

Coping with Stigmatised Linguistic Identities: Identity and Ethnolinguistic Vitality among
Andalusians

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Abstract

This study is an investigation of the impact of language stigma for identity functioning among speakers of Andalusian Spanish. Fifteen Andalusian Spaniards were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. Qualitative Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the data guided by Identity Process Theory and the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework. The following themes are outlined: (a) Threatened linguistic identity and vitality (re-)constructions; (b) Relocating the socio-psychological value in one's linguistic variety; and (c) Multiple linguistic identities: threat and management. This article elucidates how perceived threats to ethnolinguistic vitality can induce identity threat. Weak social status may jeopardise self-esteem, while weak institutional support may threaten self-efficacy. The belonging principle may be vulnerable to threat in contexts in which the stigmatised group has minority status. Relevant sociolinguistic concepts are discussed in relation to the intrapsychic level of identity functioning. Potential strategies for coping are discussed.

Keywords: language stigma; identity; identity process theory; ethnolinguistic vitality;

Andalusian Spanish

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The field of sociolinguistics has traditionally concerned itself with the societal processes which govern the perceptions speakers have about their language in contemporary terms as well as how these processes influence the evolution of language. Conversely, social psychologists tend to focus upon the inter-relations between the individual and the “social.” Scholars have long been aware of the necessity of reconciling sociolinguistic thinking with socio-psychological theories of behaviour and cognition; one result of this has been the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework, which is based on Social Identity Theory (Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal, 1981; Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977). In this article we address an important lacuna in this interdisciplinary interface, namely how perceptions of language stigma can affect identity functioning at the level of the individual. Through a case study of Andalusian Spanish (henceforth “Andalusian”), we will endeavor to demonstrate the heuristic benefits of bridging elements of the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework and Identity Process Theory for understanding how using and identifying with a stigmatised linguistic variety can affect identity functioning.

The Case Study: Andalusian Spanish

In order to promote an understanding the interface of language stigma and identity functioning, in this article we explore Andalusian as a case study. This language variety must be juxtaposed with Standard Spanish in order to understand the emergence of social stigma. The roots of Standard Spanish have been attributed to Castilian Spanish, which was the language variety prevalent in the Kingdom of Castile, the seat of the political movement which was to take control of Spain (Penny, 2000). Although there are several competing theories regarding the formation of Andalusian, the most widely accepted one is that Andalusian constitutes a *variety* of

Castilian Spanish with some Arab/ Mozarab linguistic influences (Lipski, 1996; Menéndez Pidal, 1976; Penny 1991). Andalusian constitutes a stigmatised linguistic variety partly because that it departs from the Castilian linguistic “norm” (Stafford and Scott, 1986). In their account of social stigma, Crocker et al (1998, p. 505) postulate that “stigmatized individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context.” Indeed, Andalusian is said to be less socially valued than Standard Spanish, which could have negative outcomes for identity functioning among speakers (Gecas, 1982; Snopenko, 2007).

There are several studies of Andalusian sociolinguistics (Carbonero, 1981, 2003; Villena-Ponsada, 2008). Moreover, there has been work on language stigma and socio-linguistic behaviour, largely from the perspective of language ideologies (e.g. Kroskrity, 2000; Lippi-Green, 1997; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1989). In sociolinguistics, the work of Labov (1966) highlights how social stigma and prestige may shape the linguistic behaviour of speakers, although the focus in his article is primarily upon linguistic change rather than identity functioning (see also Hernández-Campoy & Villena-Ponsada, 2009). In this respect, Labov’s (1966) work exemplifies the general trend in sociolinguistics, whereby stigma is habitually regarded in relation to language variation and change. Snopenko (2007) offers valuable insights into the historical attribution of stigma to Andalusian, as a by-product of political unification and linguistic standardisation in sixteenth century Spain. Moreover, she argues that linguistic variation was mapped onto social hierarchies with the result that specific varieties came to “represent” specific groups within the social hierarchy. Carbonero (1981, 2003) concurs with the finding that Andalusian came to be regarded in negative terms as a “deviation” from the “correct” language Castilian Spanish (Snopenko, 2007). By addressing the interface of language

stigma and individual identity rather than group identity (as in the case of the aforementioned studies), our article examines how negative social representations regarding Andalusian can potentially affect identity functioning among speakers. This has not been fully addressed in previous theory and research.

Understanding the identity implications of speaking a stigmatised variety necessitates insights into dominant social representations of language. However, this approach alone falls short of elucidating the ways in which the representations are subsequently personalised at the individual level of cognition, which will have repercussions for social and linguistic behaviour (Breakwell, 2001). This article elucidates the personalisation of representations of language stigma and the impact of such representations for identity functioning. This aim is consistent with the assertion that social psychology has the theoretical and empirical means of studying prejudice, categorisation, identity processes and various levels of human interdependence (Breakwell, 1986, 2001; Taylor & Usborne, 2007; Verkuyten, 2005). Relevant concepts from social psychology and sociolinguistics are pivotal for understanding complex language-related phenomena (Jaspal & Coyle, 2009b).

Identity Processes and Identity Threat

This article involves an exploration of the impact of perceived language stigma for identity functioning. Given the acknowledged inter-relations between *social* representations of stigma and the *intrapsychic* experience of identity threat, Identity Process Theory (Breakwell, 1986, 1992, 2001) provides an adequate theoretical framework for understanding identity functioning in the context of perceived language stigma. Identity Process Theory proposes that the structure of identity should be conceptualised in terms of its content and value/ affect dimensions and that this structure is regulated by two universal processes, namely the

assimilation-accommodation process and the evaluation process. The assimilation-accommodation process refers to the absorption of new information in the identity structure and to the adjustment which takes place in order for it to become part of the structure. The evaluation process confers meaning and value upon the contents of identity.

Breakwell (1986, 1992) identifies four identity principles which guide these universal processes. These include continuity, which refers to continuity across time and situation; distinctiveness from others; self-efficacy, whereby one feels confident and in control of one's life; and self-esteem, which refers to feelings of personal worth or social value. Vignoles, Chrysoschoou and Breakwell (2002) have proposed two additional identity "motives," namely belonging, which refers to the need to maintain feelings of closeness to and acceptance by other people, and meaning, which refers to the need to find significance and purpose in one's existence. More recently, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010) have described the psychological coherence principle, which refers to the need for perceived compatibility and coherence between inter-connected identities in their self-concept. Identity Process Theory states that appropriate levels of these identity principles are necessary for maintaining a positive sense of self. When identity processes are unable to comply with these principles, identity is threatened and the individual will engage in coping strategies to alleviate the threat. A coping strategy is defined as "any activity, in thought or deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 78).

Identity Process Theory has received considerable empirical support in work on social change, identity conflict and disruptive life experiences (Breakwell et al., 1984; Coyle, 1991; Coyle & Rafalin, 2000; Markowe, 2002; Speller, Lyons & Twigger-Ross, 2002; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the major credentials of lie in its ability to

predict identity threat under specific socio-psychological conditions, as well as the various phases in coping which are to be expected as a result of identity threat. Crucially, Identity Process Theory provides an integrative and flexible socio-psychological framework for understanding coping strategies at various levels of human interdependence (i.e., intrapsychic, interpersonal and intergroup). Thus, the theory provides scope for unifying some of the observations made in the sociolinguistics literature with the psychological concerns of the present article. It is noteworthy that, while much research focuses upon identity threat, the theory also provides a comprehensive framework outlining the structure and processes of identity and the social matrix, in which identity is constructed (Breakwell, 1986). In short, Identity Process Theory provides the heuristic tools necessary for understanding how speaking a socially stigmatised language variety might impinge upon identity functioning, which in turn impacts social and linguistic behaviour.

Identity Process Theory acknowledges the importance of social representations in shaping how social phenomena will impact identity functioning (Breakwell, 1986, 2001). For Breakwell (1986, p. 55), a “social representation is essentially a construction of reality,” which enable individuals to interpret the social world and to render it meaningful (see Moscovici, 1988). The theory postulates that identity processes will determine how the individual will “personalise” a representation, that is, the extent to which an individual will accept and internalise it. Conversely, social representations are said to shape the content and value dimensions of identity (Breakwell, 2001). The social representational dimension is fundamental for how people think about Andalusian (e.g. Snopenko, 2007) and how this in turn affects identity functioning. The personalisation of social representations is important as it is likely to predict individual behaviour (Breakwell, 2001). We will argue in this article that identity

processes are likely to be influenced by social representations of ethnolinguistic vitality, which constitutes an additional theoretical concern.

Ethnolinguistic Vitality

The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework was developed as a conceptual tool to analyse the socio-structural variables affecting the strength of ethnolinguistic groups existing within intergroup contexts (Giles et al., 1977). The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group was conceptualised as “that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and collective entity within the intergroup setting” (Giles et al., 1977, p. 308). According to the framework, three principal socio-structural variables influence the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups: (a) the *social status* dimension refers to economic status of a group, the prestige of its language and culture and its socio-historical status; (b) the *demographic* dimension relates to the sheer number of members within an ethnolinguistic group and their distribution throughout a particular territory; and (c) *institutional support* denotes the extent to which an ethnolinguistic group obtains support from relevant social institutions. The higher the vitality of a given group, the more likely it is that the group will survive and function as a distinctive, collective entity in the intergroup setting. Conversely, an ethnolinguistic group lacking vitality is likely to decline and eventually cease to exist as a distinctive and collective entity in the intergroup setting. In a subsequent development of the framework, Bourhis et al. (1981) introduced the subjective vitality questionnaire in order to explore whether group members subjectively perceived ingroup and outgroup vitalities along the same lines as the “objective assessments” of ingroup and outgroup vitalities. *Subjective* vitality enables the researcher to explore individuals’ *personal* representations of ingroup and outgroup vitalities, which are believed to be predictors of (ethnolinguistic) behaviour. Bourhis et al. (1981) have suggested that subjective perceptions of

vitality have greater clout in shaping ethnolinguistic behaviour than objective vitality. However, what remains unclear are the implications of subjective vitality perceptions for identity functioning. It has been argued that Andalusian constitutes a socially stigmatised variety (Carbonero, 2003; Snopenko, 2007). In terms of vitality, it could be stated that Andalusian lacks social status both in terms of speakers' own evaluative judgements and outgroups' perceptions towards the variety. Conversely, Andalusian is likely to possess greater vitality on the demographic front, given that the vast majority of Andalusians speak Andalusian rather than Standard Spanish (Carbonero, 2003). In this article we aim to tap into the personal representations of ingroup vitality held by a group of speakers of Andalusian, as well as some of the ways in which personal representations of ingroup and outgroup vitalities might affect identity functioning (as defined in Identity Process Theory).

Aims

The present article applies the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework and Identity Process Theory to accounts from speakers of Andalusian, in order to explore how language perceptions affect identity functioning. More specifically, it examines how social representations of linguistic varieties are personalised by participants in accordance with identity processes. The theoretical aim of the article, therefore, concerns the ways in which perceptions of weak vitality might impinge upon identity functioning.

Method

Participants

In British social psychology it has become common to conduct qualitative psychological research with relatively small sample sizes. This is particularly appropriate for qualitative studies that are concerned with providing detailed case-by-case analyses of participants' accounts and

rich, contextualised understandings of socio-psychological phenomena (Coyle, 2007; Smith & Eatough, 2007). A large sample size is not deemed to be necessary given that the aim is not to provide an empirically generalisable snapshot of language stigma and identity functioning but rather a detailed, rich account of the socio-psychological issue. Accordingly, a sample of fifteen individuals was recruited from three cities in the Spanish province of Andalusia, namely Seville, Huelva and Cadiz. There were five informants from each city. This allowed for some insight into social representations in distinct geographic areas of Andalusia. Nine participants were male and six were female, with a mean age of 24.7 years (s.d.: 2.6). Two participants held degree-level qualifications, seven participants were studying at university, and the remaining six had completed high school. A snowball sampling strategy was employed, with the initial participants recruited from the university campuses in Seville, Huelva and Cadiz.

Procedure and Data Generation

The interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule consisting of ten general open-ended questions. The schedule began with questions regarding self-description and identity, followed by more specific questions regarding their own and others' use of Spanish; questions eliciting evaluative comments regarding varieties of Spanish; and questions tapping into subjective ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions. The interviewer afforded participants the opportunity to expand upon their experiences, thoughts and feelings relevant to the research questions. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. They were digitally recorded by the interviewer and transcribed verbatim by the first author.

Analytic Approach

The data were analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). This

methodological approach allows the researcher to engage with theory in a deductive fashion in order to add theoretical depth to the data analysis (see Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997 for more on deductive approaches to qualitative research). Moreover, “theoretical” thematic analysis allows for the generation of new theory and for the development of existing models. Thematic analysis was considered advantageous since one of the study’s aims was to establish links between Identity Process Theory and the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework. Given the empirical support for both Identity Process Theory and the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework in previous research, the authors decided to employ these theoretical frameworks in order to analyse the present data.

Analytic Procedures

The recordings were transcribed in Spanish by the first author, who also read the transcripts repeatedly in order to become as intimate as possible with the accounts. During each reading of the transcripts, preliminary impressions and interpretations were noted in the left margin. These initial codes included *inter alia* participants’ meaning-making, particular forms of language, and apparent contradictions and patterns within the data. Subsequently, the right margin was used to collate these initial codes into potential themes, which captured the essential qualities of the accounts. The themes were reviewed rigorously against the data in order to ensure their compatibility and numerous illustrative extracts from the interviews were listed against each corresponding theme. Specific interview extracts, which were considered vivid, compelling and representative of the themes, were selected for presentation in the final research report. Finally, superordinate themes representing the themes derived from the 15 accounts were developed and ordered into a logical and coherent narrative structure. As indicated above, the data were analysed through the heuristic lenses of Identity Process Theory and the

Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework. The next section presents those extracts, which were selected by the analysts in order to exemplify overarching theoretical points derived from the data analysis. The extracts are selected in order to be illustrative of overlap between vitality and identity functioning, which is the central theoretical concern in this article. In the quotations from participants presented below, three dots within square brackets indicate where material has been excised, and other material within square brackets is clarificatory.

Findings

This section reports the following themes: (a) “Threatened linguistic identity and vitality (re-) constructions”; (b) “Re-locating the social and psychological value in one’s linguistic variety”; and (c) “Multiple linguistic identities: threat and management”.

Threatened Linguistic Identity and Vitality (Re-)Constructions

Participants unanimously exhibited their awareness of the social representation that Andalusian constitutes a dialect of Spanish (Breakwell, 2001). One interviewee seemed to exploit the lack of conceptual clarity regarding the notions of “language” and “dialect” (Haugen, 1966; Garrett, Coupland & Williams, 2003), in order to re-construct the “status” dimension of vitality:

Interviewer: If I were to ask you what language you speak, what would you say?

Ruben: I don’t speak Spanish, I speak Andalusian (laughs) no seriously, to me, it’s a language like Castilian.

Interviewer: So it’s a language, not a dialect?

Ruben: No, no. They say it’s a dialect, like incorrect or something, but I don’t believe that. It’s a language.

Ruben exhibits an awareness of the negative social representations associated with the concept of “dialect.” His elaboration of this notion with prescriptive comments regarding its lack of “correctness” *vis-à-vis* a “language” attests to his internalisation of these representations (Breakwell, 2001). Ruben’s account reflects a number of strategies for averting identity threat, which could arise as a result of laying claim to a stigmatised linguistic variety. For instance, at first, Ruben appears to employ denial as a deflection strategy for coping with the threats to self-esteem, which could ensue from personal representations of the poor social status of his variety (Breakwell, 1986). Self-esteem is threatened as poor social status is unlikely to facilitate the maintenance and enhancement of “a positive conception of oneself” as a speaker of the stigmatised variety (Gecas, 1982, p. 20). Ruben deals with this by denying that his variety is at all coterminous with Spanish. In linguistics, the category “Spanish” is often employed to denote the superordinate linguistic category (or “umbrella” language), encompassing varieties such as Andalusian, Canary Islands Spanish etc (Penny, 2000; Pountain, 2003). Crucially, Ruben divorces his variety from the superordinate linguistic category, since it is precisely the social representation of this hierarchical connection between the superordinate “language” and its “dialects,” which renders Andalusian a *stigmatised* variety. In short, his account exhibits the intrapsychic strategy of re-construal and re-conceptualisation (Breakwell, 1986). He re-construes the position of his variety within the sociolinguistic matrix or linguistic hierarchy; that is, he constructs Andalusian not as “dialect” or “variety” but rather as a language in its own right. Andalusian becomes evaluatively *comparable* to the “high” language Castilian, rather than evaluatively subordinate to it.

While Ruben is *aware* of contradictory social representations, he rejects these representations by attributing them to unsympathetic outgroups who “say it’s a dialect”

(Breakwell, 2001). This reflects the interpersonal strategy of negativism whereby “one feels a desire or a compulsion to act against the requirements or pressures from external sources” such as outgroup disseminators of negative social representations regarding the ingroup (Apter, 1983, p. 79; see also Breakwell, 1986). The strategy of negativism – clearly demonstrated in the case below – enables individuals to reject those representations, which may pose obstacles for identity functioning:

Interviewer: How do you think other Spaniards see Andalusian?

Martin: I don't really care what those snobs from Madrid think about the way we talk – I'm proud of being Andalusian

The strategies of negativism and re-construal are inter-connected and complementary, since it is negativism, which allows Ruben to challenge the sociolinguistic “order” and thereby construct Andalusian in terms of an independent language (Breakwell, 1986). The amalgamation of these intrapsychic and interpersonal strategies of identity protection are likely to enhance subjective vitality in that the “status” dimension of vitality may be perceived in positive terms (Bourhis et al., 1981). Crucially, the perception of one's variety as enjoying high status is likely to enhance self-esteem among self-identified speakers of this variety.

As demonstrated, close attention to participants' accounts demonstrates that perceived threats to vitality might also represent threats to individual identity:

Interviewer: How do you feel, I mean, what do you think about how other Spanish people see Andalusian Spanish?

Alejandro: At the end of the day, you speak in an Andalusian accent in the main institutions of this country and you're just a laughing stock.

Interviewer: Does this bother you?

Alejandro: It does make me feel embarrassed sometimes, yeah, like ashamed.

Like other participants, Alejandro invokes the social representation of weak social status. This is reflected in his anticipation that an Andalusian accent is likely to depict the speaker as “a laughing stock” in “the main institutions of this country.” Use of the term “laughing stock” reiterates the thesis that low social status may violate self-esteem, since the social representation of ridicule is unlikely to enhance a positive self-conception (Gecas, 1982). It is possible that the negative emotions of shame and embarrassment are indicative of threatened self-esteem. Furthermore, Alejandro’s account alludes to a lack of institutional support for his variety, since it is specifically “in the main institutions of this country” that one allegedly faces outgroup discrimination:

Interviewer: But what is it that makes you think that there’s discrimination?

Silvia: If you apply for a job and there’s a guy speaking “pure” Castilian and a guy from Andalusia you know they’ll give preference to the Castilian accent. It’s the way this works [...] all the employers in Spain prefer them.

These accounts exhibit participants’ concerns regarding the institutional support dimension of ingroup variety. There was general awareness of the social representation that, at the institutional level (i.e., in vocational settings), the social desideratum is to speak Castilian Spanish devoid of any Andalusian accent. Moreover, Silvia perceived a bias in institutional settings, whereby only Castilian-speakers would be favoured in the employment sector. This greater institutional support for “them” *vis-à-vis* that conferred upon “us” was perceived as being ubiquitous across the national institutions, which was illustrated by an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986): “*all* the employers in Spain.”

While participants generally painted a bleak picture of the status and institutional support dimensions of vitality, their perceptions of the demographic dimension of vitality were relatively positive, as exemplified by Alejandro's account:

Alejandro: [...] we shouldn't care about that [weak social status and institutional support] because Andalusia is a big place with a big population so we should stand up to it and defend our identity.

Interviewer: Why do you think this is necessary for Andalusians?

Alejandro: Because we have to stand up for who we are or we'll lose this.

Alejandro's observation that "Andalusia is a big place with a big population" reflects the social representation that ingroup vitality remains strong on the demographic front. Crucially, this dimension of vitality provides some participants with the socio-psychological resources to engage in the interpersonal strategy of negativism in order to counteract the threats to identity associated with the weak status and institutional support dimensions of vitality. This is illustrated by Alejandro's suggestion that his ingroup "shouldn't care about that." The social representation of high demographic vitality may be reproduced in order to enhance the intergroup coping strategy of group action (Breakwell, 1986). Alejandro suggests that the high demographic vitality of Andalusian enables its speakers to "stand up to it and defend our identity." Moreover, he perceives a potential threat to the continuity of Andalusian identity if it is not "defended." He advocates the formation of a social movement. This intergroup strategy was endorsed by other participants, who, similarly, associated the effectiveness of the strategy with the high demographic vitality of Andalusia:

Interviewer: How would you define Andalusia, like is it a province or region or?

Clara: Andalusia is a nation really, like you walk through the streets and you can hear everyone speaking with the accent, you'll only hear a few s's from a few tourists or businessmen (laughs) [...] so we are a nation like Catalonia and the Basque Country really.

Interviewer: Do you think Andalusia should be considered a nation? By others in Spain, I mean.

Clara: If we had our own country then it wouldn't be a laughing matter to speak Andalusian.

While Breakwell's (1986) intergroup strategy of group action generally refers to the formation of pressure groups or social movements, these data allude to a more *separatist*, institutionalised form of group action in order to enhance identity functioning. The demographic vitality of Andalusian is accentuated by referring to Andalusia in terms of a nation and by reproducing the representation that Andalusia is dominated by speakers of the variety symbolising the "nation": "you'll only hear a few s's." Moreover, the representation of Andalusian nationhood is anchored to those of Catalonia and Basque, possibly in order to construct this group action as reasonable, credible and comparable to similar movements in Spain (Moscovici, 1988). Clara employs this strategy of group action in order to challenge the basis for stigmatising Andalusian. This is necessary for identity functioning, since language stigma can adversely affect self-esteem, a principle of identity. Clara constructs Andalusian nationhood, which is facilitated by the high demographic vitality of Andalusian, as a means of ameliorating the status and institutional support dimensions of vitality. Although perceptions of high social status are likely conducive to self-esteem among ingroup members, the identity implications of perceived institutional support are unclear. Clara's reference to "*our own*

country” and to greater political and social independence may be tentatively interpreted as a having an impact upon the self-efficacy principle of identity (Breakwell, 1992). The relationship between ingroup institutional support and the self-efficacy principle requires further empirical research.

Given the general awareness of social representations of weak vitality, participants provided explanations for this:

Interviewer: Is Andalusian a good thing or a not so good thing? I'd just like to know what you think about it as a way of speaking?

Sara: There's nothing wrong with speaking Andalusian, you know, it's like this because we were not really favoured over the centuries, always seen as ridiculous and still on the TV, the guy with the accent is the clown, it's like discrimination.

Although Sara perceives no inherent negativity associated with speaking Andalusian, she exhibits awareness of the negative social representations associated with her variety. Crucially, these negative representations, which render her position as a speaker of Andalusian threatening for identity functioning, are attributed to external sources (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Sara invokes aspects of vitality, namely a history of low social status and of weak institutional support “over the centuries.” Crucially, this history of weak vitality is said to extend to the present day, since current media representations of ethno-linguistic ingroup members are regarded as being negative and discriminatory. The institutional support and social status variables are entwined psychologically in order to re-construe the reasons for occupying the identity-threatening position of speaking her variety. Low vitality is deflected from the ingroup and attributed externally to outgroup discrimination. The perception that one's ingroup lacks social status due to external causes (e.g. discrimination) cannot actively bolster self-esteem, but

it may enhance the meaning principle of identity. This enhances the meaningfulness of one's individual identity position, since it provides a framework for understanding the sociolinguistic status quo. Crucially, this newly acquired sense of meaning probably does no further damage to self-esteem given that it *externalises* the causes of the ingroup's social shortcomings (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010).

Re-locating the Social and Psychological Value in One's Linguistic Variety

In line with predictions associated with Identity Process Theory, those participants who perceived their variety as stigmatised exhibited strategies of coping with the threats to identity associated with perceived language stigma:

Interviewer: What do you think of Andalusian? Do you like it?

José: I know it's [Andalusian] a bit ugly really in comparison with proper Spanish but it's who I am and so I speak the way I do [...] So when I speak it, I'm like a "born and bred" Andalusian, I use the expressions more than I would, I basically say and do what you'd expect [...] people laugh [...] for a bit, it can start to feel quite good.

Interviewer: Does it feel good?

José: Yes, it can, like fun. I feel good when I make people laugh.

José perceives his variety in terms of an "ugly" language *vis-à-vis* "proper Spanish," which attests to his internalisation of the representation of its weak social status. He nonetheless regards Andalusian as a fundamental aspect of his identity; it has long been assimilated to and accommodated within his sense of self (Breakwell, 1986). Thus, it seems that, for the sake of continuity, he preserves this linguistic self-aspect in the identity structure, despite his acceptance of dominant social representations regarding its social stigma (see Carbonero, 2003). However,

there remain potential threats to psychological coherence principle, which may ensue from his identification with Andalusian, on the one hand, and his acceptance of its negative representations, on the other.

Data suggest that José maintains psychological coherence through the interpersonal strategy of compliance (Breakwell, 1986). He not only accepts the behavioural prescriptions associated with his stigmatised linguistic identity, but he actively exaggerates them by accentuating the linguistic traits associated with this identity. More specifically, he speaks it “like a born and bred Andalusian” and makes greater use of the idiosyncratic features of the variety. As Breakwell (1986, p. 121) has observed, “living up to expectations” may mean that the threatened individual is more easily accepted by others, which of course elucidates its particular value as an *interpersonal* strategy. These data do not allow for speculation on the interpersonal value of the strategy, but José’s account exhibits the benefits for self-esteem at the intrapsychic level: “it can start to feel good [...] I feel good when I make people laugh.” In short, by complying with the perceived social representations of occupying this threatening position, the individual may develop, enhance and maintain a positive self-conception, albeit transiently (Gecas, 1982).

In light of the presumed obstacles for psychological coherence discussed above, it may be that, while José acknowledges the “ugliness” of Andalusian, he identifies a positive function of this variety and of compliance with social representations associated with it. Use of his variety induces pleasure and amusement, which leads him to feel more socially valued by others. This may enable him to reconcile a fundamental self-aspect in the identity structure with *the dimension of the social representation* which indicates that the self-aspect is ugly. More

specifically, the social representation of his variety is extended and elaborated; one dimension of the representation indicates its “ugliness” but another dimension highlights its humorous value.

The dimension of the representation indicating Andalusian inferiority was reproduced by several participants:

Marta: Yeah, it’s true that Andalusian isn’t as nice as Castilian, yes, that’s true, I know [...] But it’s something that differentiates us from other Spanish people so it’s like our identity [...] you know an Andalusian when you hear one and, you know, it’s what reminds you that you’re Andalusian.

Marta passively accepts the social representation of the inferiority of Andalusian vis-à-vis Standard Spanish. The perception that its social status is weak can have negative repercussions for self-esteem, since one lives with the knowledge that one speaks a variety which “isn’t as nice as Castilian” (Gecas, 1982). However, self-esteem does not constitute a superordinate identity principle and that the other identity principles play equally important roles in identity functioning (Vignoles et al., 2002). Thus, it is feasible to assume that, when this principle is threatened, the emphasis may shift onto other principles. Breakwell (1986) refers to this intrapsychic strategy as the salience of principles strategy (see also Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012).

The strategy is manifested by Marta, as she actively prioritises the benefits of speaking her variety for group distinctiveness. Crucially, the act of speaking their variety serves to differentiate Andalusians from linguistic outgroups (i.e., speakers of Standard Spanish). Indeed, strategic use of one’s linguistic repertoire has been said to benefit individual and group distinctiveness in other research contexts (Jaspal & Coyle, 2010a, 2010b). Moreover, the belonging principle of identity may be enhanced, since the variety is perceived as a symbol of inclusion within the ethno-national category Andalusian: “it reminds you that you’re

Andalusian.” The act of speaking this variety safeguards continuity of self-construal as a member of this ethno-linguistic social category. Thus, rather than dwelling upon the negative impact of their personal representations of weak social status (and by extension their weak vitality and self-esteem), some participants might shift psychological emphasis to other principles (here, distinctiveness, belonging and continuity), which are more readily enhanced by the very source of the threat to self-esteem. This lends further empirical support to the thesis that self-esteem “is not the whole story” and that the enhancement of competing principles may be equally as beneficial for identity (Vignoles et al., 2002).

Multiple Linguistic Identities: Threat and Management

The relationship between weak vitality and identity threat is most clearly exhibited in occupational settings:

Interviewer: Can you think of any situations like that [when being an Andalusian felt like a social obstacle]?

Fernando: [...] I needed the job [in Madrid] quite bad but didn't get it probably because my Spanish was not good enough for them [...]

Interviewer: How did that make you feel?

Fernando: You start to feel a bit helpless after all that applying

Fernando's attributes his inability to secure work to what has been described as “linguicism” (Bourhis et al., 2007). This highlights his perception of low vitality on the institutional support front. Fernando's account provides clear evidence of the potentially negative repercussions which weak institutional support may have for the self-efficacy principle, which requires the individual to maintain feelings of “competence and control” in life

(Breakwell, 1993, p. 205). The feelings of helplessness were said to ensue from his inability to acquire work. The ensuing threat to identity induced coping strategies:

Interviewer: How do you deal with it [being disadvantaged as a result of speaking Andalusian]?

Daniel: I just put the accent on [in a job interview]. I can be more Andalusian when I want to be, you know [...] first I spoke it [Standard Spanish] because my parents were from the North and so it wasn't cool to speak "el calo". So I made the effort to avoid these things and then being at school it was like being as Andalusian as I can, speaking the lingo.

Interviewer: And did that work well for you?

Daniel: Yes, it really did. It helps.

Daniel's reported ability to switch between varieties (i.e., Andalusian and Standard Spanish) reveals his strategic management of his linguistic repertoire in accordance with identity processes. This reflects the interpersonal strategy of passing, whereby "a new interpersonal network or group is entered on false premises" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 116). Daniel reports having feigned "the accent," which he viewed as socially desirable in a job interview. As demonstrated earlier in this article, participants generally demonstrated their awareness and understanding of negative social representations surrounding Andalusian. Consequently, use of the variety in non-affirmative sociolinguistic settings (e.g. in job interviews with speakers of Standard Spanish) could potentially pose threats to the belonging principle of identity (Vignoles et al., 2002). Individuals may feel ostracised by those (i.e., employers) from whom they in fact seek acceptance and inclusion, threatening the belonging principle. Moreover, as discussed above, self-esteem may be threatened by the perception that one's variety is substandard and inferior.

Daniel's strategy of passing was aimed at enhancing belonging and self-esteem in a social context, in which Andalusian could be regarded as a stigmatised variety. Interestingly, his account suggests that even in familial contexts, such as at home or with members of his extended family, he felt under considerable ideological pressure to use Standard Spanish in order to gain the approval of ingroup members. Thus, the belonging principle of identity required him to conform to the sociolinguistic norms of the home environment lest he be branded an ingroup "black sheep" (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). It has been demonstrated that the perception of sociolinguistic norms regarding the social appropriateness of a given language within specific social contexts may encourage the negativism behavioural strategy among young people; that is, individuals actively contravene the perceived sociolinguistic norms (Jaspal & Coyle, 2010b). Negativism may constitute the preferred strategy of enhancing identity for those individuals who prioritise feelings of distinctiveness or continuity *vis-à-vis* belonging, for instance. Conversely, for Daniel, belonging plays a central role for his identity in this particular stage of his life narrative: "You've got to try to fit in wherever you are [...] that's how I felt, anyway."

Daniel's above-cited account demonstrates how speaking the "high" language (i.e., Standard Spanish) in "low" contexts may induce identity threat (Ferguson, 1959). In the school environment, Daniel reported perceiving the social requirement of "being as Andalusian as I can," which entailed "speaking the lingo." Thus, in order to enhance belonging within the school environment, it was deemed necessary to use the "appropriate" variety (i.e., Andalusian), despite the contradictory social norms perceived to be operating in both vocational and familial contexts. Similarly, Ezquiel's account highlighted some of the undesirable socio-psychological consequences of using Standard Spanish in the school environment.

Interviewer: How do others, like your friends and other people around you, think about your accent, do you think?

Ezequiel: They would call me snob because of my [non-Andalusian] accent and making jokes about shopping at Zara [a branded clothing outlet] and things like that really so I started to change the way I would talk.

The social stigmatisation of his use of Standard Spanish could be conducive to “otherisation,” which is suggested by teasing and bullying by fellow pupils at school. The belonging principle could be threatened by these “othering” practices, since it impedes a sense of acceptance and inclusion from those individuals with whom one seeks to align oneself socially and psychologically. Moreover, self-esteem generally correlates negatively with verbal abuse, teasing and bullying (O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001). Consequently, the strategy of passing, whereby individuals camouflage their membership in the speech community of Standard Spanish may constitute a means of safeguarding belonging and self-esteem.

The interpersonal strategy of passing entails public denial of one’s group origins and, in some cases, the “vilification of previous friends and compatriots” who form part of the passing individual’s concealed ingroup(s) (Breakwell, 1986, p. 117). This can be socially and psychologically stressful, given the perceived risk and fear of one’s concealed memberships being disclosed. This can adversely affect one’s sense of self. Data suggest that some participants engage in “multiple passing,” that is, the public denial of their sociolinguistic memberships in distinct contexts. This entails repeated social and psychological manoeuvres between the two sociolinguistic categories, and may therefore increase the risk of self-disclosure, namely that one has entered the ethnolinguistic group on false premises (Breakwell, 1986).

It may be that the strategy of compartmentalism, whereby the individual confines given languages to specific social contexts, might at least alleviate the negative social stress of multiple passing (i.e., risk of self-exposure). However, the potential for psychological stress remains, since in either social context, one perceives the obligation to conform to social representations which denigrate a language, which forms part of the identity structure:

Interviewer: How does it make you feel when, I mean that when you speak with an Andalusian accent at home?

Marco: [...] You've got your parents telling you that Andaluz is wrong and then at school anything but Andaluz is uncool so you just don't know what's good and what's not anymore [...]

Interviewer: Is it just speaking Northern Spanish [Standard Spanish]?

Marco: Even this one guy who had the Badajoz (elongated) accent was ridiculed.

These data illustrate Breakwell's (1986, p. 95) assertion that the strategy of compartmentalism can only be effective "if circumstances conspire to let sleeping dogs lie." The crucial point is that here they do not. In one social context, Miguel's parents denigrate Andalusian, while social representations prevalent in the school environment dictate the social undesirability of speaking "anything but Andaluz." Thus, contradictory and conflicting social representations are brought to the individual's awareness through their self-positioning within these distinct social contexts; the individual is required to accept and to act in accordance with relevant representations in order to enhance the belonging principle. However, although belonging may be enhanced in both social contexts through transient and context-specific conformity to prevalent social representations, this does not obviate persistent potential threats to the psychological coherence principle. This occurs as a result of one's acceptance and

internalisation of conflicting representations, which is suggested by Miguel's observation that "you just don't know what's good and what's not anymore."

Discussion

Vitality Threat and Identity Threat

There was general consensus among participants that the social status and institutional support dimensions of ingroup vitality were considerably weak, which contributed to the social representation that ingroup vitality is threatened. The data presented here allow for the development of hypotheses regarding the implications of threatened vitality for identity functioning, as defined in Identity Process Theory (Breakwell, 1986). Perceived threats to the social status dimension of vitality can have negative outcomes for the self-esteem principle, since the social representation that stigmatisation of one's vitality is not conducive to a positive self-conception on the basis of one's linguistic group membership. Furthermore, the representation of weak institutional support can have negative outcomes for self-efficacy. This was reflected in participants' accounts of their endless and ultimately fruitless attempts to secure work. These participants perceived "linguicism," given that Standard Spanish is the prestige variety. Moreover, the perception of weak social status and institutional support may jeopardise the belonging principle, since perceived social exclusion on the basis of one's linguistic variety can impede feelings of closeness to and acceptance by individuals with whom one essentially seeks to establish a collective identity.

Despite a general awareness of the stigma of Andalusian, participants consensually regarded their variety as occupying an important position within the identity structure. This raises the question of how speakers of a stigmatised variety assimilate and accommodate

negative representations within the identity structure, since these representations can compel the individual to review the value and meaning conferred upon the socially stigmatised variety.

Strategies for Enhancing Vitality and Identity

The general importance attached to one's variety as a component of the self-concept provides impetus to the assumption that the transient denial of its existence within, or its exclusion from, the identity structure may not constitute viable strategies for coping with the stigma associated with the variety (cf. Breakwell, 1986). This is due primarily to the consequential likelihood of violating one's sense of temporal continuity across time and situation.

However, membership in the Andalusian speech community may be coterminous with occupying a threatening position, due to pervasive stigmatising social representations. The subjective experience of threat arises insofar as the self-esteem principle acquires salience, since stigma seems to affect self-esteem, in particular (Jaspal, 2011). Conversely, by shifting the psychological emphasis to other identity principles (i.e., group distinctiveness, belonging and continuity), individuals may be able to eschew identity threat. This reflects the intrapsychic strategy of revising the relative salience of the principles (Breakwell, 1986). This article builds upon Breakwell's (1986) original work by specifying those competing principles, which are likely to be prioritised *vis-à-vis* self-esteem in this particular socio-psychological context. The extent to which changes to the salience of principles are able to banish the original threat to identity, induced by the violation of self-esteem, requires further empirical research. Moreover, data suggest that when individuals discover an alternative source of self-esteem (e.g. by causing humour to others), this may obscure the original threat to self-esteem (e.g. the social stigma of the language).

This article lends further empirical support to the thesis that social representations are personalised in accordance with the principled operation of identity processes (Breakwell, 2001). This was manifested in participants' creative attempts to personalise representations in ways which favoured identity functioning. For instance, the re-conceptualisation of Andalusian in terms of a language in its own right and not as a dialect enabled speakers to divorce, rhetorically and/ or psychologically, their variety from the superordinate variety (Spanish). This in turn enabled individuals to re-construe the social status dimension of vitality, resulting in enhanced self-esteem. This constitutes an example of linguistic "standardisation" at the individual level. Typically, linguistic standardisation is implemented at the institutional level. For instance, Lodge (1993) describes how, before standardisation, the variety, which is now known as the French language, was regarded as a "bastard" language and as a deviation from Latin in French institutions. Societal processes of standardisation, and its consequential "divorce" from Latin, endowed upon the French language a positive identity in its own right and enhanced social status. In short, as an independent *language*, it could no longer be perceived as a "bastard" language or as a deviation from any other language.

"Individual standardisation" in this way can have positive outcomes for self-esteem. However, the extent to which re-conceptualisation of social representations constitutes a viable intrapsychic strategy depends upon the nature of the social representation itself. It has been noted that some social representations may be simply too hegemonic and consensually shared to be re-construed (Jaspal & Coyle, 2009a). The interpersonal strategy of negativism would probably have to be adopted, since it provides the threatened individual with sufficient psychological leeway to re-construe or to reject hegemonic representations, which pose threats to identity (Breakwell, 1986). Here it seems that the lack of conceptual clarity, which permeates both

academic and lay thinking regarding the distinction between “language” and “dialect,” provides the individual with scope to strategically re-construct the sociolinguistic “status” of their variety (Haugen, 1966; Garrett, Coupland & Williams, 2003).

However, this strategy was by no means universal. The simultaneous acknowledgement of the low social status of one’s variety and its importance within the self-concept may well be conducive to threats to psychological coherence and, thus, decreased psychological well-being. Crucially, this will only happen when “differences” between the two varieties become salient, which is consistent with theorising on the psychological coherence principle (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Data suggest that one strategy of averting the threat was to comply with the “behavioural prescriptions associated with the threatening position” (Breakwell, 1986, p. 121). For instance, one participant reported validating the perceived stereotypes of others by accentuating his Andalusian accent, which was said to cause humour among others, encouraging greater self-esteem. This highlights an important theoretical point, namely that numerous evaluative meanings and values (i.e., Andalusian is ugly *and* humorous) may be conferred upon a given social stimulus (here, Andalusian). This can facilitate a positive re-evaluation of the variety, which in turn may facilitate the assimilation-accommodation of the linguistic self-aspect within the identity structure (Breakwell, 1986).

A key argument in this article is that weak vitality on the social status front can decrease self-esteem. However, data suggest that participants attempted to minimise the negative impact for self-esteem through the strategy of external attribution. This strategy was observable in participants’ invocation of the historically low levels of institutional support conferred upon Andalusian. Furthermore, participants exhibited the tendency to attribute the perceived causes of unsuccessful job applications to social representations of the weak social status of Andalusian in

the media (Kelley, 1973). It is argued that, although the perception of weak social status can jeopardise the self-esteem principle, the strategy of external attribution can curtail further threats to the principle by yielding a psychologically “convenient” explanation for the stigma, namely that its causes are external and not internal.

Although participants generally perceived social status and institutional support as weak, there was general agreement that demographic vitality was relatively strong. The accentuation of demographic vitality seems to constitute a strategy for coping with threats arising from weak social status and institutional support. High demographic vitality provided impetus for improving the other dimensions of vitality. For instance, the perception of strong demographic vitality is can facilitate social mobilisation in the cause of one’s collective identity. It provides the necessary psychological “strength” to reject identity-threatening social representations, allegedly disseminated by outgroups. Indeed, it has been observed that ingroup vitality may be accentuated in order to serve group goals (Harwood, Giles & Bourhis, 1996). This article demonstrates how one dimension of ingroup vitality may be accentuated in order to formulate strategies to enhance overall vitality and, thus, the principled operation of identity processes. This shows that perceived vitality can affect identity functioning.

Multilingual individuals may face dilemmas in attempting to safeguard their sense of belonging in distinct sociolinguistic contexts (Jaspal & Coyle, 2010a). For instance, participants with non-Andalusian parents perceived ideological pressure to conform to the linguistic norms associated with Castilian Spanish at home and to conform to norms associated with Andalusian at school. Although negativism has been identified as one strategy of dealing with this dilemma (Jaspal & Coyle, 2009a), it seems unlikely that those individuals who prioritise, and actively seek, a sense of belonging will employ this strategy. One would expect a negative correlation

between the strategy of negativism and a sense of belonging in the social group whose norms and values one rejects (when one engages in negativism). Rather, negativism is likely to be adopted by those individuals who prioritise distinctiveness. Given that belonging seemed to play an important role in participants' meaning-making, the interpersonal strategy of passing, whereby the individual feigns belonging in a social group was employed by some participants.

Individuals can engage in "multiple passing," which entails constant socio-psychological movement between the two social categories or speech communities (in this case, Standard Spanish and Andalusian). Frequent transition between the categories may be challenging, both socially and psychologically, due to the risk of self-disclosure and of self-exposure to negative social representations regarding one's concealed group membership (Breakwell, 1986). Here it is argued that the interpersonal strategy of passing may be enhanced by the intrapsychic strategy of compartmentalism. It is possible that, when all other options (e.g. negativism) fail or are simply less desirable, individuals will be motivated to combine those coping strategies which are likely to minimise the threat. This may nonetheless jeopardise the psychological coherence principle, given that self-exposure to conflicting and contradictory social representations regarding both language variety persist. Clearly, this aspect of the relationship between passing and compartmentalism requires further empirical attention.

Conclusion

This article shows that perceived threats to ethnolinguistic vitality may result in identity threat as outlined in Identity Process Theory. In particular, we highlight those principles that seem most susceptible to threat as a result of perceptions of weak vitality. Perceived threats at the intergroup level can have important functions for identity functioning at the individual level. In response to threat, individuals may employ the strategies of denial, reconceptualisation,

principle salience, passing and negativism. More generally, the social psychology of language and identity would benefit greatly from acknowledging the important links between vitality and identity processes. Therefore, future research should validate some of the reported relationships between vitality dimensions and the identity principles as well as the coping strategies identified in this article through the use of alternative methodological approaches in distinct populations and sociolinguistic contexts.

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