U.S. and represented in popular culture through movies such as *Mean Girls*. Bucholtz includes behaviors like gossiping and lack of consideration for other people’s feelings as part of these practices of indexing the social meaning of power and identity constructions among *preppies*. Regarding their linguistic and discursive stylistic practices, she documents these white Californian youth’s use of the quotative and discursive particle *like*, among other elements such as the rising intonation at the end of a declarative phrase. The following excerpt illustrates some of these particular sociolinguistic uses.

Excerpt A, adapted from Bucholtz² (2011, p. 97)

18 Jossie: I don't know really why
 19 I mean maybe 'cause
 20 (pause of 0.7 seconds)
 21 It's like
 22 the jocks
 23 and like
 24 everything like that.
 25 And like
 26 kind of like the quote unquote,
 27 cool people (end of intonation unit, rising intonation)

In my own ethnographic research, I too have documented how some young women, particularly those from network A, go so far as to quote English dialogue from U.S. movies portraying white *preppy* youth, such as *Mean Girls*, as well as other similar TV drama series such as *Gossip Girl* (Holguín, 2011a, p. 122; 2015). Similarly to the *preppy* stereotype in the U.S., the *fresa* stereotype has been widely disseminated by Mexican mass media, yet exist few comprehensive studies that provide meaningful consideration of this sociolinguistic variety. There does exist some research that identifies *fresa* women's cultural practices in youth groups in Mexico and Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles (Mendoza-Denton, 2008), as well as a lexical analysis regarding particular English borrowings among Mexican upper-class women in literary production (Córdova & Corona, 2002; Loaeza, 2010, for treatment of the stereotype of *las niñas bien* "the good/affluent girls"). The *fresa* stylistic image connotes an idealized woman who, regardless of actual socioeconomic standing, takes on the linguistic features and social practices associated with the upper classes, particularly within a culture in which consumerism comprises an important means of socialization (Arce, 2008). As a late-capitalist mode of 'putting on airs,' the *fresa* stereotype perpetuates a pervasive cultural narrative of a superficial woman who is snobbish towards those outside her social group. Despite the gendered variant, *niña fresa* (*fresa girl*), men employ similar socio-pragmatic moves in both all-men and mixed-gendered settings. The performed social refinement of the *fresa* identity can also be associated with a particular stereotype of *upper-middle-class*

²I have opted not to include Bucholtz's transcription conventions here for the sake of brevity and to highlight the relevant lexical aspect of the example.

masculinity. This stereotype is associated with technical or white-collar labor and represents a self-conscious distancing from other stereotypes of manliness based on heavy manual labor (Raphael, 2014). Today's *fresa* stereotypes, both masculine as well as feminine, dominate Mexican mass media (de Llano, 2009). Their pervasive representation on TV and in advertisements include predominantly white Mexicans dressed in expensive clothing lines, driving expensive foreign cars, and sampling global food and beverages in chic bistros. Though it has become commonplace for people in Mexico to mock the *fresa* stereotype, it nonetheless exists as a symbol of social distinction and privilege. Bound up with these connotations of prestige are deep—yet generally unacknowledged—associations with whiteness.

The *fresa* as a recognizable social category was consolidated in the Mexican media in the late 1980s and 90s (Raphael, 2014). It was preceded by the term *junior*—a term still very much in use and generally employed in a derisive tone—that refers to the spoiled progeny of the rich and powerful in Mexico (Arce, 2008). In contrast with the connotation surrounding the term *junior* (of inherited wealth or unearned privilege granted by birth), the term *fresa* connotes a more recent type of affluence marked by special mobility and access to a U.S.-centered cultural field. This distinction may help explain why specific contact elements from English are so fervently embraced by young people adopting *fresa* models of identity. The narrative strategies and linguistic elements used by women who are often type-cast as *niñas bien* or *fresa* within Mexican society exemplify this emerging identity formation with roots in ideologies of the social construction of gender during the modern period. Driscoll (2008) traces the origins of the social discourse of the *modern girl* back to 1868 in Eliza Lyn Linton's *The Girl of the Period*. Although this is not the earliest point from which to trace discourses on the evolution of the *modern girl* concept, Driscoll notes that the mid-nineteenth century does represent a period during which certain social anxieties regarding young women emerged (Driscoll, 2008). In *The Girl of the Period*, for example, we see that a girl was considered as “a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face, as the first articles of her personal religion; whose sole idea of life is plenty of fun and luxury; and whose dress is the object of such thought and intellect as she possesses” (1868, p. 339; quoted in Driscoll, 2008, p. 14). In considering these discourses, we can begin to understand the changes imposed upon the lives of specific girls within shifting and new definitions of citizenship during this period, one in which commodity culture became intricately tied to industrialized labor practices as well as more current practices of consumption (Driscoll, 2008).

As a phenomenon of Mexican modernity the *fresa* stereotype has origins in the era of dictator Porfirio Díaz, also known as the Porfiriato (1877-1911). Since that time, the social category of the *young girl* in Mexico has blended with the cast system inherited from colonial times, one which served to perpetuate the supremacy of white elites. *Juniors* and *fresas* as a concept have been a central component of Mexico's innermost elite since the Porfiriato, and there exist innumerable accounts of their extravagances (Raphael, 2014). Today, classism is still highly practiced and tolerated in Mexican society on the whole. As Raphael observes, being a *junior* or a *fresa* in Mexico involves a constant process of differentiation, a practice that involves calling out people who lack class distinction, for example by creating friction between those who identify not as *fresa* but instead as *naco* (Raphael, 2014). Many theories in circulation attempt to trace the origin of the term *naco* to indigenous roots and connotations (Holguín, 2011b). However, *naco* continues to be employed by a wide range of Mexicans as a classist term completely divorced from any indigenous semantic association (2014). In Mexico, calling someone a *naco* is generally accepted as a casual and commonplace (and wholly derogatory) term to describe someone without *proper* education or manners, as well as someone who does not speak with *proper* Spanish (2011b). In this way, while the elite class refers to the (perceived) middle class as *nacos*, the middle class seeks to identify those who fall lower in the (perceived) class stratification in order to refer to *that* lower class as *nacos* as well (2014; 2011b). In my own investigations into Mexico-US border communities, I found this class-based polarization through essentialized and dichotomous identity labels to hold resonance within the particular social networks of Juarez and El Paso. In both border cities, I have found that these stereotypical notions of *fresa* and *naco* function either to delineate (1) in-group prestige and solidarity, or (2) as simplified and denigrating categorizations of the *other* among the groups of youth (see Holguín, 2011a, 2011b). In the following section, I discuss in greater depth the sociohistorical elements underpinning the racial and class ideologies that inform the development of the identity labels and categories among Mexican youth I analyze in this study.

Racial and Class Ideologies in Mexican Society

In Mexico, ideologies of language purity have been intertwined with ideologies of racial purity dating back to the conquest of the Americas (Quijano, 2001). In most parts of the country, indigenous peoples have been racialized by Spanish colonizers as *the other*, as *indios*, a derogatory label that implies the suppression of

their original identities and the disadvantageous incorporation of their communities into the colonial caste system (Quijano, 2001). In the northern territories where Juarez is located, however, indigenous peoples were more often subjected to genocidal wars and forced removal (Walsh, 2004). This mass genocide and forced relocation of indigenous communities helped to foster an association in which northern Mexico is synonymous with whiteness and southern Mexico with indigeneity and, to a lesser extent, with blackness. Historically, Chihuahuans have equated their perceptions of their own whiteness with a sense of upper-class distinction (Macías, 1995). Today, younger generations in the Mexican border region affirm these traditional North-South ethnic distinctions in order to disassociate themselves from working class and *more indigenous* southern migrants (Vila, 2000; Martínez, 2003). Traditional notions of whiteness in the Mexican north function as symbolic resources for the creation of the sociolinguistic and discursive practices of many young speakers. Nevertheless, the sociolinguistic complexity of the stylistic practices of the Mexican *fresa* identity considered in this study must be understood not only within the context of these deeply rooted racial ideologies particular to Mexico and the northern border region but also within the context of the current commodification of white identities in late capitalist society.

Whiteness, Global Capitalism, and Identity

Racism and classism in Mexico have not diminished in the 21st century, though they have acquired new guises and disguises (Guerrero & Cuadra, 2013). The perpetuation of racist and classist ideologies has taken place with the participation of those who are kept as the racialized groups—indigenous peoples and black Mexicans who consciously or unconsciously negotiate their social positioning in reference to perceived levels of whiteness (2013). Being white has become a *condition of whiteness*, meaning that its ethnic order has become subordinated to the category of identity imposed by capitalist modernity (Echeverría, 2007, pp. 18-19; Guerrero & Tapia, 2013). Within capitalist discourse and society, some individuals of color may be capable of obtaining a white identity insofar as they demonstrate their whiteness (2007). Thus, ethnicity becomes conceived as a commodity that is implicated in the economics of everyday life (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). Cultural identity “represents itself ever more as two things at once: the object of choice and self-construction, typically through the act of consumption, and the manifest product of biology, genetics, human essence” (2009, p. 1). In the current era of late capitalism, acquiring the condition of whiteness is accompanied by what Bartra (2005) calls

“northamericanization” (p. 306), a process through which Mexicans participate in a significant acculturation to U.S. society, norms, and values. This acculturation—some might call it acquiescence—is expressed and recreated on many levels, one of which is through stylistic language practices within face-to-face interactions.

*STYLISTIC LINGUISTIC PRACTICES
ALONG THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER: DATA ANALYSIS*

The data analyzed here originates from an ethnographic sociolinguistic study of three social networks of young people that I undertook in the cities of Juarez and El Paso in 2009-2010 (Holguín, 2011a). As someone who was raised in Juarez, the idea of selecting Juarez as a field site for sociolinguistic research emerged from casual observations of marked differences in stylistic practices—both aesthetically and linguistically—among speakers who were affiliated with a private Catholic high school that subsidizes and creates social programs for a poorer high school located in a working class neighborhood. As part of this observatory ethnographic study, I identify three distinct social networks: A, B, and C. Each member of these three networks belong to particular communities of practice within them. By incorporating the notion of communities of practice (Davies, 2005), defined as a group meeting to share an activity or interest (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003), I was able to locate boundaries in speakers’ linguistic performances and social relationships. The incorporation of this concept of communities of practice also permitted me to observe “the most closely coordinated” linguistic practices (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 57). As mentioned above, I center this paper’s analysis on only five female speakers. My direct ethnographic observation of the linguistic behavior among speakers within these communities of practice helped me to better understand the everyday relationships among these women. Thus, the identified networks were not restricted by social class in the traditional sense (i.e., family income, education, or social status in general). According to Bourdieu (1984), lifestyles signal behaviors and preferences that serve to construct social relationships. Social classes are understood as social categories through which people relate to each other but that are not, in and of themselves, real. Bourdieu’s notion of “social space” offers a map that functions as an abstract representation of how people see their social worlds (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 169). “Social space” connotes an imaginary construct of relationships based on “principles of differentiation,” a concept that indicates

how the world is organized according to peoples' lifestyles, even as individuals assume they are freely choosing their preferences (Irvine, 2001, p. 23).

Participants in this ethnographic research all self-identified as Mexican and as *fronteriza* women residing in Juarez and commuting to and/or living in El Paso. I reviewed approximately 21 hours of recordings comprised of several discrete periods of interaction among the five participants. In dialogue (1), Ale, a 22 year-old *balanced* bilingual from Juarez who studies at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), is on the phone with her friend Belsy, who is the same age and enrolled at the same institution. Both women grew up in Juarez, were raised in affluent families and attended prestigious private schools. Having traveled extensively throughout the U.S., and other places in the world, they are highly proficient in English. Their stylized Spanish-English codeswitching is indicative of young women immersed in cultural practices typically associated with privilege and access to cosmopolitan modes of engagement.

DIALOGUE 1. Ale and Belsy during a phone conversation
in her parent's home in Juarez

<i>Line</i>	<i>Conversation Text</i>	<i>English Translation (when needed)</i>
1	ALE: Unos amigos↑ (high rising pitch)	<i>Some friends</i>
2	BELSY: [inaudible on the other side of the	
3	phone line]	
4	ALE: I don't know maybe a dress	
5	or something.	
6	BELSY: [inaudible]	
7	ALE: I want to wear a dress↑ Shut up!	
8	BELSY: [inaudible]	
9	ALE: Ay ¡nooo! Pos no sé horita, bueno	<i>Ay nooo! Well now I'm not sure, I'll have to think</i>
10	ahorita veo que me voy a poner	<i>about what I'm gonna wear</i>

Source: Compiled by author.

Routinized expressions (Ford, Fox, & Thompson 2003) including “shut up!” (line 7), along with the codeswitching used in these speakers’ performances suggest that there are specific linguistic forms that constitute a style of speech in this region. These practices also illustrate a highly intersubjective language use that indicates speakers’ tendency to emphasize stance, personal experiences, attitudes, and/or feelings within the context of their particular networks, lifestyles and aspirations (Scheibman, 2002). In the example (2) below, we observe a more prolonged interaction between these speakers, who are chatting in a coffee shop close to the UTEP campus.

DIALOGUE 2. Ale and Belsy at a cafe at UTEP

<i>Line</i>	<i>Conversation Text</i>	<i>English Translation (when needed)</i>
1	BELSY: Pero estaba como preocupadísimo	<i>But (be) was [like] so worried dude, and</i>
2	güey, y yo, “¡madres! O sea ¿qué está	<i>I [was like] “fuck! So what’s going on?!” So...</i>
3	pasando?!” O sea...	
4	ALE: (interrupting) es que yo creo que sí	<i>(interrupting) uhm I think it’s</i>
5	ha sido cierto güey, o sea, después	<i>true dude, like, after a thousand fucking</i>
	de pinche mil	
6	años güey, así que yo ay sí↑,	<i>Years, dude, like hey yeah</i>
7	...y loo [luego] pasara eso y loo [luego] se	<i>and after what happened and after he left and</i>
8	fuera y loo [luego] así como todo un misterio	<i>like all this mystery dude like,</i>
9	güey como... porque se había ido	<i>because [he] had gone to Chicago, dude, so it</i>
10	a Chicago güey, o sea, fue así como...	<i>was like...</i>
11	BELSY: ah me acuerdo	<i>oh [I] remember</i>
12	ALE: no sé super raro güey	<i>I don’t know super weird dude</i>
13	BELSY: things happen for a reason baby,	
14	and now you know why	
15	ALE: I know (overlapped),	
16	now I guess but, ‘cos I wasn’t like,	
17	es que güey, al principio era así como que	<i>um dude, at the beginning it was like</i>
18	los dos así “es que ¿por qué? ¿por qué	<i>both of us like “um, Why? Why now?</i>
19	ahorita? y ¿por qué si nos volvimos a ver?	<i>and, why now that we’re seeing each other again?</i>
20	¿y por qué blablablá?”...	<i>and why blablablablá?”...</i>

Source: Compiled by author.

Example (2) illustrates how speech style occurs as a conglomerate of elements that are multimodal in nature and not shaped exclusively by one linguistic feature (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Several particular linguistic characteristics, such as the pragmatic marker *like* in (2) have already been examined as part of juvenile language in English (Ferrara & Bell, 1995; Buchstaller & D'Arcy, 2009). In the above excerpt, we can also observe the use of taboo words in Spanish such as *güey* (*silly, dude*) which is used as a vocative, (lines 1, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 17). Here, *güey* is a salient marker of *fresa* identity formation since it occurs in reciprocal terms, particularly among members of network A (Holguín, 2011a). *Güey* contributes to the rhythmic shaping of discourse as a feature originally used among Mexican working class males that has been integrated into discourse due to its high frequency (2011a). Moreover, *güey* works as a pragmatic marker to help organize oral discourse, as observed in this interaction; it is also commonly used as an interjection when adding emphasis or focus (line 6). This phenomenon also occurs in other cases of vocatives such as the words *cara* (*guy*) and *man* (*fool*) among youth in Brazilian Portuguese (Roth-Gordon, 2007). We can also note the use of other taboo interjections, such as *madres* (lit. *mothers*, meaning *fuck*), *pinche* (adj. *fucking*), and onomatopoeic expressions, *blabláblá* (2007). The use of the archetypical *fresa* pronominal form as a quotative *y yo* (“and I [was like]”) is also present (i.e., line 2) (Holguín, 2015; Portal Mochis, 2016), as is the frequent stereotypical expression *o sea* (lit. *that is*, meaning *I mean*) (lines 2, 3, & 10) (Holguín, 2015; 2016). When used together as in (2), we find that these forms comprise a recognizable speech style that assumes shared social meanings. Similar to other findings in the sociolinguistics of youth, these elements seem to function here as stance markers that convey metapragmatic information, including the speakers’ own attitudes (Kärkkäinen, 2007). In (2) we also find a high frequency of several variants of pragmatic markers including some functioning as quotatives such as the word *así* (“like,” in line 18), which introduces the speech of both the speaker and her interlocutor. It is clear that pragmatic markers such as *así* (*like*), *como* (*like*), and the combinations, *así que* (*like*), *como que* (*like*), and *así como* (*like*) are being employed as cues for pragmatic meaning in discourse that stylize speech and determine underlying norms of participation (Holguín, 2015).

Belsy’s switch to English with the phrase “things happen for a reason baby” (line 13) intertextually lifts an idiomatic phrase commonly used in Hollywood movies and pop music. Although it functions on an interpersonal level by contributing to a private discourse of affect (i.e., an answer to her friend’s self-questioning

regarding her problematic personal relationship with a young man), the English idiom here demonstrates Belsy's access to the U.S. sources of the expression and/or her association with the fetishized persona that tends to publicly display attitudes or emotional states. Ale clearly accepts her friend's intentions with the English adjacency pair, *I know*, which functions as a routinized pragmatic marker indicating commonality (Kärkkäinen, 2007). This exchange could have taken place in Spanish; yet the use of English creates an extra layer of social meaning, both as a group marker and as an index of social distinction. When Belsy replies in English with "now you know why" (line 14), she makes reference to other events which might explain why it is better that this relationship did not work out for her friend. Ale's response begins in English (lines 15-16) with the phrase "now, I guess, but, 'cos I wasn't like," which constitutes a series of cued phrases that also act as pragmatic markers. The word *now* functions in this utterance as a focusing device, followed by the expression, *I guess*. Following Kärkkäinen's (2007) framework, we can infer that *I guess* also serves as a crystallization of linguistic routines used by the speakers as discursive organizers. Kärkkäinen notes that these include other linguistic routines such as *I think* and *I don't know* that may signal that an upcoming segment is "not fully coherent with the main flow" (Kärkkäinen, 2007, p. 208). This appears to be the case in dialogue (2) in that the elements that follow these expressions are not coherent in and of themselves. The expression *but*, serves to guide the listener and does not provide any additional semantic meaning. As Stenström, Andersen, and Hasund (2002) show, the segment 'cos has undergone a process of grammaticalization in the language of youth. Here it functions as a discourse link to introduce an adjunct clause; the use of 'cos ('cause) also connects the utterance *I wasn't like*. The speaker employs all of these pragmatic, grammaticalized particles and expressions to achieve a very particular stylistic effect in this particular conversation. We could argue that in this final utterance Belsy relies on discourse *fillers* in order to take up time and not lose the discursive floor. However, she does so in English, acknowledging all of these expressions and affirming their stylistic value. These bilingual conversation strategies demonstrate just how embedded the pragmatic meanings of these linguistic forms remain in the English language as well as how advanced these processes of grammaticalization are. In dialogue (2), it is reasonable to conclude that we are witnessing a case of hyper-use of these English forms (*now, I guess, but, 'cos I wasn't like*), that function to recreate performances within a very particular salient style that aims to emulate cultural practices of whiteness from the U.S. (Bucholtz, 2011).

These two speakers from network A, Ale and Belsy, employ near-native pronunciation when speaking in English. Their English language proficiency and choice of English registers are affiliated with mainstream, upper and middle-class linguistic practices in the U.S. The near-native English speech styles that are produced within this social group index access to certain lifestyles possible through affluent economic and social resources in Mexican society. These cases of codeswitching are particularly marked (Myers-Scotton, 1988), in the sense that these Mexican women would not normally be expected to engage in codeswitching (Hidalgo, 1988). Uses of English in interactions among these group members are part of their identity formations in that they work as a specific stylistic practices of social prestige in Mexico (Holguín, 2011a, 2015). Among these speakers, pragmatic markers in Spanish and English and the types of codeswitching in which they engage form a communicative code designed for a particular audience in contextualized interactions (Bell, 2001), one which serves their particular cultural communicative needs (2015). These stylistic practices, considered in conjunction with other behaviors involving speakers' relationships with other privilege members in their perceived *social spaces*, their awareness of those who do not belong, and their patterns of consumption of U.S. *preppy* stylistic products and brands, echo those practices among privileged white in the U.S. discussed previously (Bucholtz, 2011; Holguín, 2011a).

Negating Fresa Speech Styles

In my broader ethnographic study, I observed no instances of codeswitching in interactions recorded among members of network B, regardless of their perceived socioeconomic resources. Regarding the use of English, I did note some uses of traditional loan words such as *parquero* (person who takes care of cars in parking lots), or *porche* (porch). Other English words occurred among members of network B with some proper names such as TV and movie characters. In the following example (3), three speakers from network B and the ethnographer navigate a problem together. Due to her position as a fluent bilingual, Diana, a 23-year-old college student at UTEP and a member of both networks A and B, switches to near-native English through her use of the compound noun, *wedding planner*, and adjectives in other interactions (i.e., *tipsy*, *cool*, and *loser*). More interestingly, Jacqueline, a 22-year-old law student at the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juarez (UACJ), is a member of network B and never switches into English during the conversations among her friends in network B, even though she is fluent in English. As a law student, Jacqueline has had many formal education opportunities. Yet, her family comes

from a southern Mexican state where Jacqueline and her family spend all of their vacation time. Though she self-identified as *juarense*, she never used the label *fronteriza* to describe herself. Diana, on the other hand, sometimes goes to Canada or spends a month at a time at a U.S. college or summer camp. This heterogeneity in language practices is also reflected in ideologies and attitudes toward language use that can be clearly appreciated in several interactions. During this interaction (3), Cristina, a bilingual 26-year-old professional working as a teacher at a university in Juarez and a member of network B, had been describing to her friends how frustrated she is with the arrangements for her upcoming wedding and move to the U.S. (to attend graduate school). She feels that she has to please everybody, especially her future husband's family.

DIALOGUE 3. Cristina speaking on the phone while her maids
of honor discuss weddings

<i>Line</i>	<i>Conversation Text</i>	<i>English Translation (when needed)</i>
1	JAQUELINE: qué me lo organice alguien (northern <i>fronterizo</i> regional intonation)	<i>[My wedding] should be organized by someone</i>
2	DIANA: eso estaría, eh yo creo que eso, es lo que	<i>that would be, eh, I think that's</i>
3	yo (rising intonation) haría (laughing)	<i>what I would do</i>
4	ETHNOGRAPHER: una ¿cómo se llama?, ¿no sé qué	<i>the, what's it called?, something wedding?</i>
5	bodas?	
6	DIANA: wedding planner (with native-like pronunciation)	
7	JAQUELINE: ay, osa (o sea) (ironically, mocking the <i>fresa</i> style)	<i>Oh well</i>
8	ETHNOGRAPHER: ¿planeadora, de bodas?	<i>¿Wedding planner?</i>
9	JAQUELINE: Mira Diana, nooo se dice así, estamos	<i>Look Diana you don't say it like that, we're</i>
10	en México (laughing)	<i>in Mexico</i>
11	DIANA: ta [está] bien te voy a contratar a tí	<i>It's alright, I'll hire you Jacqueline</i>
12	Jaqueline (interrupting) (laughing)	

Source: Compiled by author.

In this excerpt (3), Cristina is in the kitchen at her Juarez home talking on the phone with someone about her wedding plans. Meanwhile in the living room, her

friend Jacqueline is complaining about how annoying it is to have to deal with other people's opinions, stating that she would rather have someone else organize her wedding (line 1). Diana agrees emphatically (lines 2 and 3). In lines 4 and 5, I intervene in the conversation with the question phrase "una ¿cómo se llama?, ¿no sé qué bodas?" (the, what's it called?, something wedding?) by trying to suggest that there is already a profession, or a person who arranges weddings professionally, though at the moment I could not recall the phrase. Diana rapidly utters *wedding planner* in English (line 6) with native-like pronunciation, which triggers a reaction by Jacqueline, who mocks a *fresa* performance evident in Diana's use of the term by uttering the expression "osa" (*o sea*). By articulating the compound noun *wedding planner*, and in English, Diana makes evident her sociolinguistic capital of femininity, ethnicity, and social distinction. This reminds us that she is a fluent bilingual speaker, which serves to highlight her differential status in relation to her interlocutor. Despite the fact that this interaction occurred with my own intervention as a researcher (Mendoza-Denton, 2004, p. 479, for the notion of the researcher as a simultaneous agent and instrument), it nonetheless helps to map the social boundaries that are demarcated through switches to stylistic English forms such as the phrase *wedding planner*. Jacqueline reacts to the message embedded in the English noun and makes a parody performance, mimicking a *fresa* speech style (line 7) with a different voice quality. The discourse marker *o sea* (lit. *that is*, meaning so, *well, I mean*) is an expression that is stereotypically associated in the Mexican media with this particular *fresa* stereotype (Holguín, 2011a; de Llano, 2009). As I discussed above, it was observed in abundance during *fresa* stylistic interactions by members of network A in dialogue (2) (lines 2, 3, and 10). The uttering of *o sea* by Jacqueline in this context signals that the social meaning embedded in this mocking performance invokes stereotypical distinctions not only at the personal level but at the institutional level as well, as she makes evident her sociolinguistic awareness of *fresa* performances (Irvine, 2001).

Given this context, we can infer that Jacqueline employs this strategy to reject Diana's intervention as a symbolic and marked act of femininity, class affiliation, and whiteness; she makes a clear statement that this type of *fresa* behavior is unacceptable and unnecessary since, in her own words, "estamos en México" (we're in Mexico) (line 10). The implied message is that *therefore, only Spanish is spoken here*. Jacqueline calls attention to the fact that her friend Diana is violating the underlying interactive norms of network B (in contrast to those of network A, with whom Diana also interacts). Consequently, Jacqueline may be choosing to reinforce her

southern identity, an identity that lays greater claim to Mexican traditions than that of a *fronteriza* or *norteña*. Additionally, Jacqueline may also be (consciously or not) seeking to redefine the boundaries of network B and to create a mechanism of defense of her own ideological and racialized southern background.

In another moment during the same interaction between members of network B, Cristina and Diana express that Jacqueline should not marry a person from her southern state of origin, where her family lives. They insist that she should marry someone from the north, since in the south most men are *morenos y chaparros* (dark-skinned and short) (Holguín, 2011a, 2011b). Jacqueline's reaction to their reference to regional ethno-racial and class identity formation is co-textually constructed from previous racialized comments from these participants. Other factors may also play a role here: being a central member (more so than Diana and Cristina) of a Catholic organization and an activist who intensively works to promote formal education opportunities for youth in marginalized neighborhoods in Juarez (network B), Jacqueline seems to be more conservative in many of her language ideologies as reflected in her linguistic practices. As is the case with most members of network B, Jacqueline is highly religious and involved in church activities, something that seems to reinforce traditional values in Mexican society and oppose other *foreign* and less conservative practices, such as this stylistic use of English (Vila, 2000). It is relevant to consider that this exchange (3) is marked by and ends with joking and laughing, which pragmatically mitigates and softens the whole interaction among these close friends. Yet it also reveals a conflictive situation that clearly reflects opposing ideologies permeating this and previous interactions. Milroy and Wei (1995) attest to the importance of considering the patterns of language choice at the community and at the national level when analyzing code switching within interactions. Specific language ideologies and social values continue to underlie sentiments of distaste toward codeswitching in Juarez, particularly among those with closer ties to national and specifically southern Mexican identities. My own research supports Milroy and Wei's findings that "variation in the structure of different individuals' personal social networks will, for a number of reasons, systematically affect the way they use the two languages in the community repertoire" (1995, p. 138).

By observing these salient interactions, it is possible to establish connections between the multiple levels of social meanings that serve as a framework for these communities' patterns of language choice. Álvarez (1991) argues that metapragmatic awareness, which refers to "an underlying but documentable attitude of self-reflection about the very nature of the verbal interaction in which the speaker is

engaged” (Álvarez, p. 167), constitutes a kind of speech monitoring. Speakers’ awareness about their (and others’) language use exposes the ideologies within what are deemed *appropriate* contexts depending on social discourses. In this way, verbal interactions become “conscious practices of identification/disidentification, that is, of symbolization of social identity or political position” (Álvarez, 1991, p. 122).

Sociolinguistic Capital at play: Performing Fresa Speech Styles

The overlapping interactions between members from networks B and C also reveal relevant social information regarding the language ideologies behind these sociolinguistic stylistic practices and performances in relation to *fresa* identity formations. Members of network C were mostly high school students working in conjunction with members of network B in social justice and religious activism. Most members of network C came from working class neighborhoods in the western area of Juarez, and some of these youth had experienced difficult lives due to their socioeconomic circumstances. As they were considered gifted students, however, most had the opportunity to study in the subsidized religious high school in the working class neighborhood. This was the case for Karen, a 16-year-old high school student whose interactions were mostly among members of network C, though she frequently interacted with people from network B. Her hyper-feminine language practices were often mocked by some male peers since they resembled some of the iconic stylistic performances of characters from the Mexican TV program, *Atrévete a soñar* (Dare to Dream) which helped to disseminate the *fresa* stereotype (de Llano, 2009). Interestingly, for members of network C, *fresa* identity formations may represent more of a stylistic choice, or an identity as an obtainable commodity (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). As Karen states in her own sociolinguistic interview at the end of the ethnography, “*fresas* are people who believe they are upper class” (*se creen que son de la alta*). She adds that they behave as such, but that currently nobody is truly upper-class due to the economic crisis in Mexico. Her perception has to do with the fact that she is more familiar with a reality in which most people maintain several jobs in order to merely maintain what they already have. However, Karen’s frame of reference also suggests that even when someone is not from a more affluent background, she can always perform an identity signaling *upper-class* experience, as she herself seems to be doing in dialogue (4). Even if she lacks all the necessary sociolinguistic capital to produce this stylistic *fresa* performance more *accurately*, she can at least approximate this semiotic mode of behavior. In (4), Karen is talking to

Cristina and Jaqueline (from network B) and two other members of network C who were helping Cristina with her wedding arrangements.

DIALOGUE 4. Karen talking to Jaqueline in Cristina's house

<i>Line</i>	<i>Conversation Text</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
1	KAREN: Y luego van a ser azules las calcetas,	<i>And then socks are going to be blue, nothing to do</i>
2	nada que ver (rising intonation)	<i>with [to our uniform],</i>
3	por ejemplo, nos van a cambiar el uni-	<i>for example they're gonna change our uniform and</i>
4	forme y no podemos comprar las calcetas	<i>we can't buy the socks</i>
5	en otro lado más que ondiga [donde diga] la escuela.	<i>in any other place except where the school tells us to.</i>

Source: Compiled by author.

Karen is indignant at having to buy a certain kind of blue socks for her high school uniform, which they have to buy only in particular stores approved by the school. She utters “nada que ver” (lit. nothing to do with) in a high pitched tone with a raising boundary tone (line 2). This expression is frequently used by members in network A and has also been very much employed in the Mexican media to portray young women whose behavior conforms to the *fresa* stereotype³ (Holguín 2011a; Portal Mochis, 2016). However, Karen's identity performance becomes more salient when she produces an older stigmatized rural/popular form in line 5, “ondiga” (standard, *donde diga*) (Santa Ana & Parodi, 1998). The use of *ondiga* is undoubtedly a marked instance that exposes Karen's lower level of metalinguistic awareness of stigmatized forms in Mexico (1998) as well as her lack of sociolinguistic capital. In order to produce convincing stylistic performances of specific identity formations, in this case that of people occupying privileged social spaces, speakers need to possess a certain degree of sociolinguistic capital as well as the necessary metalinguistic awareness to create the desired effect on a more aware audience. As a result, Karen is still labeled as *fresa* by her school peers, who may possess a similar level of metalinguistic awareness and lack of sociolinguistic capital.⁴

³ The expression “nada que ver” is very common in many Latin American countries and that it is often used by people belonging to different social groups. However, the use of this expression in (4) can be identified as stylistic and linked to the *fresa* identity label as it appears in a very specific context and it is marked by a distinctive rising intonation boundary tone.

⁴ The *fresa* identity may also be internally differentiated by other markers of identity, in this case, class. In other cases, the term may denote regional or religious identification, for example.

CONCLUSION

Through language choice and performance, status differentials among various social actors are negotiated in conversational settings. As with any particular identity formation, the complexity of the Mexican *fresa* identity and stereotypes reside in the fact that the cultural capital associated with this identity formation does not depend exclusively on a speaker's ethnic background or constructed categories of social class, but on her dynamic position within specific social networks (Milroy & Milroy, 1992). In other words, the specific type of social prestige that the word *fresa* confers signals not only a speaker's local or regional ethnicity, degree of whiteness, and degree of access to material goods, but also her access to the intellectual goods and forms of knowledge that confer cultural capital. A speaker's stylized bilingual practices, in addition to the use of pragmatic markers and particular lexical elements in Spanish, refer to and thus reinforce these forms of cultural capital by indexing their specific social meanings of prestige. Nevertheless, the *fresa* identity formation as a stereotype can also be the source of stigmatization and negative prestige, depending on the context, for instance, interactions in social spaces where U.S. culture and values are perceived by some speakers as a threat to their Mexican and more southern identities. Not only these communicative practices but also the speaker's awareness of them reflect what we might call her sociolinguistic capital. I am referring here to the speaker's degree of self-awareness regarding her own social condition as well as her ability to navigate and influence the norms of her social milieu. Hence, sociolinguistic capital is not only reflective of sociocultural, political, and economic processes, but is also dynamically embedded within these processes themselves (Koven, 2004).

As a sociolinguistically distinguishable emergent identity formation in the border region of Juarez and El Paso, *fresa* Mexican Spanish features performances of stylistic sociolinguistic uses that can include Spanish-English codeswitching, lexical borrowing, pragmatic markers and Mexican slang. To the extent that any particular sociolinguistic phenomenon can be defined by three or four emblematic tendencies, I maintain that the highly stylized use of these features as socio-pragmatic elements forms a recognizably distinct language variety. The stylistic use of pragmatic markers and lexicalized elements has crystallized into a linguistic habitus. In particular, stylistic shifts toward new forms of sociolinguistic capital signal an emergent border identity in which whiteness is bound up in consumer-based ideas of class distinctions, gender, youth, and spatial mobility. However, the production of the linguistic elements that encode such social differentials, identifiable in terms of *fresa* speech styles, is laden

with conflict; it opposes deeply entrenched nationalist ideologies that equate authenticity with *mestizaje* (neither whiteness nor non-whiteness) and long-standing skepticism regarding the place of Anglo-American culture and the English language in Mexican social life. Spanish-English bilingualism may still work against speakers' claims to *traditional* Mexican identity, yet within the context of pervasive U.S.-centered globalization influences among upwardly mobile youth in Juarez, the availability of such language choices mirrors the social prestige subjectively experienced through numerous acculturation paths affiliated with U.S. lifestyles and consumer patterns. Moreover, through the interactions of speakers across these three social networks and particular communities of practice within them, we have seen how these *fresa* stylistic practices and performances may also function to exclude racialized social actors from the Mexican south and secure stronger local *fronterizo* identities embedded with participant structures and emergent models of personhood imbued with the values and practices of U.S.-based consumer culture.

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