

Comparing Dominican Linguistic (In)security in the Dominican Republic and in the Diaspora

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1. Introduction

Minority immigrant groups are frequently confronted with negative stereotypes in their new home countries. Such prejudicial notions usually stem from historical, socio-cultural, socioeconomic, and racial differences that can also be reflected in the host country's negative attitudes towards the minority's language(s) or accent. Moreover, these negative attitudes can affect immigrant's linguistic insecurity and self-perception. The aim of this study is to examine the possible emergence of linguistic security among émigrés as compared to those remaining in their native country. An ideal setting for this investigation can be found in Puerto Rico. Over the last several decades an increased influx of immigrants from the Dominican Republic has led to the existence of a growing minority of Dominicans and consequently to increased contact between these two groups on this Caribbean island.

Previous research has established that (i) Dominican Spanish is frequently disparaged, and (ii) Dominicans themselves do not think highly of their variety, believing it to be less "correct" than other varieties spoken in Spain and Latin America (García et al. 1988, Toribio 2000b, Alfaraz 2002). Moreover, the low socioeconomic status of the Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico and existing prejudicial notions vis-à-vis the immigrant community (Mejía Pardo 1993, Duany 2005) beg the question of whether and to what extent Puerto Ricans' negative perceptions of and attitudes towards Dominican Spanish can affect Dominican identity and linguistic insecurity.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the main issue affecting Dominican integration in Puerto Rico as potential sources of linguistic insecurity. Section 3 offers the details of the study, including participants, materials, and procedure. A presentation of results follows in Section 4. Section 5 contextualizes the results and the implications of the study.

2. Linguistic insecurity among Dominicans in the Diaspora

It has been widely established that low socioeconomic standing and social marginalization of immigrant groups frequently give rise to linguistic insecurity (e.g., Demirci and Kleiner 2002). In the case of Dominican Spanish, it was shown that Dominicans evidence linguistic insecurity vis-à-vis other varieties of Spanish. The development of linguistic insecurity among Dominicans would not be particularly surprising given the fact that the Dominican vernacular is stigmatized and undervalued even in the Dominican Republic (Toribio 2000a). The dialectal variants spoken near the Haitian border are especially disparaged based on a perceived similarity to Haitian Creole (Bullock & Toribio 2006).

One fact that appears to be at odds with the above observations is a high degree of language loyalty among Dominicans living in the Diaspora. Dominicans living in the U.S., for instance, have been shown to be highly language-retentive, maintaining dialectal innovations and particularities, even while in contact with more conservative and more prestigious Spanish dialects (Duany 1998,

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Toribio 2000b, Duany 2005, Bailey 2000, Otheguy et al. 2007). The continued use of Dominican vernacular in this immigrant situation speaks to the high intra-community value of language as an identity marker (Tabouret-Keller 1997). Language loyalty among Dominican immigrants reflects a strong loyalty to the Dominican homeland and the speakers' need to identify as Dominican and distinguish themselves from other Spanish speakers.

2.1. Socioeconomic profile of Dominican immigrants

Although migration between the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico has existed since pre-Colombian times, economically motivated migration from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico increased considerably since 1961. Between 1966 and 2002, a total of 118,999 immigrants from the Dominican Republic were allowed entry to Puerto Rico. This number represents about 12% of the Dominican immigration to the U.S. in the years between 1961 and 2002 (Duany 2005: 246). Data on the regional origin of Dominicans living in Puerto Rico reveals a bifurcation between the capital Santo Domingo and the northern Dominican region of the Cibao (Duany 1998). Other areas of origin are the southeast of the Dominican Republic and specifically the cities of La Romana and San Pedro de Macorís. Although the majority of the immigrants come from urban areas, others have rural origins.

Today, Dominicans are by far the largest ethnic minority in Puerto Rico. Recent census data taken in 2005 (2005 American Community Survey) indicates that a total of 66,116 Dominicans live in Puerto Rico. In addition, an unknown number of Dominicans live in Puerto Rico illegally. The residential distribution of Dominicans in Puerto Rico lies mainly in San Juan and its suburbs (61,264 Dominicans). Other Dominican communities can be found in Carolina and Bayamón, as well as in smaller towns all over the island (Duany 2005). The majority of Dominican immigrants come from the lower middle sectors of Dominican society (2005 American Community Survey, Castro and Boswell 2002, Hernández 2002, Levitt 2001). Many Dominican immigrants find employment in domestic service, retail trade, and construction (Duany 1998, Hernández 2002, 2005 American Community Survey). Very few have found professional and/or managerial employment (Duany 2005: 253). Similarly to many Dominicans in the mainland U.S. who remain confined to the lower stratum of the society, census data from Puerto Rico reveals that also on this island many Dominican immigrants do not experience trends of upward social mobility (Duany 1998, 2005).

2.2. Perceptions of socioeconomic and racial differences

A particularly important factor in the study of language attitudes and perceptions is the fact that often dialectal differences are tied to social differences between immigrants and the majority group. For instance in the Caribbean, Spanish speakers' lower socioeconomic status leads to the identification of their variety as "less standard" or "less correct". Several studies have found evidence of a correlation between economic development and evaluation of regional speech. For example, in her study of Miami Cubans' perceptions of varieties of Spanish, Alfaraz (2002) found that Southern American variants are attributed a higher prestige than Caribbean ones. However, she states that ratings of dialectal differences can only in part be explained by regional patterns. More specifically, Alfaraz found a significant correlation between ratings of "correctness" of particular variants and the gross domestic product of the countries in which they are spoken. (A notable exception is Puerto Rico, which has one of the highest gross domestic products among the Spanish-speaking regions in the study. The author posited that the perception of Puerto Ricans as poor among Miami Cubans could be due to the low socioeconomic status of Puerto Ricans living in the U.S.) Such results underline the fact that speakers' perceptions of dialectal variants are susceptible to socially imposed hierarchies of prestige and power.

In addition to their low socioeconomic status, Dominicans in Puerto Rico are also exposed to negative public perceptions based on perceived racial differences. Although both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are largely of mixed racial background (comprising indigenous, European, and African ancestry), Puerto Ricans have been found to regard themselves as "whiter" than Dominicans, who they

regard as “black” (Duany 2005).¹ That is, within the context of immigration Dominicans are forced to reevaluate these notions of racial identity (Duany 1998, Bailey 2000).

The picture that emerges of Dominicans living in Puerto Rico is that of a minority group that finds itself at the bottom of the social (and racial) echelons of Puerto Rican society. Although this statement surely cannot be extended to each individual member of the minority group, it is likely to contribute to the image that many Puerto Ricans have of Dominican immigrants living on their island. This negative image has been expressed through intense stigmatization, prejudice, and discrimination. Puerto Rican folklore often depicts Dominicans as lazy, uneducated, dirty, undesirable, and dishonest (Mejía Pardo 1993, Duany 2005). Popular television and radio programs have been found to portray Dominicans as comic, ignorant, and vulgar (de la Rosa Abreu 2002). These negative attitudes have also been found to be extended to Puerto Rican perceptions of Dominican Spanish as “incomprehensible” (Duany 1998). Within this context, the issue of linguistic differences is likely to take on a more symbolic status, in particular since Dominican and Puerto Rican Spanish are linguistically very similar and reveal only few characteristic differences. These will be presented in the following section.

2.3. Linguistic differences

Puerto Rican and Dominican Spanish are closely related and differ solely in a small number of linguistic features. Some of the main characteristic of Caribbean Spanish include the aspiration or loss of syllable-final /s/ (*la[h] casa[ø]*, ‘the houses’), the velarization of /n/ (*e[ŋ] casa*, ‘in (the) house’), and the use of overt pronouns (*Tú me avisa cuando tú esté lista*. ‘Let me know when you are ready.’) (Lipski 1994).

Characteristic of Dominican Spanish is the almost complete erosion of /s/ in coda position (*la[ø] muchacha[ø]*, ‘the girls’), the use of *ello* ‘it’ as an overt expletive (*Ello hay gente*. ‘There are people.’), and double negation (*No lo sé no*. ‘I don’t know’) (e.g., Henríquez Ureña 1940, Jiménez Sabater 1975, Toribio 2002). A very salient trait of Puerto Rican Spanish is the velar articulation of the /r/ in syllable-initial position. At the lexical level there are also differences between the dialects of the island. For instance ‘passion fruit’ is termed *parcha* in Puerto Rico and *chinola* in the Dominican Republic, likewise ‘goat’ is either called *cabra* in Puerto Rico or *chivo* in the Dominican Republic (e.g., Navarro Tomás 1948, López Morales 1992).

In sum, there is a high degree of similarity between Dominican and Puerto Rican Spanish. However, within the context of Dominican immigration to Puerto Rico a number of socioeconomic differences arise between both speaker groups that are influential in overall attitudes toward Dominicans and Dominican Spanish. In the ensuing section the details for the present study will be delineated.

3. The present study

The aim of the present study is to investigate the effects of negative attitudes towards Dominican Spanish and prejudicial notions towards Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico on Dominicans’ perceptions of and attachment to their own dialect as well as their attitudes towards other variants. To this end a survey was completed by Dominican participants in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico with the aim of comparing the results.

¹ Ironically, Haitians living in the Dominican Republic are also subject to this process whereby they are categorized as “black”, African, and uneducated voodoo-practitioners, whereas the official discourse classifies Dominicans as “white” or “indio”, Hispanic, and Catholic (Duany 1998: 152). As a consequence many Haitians living in the Dominican Republic suffer intense stigmatization and prejudice (Duany 1998).

3.1. Goals and guiding questions

The present study will be guided by the following questions:

Question 1: Is there evidence of linguistic insecurity among Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico as a result of Puerto Rican attitudes towards Dominicans and Dominican Spanish?

Question 2: Is there evidence that Dominicans' experiences in Puerto Rico affect their relationship towards Dominican Spanish and the individuals' identity as Dominicans?

3.2. Participants and data collection

The project included a total of 96 participants across two groups: Dominicans living in Puerto Rico and Dominicans living in the Dominican Republic (Table 1). The respondents for the linguistic insecurity and identity survey were selected by stratified random sampling (Milroy & Gordon 2003, Tagliamonte 2006). This also allowed for the stratification of gender as well as of region of origin for the immigrant population to Puerto Rico. A possible limitation to the format of the questionnaire is the fact that the participants from the Dominican Republic were not asked whether they had previously traveled to Puerto Rico, which represents a possible confounding factor and that will be taken into account in the interpretation of the results.²

Table 1: Participants in Survey on Linguistic Insecurity/Identity

	Dominican Participants			
	in DR (n=49)		in PR (n=47)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
# per gender group (and percentage per group)	28 (57%)	21 (43%)	24 (51%)	23 (49%)
Ages	20-66	18-82	18-83	24-67

Data collection took place in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. In the Dominican Republic participants were recruited in the capital Santo Domingo (n=40) and also in the Cibao, a rural area in north-western Dominican Republic (n=9). The regions of origin of the participants interviewed in Santo Domingo were the metropolitan area of Santo Domingo (n=30), the southeastern Dominican Republic (Higüey, El Seibo, San Pedro de Macorís) (n=5), the central province of San Juan (e.g., Elías Piñas) (n=2), and the central western province of La Vega (n=3). Crucially, all participants pertained to the geographic regions and socioeconomic strata that form part of the migratory population.

In Puerto Rico, participants were recruited in the larger metropolitan area of San Juan, particularly in barrios mainly populated by Dominican immigrants: Santurce (Barrio Obrero and Mercado de Santurce) as well as in the Mercado area of Río Piedras (n=47). The participants were originally from the capital, Santo Domingo (n=11), from the eastern and southern regions of the Dominican Republic (n=27), and from the northern region of the Cibao (n=9). All participants completed the same survey which will be presented in the ensuing section.

² I would like to thank my reviewers for pointing this out to me.

3.3. Materials

The survey consisted of ten items which addressed the perception of dialectal and racial differences between Dominicans/Dominican Spanish and Puerto Ricans/Puerto Rican Spanish and evidence of linguistic insecurity. The statements (1.-2., 4., 6.-7.) were adopted from a smaller study (Suárez Büdenbender 2008) that investigated both Puerto Rican and Dominican attitudes towards their own variety and that of the other group. In the earlier study, much like in the present study, the native variety of the speaker was compared to that of the “other group” members. For this reason, statement (1) compares Dominican Spanish (the native variety of the participant) to Puerto Rican Spanish. The remaining statements were created to address issues of linguistic insecurity and identity. All statements were evaluated on 7-point *Likert* scales which allow for the indication of non agreement (1-3), agreement (5-7), or for the expression of neutrality (4).

Also, included in the presentation of results are some of the statements made by participants during the interviews. These qualitative results serve to underline the results found in the item analysis.

Table 2: Overview of Survey items

Items on dialectal and racial differences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I believe that Dominican Spanish is better than Puerto Rican Spanish. 2. I believe that Dominican Spanish is better than other dialects of Spanish. 3. There is a difference in skin color between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans.
Items on Language Insecurity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Speaking with my native accent is very important to me. It reflects who I am and where I come from. 5. I don't think it is fair that other Spanish speakers discriminate against our Dominican accent. 6. I believe that the Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic is not very correct. 7. I believe that Spanish spoken in other countries is more correct than Dominican Spanish.
Items on Dominican Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. The Dominican culture is very important to me and my identity as Dominican. 9. I am very proud to be Dominican. 10. Sometimes when Dominicans live outside of the Dominican Republic, e.g. in Puerto Rico, they don't speak with a “pure” Dominican accent anymore. This indicates to me that they are not Dominicans anymore.

3.4. Procedure

The survey was presented as part of an interview, in which the researcher introduced the items to be rated. During the interview participants were instructed to indicate their agreement on a 7-point scale with “1” indicating strong disagreement and “7” indicating strong agreement. For those participants with little or no formal education, a visual aid was created in the form of a laminated representation of the 7-point scale. The interviews were recorded in their entirety with the permission of the participants. Recordings were made with a Marantz PMD 620. Interview sessions lasted between 15 to 45 minutes. Later on, the quantitative data was coded and submitted to statistical analysis using SPSS allowing for a comparison of means. The qualitative data was transcribed. The results of the analysis are discussed in the ensuing section.

4. Results and discussion

This section will describe the results of the Survey on Linguistic (In)Security and Identity. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gain insight into possible changes in Dominican identity expression and linguistic (in)security that could result from the experience of immigration to Puerto

Rico. To this end, the mean responses given for each item and each group of speakers (Dominicans in the Dominican Republic vs. Dominicans in Puerto Rico) were calculated and compared. The statistic procedure used to compare the means for two independent groups were Independent Sample T-Tests. These were performed for each item. The means and results for each T-test are presented below.

4.1. Results on dialectal and phenotypical differences

The perceived dialectal differences between Dominican and Puerto Rican Spanish by Dominicans living in the Dominican Republic and those living as immigrants in Puerto Rico are reflected in item #1 (“I believe Dominican Spanish is better than Puerto Rican Spanish.”) and item #2 (“I believe that Dominican Spanish is better than other dialects of Spanish.”). The third item in this series focuses on perceived racial differences between speakers of both dialects of Spanish. An overview of the three items and the overall means given by each immigration group are represented in Table 3.

Table 3: Overall results of perceived dialectal/phenotypical differences

	Dominicans in DR n=49		Dominicans in PR n=47	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Item #1 (DS better than PRS)	5.24	2.04	4.36	1.97
Item #2 (DS better than other dialects)	5.37	1.98	4.15	2.05
Item #3 (Diff. in skin color)	5.16	2.00	3.77	2.46

The overall means reveal that among Dominicans in the Dominican Republic the comparison of Dominican Spanish with Puerto Rican Spanish in particular (item #1) and other varieties in general (item #2) is slightly positive in favor of Dominican Spanish but decreases in the post-immigration group. With respect to item #2 (“Dominican Spanish better than other dialects of Spanish.”), the means for the “Dominican in DR” group are quite positive (above 5.0), however, the post-immigration group only reaches a mean of 4.15. For each item, this difference in rating is statistically significant. For the item #1 an Independent Samples T-Test had the following results: $t(95, 96) = 2.16, p < .05$. The T-Test for item #2 showed a highly significant difference between both groups: $t(94, 96) = 2.96, p < .01$.

Based on the results for item #1, immigration does have a statistically significant effect by which Dominican immigrants are less likely to believe that their variety is better than Puerto Rican Spanish. This outcome is not necessarily an indication of an increase in linguistic insecurity. Rather, it is possible that through contact with Puerto Rican Spanish, Dominicans have become aware of the fact that both varieties share many similarities. This interpretation is supported by the statements made during the interviews in response to item #1. The equality of both varieties is a sentiment frequently expressed during the interviews, much like in the following extract offered by one of the Dominican participants in San Juan:

- (1) *No, no puede haber diferencia porque somos todos iguales, somos humanos...hablamos el mismo lenguaje y todo...y somos muy cercanos...la República Dominicana y Puerto Rico son unos pueblos más cercanos que hay. ‘No, there cannot be any difference because we are all equal, we are human beings...we speak the same language and everything...and we are close...the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico are countries that are as close as you can get.’* (male, 55, brick layer, from Cibao)

Moreover, the statistically significant results for item #2 indicate that Dominican immigrants do not believe that their variety of Spanish is better than other dialects of Spanish. It is possible that the experience of immigration and the resulting contact with other varieties has caused the speakers to reconsider the standing of their native dialect in comparison to other dialects. Among those

participants in San Juan who believed in the notion that other varieties of Spanish were “better” than their native dialect, the dialects mentioned included varieties spoken along the Caribbean coast, such as Venezuela and Cuba. The latter country, in particular, was noted for its “good” Spanish as were other Central and South American varieties. Frequently, the definition of “good” Spanish was related to access to higher education and the idea of a more standardized, more accurate pronunciation:

- (2) *Entonces, sí, el español de España es más fino...* ‘Well then yes, the Spanish spoken in Spain is nicer.’ (female, 40, cleaning lady, from Santo Domingo)
- (3) *Hay muchísimo, los venezolanos...todo Centro América habla más perfecto, habla con la ‘s’ donde va. Nosotros...lo más que estudiemos quitamos la ‘s’ porque no importa. Pero por allá en todos estos países de Centro América ponen la ‘s’ donde va. Y hablan más perfecto que nosotros.* ‘There are many, the Venezuelans...all of Central America speaks more perfectly, they place the ‘s’ where it belongs. As for us...as much as we study we [still] leave off the ‘s’ because it is not important. But over there in those Central American countries they place the ‘s’ where it belongs. And they speak more perfectly than we do.’ (male, 53, electrician, from La Romana)
- (4) *En Cuba. Los cubanos son más intelectuales.* ‘In Cuba. Those Cubans are more intellectual.’ (male, 34, cook, from Santo Domingo)

Also interesting are immigration-induced changes in mean ratings for the item #3 that taps into perceived racial differences between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. Within the overall results the mean ratings suggest a change in perception for those participants who immigrated to Puerto Rico. The difference between both ratings is highly significant as shown in the result of the Independent Samples T-Test: $t(94, 96) = 3.06, p = <.01$. Much like the results for #1 and #2, the difference in ratings pre- and post-immigration for #3 could be related to an increased contact between both speaker groups. Several comments made by participants support this interpretation:

- (5) *Este, todos somos caribeños, los todos tenemos la misma mezcla...estoy absolutamente...que todos tienen la misma...procedencia...* ‘Well, we all are Caribbeans, we all have the same mixture...I am absolutely...that all have the same...origin.’ (male, 40, hair dresser, from Santo Domingo)
- (6) *Bueno mayormente hay más gente aquí clarita pero hay morenos también...hay de todo.* ‘Well, by and large there are more light-skinned people here but there are black people as well. You can find anything here.’ (female, 25, student, from Santo Domingo)
- (7) *No hay nada de diferente. En Boricua hay blancos, y más... como en la Dominicana.* ‘There are no differences. Among Puerto Ricans there are whites and more...just like in the Dominican.’ (female, 37, market seller, from Santo Domingo)

In conclusion, the results of the inferential analysis confirm that immigration does affect Dominican immigrants’ perceptions of their native dialect vis-à-vis other dialectal variants significantly. However, this fact alone cannot solely be attributed to an emergence of linguistic security on the part of the immigrants. The means given for items #1 and #2 could also be the result of exposure to a dialectal variety very close to their own. Both Dominican and Puerto Rican Spanish are stigmatized Caribbean Spanish varieties. Therefore, it might be difficult for Dominicans to consider either one of the dialects as “better Spanish” than the other.

Similarly, immigration has had a significant effect on the perception of racial differences between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. It is possible, that Dominicans in the Dominican Republic perceive Puerto Ricans as “whiter” due to the island’s political status as a U.S. Commonwealth. Clearly, upon living in Puerto Rico, this perception is not maintained by the participants in the study.

The results of items #1-#3 allow interesting insights into the changes that immigration incurs on the perception of dialectal and racial differences. In how far immigration has an effect on the linguistic insecurity and identity of these migrants will be discussed in the following section.

4.2. Linguistic insecurity and identity

Recall that items #4 (“Speaking with my native accent is very important to me. It reflects who I am and where I come from.”), #5 (“I don’t think it is fair that other Spanish speakers discriminate against our Dominican accent.”), #6 (“I believe that the Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic is not very correct.”), and #7 (“I believe that Spanish spoken in other countries is more correct than Dominican Spanish.”) reference linguistic insecurity within this questionnaire. Items #8 (“The Dominican culture is very important to me and my identity as Dominican.”), #9 (“I am very proud to be Dominican.”), and item #10 (“Sometimes when Dominicans live outside of the Dominican Republic, e.g. in Puerto Rico, they don’t speak with a “pure” Dominican accent anymore. This indicates to me that they are not Dominicans anymore.”) tap into possible changes in the relationship between language and identity due to immigration. As mentioned in Section 2, Dominicans have revealed linguistic insecurity vis-à-vis other dialects, but Dominican immigrants have also been found to value the correlation between language and identity in the Diaspora. An overview of these items and the overall means given by each immigration group are represented in Table 4.

Table 4: Overall Results of Linguistic Insecurity and Identity Survey

	Dominicans in DR n=49		Dominicans in PR n=47	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Item #4 (Importance of native accent)	6.57	.82	6.79	.95
Item #5 (Discrimination against DS)	5.45	2.34	6.32	1.82
Item #6 (Correctness of DS)	4.47	2.42	4.55	2.05
Item #7 (Other dialects more correct)	4.67	2.18	4.53	2.18
Item #8 (National Pride and Identity)	6.88	.33	6.96	.92
Item #9 (Pride to be Dominican)	6.94	.32	6.87	.54
Item #10 (Loss of Dominican identity with loss of accent)	3.35	2.46	1.72	1.31

Overall mean ratings for item #4 indicate strong agreement with this statement in both immigration groups. These results reveal that for immigrants and non-immigrants alike, Dominican Spanish is highly salient for the realization of Dominican identity at home and abroad. The results for item #5 referencing discrimination against Dominican Spanish reveal a stronger reaction towards the issue of linguistic discrimination among Dominicans living in Puerto Rico than those interviewed in the Dominican Republic.

Items #6 and #7 reference the correctness of Dominican Spanish overall and vis-à-vis other dialects. Dominicans in the Dominican Republic as well as those in Puerto Rico rate the agreement with these statements within the “neutral” range, not indicating agreement or disagreement with the statements. These results confirm the existence of linguistic insecurity in the Dominican Republic but this does not increase due to immigration to Puerto Rico.

Items #8 and #9 received high ratings in both pre- and post-immigration groups. Clearly, the participants feel that Dominican culture and national pride should be maintained at home and as

immigrants abroad. Therefore, immigration does not appear to have an effect on Dominican pride and/or the role of Dominican culture for these speakers.

The mean ratings from the overall group as well as from the gender groups reveal interesting results for item #10, referencing a change in accent through immigration. All participants (pre- and post-immigration) disagreed with the statement that the loss of Dominican accent through immigration incurred a loss of Dominican identity.

With respect to the comparison of items on Linguistic Insecurity and Identity between both groups, only two items showed significant differences in means. The means for the remaining five items were not significantly different. More in detail, the means for both groups for item # 5 were found to be significantly different with $t(94, 96) = -2.04, p < .05$. Prior to immigration, Dominicans agreed quite strongly, that to discriminate against speakers of Dominican Spanish is not acceptable (mean 5.45). The immigrant group increased in their agreement (mean 6.32). Therefore, Dominicans in Puerto Rico were significantly more sensitive towards prejudicial notions disparaging Dominican Spanish. This result can be attributed to the high degree of discrimination that speakers of this variety face in Puerto Rico. Evidence of discrimination may be found in the accounts that the participants give of every-day encounters with Puerto Ricans:

- (8) *Bueno, por ejemplo aquí, si tú vas a una fila en un sitio para buscar un documento en una oficina que pertenece a este país y se dan cuenta por el acento que somos dominicanos nos maltratan inmediatamente...* ‘Well, over here for example, if you’re standing in a line in a place where you receive official document, in an office that belongs to this country and they realize through our accent that we are Dominicans, they will mistreat us immediately.’ (male, 53, electrician, from La Romana)

Other participants give examples of comments and ridicule that Puerto Ricans utter when hearing Dominicans speak which often are expressed in the form of stereotypical imitations of Dominican Spanish:

- (9) *Sí, lo he escuchado...la imitación por ejemplo.... “poique”.* ‘Yes, what I’ve heard...is imitation, for example “poique”.’ (male, 43, manager/student, from Santo Domingo)
- (10) *¿Qué dicen? Pues nos imitan así con “oh, oh, mira...” “que vaina”, “oh, pero qué te pasa”, “oh, que es la vaina”.* ‘What do they say? Well, they imitate us with “oh, oh, look”, “that thing”, “oh, but what’s going on”, “oh man that thing.” ’ (male, 50, cook, from San Cristóbal)
- (11) *Porque es una manera como de...tratar con racismo a, a los dominicanos y una forma de desprecio al, a la manera en cual que la hablamos. Que lo hacen porque quizás porque se creen superiores en todo el uso casi de las palabras que son mejores hablantes del español que nosotros simplemente porque el acento es diferente y porque tenemos diferentes, eh, modismos de hablar.* ‘Because it is a way to ... deal with racism towards, towards Dominicans and an expression of disparagement to, towards the way in which we speak. They do it maybe because they believe they are superior in the use of almost all words, and that they are better speakers of Spanish, that we simply, because the accent is different and because we have, eh, other ways of expressing ourselves.’ (male, 40, hair dresser, from Santo Domingo)

A highly significant difference was found in the difference in means for item #10 with $t(94, 96) = 4.05, p < .01$. Dominicans in the DR did not feel that the loss of the accent as a result of immigration reflected any loss of Dominican identity. This tendency is maintained and increases among the immigrant population among which Dominican Spanish is held in high esteem. Loss of the accent through processes of assimilation in the new country does not incur a loss of Dominican identity neither in the eyes of fellow immigrants, nor among those who remain in the Dominican Republic. Among those who elaborated on this issue was the following participant:

- (12) *No, eso significa que eso ... que estar aquí tenemos que llamar las cosas por su nombre, y nos acostumbramos a llamarlas así. Cuando llegamos allá lo llamamos así...se acaba el tiempo y llamamos las cosas como las llamamos allá...mientras tanto...estamos con eso...la diferencia que decimos ...* ‘No, that means that being here we need to call things by their name and we get used to calling them like that. When we come here we call them like this...times goes on and we call the things the way they are called here, meanwhile...we are left with the difference that we talked about.’ (male, 53, electrician, from La Romana)

The remaining comparisons did not reveal significant differences. Therefore, by and large immigration showed no significant effect on the Dominican linguistic insecurity (items #4, #6-#7) and identity (items #8 and #9). The results of the T-Tests are as follows: item #4 (“Speaking with my native accent is very important to me. It reflects who I am and where I come from.”) $t(94, 96) = -.138, p = .855$, item #7 (“I believe that Spanish spoken in other countries is more correct than Dominican Spanish.”) $t(94, 96) = .318, p = .751$, item #8 (“The Dominican culture is very important to me and my identity as Dominican.”) $t(94, 96) = -1.25, p = .212$, and item #9 (“I am proud to be Dominican.”) $t(94, 96) = .735, p = .465$.

Clearly, the experience of immigration to Puerto Rico has little effect on Dominican linguistic insecurity as a comparison of means did not reveal significant differences. Also, Dominican identity appears by and large unaffected. The following section will discuss the results within the context of Dominican migration to Puerto Rico and compare these present results to previously established patterns of Dominican behavior in the Diaspora.

5. Summary of results and implications

Returning to the guiding questions stated earlier, immigration and resulting contact with Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican Spanish have an effect on Dominican perception of dialectal and racial differences. Whereas, Dominicans in the Dominican Republic thought that Dominican Spanish is “better” than Puerto Rican Spanish, daily contact with Puerto Rican Spanish has made Dominican immigrants aware that the differences between dialects are less substantial and they do not perceive one dialect as more prestigious than the other. Likewise, perceptions of phenotypical differences between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans that could be found among Dominicans in the Dominican Republic decreased substantially after immigration. Based on the data presented, Dominican immigrants do not believe that a person’s nationality can be determined by skin color alone.

The importance of the native accent and its reflection of Dominican nationality and identity remain salient in all groups pre- and post-immigration. A particularly strong effect of immigration is evidenced in the strong rejection of discrimination of Dominican Spanish, which is disparaged by all participants and increases due to the immigration experience. Otherwise, Dominican identity and national pride remain of high value for both the Dominicans living at home and those living in Puerto Rico. Dominican nationality and self-definition are shown to be resilient throughout the immigration experience. Definitions of Dominican identity include, but do not hinge on, the use of Dominican Spanish. Linguistic accommodation to Puerto Rican Spanish is not considered to affect an individual’s national identity, but rather is solely interpreted as a consequence of immigration and not a rejection of Dominican identity. Therefore, although immigrants value Dominican Spanish as part of their heritage, the maintenance of a Dominican identity is not solely determined by their use or non-use of the native variant.

As established previously (e.g., Toribio 2000b, Bailey 2000) Dominicans are aware of the cross-dialectal stigmatization of Dominican Spanish and the vernacular in particular. Linguistic insecurity is also reflected in the results of the present study. Presently, Dominican Spanish was not perceived to be significantly more “correct” than Puerto Rican Spanish or other dialects of Spanish among Dominicans living in the Dominican Republic. This tendency decreased among immigrants living in Puerto Rico. Crucially, the data emerging from this study reveals that existing linguistic insecurity does not increase significantly among émigrés in Puerto Rico. These results are surprising considering the existence of social and linguistic prejudice within Puerto Rican society (Duany 2005). However, simultaneously

among Dominican émigrés, items referencing language and culture are rated highly suggesting that linguistic identity for these speakers correlates strongly with national identity. The dichotomy emerging from the data falls in line with previous research on linguistic insecurity and identity among Dominicans living in the U.S. (Toribio 2000b, Bailey 2005).

One possible reason for the stability of linguistic insecurity among Dominicans in Puerto Rico could be the stigmatization of Puerto Rican Spanish cross-dialectally and the existence of linguistic insecurity among Puerto Ricans themselves (Zentella 1990). Contact between two stigmatized varieties of Spanish might not incur the same level of linguistic pressure on the minority group as contact between a prestigious and a stigmatized variety. Within this context, it would be of interest for future studies to directly compare the level of linguistic insecurity between Dominicans in Puerto Rico and Dominicans living in e.g. Spain or Mexico.

Moreover, for the further development of this discussion it would be important to investigate Puerto Rican attitudes and perceptions of Dominicans and Dominican Spanish. It would be interesting to compare as to how far Puerto Ricans perceive Puerto Rican Spanish in relation to Dominican Spanish or to other, cross-dialectally more prestigious, dialects of Spanish.

In sum, little work to date has investigated the effects of socioeconomic and/or racial prejudice towards Dominicans in the Puerto Rican Diaspora. The results of this study reveal important insights into the development of linguistic insecurity and identity of Dominicans living in Puerto Rico. In line with previous research, this study confirms an important correlation between Dominican Spanish, culture, and identity. Perhaps surprisingly, perceptions of racial differences between both groups have not been found to increase among immigrants, but rather appear to be discounted by the Dominicans living in Puerto Rico. These results indicate that for this particular group of Dominican immigrants inter-group boundaries appear to be drawn along linguistic and cultural lines, rather than along racial dimensions.

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