Focus on ELT Journal
Vol 6, Issue 3, 2024
ISSN: 2687-5381

We barely wrote this paper: Sociolinguistic relativity in Southwestern U.S. schools and its impact on English language teaching

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APA Citation: Przymus, S. D., & Mendoza, M. E. (2024). We "barely" wrote this paper: Sociolinguistic relativity in Southwestern U.S. schools and its impact on English language teaching. *Focus on ELT Journal, 6*(3), 124-147. https://doi.org/10.14744/felt.6.3.8

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a critical discourse analysis of three potentially challenging communicative interactions between teachers and Spanish-speaking *Active Bilingual Learners of English* (ABLE) students in Southwestern U.S. schools. 1. Passive voice in situations involving causality is much more common in Spanish than in English; 2. results from a pilot study show how the word "barely" is frequently used as a temporal adverb, like "just," by many individuals living in the Southwest who have grown up in a figured world influenced by the Spanish language and/or Chicano English; and 3. within the figured worlds of many students from Latin America, it is common to respectfully call one's teacher, simply *maestro, profe, Señor,* or *Señora.* The equivalents of these in English often are met with disapproval by U.S. teachers feeling disrespected by being called "teacher," "mister," or "miss," instead of their last name. Although certainly not comprehensive, these three kinds of language use uncover both the ubiquitous and the implicit sociolinguistic relativity of what we refer to as the "linguistic figured worlds" of Spanish-speaking ABLE students in the U.S. Southwest. We use a systemic functional linguistics approach to document this sociolinguistic relativity and to analyze its potential impact on English language teaching.

Keywords
Active Bilingual Learners/Users of English (ABLE), linguistic figured worlds, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Article History

Received	:	27.05.2024
Revised	:	10.09.2024
Accepted	:	13.09.2024
Published	:	15.11.2024

Type
Research Article

Introduction

This paper offers a critical discourse analysis of three potentially challenging communicative interactions between non-Spanish-speaking and perhaps monolingual, English-speaking teachers and Spanish-speaking active bilingual learners/users of English (ABLE students, Przymus et al., 2020) in Southwestern U.S. schools. In order to build on the concept of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) with a specific focus on language and language teaching, all three sociolinguistic topics addressed attempt to uncover a bit of the impact of the linguistic figured worlds of Spanish-speaking ABLE students in U.S. schools that may differ from that of their English teachers. In figured worlds, "people 'figure' who they are through the activities and in relation to the social types that populate these figured worlds and in social relationships with

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the people who perform these worlds" (Urrieta, 2007, p. 107). With this paper, we isolate and analyze three specific linguistic practices that ABLE students perform, as part of their linguistic figured worlds, and discuss how and why this could influence their English language learning experiences in Southwestern U.S. schools.

We begin by bridging existing studies that demonstrate how passive voice and low transitivity is more common in Spanish than in English and how this may influence speakers' perception and thought regarding the agent's, in a communicative interaction involving fault, degree of fault or blame. We inquire into the possibility of this creating misunderstanding between Spanish-speaking ABLE students and their monolingual English-speaking teachers, during common classroom interactions. Left unexplained, structural differences in how languages allow its speakers to answer questions such as, "Where is your homework?"-*Se me perdió* (It lost itself to me), could further aggravate already challenging communicative interactions. Results from past studies and a current pilot study do evidence a meaningful pattern of Spanish speakers both using passive voice at least half of the time in school-based communicative interactions and upon reflection, a confession from some that they understand how this might create distance between themselves and the fault/blame in the encounter.

We continue by giving attention to a specific and ubiquitously used lexical item and discourse marker that semantically differs by users of or influenced by Chicano English in the U.S. Southwest, compared to speakers in other parts of the United States. We draw on work in Fought's (2003) *Chicano English in Context* and share the perceptions of respondents from California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas from our current pilot study, to elucidate how the word "barely" is frequently used as a temporal adverb, like "just," by many individuals living in the Southwest who have grown up in a figured world influenced by the Spanish language and/or Chicano English. In this use, the title of this paper means that we just wrote this paper, whereas many non-Spanish-speaking, English-speaking teachers and/or those who have not grown-up in the U.S. Southwest, may interpret the title as we almost did not write this paper for some reason.

Finally, within the figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) of many students from México and Central America, it is common to respectfully call one's teacher, simply *maestro, profe, Señor,* or *Señora.* The equivalents of these in English often are met with disapproval by U.S. teachers, who do not share the same lived experiences and linguistic figured worlds, feeling disrespected by being called "teacher," "mister," or simply "miss," instead of their last name. Perspectives shared from pilot study data, paint a more complex picture of this common school-based communicative encounter, with both negative comments from participants coupled with very positive comments that may provide educators with a path forward for addressing this convergence of distinct linguistic figured worlds. Although certainly not comprehensive, these three kinds of language use uncover both the ubiquitous and the implicit relativity, meaning, and ambiguity of what we refer to as the "linguistic figured worlds" of Spanish-speaking active bilingual learners/users of English (ABLE) students.

Culture and Linguistic Figured Worlds

People conceptually and materially/procedurally produce identities and understandings of the world through figured worlds or "socially produced, culturally constituted activities" (Holland

et al., 1998, pp. 40-41). But what role, specifically, does language play in conceptually and materially/procedurally producing these identities and ideologies? This most certainly is not a new question, but a diachronic review of the role of language in reality construction, we believe, reveals that a more narrowed/concise term, such as *linguistic figured worlds*, is justified. Such support for this claim could come from looking at Sinclair's (1991) idiom principle, situation-bound utterances, linked to underlying cognitive mechanisms (Kecskes, 2000), Fowler and Kress (1979) stating that "ideology is linguistically mediated and habitual" (p. 185), Fairclough (1995) on the Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity hypothesis, explaining that different languages "embody particular world views belonging to them" (p. 89), Halliday's (1978) claim that culture is interpreted through language and that children build realities that are "inseparable from the construal of the semantic system in which the reality is encoded" (p. 1), Fairclough (1982) again writing that language reflects social reality and social reality reflects properties of language, and Sturrock (1986) claiming that "we use language to say what is and isn't in the world, so language determines our reality (p. 79). Yet, linguistic and cultural difference may not be known and thus not considered by English teachers, and this can result in the misinterpretation of student behaviors as problems, rather than differences.

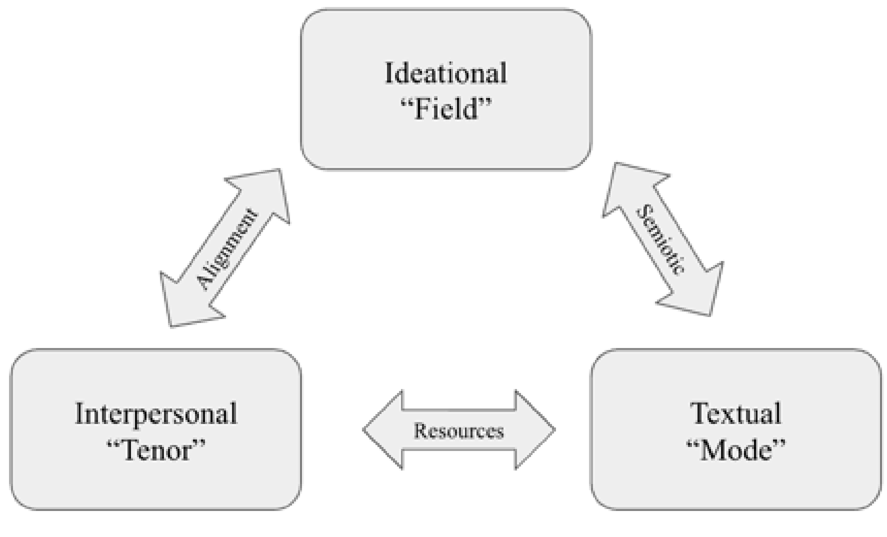
Analyzing Language as a Social Semiotic

Language is systemic, in that it offers choices of use that create meaning (Norton & Christie, 1999). The meaning, however, does not simply reside in the language, or the choice of language, but rather is constructed in use and interactions with others (Canagarajah, 2007a). Since the 1960s and the work of Michael Holliday, systemic functional linguistics has been used by countless researchers and educators to help make explicit how language is used as a meaning-making resource in our daily lives. It is our hope with this paper, that we too add to this tradition by offering academics and educators a practical approach to analyzing all that is happening in a social semiotic, communicative, or meaning-making interaction. Our application of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), below, gives both teachers and students a concrete visual of how the different modes (textual metafunctions), usage of language, that may differ across linguistic figured worlds, are relative and can create distinct meanings (fields of knowledge/ideational metafunction) that could act to further strengthen the misunderstanding and reify the marginalization of ABLE students in schools (tenor/interpersonal metafunction).

Figure 1 below is an example of how SFL can be used to demonstrate this intersection of language use, knowledge, and identity across the three themes addressed in this paper. Each genre of mode, field, and tenor are numbered to show alignment and the circular, flowing, and ongoing impact that each metafunction has on the others.

Knowledge

1) De-emphasized, distanced, & defocused role of agent in events involving causality
2) Ambiguity in meaning, breakdown in communication
3) Disrespect, confusion, resentment, social distance between learner and teacher



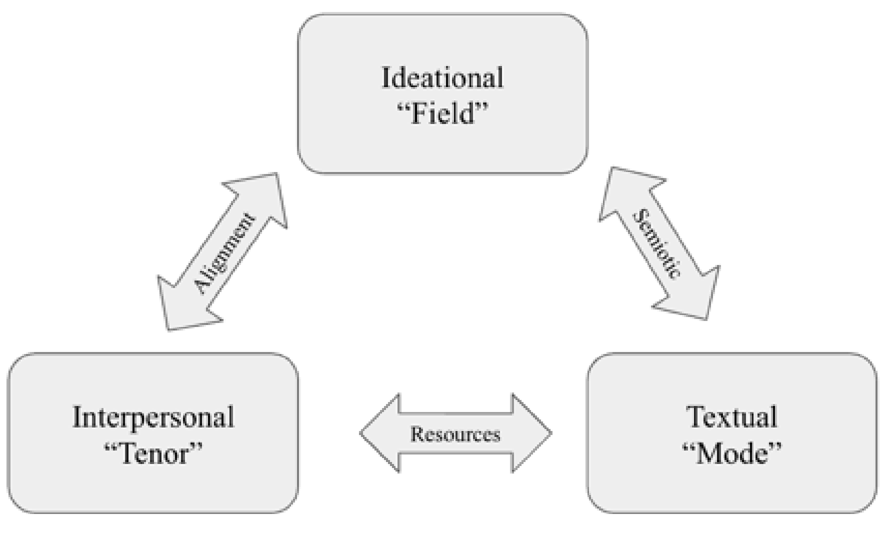
Identity	**Use**
1) Positioned as irresponsible, uncaring student	1) Passive construction in challenging interactions
2) Perceived distance in shared identity	2) Use of *barely* differs from teacher's use
3) Positioned as rude, disrespectful student	3) Use of "miss," "mister," or "teacher"

Figure 1. Intersection of language use, meaning, and identity

As English language teachers and teacher educators, we can use the above figure and analysis of sociolinguistic relativity and meaning across the linguistic figured worlds of U.S. Southwestern schools to understand how ABLE students continue to be negatively positioned and marginalized, but also can use this information to create positive change in this negative reality. We can strive specifically to re-write the narrative of the knowledge/ideational metafunction and the identity/interpersonal metafunction by increasing awareness among English teachers by drawing attention to and explicitly teaching the cultural and linguistic differences in the use/textual metafunction. Consider the reconceptualization of this alignment of semiotic resources, below, in Figure 2., where the textual metafunction/mode/use of language stays the same and the ideational (knowledge) and interpersonal (identity) metafunctions change.

Knowledge

1) Increased awareness of linguistic and cultural differences and understanding of both why students may use the passive voice in events involving causality and that this does not necessarily mean they are denying responsibility for their actions
2) Increased sociolinguistic awareness and understanding of the difference of meaning of *barely* as a discourse marker, leading to requests for clarification
3) Increased awareness of differences in how students address teachers, based on culture and lived experiences, leading to both greater understanding and more explicit instruction of expectations, rather than judgments of disrespect



Identity	Use
1) Positioned as student with a rich linguistic system that allows for multiple ways to describe and potentially perceive events involving causality	1) Passive construction in challenging interactions
2) Understood as student who has had different geographical and linguistic lived experiences	2) Use of *barely* differs from teacher's use
3) Positioned as a respectful, deferential, reverent student, who is continuing a practice from previous schooling	3) Use of "miss," "mister," or "teacher"

Figure 2. reconceptualization of the intersection of language use, meaning, and identity

The Effect of Language on our Realities

Simply by means of not speaking the dominant language, ABLE students enter school with minimal power and this imbalance of power is often magnified and reinforced through multiple and re-occurring unsuccessful communicative interactions with teachers and other students. "[Critical discourse analysis] attempts to demonstrate how particular discursive practices reflect socio-political power structures and, by implication, to modify practices to the benefit of those whom they currently disadvantage" (Charteris-Blac, 2004, p. 29). The socio-political power structures of the sociolinguistic topics explicated within can be described as the narrow band of acceptance associated with the second-space discourse of school.

Where there is a potential to modify this to the benefit of the disadvantaged, is in raising awareness to different linguistic figured worlds and the different patterns of thought that may accompany these worlds. Is language the "dress of thought" or as Chandler (1999) puts it, a cloak, that fits the thought patterns of its speakers? Or is thought "molded" by the language that people speak (Chandler, 1999)? In the early to mid-twentieth century, one such "mold" theory immerged. The Sapir-Whorf theory suggested that people's reality is subject to the language that they speak. Although this theory does not enjoy the same influence today that it once did, researchers still continue to try to find a measurable link to how different languages can affect how people view reality in different ways. This is the work we take up below, focusing our gaze and analysis on what this effect can mean for ABLE students in U.S. schools.

Sociolinguistic Figured Worlds: Three Pilot Studies

> "World visions can conceive of everything except alternative world visions" (Eco, 1986)

> "By discovering how we talk and what we call things we can discover how we think and ultimately how we see the world"
>
> (Ruiz, 2016)

Data Collection

We now briefly give space to each one of these linguistic practices and weave in results from existing work in the literature, our own past studies, and a current pilot studies in which we collected sample data from 261 respondents. In order to tap into the sociolinguistic relativity and meaning across the U.S. Southwest, all respondents include students, teachers, parents, and school personnel from California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The first section "Who done it?," also includes participant data from México, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Spanish-speakers from outside of the U.S. Southwest, in order to greater identify patterns and draw preliminary conclusions regarding the difference between the amount of passive voice usage in English vs. Spanish to describe events involving causality and to be able to report more voices/perspectives on whether or not this may have an impact on difference in perceptions regarding these events.

1. Who done it?

Studies by Boroditsky and Gaby (2010), Fausey et al. (2009), and Fausey and Boroditsky (2008) have looked at how different languages may affect how individuals view spatial dimensions differently, such as in the case with the Pormpuraawan people of Australia, and how grammatical structures of different languages may affect how its speakers view agentivity

in causal event descriptions. These causal event studies looked at how the difference in use of passive voice sentence constructions between languages, such as Spanish and Japanese vs. English, may affect how speakers of those languages remember events in terms of causality of the agent of the sentences.

Even though themes of language and thought are not novel, perhaps a treatment of this in schools is both needed and somewhat new. In drawing a connection between first language syntactic structure and its influence on thought and second language use in possibly challenging student-teacher communicative interactions, teacher and student practices may be modified in order to avoid such miscommunication. We are well aware of the long tradition in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) theories that look for differences between Western cultures and "other" cultures. This romanticizing of "different," non-English speaking cultures continues a tradition of colonial "othering" that renders these cultures as exotic (Kaplan, 1966; Pennycook, 2001; Pennycook, 1998a; Said, 1978; Susser, 1998). We argue here that it is essentially this subjectivity and prolonging of stereotypes fueled by colonial relations of self and other (Pennycook, 1998a) that sets up initial ABLE student-teacher interactions for failure.

This pilot study uses anonymous survey responses to measure how differently situations of causality are constructed in Spanish vs. English and whether or not Spanish speakers and English speakers differ in how they perceive the agent in these situations. Fairclough (2001) highlights the value of experiential aspects of grammar of a language when considering the ideas that speakers of that language wish to communicate (p. 100). In the case of the passive voice construction, Fairclough (2001) states that, "Agentless passives…leave causality and agency unclear" (p. 104). In order to investigate both the amount and effect of passive voice at schools, participants were presented with pictures of five highly challenging communicative interactions, such as a student explaining to a teacher why she was late for class, why she does not have her book, and why she does not have her homework, and were asked to write a sentence in either Spanish or English to describe each picture.

Results, below, come from three pilot studies, reporting on survey data from 175 public school students and teachers, across The Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, México, and the U.S. states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and a few respondents from non-Southwestern states (Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota). All anonymous respondents were educators and their students in institutions or multiple educational institutions in school districts and communities where Przymus (Author 1) has lived and worked. Surveys were constructed and disseminated as part of an assignment and under the supervision of the professor of a doctoral course in psycholinguistics, of which Przymus was a student at the time of the study.

Results evidence that Spanish speakers use the passive voice much more than English speakers when describing these difficult school-based events. Sentences constructed in Spanish were 45% passive voice construction, such as *A la muchacha, se le olvidó el libro en su casa* (The book forgot itself at the girl's house) or *El autobús se le dejó y le hizo tarde* (The bus left her and made her late). In comparison, no sentences written in English included the passive voice, as all sentences started with some variation of "the girl" or "the student."

Applying an SFL analytical approach to these written responses brings up two distinct realities. In one (Figure 3), the textual metafunction of using a passive voice could be

interpreted as the student intentionally distancing herself from the fault/blame of the situation (ideational metafunction) and thus be seen by the teacher as a student who does not accept responsibility for her actions (interpersonal metafunction).

Knowledge

Denying responsibility for actions

Ideational
"Field"

Alignment

Semiotic

Interpersonal
"Tenor"

Resources

Textual
"Mode"

Identity

Unrepentant, irresponsible student

Use

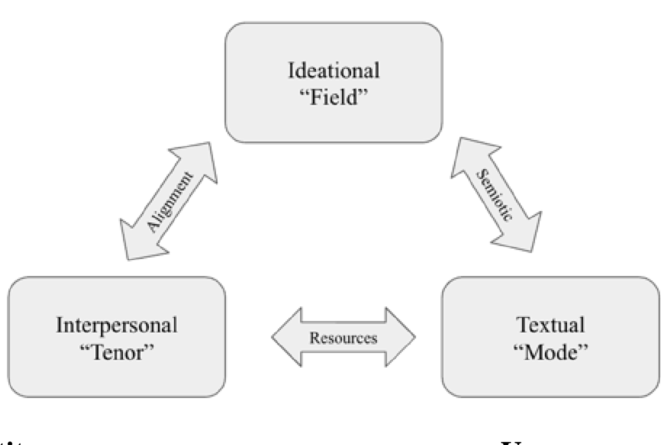
Passive voice for explaining difficult situation

Figure 3. Passive voice as purposeful strategy to distance oneself from fault

Or, as in the second example (Figure 4), the passive voice construction could be explained as either an unconscious influence from the student's linguistic figured world or a conscious effort to save 'face" (Goffman, 1955) and to maintain a positive and respected relationship with the teacher, by distancing oneself as the agent in the challenging interaction. This explanation presents an opposite interpretation from the unrepentant and irresponsible student and could be explained as a student trying to please the teacher.

Knowledge

Relationship maintenance



Identity

Respectful, caring, pleasing student

Use

Passive voice for explaining difficult situation

Figure 4. Passive voice as purposeful strategy to save and give face to maintain positive relationship with a teacher

Regardless the motive, we can see that the decision to use the passive voice, what Halliday (1977) calls "text as semantic choice in social context," is more complex than just assuming that one is trying to shirk responsibility. Can we assume that the passive voice is always purposefully and consciously used to distance one's agency from the responsibility of the action? According to Fairclough (2001), discerning between the unconscious automatic and the purposeful can be very difficult. "Such choices to highlight or background agency may be consistent, automatic, and commonsensical, and therefore ideological; or they may be conscious hedging or deception" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 102). If the situational variable, or field, of students' passive voice construction can be explained as low transitivity (Kay & Aylett, 1996) and passive voice construction to de-emphasize their role and leave the agency and responsibility implicit, then what interpersonal functions are being created? What tenor or social relationships would be the desired result of students' conscious or subconscious use of the passive voice? Our use of language, many times on a conscious level, but often unconsciously as well, constantly shapes and re-shapes our identities. In citing Machin and Mayr's (2012) discussion on Foucault et al. (2013) write "language constitutes us or those we seek to describe in the discourse (Foucault, 1981), and we think about ourselves or others through the discourse we use, some aspects become suppressed or concealed in order to legitimize a particular ideology (Machin & Mayr, 2012)" (p 39). It is plausible that ABLE students feel the same desire as other students, if not more, due to their dependent status as new language and culture learners, to impress their teachers and build a rapport of respect. It is not surprising then that newcomer ABLE students would want to hedge their responses to shift responsibility in uncomfortable and negatively perceived situations. And certainly, the use of the passive voice in responding to challenging communicative interactions, such as explaining why the student was late for class, would seemingly be an effective mechanism for de-emphasizing agency and responsibility.

What's interesting, however, and what makes this specific grammatical technique especially curious for the purpose of this study, is that we see above that the passive voice is not a commonly used grammatical structure in English for responding to these same challenging interactions. This, then, renders the passive use in Spanish in saying, for example, *Se me perdió el libro (the book was made lost to me)*, a cultural and linguistic difference between Spanish and English. Therefore, we would argue that the more frequent use of the passive construction in Spanish might act as an underlying barrier for Spanish-speaking ABLE students to overcome in establishing a positive tenor in discourses with their English teachers. In other words, growing up speaking Spanish, may give these students a different perspective on the severity of these challenging school-based situations, due to a lifetime's practice of passive construction that their English-speaking teachers do not share, that distances the agent from causality in the action. This indeed is what many students and teachers in Mexico have anecdotally shared with us and warrants further study.

In Vygotsky's (1962) view, "thought and language, which reflect reality in a way different from that of perception, are the key to the nature of human consciousness" (p.153). This seems to us a very valuable topic to keep revisiting in order to improve the educational equity of ABLE students in U.S. schools. A Southwestern U.S. school is exactly the context where the next section and topic begins.

2. Did you barely drop her off? (Written from Author 1's perspective)

Early one morning, I (Przymus) had just walked my oldest child to their first-grade classroom, hugged them, kissed them goodbye, and made my way back to my car in the school parking lot. Just before getting to my car, I heard my child crying and running back toward me, from some distance. Between myself and my child was a crossing guard, who upon observing the situation, turned to me with a concerned face and said, "Did you *barely* drop them off?" I stood for a moment, bewildered, sifting through my potential responses, until I replied (a bit offended), "No ma'am, I fully dropped them off. I walked them to the door and everything!" The crossing guard returned my bewildered look and repeated, this time with a greater emphasis on *barely,* "No, did you ***barely*** drop them off?" This didn't help, but by then I had rescued my child, who just needed another hug and reassurance that school is a good place to be at (that's another paper), and within minutes I was off to campus and thinking about the interaction. Two major differences exist between my linguistic figured world and that of the crossing guard. 1) I use "just," (used three times above in this paragraph) "had just," or maybe "had just barely" as temporal adverbs for meaning "just recently," for which the crossing guard uses "barely" and 2) I grew up in the U.S. state of South Dakota (the Midwest of the U.S.) and the crossing guard grew up in Arizona (Southwest U.S.). For readers who grew up in the Southwest of the United States, this still might seem a bit confusing or maybe not a big deal, but for me, and I suspect many other from across the U.S., saying *barely* means that something almost did not happen, but then it did.

The distinct use of *barely* in Latinx speech communities was first documented by García (1984), who recorded speakers from East Los Angeles using *barely* to emphasize "scarcity," such as in "I barely have two pieces" (in Fought, 2003, p. 240). And although I find myself reading the above example a few times over, and citing García's work is important in showing that others have been drawn to analyzing *barely* in the Southwest, the 'scarcity' usage of *barely* is not that distant from my own understanding of the word. It is in Carmen Fought's (2003) sociolinguistic study of language and language change in U.S. Latinx communities, *Chicano English in Context,* where the "just recently" use of *barely* as a lexical item and discourse marker that frequently occurs among young adult native speakers of Chicano English in Los Angeles, is highlighted and fleshed out. Fought posits that this could potentially be explained in part by an influence of the Spanish language where the "adverbial form *apenas* can mean (a) that something almost did not happen but then it did (the main use of *barely* in many English dialects), or (b) that something happened recently" (p. 106). Fought goes on to say, and this is supported in the data from our study here as well, that direct Spanish influence is only one possible explanation for this duality of meaning, with another being an influence of Chicano English and the sociolinguistic practice of the U.S. Southwest. Fought suggests that "the semantics of this form might have been extended quite naturally, a fairly unremarkable language change, without there needing to be any influence from Spanish" (p. 106). Although, there is strong evidence in our survey data to support the influence of *apenas*, most namely the high percentage of Spanish-speakers using *barely* as "just recently," many non-Hispanic and self-reported non-Spanish-speaking respondents also demonstrated the dual meaning usage of *barely.* Survey data revealed that this subgroup understood *barely* either as exhaustively as "just

recently" or with the dual understanding, only if they grew up in the Southwest of the U.S. or are a transplant to the Southwest and have spent a good deal of time in that region.

In order to gather sample data to support, refute, and/or muddy the understanding of this linguistic phenomenon, Przymus worked with his students in the Sociolinguistics of Bilingualism course to create a pilot study survey of 11 sentences that contained the word *barely*. Our study was informed by a similar study conducted by Guerrero (2014), who also sought to investigate salient features of Chicano English that may lead to negative or at least different assumptions of Chicano English speakers. One of Guerrero's findings also highlights the distinctive understanding of the word "barely." Our study adds more complexity to this work by expanding the geographically reach of Chicano English beyond Southern California. Students in Przymus' Sociolinguistics course disseminated an online survey with educators from their home communities, which resulted in respondents from four Southwestern states in the U.S. (Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas). All survey respondents were anonymized in order to de-identify responses for coding purposes. Survey respondents were asked to read each sentence and select the option that reflects what the sentence meant to them. For five of the 11 sentences, respondents were provided with "just recently happened," "almost did not happen, but then did," and "not sure" as the three options to choose from. Sentences that contained these three options included:

1. I barely finished my homework.
4. *I barely got to school.
6. *I barely got back from the trip.
8. I barely got the notes from my friend.
10. I barely handed in my homework.

In order to measure the frequency of another possible understanding/usage of the word *barely,* that of "to no great degree," we included six more sentences, with the following three options for meaning, "just recently happened," "by not a great degree," and "not sure." These sentences were:

2. I barely broke my arm.
3. I barely learned how to add and subtract fractions.
5. I barely worked on it with my group.
7. The teacher barely told me how to do it.
9. I barely heard how to do the assignment.
11. I barely understood the directions.

We sent the anonymous survey, which can be accessed (and taken if you choose) here https://goo.gl/forms/3b2r7GzSkpGDEWeP2 to friends, teachers, university professors, school district administrators, and university students in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The survey was completed by 86 individuals, with representation coming from respondents *currently* living in Texas (n = 54), California (n = 16), Arizona (n = 14), New Mexico (n = 2). We emphasize currently because many of the Texas and Arizona respondents are transplants from other parts of the country and we will below parse out the impact of simply living in a region on the change in one's linguistic figured world. Thirty out of the 54 respondents from the Texas data are transplants from other parts of the country and according to survey data have

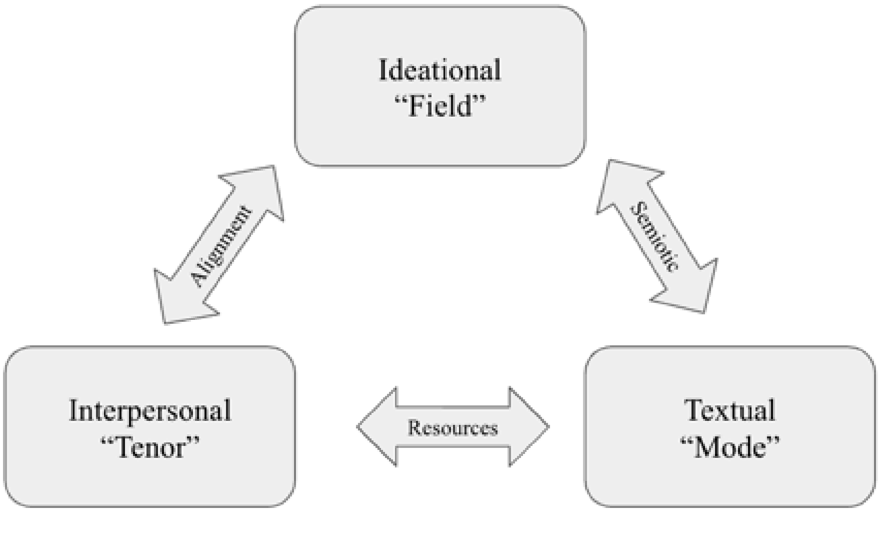
lived in Texas for as little as three years and as long as 15 years. Ten out of the 14 respondent from Arizona are transplants to Arizona, but according to survey data, have lived in Arizona for at least four years or more. By giving attention to the responses of transplants to the U.S. Southwest, we get a more nuanced understanding of whether or not the distinct, dual use of *barely* is purely an influence of the Spanish language, perhaps just an influence of living for long enough in a new linguistic figured world, or maybe both.

For the 11 sentences, we coded a (1) for the "just recently happened" response, a (2) for both the "almost did not happen, but then did" and the "by not a great degree" responses, and a (3) for the "not sure" response. A (T) for transplant was also used in the coding to mark respondents not originally from where they live now. Full coding analysis of this survey is included in Appendix A. Seventy-two percent (72%) of Texan participants responded with the "just recently" (1) option for most or at least some of the sentences. These results still leave a fairly large 28% or 15/54 current Texas residents that reported all (2) responses or (3) "not sure." Taking a look at the Texas transplant data gives a much more complex analysis, as 20 transplants reported mostly or at least some "just recently" responses and 12 transplants reported no "just recently" responses. California data illustrates the same majority of dual meaning, as 81% reported "just recently" (1) for most or at least some of the sentences. However, a deeper look at the California data shows less of a tendency, compared to Texas, to only understand *barely* as "just recently," as only 1/16 respondents reported almost all (1)s, compared to 13/54 Texans. Pilot data from Arizona also show a strong duality of meaning for the word *barely,* as 10/14 or 71% of participants rendered responses of "just recently" (1) for most or at least some of the sentences. In looking for trends, Arizona shows the strongest tendency to understand *barely* as "just recently," as 6/14 or 43% of respondents denoted this understanding for almost all of their responses. Looking at the transplant responses for Arizona, supports this tendency, but also illustrates the potential ambiguity and friction that the difference in meaning of this discourse marker may create, as six transplants marked (1)s, two marked all (2)s, and one transplant responded with all "not sure" (3) options. Little data were reported from New Mexican participants, but the two that responded both marked some (1) responses, indicating that this dual meaning for the word *barely* exists as well in New Mexico.

Finally, the result most curious, consistent, and perhaps most deserving of future research was the *marking denoted on sentences above, indicating some meaning of "returning." Regarding the two sentences highlighting this specific meaning on the survey, "I barely got to school" and "I barely got back from the trip," a higher percentage of respondents, across state, transplant, ethnicity, age, gender, occupation, etc., reported "just recently." Once again, by placing these on an SFL triangle of alignment of semiotic resources, differences in meaning and the potential consequences of these diverging interpretations, become more visible. Figure 5 below illustrates two potential ways of understanding *barely* and possible outcomes regarding identity and future communicative interactions at school.

Knowledge

1) Co-constructed knowledge of alarm: Oh no! "What happened? Are you ok?"
2) Co-constructed knowledge of duality of meaning. "What do you mean by that?"



Identity

Multiple potential identity positioning:
* Student makes excuses for being late
* Student needs help
* Student is an ambiguous communicator
* *Student uses English incorrectly because student is an ABLE student*

Use

"I *barely* got to school."

Figure 5. Two potential meanings and outcomes of using *barely* at school

We end the results section of the *barely* study with these interesting responses regarding arrival, because they vary greatly from what our own understanding of "I barely got to school" or "I barely got back from the trip" would be. This convinces us that there exists great relativity and meaning with this word and leaves us with the feeling that we have *barely* begun to investigate this.

What may seem to be a curious treatment and analysis of one single word, we believe could actually be a serious sociolinguistic topic for English teachers to consider. Teachers in schools, who have inhabited a different linguistic figured world, may believe the myth, that Fought's (2003) work aims to dispel, and fall into the trap of believing that the use of *barely* by young ABLE students in schools is simply "English influenced by the ***mistakes*** of speakers whose first language is Spanish" (Fought, 2003, p. 109, emphasis ours). It is not. The pilot study data above begins to deconstruct this myth by showing that non-Spanish-speaking, non-Hispanic individuals also possess a dual meaning of *barely* as part of their linguistic figured world and that this is the result of living in a region of the country, shaped by a historical tradition of bilingualism, language contact, and a living, strong dialect of Chicano English (Fought, 2003).

3. Teacher or T-Shirt

-Teacher?
-George, Please call me "Mrs. Roberts."
-Yes, Teacher.
-George, Please don't call me "Teacher."
-Yes, T- I mean, Mrs. Roberts.
-You see, George, It's a sign of respect to call me by my last name.
-Yes…Mrs. Roberts.
-Besides, when you say it, it sounds like "t-shirt." I don't want to turn into a t-shirt!
-Mrs. Roberts?
Yes, George"
-Please call me Jorge.
(Jane Medina, *My name is Jorge: On both sides of the river,* 2014, p. 28)

The final section of this paper is the briefest, but undoubtedly begs the most urgency for inspection, discussion, and action. As important as the topic raised in Jane Medina's poem above of getting students' names right is, (see https://www.mynamemyidentity.org for wonderful resources regarding this effort), it is the initial response of frustration and irritation that the teacher expresses in the poem that we address in this section. Every day in classrooms around the U.S., ABLE students address their teachers by simply saying "teacher," "mister," or "miss." In many settings this draws ire from their teachers as a speech act of disrespect. From my (Przymus') own experience teaching in schools in Nebraska, Iowa, Arizona, and Texas, in every context I have had teachers approach me and say something to the effect of "Steve, why do your ESL students insist on calling me 'teacher' or 'miss'? It is disrespectful. Can't they just learn my name?" Equally as strong is the reaction that teachers in México have when we tell them about this. Their strong response, however, is one of disbelief that U.S. teachers find these honorifics disrespectful. Herein lies an important example of a difference in linguistic figured worlds.

The impact of ABLE students calling their teachers "miss" or "teacher" has not been written about in academia. Focused internet searches about this sociolinguistic practice brings up Reddit and other non-academic websites that have chains of questions and responses, regarding opinions on the topic. Some researchers, such as Robinson (2010), have investigated "gendered authority" or the practice of male (typically secondary level) students calling their female teachers "miss" as a form of sexual harassment, disrespect, and the reification of socially constructed gendered power dynamics in the classroom. What we take up in this section is not that. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Rather than meaning to be disrespectful, ABLE students are calling their teachers Miss, teacher, or mister out of honor and respect, but it is being sociolinguistically misinterpreted by their teachers.

In order to gather sample pilot data on 1. the kinds of emotions that teachers feel when addressed as "teacher," "miss," or "mister," 2. what they have done, if anything to attempt to change this behavior, and 3. if their feelings have changed regarding this behavior over time, we included these questions on the same anonymous online survey reported on above. It should be noted, however, that this part of the survey contained the directions "to be completed only by instructional assistants, teachers, school administration assistants, people who work with kids at schools, etc." This limited the number of respondents and 72 of the 86 total respondents

completed this section. Similar to the *barely* part of the survey, we coded the *teacher* responses by ethnicity (Hispanic/non-Hispanic), state (Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, & California), and marked a (+) for a positive response to being addressed by these titles in the classroom, a (-) for negative responses, and either a (+/-) or a (-/+) for responses that were both positive and negative or negative first, then positive in nature. These (+/-) and (-/+) responses were typified by respondents reporting that they felt bothered/annoyed, but understood why students might address them in this way and did not get upset. Full survey coding for this section can be found in Appendix B.

Texas, again had the most responses and these can be summarized as mostly negative (-) 20/52 (39%) or expressions of both (+/-)(-/+) 20/52 (39%). Negative emotions reported by the respondents included: confusion, frustration, distant, disprefered, weird, annoyance, bothered, dehumanized, and irritation. A surprising result by ethnicity was that Hispanic respondents seemed to judge this behavior harsher than non-Hispanics and transplants to Texas. In fact, the only Texas Hispanic respondents that reported this behavior as positive were transplants to the state (from Cuba and México). Only 12/52 or 23% of total Texan respondents reported this student behavior as all positive. These positive responses, however, were quite positive and included words such as: respect, endearment, pride, happiness, optimistic, confidence, appreciative, flattered, recognized, nostalgia for México where Teacher or Miss is a common address, friendship, love, esteem, and unworthy. The dichotomy between positive and negative feelings surrounding this speech act is astounding. A similar dichotomy of feelings existed among the California respondents (N = 10), but to less extremes. The California responses can be summarized as mostly positive (+) 4/10 (40%) or expression of both (+/-)(-/+) 4/10 (40%). There were eight respondents from Arizona, and these were mostly positive (+) 5/8 63%, both (+/-)(-/+) 2/8, and only one all negative response. Only two participants from New Mexico provided a response to this section, one positive and one negative. It should be noted that the one positive response from New Mexico, came from a Texas transplant, who is also Hispanic. Regarding strategies for attempting to change this behavior (if seen as negative), sample responses that typify other responses include:

> I will answer them, but repeat back my name,"Ms. M".
> I corrected them but it didn't change anything. There are so many of them I gave up.

Other responses to this survey question included positive statements about this behavior and not wanting to change it and/or suggestions that shift the focus of addressing the behavior from what the students are doing wrong to how others (teachers, staff, and administrators) can understand and learn about this cultural behavior. Sample responses of these perceptions include,

> This happens every single day in my classes, multiple times a day. It does not bother me at all.
> I've never been referred to as Miss for a job and it felt important.
> Since I grew up in Spanish speaking country and how titles are respected, such as teacher, I would make sure other teachers that did not understand this learned about this in my school and district.
> Educating other teachers, staff and administrators.

One last time we utilize SFL to demonstrate how relativity and difference of meaning across the linguistic figured world of the U.S. Southwest can be manifested in the textual metafunction and how this mode of interaction can create diverse fields of knowledge and in turn have an

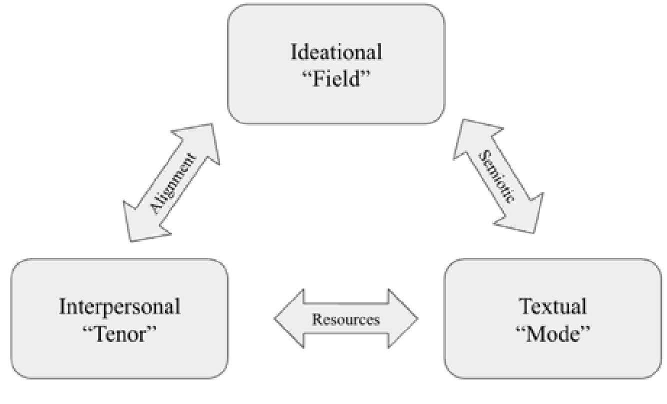
impact on the tenor of a classroom and the positioned identities of emergent bilingual youth in schools.

Knowledge

1. Co-constructed knowledge of disrespect, causing irritation, annoyance, & anger

or

2. Co-constructed knowledge of multicultural understanding-title of respect & endearment



Identity

Multiple potential identity positioning:
1. A rude, disrespectful student
2. A kind, respectful, student

Use

"Teacher?" "Miss?" "Mister?"

Figure 6. "Teacher" as a horrific or an honorific title

Conclusion

The above three topics, that embody what we believe linguistic figured worlds to be, afford English teachers, and all educators, with an opportunity to reflect on and examine their own understanding of language and how their own linguistic figured world may have been constructed. In this exploration of pilot studies, we have discussed how passive voice can be utilized by Spanish-speaking ABLE students, how one word can be interpreted and internalized by English speakers across multiple contexts, and how the names we use for our teachers can be both examples of cultural and linguistic demonstrations of respect. To improve the educational equity, opportunities, and overall experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse youth, misperceptions of language must be combatted so as not to transform into dismissive, harmful treatment of students that look, sound, and act differently.

This remains a topic that should be addressed in teacher education programs by both teaching future teachers about the potential different practices of addressing teachers that accompany diverse linguistic figured worlds and by encouraging them to learn more about the language used within their contexts. Sociolinguistics, as is evidenced across the other contributions to this special issue, is a powerful tool that educators and researchers can harness to learn about the intersection of language use and linguistic ideologies. As seen in our studies regarding passive voice, the semantics of "barely," and how teachers want to be addressed by students in the classroom, much is taken for granted in what teachers expect from their students.

Without explicit attention to cultural, racial, regional, etc., differences in language use, these assumption will persist - usually at the academic, identity, and social cost of ABLE students. It is our hope that this paper, at times light-hearted, but always critical, will inspire

other sociolinguists and English language teachers to further the ideas presented above and related concepts with aims to inform and improve multicultural education and English language teaching in the U.S. and around the world.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix A: Barely Pilot Study

1= Just happened; 2= Almost did not happen; 3= Not sure; *= Arriving (Male, Female) (T= transplant)

	Arizona	Texas	New Mexico	California	Other
Hispanic	F-T: 2,2,1,2,2,1,1*,1,1,1,1 F: 1,2,2,1*,2,1*,1,1,1,1,2	F- T(mex): 1,2,1,1*,1,1*,1,1,1,2,1 F-T(mex): 2,2,2,1*,1,3,2,3,2,1,2 F-T(cuba): 2,3,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2 F-T: 2,1,1,1*,1,1*,1,1,1,1,2 F:2,1,1,1*,2,1*,1,1, 1,1,2 F: 1,3,2,2,1*,1,3,3,1,2 F-T (California): 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,1,3,1,1,1, F: 2,3,1,2,2,2,1,3,1,2,1 F-T (Mexico): 2,1,1,2,1,1*,2,1,1,2,2 F: 2,2,3,2,2,2,2,3,2,2,2, F: 1,3,2,2,1,2,3,3,2,2,2,	F-T: 2,2,2,2,2,1*,2,2,2,2,2 F-: 2,2,1,2,2,2,2,3,2,2,2,	F-: 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,1,3,1,1,1,	México-M(Germany): 1,2,1,2,2,1*,1,1,2,1,2 M (Canada): 2,2,1,2,1,1*1,1,1,2,2,

	Arizona	Texas	New Mexico	California	Other
Non-Hispanic	M-T: 2,3,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2 F: 2,3,1,1,2,2,1*,1,1,1,1 F-T: 1,2,2,1*,1,1,*,1,1,1,1,2 F-T: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,3,1,3,2 F-T: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2 F-T: 2,2,1,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2 F-T: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2 F-T(NY): 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,1,2,2,2 F-T: 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,2,2,2,2 F-T: 3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3 M: 1,2,1,2,2,1*,1,1,2,1,2 F	F: 3,2,2,3,3,3,1,3,1,3,1 F-T: 2,2,2,2,2,1*2,2,2,2,2 F-college: 1,3,3,3,3,2,2,2,3,3,2 F-T: 1,2,1,2,2,1*,2,1,2,2,2 F: 1,3,2,3,3,3,3,3,3,1,3 F-T: 2,3,2,2,3,2,2,3,2,2,2 F-T: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2 F: 2,2,2,2,1*,2,2,2,2,2 F-T: 1,2,1,1*,2,1*,2,2,1,1,2 F: 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,1,2,1,2, F-T (New Mexico): 2,2,1,2,2,2,2,3,2,2,2, F: 2,3,3,3,3,1*,2,2,1,3,1 F-T:		F: 2,2,2,2,2,1*,2,2,2,2,2 F: 2,2,2,2,2,1*,2,2,2,2,2 F: 2,2,2,2,1,1*,2,2,1,2,2, M: 1,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,1,1, F: 1,3,3,1*,3,3,1,3,3,3,1, F-: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,3,2,2,1 F-: 1,2,2,2,2,2,2,3,1,2,2, F-:3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3 F: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, f-: 1,2,2,2,3,3,3,3,1,2,2, F-: 3,2,3,3,3,3,3,3,2,3,2, F-: 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,1,2,1,2,	F-T Zimbabwe: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2

	Arizona	Texas	New Mexico	California	Other
	1,1,1,2,1,1*,1,1,1, 2,2	3,3,3,2,1,1*,1,2,1, 2,1, F-T (North Carolina): 2,2,2,1*,2,2,2,1,2, 1,2, F: 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,2,2 ,2,2, F: 2,3,2,2,3,3,2,1,1,2, 2, F: 1,2,1,2,2,1*,2,2,2, 2,2, F: 1,3,3,2,2,3,1,2,1,1, 1, F: 1,1,3,1*,2,3,1,3,1, 3,1 F: 1,1,2,1*,2,1*,2,1,2 ,1,2 F: 3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,1,3, 1, F-T: 3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3, 3, F-T (Missouri): 1,2,2,3,2,1*,1,2,1, 1,1, F-T (California): 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,3,2,2, 1 F-T (California): 1,2,2,2,2,2,2,3,1,2, 2, F-T (California): 1,2,2,2,2,2,2,16,1, 2,2,		F: 1,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,2,2 ,1,2, F: 1,2,1,2,2,1*,2,2,2, 2,1,2, F-: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, 2, F-): 1,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,1,2 ,1,2	

	Arizona	Texas	New Mexico	California	Other
		F: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, 2, F-T (Illinois): 2,3,3,2,2,3,2,2,2,2, 2, F-T (Ohio): 3,3,2,2,3,2,1,2,1,3, 1, F: 3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3, 2, f-T(California): 1,2,2,2,3,3,3,3,1,2, 2, F-T (California): 3,2,3,3,3,3,3,3,2,3, 2, F-T (California): 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,1,2 ,1,2, F: 1,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,2,2 ,1,2, F: 1,2,1,2,2,1*,2,2,2, 2,1,2, F-T (California): 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, 2, F-T (Illinois): 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, 2, F-T(Belgium): 2,2,2,2,2,1*,2,3,2, 2,2, F-T(California): 1,2,2,1*,2,1*,2,1,2 ,1,2			

	Arizona	Texas	New Mexico	California	Other
		F: 1,1,1,1*,1,1*,1,1,1,1,1, F-T(Rhode Island): 2,2,2,1*,2,1*,1,2,1,2,1, F-T (New York): 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, F-T(New Jersey): 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, F-T (Colorado): 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, F-T (Illinois): 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2, M: 2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,2,			

Appendix B: *Teacher, Miss, Mister* Pilot Study

	Arizona	Texas	New Mexico	California	Other
Hispanic		F-T: - F- T (Cuba): + F-T: + F: - F: - F: - F-T (México): + F: - F: -/+	F-T: + F: -	F: + F: - F: -	
Non-Hispanic	F-T: - M-T: + F: + F-T: + M: + F-T (NY): +/- F-T: + F+/-	F: - F-T: + F: - F-T: + F-T: + F-T: -/+ F-T: +/- F: - F-T (New Mexico): - F-T (California): +		F: +/- F: + F: + f: -/+ F: + F:-/+ F: -/+	F-T (zim): -/+

	Arizona	Texas	New Mexico	California	Other
		F: - F-T: +/- F-T (North Carolina): + F: - F: -/+ F: + F: -/+ F: + F: +/- F: + F-T: - F-T (Missouri): -/+ F-T (California): - F-T (California): - F: - F-T (Illinois): - F-T (Ohio): -/+ F: - f-T(California): -/+ F-T (California): + F-T (California): -/+ F: - F: - F-T (California): -/+ F-T (Illinois): - F-T(Belgium): -/+ F-T(California): -/+ F: -/+ F-T(Rhode Island): -/+ F-T (New York): -/+ F-T(New Jersey): -/+ F-T (Colorado): -/+ F-T (Illinois): -/+ M: -/+			

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