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Wendy Stephany Avilés April 12, 2022

The Debate on Gender-Fair Language in the Dominican Republic: Assessing the Phenomenon's Form, Usage, and Linguistic Attitudes

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Abstract

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The work presented in this thesis examines linguistic attitudes and grammaticality judgments in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic for the phenomenon of gender-fair language (GFL) or, 'lenguaje inclusivo.' To assess Dominicans' attitudes, values, and prejudices, participants (N = 40) took a Qualtrics survey, providing them with written cues on individuals employing gender-fair language testing their level of acceptance, rejection, exposure, and usage, as well as their grammatical judgements. Since people's linguistic attitudes and prejudices are potentially good indicators of ideological division on forms and varieties, this study allows linguists to have a better sense of how the iterations of GFL relate to its usage and acceptance. The target population ranges from 18 to 65 years old. The results show four main points: firstly, that the *x*-morpheme, as the least innovative choice between itself and the *e*-morpheme, is slightly less accepted in participants. Secondly, on average, the singular form of GFL has slightly more acceptance than the plural form. Thirdly, rejection of Dominican Spanish is meaningfully lower than GFL. Lastly, there was a smaller neutrality rate for the GFL pertaining to other topics, giving a higher rejection.

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I. Introduction

Most traditional Western-oriented views uphold heterosexual and binary expectations in their societies, reinforcing gender and sexuality differences. In the Dominican Republic, with 10,499,707 inhabitants, 47.8% identify as Roman Catholic, 21.3% as Protestant, 2.2% as other religions, and 28% as none (The World Factbook, 2020). These numbers make approximately 69.1% of the population Christian, and 71.3% religious. When the vast majority in some way or another adheres to theological dogmas, shaping its lifestyle around Christian teachings and often emphasizing the strict differences in sex as dichotomous, people can become intolerant to any deviations of unanalyzed behavioral stereotypes.

Eckert and McConnell's (1992) paper has set a different standard to understand sex and gender and its relation to language (Bergvall, 1999). These linguists argued that women and men should not be treated as monolithic variables to comprehend variation and that gender is a collaborative affair, meaning that it is not something that we have or are, but rather something we perform. To study variation and change in language or the potential thereof, understanding that 'sex' is not a reliable measure to classify the genders, capabilities, dispositions, and conventional behavior becomes vital. It reveals that traditional ideas of the classification of "men" and "women" have been conventionally passed from generation to generation, continuing to perform and further ascertain binary traditions, discouraging signs of alternative behavior.

With minority groups, such as members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and others (LGBTQ+) community in the Dominican Republic remaining in the periphery, there has been a push for more inclusivity in policymaking and more recognition in society. Spanish is the official language of the Dominican Republic—a Romance language considered as one of the closest to Latin, only behind Sardinian and Italian, with 75% of its modern vocabulary derived

from Latin borrowings from Ancient Greek (Robles et al., 1998). With the efforts for socio-political change comes those who warn about sexist connotations in language due to employing masculine as the universal generic for Spanish, further conditioning people's attitudes and behaviors conforming to the heterosexual, binary norm. Movements have emerged in favor of ungendered grammatical suffixes for languages like Spanish, using neutral morphemes, such as '*x*' and '*e*,' to refer to both or more sexes instead of '*o*' and '*a*' strictly marking feminine and masculine (Molina, 2019).

Generic Masculine (GM) is a linguistic form with a double function: referring specifically to men and referring to mixed groups whose gender is unknown (Navarro-Mantas, 2018). According to Navarro-Mantas (2018), GM subconsciously supports an androcentric view in which men are presented as the norm and women as the deviation from said norm, meanwhile any other expressions of gender are ignored if they do not classify in either category. Swim, Mallet, and Stangor (2004) go even further, defending that GM is a subtle form of discrimination that makes it difficult for speakers to detect and therefore question it (ibid.). Navarro-Mantas (2018) argued that people abstaining from detecting sexist language and not using inclusive language has to do more with ignorance than with a rejection or denial of this type of measure. Regardless of this, *lenguaje inclusivo*, or gender-fair language (GFL), has been introduced in many Spanish-speaking communities to reduce stereotypes and discrimination in language. Some research has found that men reject the use of non-sexist language more than women. In contrast, other studies have revealed no gender differences in attitudes towards the use of inclusive language, perhaps related to women and minorities' push to abide by overt prestige. I expect that LGBTQ+ groups are most likely to subscribe to gender-fair language as this

phenomenon increases the level of identification in environments that accept these forms in discourse, thus increasing a feeling of belonging and solidarity.

Despite the benefits it could bring to these groups, the Spanish Royal Academy (RAE), the world's largest institution upholding standard language ideology in Spanish-speaking societies, has time and time again dismissed any word with suffixes *-x*, *-@,* or *-e* (Milian, 2019). Their justification is that GM is inclusive to mixed collectives in general or nonspecific contexts. Darío Villanueva, director of the RAE, declared that this question does not apply to language because "the problem is to confuse grammar with *machismo* (or sexism)" ("Cómo utilizar el lenguaje inclusivo sin morir en el intento," 2019).

While the RAE has rejected changes to Spanish grammatical genres, it has not addressed the meaning of 'x' in *Latinx* or what that symbolizes for Hispanics in and outside of Latin America. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary added the term in September 2018. According to Milian (2019), "*Latinx* has emerged as the most inclusive adjective for people of all gender expressions," whether 'Latinx-es' does or not exactly rolls off the tongue. Raquel Almazan expressed that the concept rejects stereotypical representation and the limitations of the colonial past (Milian, 2019). Additionally, it implies a new conversation, accounting for intersectionalities that Latinxs represent across race, class, and nonbinary gender, employed by mainly younger individuals (ibid.). Lastly, Milian (2019) pointed out that the 'x' is making a return from the sixteenth-century use of the Latin language, when the *x* phoneme expanded to represent an indigenous language sound, becoming nowadays as a "confrontation between the Latin and indigenous languages—a 'mother tongue' that refuses gendered language." In the case of GFL, it does not reject the idea of gender in language, but rather opens the possibility of

adding a non-binary gender form that adopts to the concerns of a community that does not feel represented.

As Luck (2020) asserted, "by being able to speak about neutrality, language users can contemplate its possibility," and yet, "language-learners are taught to follow the rules, not question them." As a result, this paper will be assessing the different linguistic attitudes to the evolving GFL phenomenon in its users located in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. Conducting a survey to test acceptance, rejection, grammaticality judgements, exposure and usage through written cues, I will aim to answer how the degrees of GFL relate to its usage and acceptance. With people's linguistic attitudes and prejudices being potentially good indicators of ideological division on forms and varieties, this study can shed light into the phenomenon's change and evolution and its implications on standard language in Santo Domingo.

For the research, I have formulated the following research questions on form. Firstly, (**RQ1**) what is the relationship between the phonology of GFL and its acceptance? To answer, I will be looking at the levels of GFL in the examples provided in the survey to assess how each could lead to a positive or negative perception. I expect that, for the most innovative forms, like the addition of the *e* morpheme in the sentence examples, the acceptance will be greater overall. The second research question (**RQ2**) is: what are the differences in GFL acceptance between singular and plural forms? I do not expect to see a meaningful difference in acceptance due to the solidarity to the community practice, but also the reflection of identity in the singular form.

When it comes to usage, the research questions posed in this paper are: firstly (**RQ3**), how does rejection of Dominican Spanish relate to rejection of GFL? Although Dominican Spanish is less innovative than GFL and is an established dialect of participants, I expect that

rejection of Dominican Spanish will relate to rejection of GFL. The second research question on usage (**RQ4**) is: what are the differences in GFL acceptance between topics pertaining to justice, peace, and rights (JPR) and other topics? I expect to observe more extreme attitudes of GFL addressing JPR topics than other topics, with less neutrality.

II. Gender-Fair Language Form and Usage

A. Arbitrariness and Grammatical Gender in Spanish

For Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013), 'gender' is the process of creating a dichotomy through the minimization of similarities between sexes and a greater focus on the differences, especially the biological ones, exaggerating them to serve for the creation and establishment of social gender. However, the nouns that designate inanimate entities possess grammatical gender in Spanish, and one can say that its selection is arbitrary, considering that it lacks features of semantic sex in its denotation (Reales Gil, 2020). Yet, grammatical gender does include semantic information in nouns that designate animate beings, relating back to their assigned gender (ibid).

Even though in Spanish there seems to exist some correlation between nouns with suffixes *-o* and *-os* as masculine and *-a* and *-as* as feminine, there are some that have suffixes *-a* (*día* = day) and are accompanied by masculine pronoun, as well as suffixes *-o* (*mano* = hand) and accompanied by feminine pronoun. Additionally, there are cases of nouns with suffixes *-e* (*héroe* = heroe, *serie* = series) that imply both genders and can be accompanied with either pronoun. Specifically, nouns referencing animate beings can present themselves in different forms. While many have explicit grammatical genders, some others do not, such as heteronomous (*varón* = male, *mujer* = female), and epicenes nouns with fixed form (*víctima* = victim) (ibid). In heteronomous nouns, the grammatical gender does not have a reflexive appearance (*niño*/*niña*)

or derivative (*actor/actriz*) since its gender reference is lexicalized (p. 11). In all these cases, the grammatical gender is a formal feature of nouns that does not depend on biological sex of the referee (ibid).

Otheguy and Stern (2000) would challenge Reales Gil's position on the arbitrariness of grammatical gender. These linguists sustain that, from the Cognitive Linguistics perspective, the conceptualization of a word as a noun or adjective as masculine, feminine, or neutral is variable and contingent to cultural phenomena and the communicative needs of the speakers more than fixed and arbitrary rules. The conceptualization manifests against the arbitrary association of 'a gender for every noun' and against the notion that a gender is inherent since some categories receive more than one gender (ibid).

Martínez (2019) studied whether culture can model grammar. According to his argument, culture influences grammatical conformation and should be considered as a proposal of change as an ethno-pragmatic feature. He puts forward the idea that syntax is semantically and pragmatically motivated, and thus, culture can model grammar. Rivera Alfaro (2018), citing del Valle (2014), states that gender-fair language is the name used to designate certain uses of language that people employ to make their ideological positions explicit: how they conceive politics in context and how they want to be perceived. Hopper (1988) makes the claim that the expression of inclusive gender is in a transitional phase, from opposition to the binary male/female to the graduality that offers the gender spectrum (LGBTQ+). The gender paradigm, traditionally composed of two categories does not suffice to satisfy the communicative needs of Spanish-speaking communities when referring to humans (Martínez, 2019). For this reason, there is a subsystem forming to add a new gender category, which is necessary to signal the inclusive

gender, particularly when referring to animate objects whose gender is either unknown or they do not identify with either of the traditional ones.

Since the early 2000s, some guides begun to appear to avoid sexist language and replace generic masculine. One of these is Bosque's academic essay titled "Linguistic sexism and the visibility of women," making a distinction between morphological gender and social gender. He describes the former as an inherent grammatical category in nouns and pronouns, codified through the agreement of words (such as articles, adjectives or participles), meanwhile the latter as a relative socio-cultural category implying differences and inequalities of social, economic, sanitary, political, and professional nature associated to biological sex (Gelbes et al., 2020). However, Wasserman et al. (2009) uphold that languages with grammatical gender, such as Spanish, promote sexist attitudes and have a particular impact on females. In many languages, male superiority seems to be embedded in the grammar of language due to the generic pronoun being masculine and is used to refer to a person of either sex (without accounting for the existence of a non-binary gender) (ibid). Lomotey (2018) would agree with this theory, claiming that sexism in language reflects and influences the perceptions society has of the sexes. Furthermore, according to Sayago (2019), if a language distinguishes something, it means it matters, and what GFL does is reflect the necessity of language establishing a new distinction.

Still, it is easier to adopt lexical changes than grammatical changes since the grammatical system operates with a lower degree of reflection (ibid). All in all, the grammatical strategies created to express inclusive gender are in competition. Whichever strategy succeeds in satisfying the communicative objectives of the speaker community will be the one that stays (Hopper, 1988).

B. Social Meaning in Form

D'Onofrio examines in her PhD dissertation at Stanford University that behaviors and attitudes lead to large-scale demographic patterns found in traditional variationist work (Moore, 2012), meaning that individuals use language to convey and to understand the social meanings "indexed by linguistic forms" (D'Onofrio, 2016). Linguistic features are deployed as components of styles (clusters of features), and speakers use these to enact a particular personae (ibid). Personae then reflect macro-social patterns observable in larger scale studies of linguistic variation, and as Agha (2005:12) describes, "it is through individual stylistic choices that group norms are produced and reproduced." Personae are social constructs, according to D'Onofrio, that are linked to macro-social category membership, like country or city of origin.

Listeners within the same speech community do not have to align with one another in a feature, though (Agha 2003, 2005). Language attitudes, or "register stereotypes," do not need to be consistent in a community since the context determines the recognizability of a form-meaning link, and the level of awareness synchronically reflects how far along a variable is in the stages of a change (ibid). Regardless, linguistic change, in its initial stages, is exclusively depicted as deviant and is typically not deemed as a process, as people forget that alive languages must evolve (Gelbes et al., 2020). This position reflects back to GFL as it is a fairly new phenomenon finding its way around the needs of a particular community in the Spanish-speaking societies.

C. Gender-Fair Language in Other Contexts

a. Latin America and Spain

Reales Gil (2020) analyzed comments in digital press articles pertaining to GFL in three Spanish-speaking countries: Argentina, Spain, and Mexico. He finds that the most favorable

attitudes of GFL are among Argentinian women, followed by those of Mexican women, and lastly, those of Spanish women. In his paper, Reales Gil describes that there is a relationship between societal views and attitudes of "proper" language and individual deviance, reflected in this finding. While generally men had a greater level of rejection toward GFL, both genders differed in the topics governing their claims for or against GFL. Men were found to touch more upon politics (politicians, the left), feminism (feminists, equality), rights (Constitution) and the RAE. On the other hand, women addressed topics related to people (kids, elders), literature (books), grammatical features (generic masculine), and politics (presidents). The relationship between topics in GFL and its acceptance between gender groups validates the necessity of looking into this relationship empirically, developed in Part III.

b. GFL in Other Languages

Gender-fair language was born as a result of social movements seeking human rights equality among genders, offering the opportunity of being witnesses of change in gender morphology, where it is evident that linguistic change cannot be fully grasped without its sociopolitical context (Gelbes et al., 2020). As Sayago (2019) puts it: GFL is a "subversive capital primarily associated with a large group of young people originating in the middle class that possess social militancy." This is no surprise taking into account that young people generally foster linguistic innovation in lexical items, but also in grammatical structures. One peculiarity of this linguistic change that we have described in Spanish is that it is replicated in several languages more or less at the same time (Gelbes et al., 2020), reflecting a potential pattern pushed by globalization and its influence on social media and language variation.

In French, some speakers use the pronoun *il.le* to represent the combination between *il* (‘he’) and *elle* (‘she’). German marks the inclusive gender through the insertion of a consonant that is pronounced as a glottal stop and is written as an asterisk: *Ärzt*innen*, equivalent to the inclusive form in Spanish *mediques* (‘physician’). English has resumed its old use of *they* as a third person pronoun of plural form indistinguishable for gender for the singular form as well. The urgency of these inclusive forms demonstrate a change in process that is overlooking the binary tradition and transforming into a system that contemplates three possibilities: masculine, feminine, and inclusive/non-binary (ibid).

D. The Debate: Identity vs. Tradition

a. Historical Overview of Non-Sexist Language to GFL in Spanish

Spanish, as a romance language with grammatical gender used to refer to objects and individuals, has been openly criticized by groups of people, including some women and the LGBTQ+ community for not being inclusive. That being said, many others rely on more traditional ideals, objecting to Spanish as an exclusive language since, based on their position (supported by the RAE), grammatical gender does not equate to social inequality but simply to linguistic habits according to the systematic evolution of language.

Linguists like Wasserman and Wesley (2009) maintain that languages with grammatical gender promote sexist attitudes and impact women. Whorf and Sapir (1956) specifically found that cognitive differences could result in speakers of different grammatical structures. This line of thought originated ‘linguistic determinism,’ which argues that language can determine thought (Lenneberg, 1953; Wesserman et al., 2009). Most recently, ‘linguistic relativity’ explains that languages can reflect and preserve the existing social structures and hierarchies, and thus,

influence perceptions of reality (Parks et al., 1998; Wasserman et al., 2009). According to these authors, widespread ideologies and institutions subscribing and sustaining male superiority seem to be reflected syntax as the generic pronoun is masculine and is used to refer to a person of either gender (e.g. “the children,” “the students,” “the presidents”). A study asked its participants to complete sentences using generic masculine or non-generic pronouns, followed by assigning a name to the person described in the sentence. Its findings show that, when participants selected masculine generic pronouns, they also chose male names for the subjects in the sentences, even when the gender is unknown (Hamilton, 1988; Wasserman et al., 2009).

Other studies have found that men, especially younger ones, consistently identify with more traditional point of views on gender roles than their female counterparts, and these ideologies are still seen nowadays in multiple countries, such as Japan, Croatia and Slovenia (Gibbons et al., 1991; Ferligoj et al., 1993; Wasserman et al., 2009). Furthermore, research indicates that women manifest less implicit prejudice to their gender due to sexist policies and, for that reason, making them less likely to be sexist. These differences in prejudices between genders are important and relevant to understand the historical and contemporary context in Spanish.

In 1978, according to Lomotey (2018), Wendy Martyna identified three issues with generic masculine: inequity, ambiguity and sexual exclusivity. According to a study looking at the relationship between linguistic conventions and gender equality in society, countries with speakers of languages with grammatical gender have less gender equality than those where languages with natural gender or no marked gender are spoken (Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012; Lomotey, 2018). Even with these conclusions, GFL confronts the weight of tradition facing generic masculine (Jiménez Rodrigo et al., 2011; Lomotey, 2018). This is due to its traditional use neutralizing the sexist perception in the universal usage of generic masculine, and women (as

well as men) consider it as a habitual and grammatical case. For that reason, these conventions generate an individual resistance and perception of importance of linguistic tradition, without questioning what that could signify for social patterns.

With linguistic varieties playing an important role in people's identity, speakers who ascribe a high value to the variety associated as the most important in terms of community membership (whether a nation, social class, ethnicity, among others). The varieties that have less individual value to the speaker will subsequently become stigmatized and negatively perceived. These perceptions and linguistic attitudes are reflected in schools and universities, where teachers and professors of languages generally have not embraced the possibility of implementing non-sexist language, therefore the policies and linguistic planification cannot effectively be adopted with its opposition (Bengoechea, 2011; Lomotey, 2018). As a result, the authority's ideology and implicit biases imply a preference towards tradition, which has been supported by the conventions of a language that could be sustained by sexist attitudes.

The political dimension of this debate cannot be ignored. The institutional role of the RAE, even if they argue to be centered in the study of language in a social dimension, is crucial pertaining to the power dynamics and disputes (Scotto, 2020). A closer observation into its publication of neologisms and its permanent digital tool through its Twitter presence (@RAEinforma) will allow a deeper comprehension of RAE's role. Though the regular publication of dictionaries, critical editions of literary works, academic literature, and its library and archives might be the most prestigious (ibid), its digital tool, open to any Twitter user, has been employed for constant public interventions. At all times, its statements have directly been pushing the panhispanic politics that have been sustaining the institution, particularly that every hispanic speaker refers to its resources.

As a result of the increasing institutionalization of non-sexist language, both in Latinamerica and Spain, an article titled "Linguistic sexism and women's visibility" was published and signed by 26 members of the RAE in 2012. In this publication, generic masculine is established as the grammatical gender that includes "both sexes." In contrast, words like *feminicidio* ('femicide') are included in dictionaries in 2014, after six Latin American countries (Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia and Honduras) already passed laws that included either or both *femicidio* or *feminicidio* as aggravating hate crimes. Other words like *hembrismo* ('hembrism') and *feminazi*, while not possessing much literature other than social media, the RAE chose to document them in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (Dictionary of Spanish Language) in 2016. With these examples, Scotto (2020) maintains that it is undeniable that every legislation by the RAE pretends to operate with a clean and institutionalized language that is eminently political. The problem, then, circles back to power and the responsibility of accepting in codification only some debates of how to refer to people, events or relevant positions, in a manner that will sustain its institutional recognition. From there arises the necessity of visibility and guarantee of the rights of an oppressed community that has been historically neglected (ibid). The grammatical representation, as mentioned by Scott (2020), can condition the perception of reality and the people who identify with a more inclusive variety of language. For many, if a word is not found in a dictionary, or is not clearly supported by the RAE, it becomes rejected and despised. Thus, public statements (as in social media) can have a meaningful impact on speakers who seek employing what are deemed as prestigious varieties of Spanish.

GFL, like the RAE, cannot be separated from its socio-political reality. Inclusive language, in any of its levels, is recognized as an initiative for politically correct communication, according

to Sayago (2019). Its grammar can either integrate the *@,* as an effort to avoid neglecting female gender, and the non-binary *x* or *e* morphemes as unmarked, instead of the generic masculine.

Lastly, the linguist Angelita Martínez, in her article "Culture as Motivator of Syntax: The Inclusive Language" (2019), addresses the use of Spanish in Buenos Aires specifically, shedding light on the communicative needs of this group of speakers. Martínez (2019) describes GFL as emerging according to the communicative needs through a language of free words, phrases or tones that reflect stereotypical perspectives and evades discrimination. In Argentine society, some discursive strategies began to emerge to make women more visible, such as preventing the use of the masculine from also encompassing feminine references: this is non-sexist language. Among these examples is the use of the explicitness of the feminine and the masculine with *las* and *los* pronouns, followed by both expressions of the gendered forms. Additionally, there is an attempt to select terms, such as *profesorado* instead of *profesores* (teachers), *ciudadanía* instead of *ciudadanos* (citizens), among others. However, in these instances, people are still prompted to utilize *el* and *los* as generic masculine articles (ibid). Regarding grammatical gender, inclusive language has to do with people's gender, which equals to a small group of words, but that are very frequently used.

The gender paradigm, traditionally seen in binary categories, is not enough to satisfy the communicative needs of different groups when referring to human beings. With attempts and proposals to include groups historically excluded from power, non-sexist and inclusive languages have evolved. Many have realized that non-sexist language is not inclusive enough, and have decided to rely on more innovative forms of GFL. This translates into adding a non-binary gender category to refer to groups of people or individuals who do not identify as female or male, and discarding the generic masculine as unmarked. This proposal has clearly brought about

highly controversial debates for breaking the sociopolitical norm and linguistic conventions because its syntax is semantically and pragmatically motivated. Regardless of where these phenomena are headed, this evolution in the language shows that culture has the necessary influence to shape grammar, not only in the past, but also today, even if it is not institutionalized through the RAE.

b. Usage Evolution and Limitations

Youth and social media, as stated previously, are key agents in the spread and adoption of language innovations, making it the way in which GFL can become a linguistic norm. If these GFL "novelties" become linguistic habits over time and less stigmatized, gender-inclusive language can increase its acceptance and therefore make a more concrete impact (Lomotey, 2018). In social media, the debate on using *-e*, *-x*, or other proposals in the non-sexist language guides revolve around grammatical or lexical aspects based on the systemic conception of language (Messina, 2020). The different strategies are organized in a continuum that is being developed into a spectrum from the most conservative until to most innovative: it begins with morphemes *a*/*o*, then *@,* then *x*, and as the most innovative, *e* (Romero et al., 2018). The morphemes *a*/*o* are labeled as the most conservative due to explicitly depicting a binary opposition between the male and female genders and appeals to morphemes that are already part of standard Spanish. Romero et al. (2018) make a morphological analysis with the noun *trabajadorxs* ('workers') shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Morphological Analysis of *trabajadorxs*

Category	Morpheme	Meaning
Root	/trabaj-/	"Trabajar" ('to work')

Suffix	/-a/	Thematic vowel, first conjugation
Derivational suffix	/-dor/	Agentive
Inflectional suffix	/-x/	Inclusive gender
Inflectional suffix	/-s/	Plural number

One of the criticisms in grammatical terms of the style in Table 1 is that it does not transfer to oral communication by itself, giving rise to a complementary proposal where the phoneme /e/ is used to close the gap between oral and written communication, which also presents a more economical option and reflects the non-binary as an option. The previous attempts of expressing GFL did not manifest in a sufficiently successful way since its use depicts a more complicated and often monotonous speech (Martínez, 2019).

Sayago (2019) highlights some criteria for analyzing GFL usage that are necessary to more deeply comprehend the phenomenon: threshold (relevance), economy, linguistic habitus, and perseverance or strategy. **Threshold**, or relevance, indicates that some people affirm that it is not possible to continue ignoring gender diversity and take masculine as an unmarked gender, while some others consider that this difference is not relevant enough to change the gender system in Spanish. The **economy** of language is based on the law of least effort, where it is instituted that modifying the system to be more inclusive of gender diversity implies a substantial effort since it would be easier to make lexical changes than grammatical changes due to the low degree of reflection (ibid). Another important criterion is that of the **linguistic *habitus***, which underlines the speaker's (in)security regarding the lack of confidence they have in their linguistic capital and the values relative to the linguistic market. This criterion also explains that inclusive language is mainly associated with a group of middle-class youth, that is, a specific community

of Hispanic populations. At the same time, the phenomenon "defies the ear, multiplies the frequency of the *'e'*" in its most innovative form, making it not just a grammatical or systematic issue, but something more irrational (ibid). This alteration of the linguistic norms standardized by the RAE is a point of debate for many speakers, who approximate naturalness with convention.

The main issue, then, with including both forms of masculine and feminine in one sentence or expression to increase women's visibility is its anti-economic properties, which are exhausting to produce, read, or listen (Sayago, 2019), and implies the law of least effort. The problem with suffixes *-x* and -@ as unmarked morphemes or generic gender is that it is difficult to translate to oral communication. In Reales Gil's (2020) study, among the different opinions observed in the comments found in digital press, there were degrees of positions for or against, as well as opinions that accepted a moderate form of GFL and others that accepted it in a more radical way.

GFL has been widely controversial and has resulted in numerous heated debates, including the RAE still viewing it as "artificial and unnecessary from the linguistic point of view" (RAE, 2020). However, according to Messina (2020), GFL is a rhetorical phenomenon that implies the conscious decision of linguistically representing the existing violence and inequality that a part of the population in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain faces. Thus, GFL seeks a political effect through communication based on efficacy and not what is most economical (ibid).

Schiffman (2009) argues that "implementation is almost always the weakest link in language policies" (p. 119). Lomotey (2018) pushes forward the idea that what is presently a negative attitude towards GFL will change with time given that Spanish speakers will eventually become familiar with the styles, and could become a language practice. Sayago (2019) sums up that the success of GFL will not end gender violence or *machismo*, but it would "add a productive

nuance in the conception of language and the speaker's sociolinguistic awareness, increasing sensitivity to gender variety."

E. Linguistic Attitudes and Profiling in the Dominican Republic

a. Methodology

To assess Dominicans' linguistic attitudes, values, and prejudices, participants took a Qualtrics survey with written cues on individuals employing GFL. Since people's linguistic attitudes and prejudices are potentially good indicators of ideological division on forms and varieties, this study allows linguists to have a better sense of how the versions of GFL relate to its usage and acceptance. The participants (N = 40), with ages 18 to 65, received a link for the Qualtrics survey gathering information on their demographics and the pseudo-randomized experiment, including questions with written examples including features of standard and Dominican Spanish, as well as examples of GFL in singular and plural forms pertaining to social justice, peace, and human rights (JPR).

The control variables are standard and ungrammatical Spanish. The intermediary variable would be Dominican Spanish sentences, meanwhile the testing variable is the different forms of GFL inspired by social media and the press in the Dominican Republic. The control variable takes on the role of filler questions that stray away from the participant's attention on the focus of the study: GFL and the individual's linguistic attitudes. To see the entire compilation of examples and their classification for the survey, see Appendix B. The following are examples of the sentences included in the survey:

1. Standard Spanish:

Al crear buenos vínculos con nuestros hijos estamos creando mayor autonomía en ellos.

“By creating good relationships with our children, we are creating greater autonomy in them.”

2. Dominican Spanish:

Se me olvida que toy a dieta y voy a la nevera y sin quere me como do plato.

*“*I forget I’m on a diet, and I go to the fridge, and I accidentally eat two plates.”

3. Gender-fair language singular, JPR topics:

Ser binarie no significa que no te sientes identificadx con los géneros binarios hombre y mujer normalizados como las únicas identidades posibles post-colonización.

“Being non-binary doesn’t mean you don’t feel identified with the binary genders woman and man normalized as the only possible post-colonization identities.”

4. Gender-fair language plural, JPR topics:

El futuro es nuestro. Nuestros hijes tendrán un mejor país, más democrático, inclusivo, y más justo.

*“*The future is ours. Our children will have a better country, more democratic, inclusive, and more just.”

5. Gender-fair language singular, other topics:

De mí, para mí: “viste que sí podías.” Qué jevi es estar orgullosx de unx mismx.

*“*For me, to me: “see, you could do it.” It’s awesome being proud of oneself.”

6. Gender-fair language plural, other topics:

Si no te despides de tus amigxs diciéndoles te amo, te invito a que lo hagas. Normalicemos decir te quiero a quienes apreciamos.

“If you don’t say goodbye to your friends by telling them you love them, I invite you to do it. Let’s normalize saying I love you to people we appreciate.”

7. Ungrammatical Spanish:

Yo sabo el alfabeto en inglés de atrás para alante.

"I know the alphabet in English from back to front."

The demographic questionnaire focuses on the participant's background, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, age group, level of education, background in linguistics, native language, place of residency, income, race, and religious denomination (see Appendix A). The filler questionnaire is important because it masks the variable being specifically evaluated to the participant, which could skew the results, making the participant hyper-aware of their opinions, and in turn, resulting in a modification of their response to the question before going to the next question (as they are not able to change their answers once they click 'next'). Part of the filler questions include those sentences with Dominican Spanish features, such as lexical additions with dominicanisms (for instance, *quillando*, meaning "getting upset"). By providing these sentence examples, and evaluating the participant's grammatical judgments with both positive and negative connotations, one would have an indication of the person's ideology, including if they are influenced by standard language ideology. This means that, for each sentence example provided, one question will be with positive connotation, the other with negative, and the third will be a grammaticality judgment.

The percentage associated with the number of sentence examples is: 30 percent will be perfectly grammatical, 30 percent perfectly ungrammatical, and 40 percent target sentences with GFL. Like the filler questions, with the 40 percent of all examples being specifically about GFL, each sentence example has three questions that will be pseudo-randomized throughout Qualtrics and includes a Likert scale of the participant's attitude to these examples, with both the positive and negative connotations. The pseudo-randomization consists of an order that does not repeat question types for the same sentences too closely to the last. Specifically for the questions testing

GFL, 50 percent of the examples included are related to JPR, and 50 percent are not related to JPR. There are also examples that are either plural or singular. Besides this, there is an exposure to GFL questionnaire, which allows the researcher to determine the level of understanding of the phenomenon that the subject may have. The positive connotation questions are included to evaluate linguistic profiling, possibly indicative of linguistic change for social reasons. These include keywords that are deemed as positive, such as *accept*. The negative connotation questions include keywords that are deemed as negative, such as *reject.* All these categories yielded 150 questions, with 50 sentence examples, with 10 GFL in plural form, half related to JPR and half related to other topics, 10 GFL in singular form, half related to JPR and half relation to other topics, 10 standard Spanish, 10 ungrammatical Spanish, and 10 Dominican Spanish.

Every one of these questions is minimal risk, but to avoid discomfort, a "not sure" and a neutral option have been offered. Recruiting was primarily done by using the Emory Listserv and word of mouth, through the dissemination of a pre-written flier. Thus, all contact was virtual or remote. There was no waiting period between informing the prospective participant and obtaining the consent. Without confirming or declining consent, the participant was not able to view the rest of the survey-experiment. Once the participant submitted their responses in Qualtrics, the contact with the individual was finalized. Despite having a sample of 40 individuals living in Santo Domingo, one decided to abandon the survey after reading the consent form. Every single participant volunteered to complete the survey regardless of the lack of financial compensation. The only participants able to access the survey were those proficient in Spanish, considering that it was fully designed in Spanish. Bilingual speakers were also welcome as long as they reside or have resided in Santo Domingo.

b. Results

i. Grammaticality Judgments

This type of question provides relevant information on the potential linguistic change pushed by the inclusion of GFL in people's oral and written communication. For each of the 50 sentence examples, participants were asked whether they deemed the use of Spanish as a) grammatical, b) ungrammatical, or c) not sure. The percentages associated with each response are organized in Table 2.

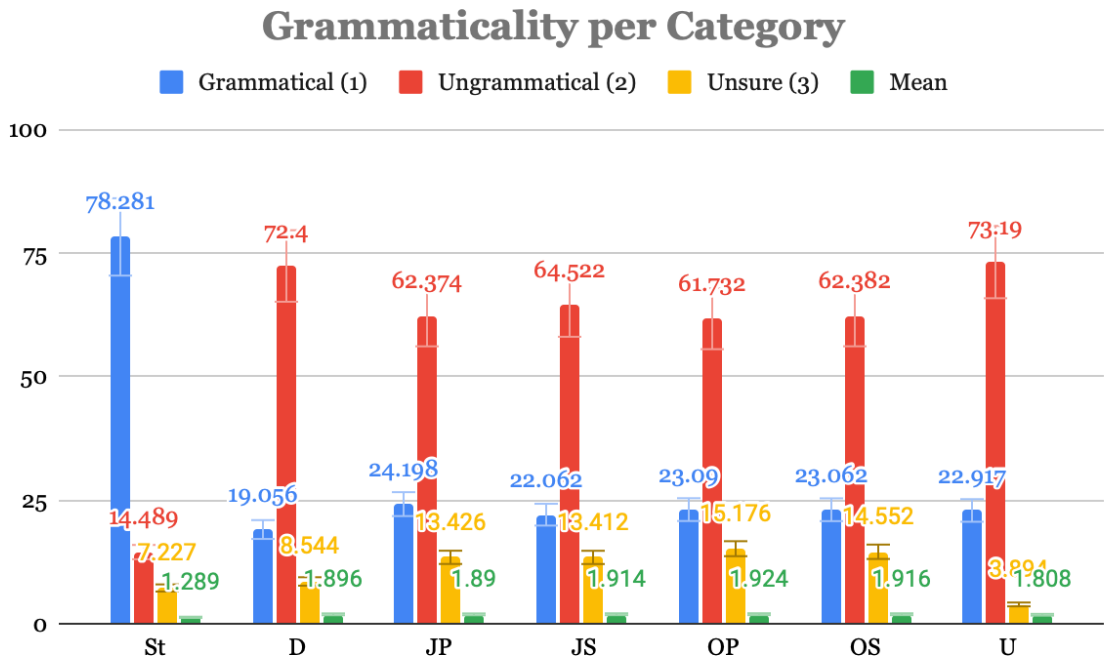
Table 2. Grammaticality Judgments Percentages and Mean for All Examples (2.s.f)

	Standard	Dominican	JPR Plural	JPR Singular	Other Plural	Other Singular	Ungrammatical
Grammatical (1)	78.28	19.06	24.20	22.06	23.09	23.06	22.917
Ungrammatical (2)	14.49	72.40	62.37	64.52	61.73	62.38	73.19
Not Sure (3)	7.23	8.54	13.43	13.41	15.18	14.55	3.89
Mean	1.29	1.90	1.89	1.91	1.92	1.92	1.81

Note: N = 39. All numbers are percentages, except for the mean, which represents where most responses lie based on the participants' choice, where 1 is the most grammatical, 1 the most ungrammatical, and 3 reflects the participant's uncertainty.

The information in Table 2 is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Grammaticality Judgments Percentages and Mean for All Examples



Note: St = Standard Spanish, D = Dominican Spanish, JP = GFL JPR topics in Plural, JS = GFL JPR topics in Singular, OP = GFL Other topics in Plural, OS = GFL Other topics in Singular, and U = Ungrammatical Spanish.

In the grammaticality judgments per category, there is a clear distinction between standard Spanish and the other varieties presented. For standard Spanish, 78.28 percent of participants voted that the sentence examples were grammatical. The category that follows this percentage, with a difference of 54.08 percent, are the sentence examples provided utilizing GFL, pertaining to social justice, peace, and/or rights in the plural form with approximately 24.20 percent of participants labeling it as grammatical. The next most grammatical sentence examples, according to the participants, were GFL, pertaining to other topics in plural form with 23.09 percent. Then, by a small margin, the sentence examples that contain GFL, pertaining to other topics in singular form with 23.06 percent. The particularly interesting data points in these grammaticality judgments are the following: sentence examples of perfectly ungrammatical Spanish were chosen as grammatical before (22.92%) before those containing GFL on JPR topics in singular form (22.06%) and Dominican Spanish (19.06%). The order is easily visualized in Table 3.

Table 3. Order of Grammatical Categories

Category Tested	% of Participants Choosing Grammatical
1. Standard Spanish	78.28
2. GFL JPR Plural	24.20
3. GFL Other Plural	23.09
4. GFL Other Singular	23.06
5. Ungrammatical Spanish	22.92
6. GFL JPR Singular	22.06
7. Dominican Spanish	19.06

The mean for each category based on the participants' selections is a number from 1-3, with 1 being, on average, the most grammatical, 2 being the most ungrammatical, and 3 being uncertainty between a choice or the other. Table 4 contains the order of the category tested dependent upon the mean.

Table 4. Order of Grammatical Categories Based on Mean (2.s.f)

Category Tested	Mean of Participants Choosing Grammatical
1. Standard Spanish	1.29
2. Ungrammatical Spanish	1.81
3. GFL JPR Plural	1.89
4. Dominican Spanish	1.90
5. GFL JPR Singular	1.91
6. GFL Other Singular	1.92
7. GFL Other Plural	1.92

In the spectrum of grammatical to unsure, participants seem to be the most certain about standard Spanish, having a 1.29 mean as the closest category to being perfectly grammatical. The

other categories are closer to a 2 mean, which means more participants either chose that the sentence examples are ungrammatical or they were not sure. The category closest to ungrammatical or the category people doubted the most was GFL on other topics in plural form, and in the middle, but closer to ungrammatical are the sentence examples that included Dominican Spanish.

ii. Acceptance and Rejection of GFL

These types of questions contain the positive and negative connotations that depict the participants' linguistic attitudes toward the variables tested. It is important to note that the Likert scale allows participants to more honestly decide where each sentence example lies in terms of their acceptance or rejection of the category tested. There are many ways to observe these variables, but for the sake of answering the distinct research questions, I will provide tables and figures for the variables that are relevant. First off, for RQ1, Table 5 organizes the results between sentence examples containing the *x*-morpheme and the *e*-morpheme as degrees of GFL.

Table 5. Degrees of GFL and Acceptance (2.s.f)

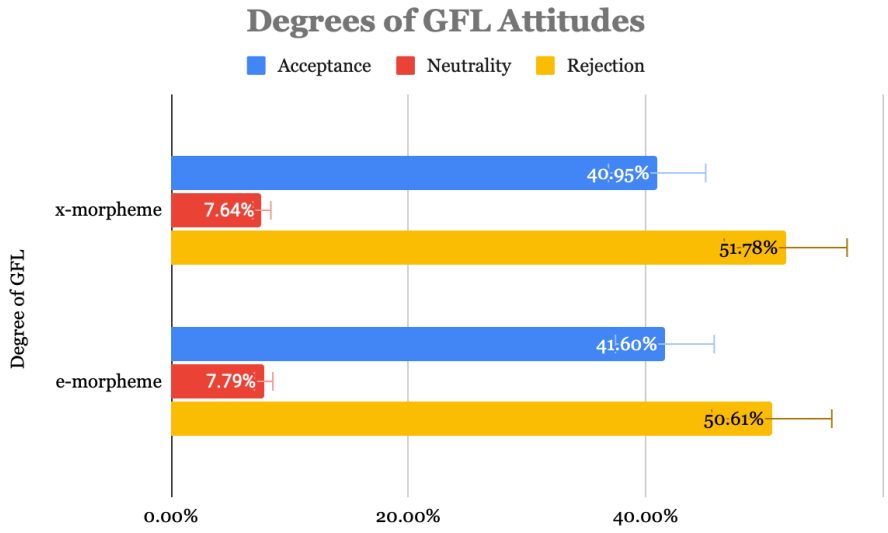
	Degree of GFL	
	***x*-morpheme**	***e*-morpheme**
Acceptance	40.95%	41.60%
Neutrality	4.64%	7.79%
Rejection	51.78%	50.61%

Note: % of Acceptance is determined by getting the sum of the 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree' when participants were asked whether they accepted the use of Spanish in the sentence, averaged by the sum of 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree' in Rejection, and vice-versa for the % in Rejection. The percentages might not add up to 100.00 due to the estimates.

The representation of GFL with the *x*-morpheme as the neutral grammatical gender yields an average of 40.95 percent of acceptance, and a 51.78 percent of rejection. Both of these percentages reveal that the *x*-morpheme is slightly less accepted than the *e*-morpheme. There is a

higher neutrality or confusion with the most innovative morpheme of GFL, with 7.79 percent of participants not choosing to accept or reject it. Figure 2 illustrates these results.

Figure 2. Degrees of GFL and Average Attitudes



For RQ2, Table 6 includes GFL divided solely by number, plural and singular forms, and includes the percentages of acceptance, neutrality, and rejection.

Table 6. GFL Acceptance by Number (2.s.f)

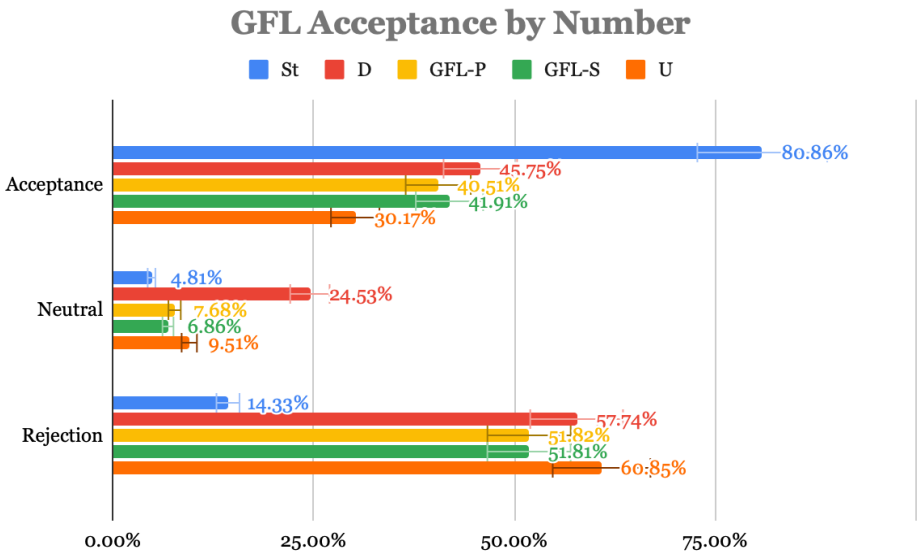
	GFL-P	GFL-S
Acceptance	40.51%	41.91%
Neutrality	7.68%	6.86%
Rejection	51.82%	51.81%

Notes: GFL-P = Plural and GFL-S = Singular. % of Acceptance is determined by getting the sum of the 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree' when participants were asked whether they accepted the use of Spanish in the sentence, averaged by the sum of 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree' in Rejection, and vice-versa for the % in Rejection. The percentages might not add up to 100.00 due to the estimates.

Table 6 shows that, on average, GFL has slightly more acceptance when used in singular form, with a 1.4 percent difference, as well as even a smaller margin of rejection, with a 0.01 percent difference. Neutrality for the plural forms seems to be greater for the plural forms of GFL, with a 0.82 percent difference. It is worth noting that the singular form also has a smaller

percentage of neutrality. Figure 3 illustrates the differences by number, contrasted to the rest of the categories.

Figure 3. All Categories Acceptance by Number



Note: St = Standard Spanish, D = Dominican Spanish, JP = GFL JPR topics in Plural, JS = GFL JPR topics in Singular, OP = GFL Other topics in Plural, OS = GFL Other topics in Singular, and U = Ungrammatical Spanish.

For RQ3, Table 7 summarizes acceptance and rejection of GFL and Dominican Spanish as to observe more closely the relationship between these variables.

Table 7. General Acceptance of GFL compared to Dominican Spanish

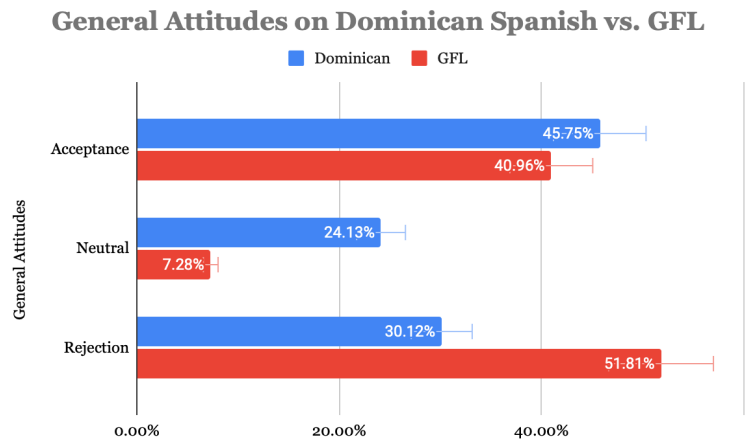
	D	GFL
Acceptance	45.75%	40.96%
Neutrality	24.13%	7.28%
Rejection	30.12%	51.81%

Note: D = Dominican Spanish. % of Acceptance is determined by getting the sum of the 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree' when participants were asked whether they accepted the use of Spanish in the sentence, averaged by the sum of 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree' in Rejection, and vice-versa for the % in Rejection.

Between the acceptance of Dominican Spanish and GFL there is a 4.79 percent difference, with Dominican Spanish being more widely deemed in a positive light. With neutrality, there is a

trend that the percentages are different, with Dominican Spanish having 24.13 percent of participants not feeling very strongly about the variety. That being said, for GFL, participants seem to be taking more firm positions, mostly relying on a negative perception of the phenomenon, with 51.81 percent of participants rejecting it. The general linguistic attitudes toward these are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. General Attitudes on Dominican Spanish vs. GFL



Lastly, for RQ4, Table 8 compares the acceptance and rejection of JPR topics in the GFL sentence example results with other topics, regardless of their number.

Table 8. GFL Acceptance per Topic

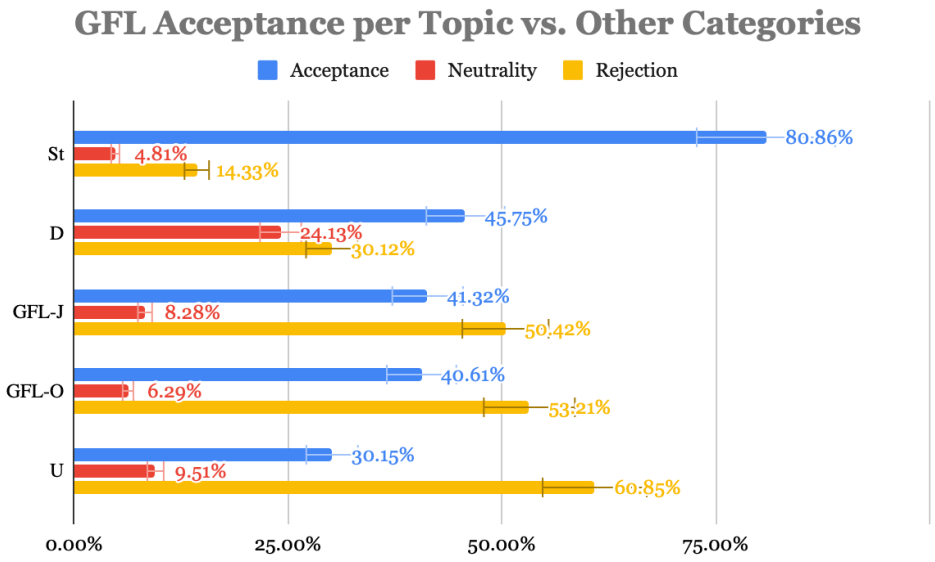
	St	D	GFL-J	GFL-O	U
Acceptance	80.86%	45.75%	41.32%	40.61%	30.15%
Neutrality	4.81%	24.13%	8.28%	6.29%	9.51%
Rejection	14.33%	30.12%	50.42%	53.21%	60.85%

Note: St = Standard Spanish, D = Dominican Spanish, GFL-J = GFL with JPR topics, GFL-O = GFL with other topics, U = Ungrammatical Spanish. % of Acceptance is determined by getting the sum of the 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree' when participants were asked whether they accepted the use of Spanish in the sentence, averaged by the sum of 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree' in Rejection, and vice-versa for the % in Rejection.

Table 8 shows standard Spanish is the category with the least neutrality and highest acceptance, with 4.81 percent and 80.86 percent respectively. However, GFL on other topics has

the second smaller neutrality rate with 6.29 percent and the second highest rejection with 53.21 percent of participants being against its use. GFL on JPR topics follows it, with 8.28 neutrality and 50.42 percent rejection. These points are depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4. GFL Acceptance per Topic vs. Other Categories



Note: St = Standard Spanish, D = Dominican Spanish, JP = GFL JPR topics in Plural, JS = GFL JPR topics in Singular, OP = GFL Other topics in Plural, OS = GFL Other topics in Singular, and U = Ungrammatical Spanish.

c. Discussion

i. Phonology of GFL and Acceptance

Observing the results in Section B, the survey responses reveal that the *x*-morpheme has a 51.78 percent rejection in participants versus a 50.67 percent for the *e*-morpheme. This clearly shows that the *x*-morpheme, as the least innovative choice of the two, is slightly less accepted (for only a 1.11 percent difference). These results are in accordance with literature on GFL, as one of the main criticisms in grammatical terms of the *x*-morpheme is that it does not easily transfer to oral communication, which leads speakers into relying on the *e*-morpheme. Findings

have found that altering one phoneme (Campbell-Kibler, 2007) can dramatically alter listener evaluations of the speaker. However, the same individuals could potentially be employing the *x*-morpheme in writing while at the same time using the *e*-morpheme in speech.

As stated by Martínez (2019), the phoneme /e/ closes the gap between oral and written communication, while also being the more economical option of the two and still reflecting the non-binary nature that is sought by the LGBTQ+ community. The previous attempts, such as the non-sexist language proposals stated in the literature review of this paper, have merely been trials that have not been successful enough to fulfill the needs of the speakers who are seeking higher levels of inclusivity in language. This is mostly because of these strategies supporting the binary tradition of Spanish. Another concern with the GFL options available at the moment is that they are complicated and can turn repetitive, especially with the suffixes containing -*x* and -*@*.

There is still a higher neutrality with the *e*-morpheme, which could relate to this feature being the newer suffix, as the *x*-morpheme is more well-known and utilized in writing through social media, where the phenomenon is being widely spread. When looking for GFL examples online, there was a 1:19 ratio of finding the *e*- versus the *x*-morphemes in social media.

The slight difference in acceptance or rejection could be due to groups generally having more positive or negative perceptions of GFL as a phenomenon rather than being completely opposed to one form of GFL. To view this relationship on a deeper level, further studies would have to extract more data, potentially by collecting information through people's statements on social media. Evidently, Hopper (1988) was correct in his assertion that the grammatical strategies to express inclusive gender are (still) in competition. My hypothesis that, for the most innovative forms, like the addition of the *e*-morpheme in the sentence examples, the greater

acceptance is not incorrect. That being said, the results of this study have low generalizability to the Dominican Republic as a whole, and do not transfer to other societies necessarily.

ii. Singular vs. Plural Forms of GFL

When it comes to GFL acceptance by number, the results show that, on average, the singular form of GFL has slightly more acceptance, with a 1.4 percent difference, which is validated by its slightly smaller margin of rejection, but only with a 0.01 percent difference. Nonetheless, it seems as though the difference between GFL acceptance by number might not be meaningful enough when considering Dominicans' linguistic attitudes toward language change implying the addition of GFL in their speech and writing, which does not reject my hypothesis, where I expected to see unmeaningful difference in acceptance due to the solidarity to the community practice, but also the reflection of identity in the singular form.

It is still worth nothing that the neutrality percentage for the plural forms being slightly higher could be due to Agha's (2005:12) point that, "it is through individual stylistic choices that group norms are produced and reproduced." Linguistic change for this community—and in general—begins with the micro-decisions that later reflect on and influence the macro societal patterns in linguistic styles. D'Onofrio (2016) expanded upon this idea explaining that, "while a given linguistic form might initially index some community or group by virtue of its contextual use, its (re-)interpretation allows the form to be linked with a particular attribute or quality associated with its group." What we are observing in this study is a form that is generally attributed to the LGBTQ+ community but that also has a direct effect on people's perception and reflection of identity.

iii. Rejection of Dominican Spanish and GFL

Table 3 clearly demonstrates that participants do not believe that Dominican Spanish is grammatical, choosing their responses with a higher certainty than for GFL, given the low 8.54 percent of neutrality versus a 14.14 percent average in all GFL sentence examples. With the widespread standard language ideology perpetrated in the educational system on all levels in the Dominican Republic, it is reasonable to find that participants' level of confidence in the Dominican Spanish grammaticality judgments. After the perfectly ungrammatical sentence examples, Dominican Spanish is the category that participants deem as the most ungrammatical with 72.40 percent choosing that option. In contrast, GFL averages 62.75 percent of participants choosing the phenomenon as ungrammatical, which is slightly over a 10 percent difference. Dominican Spanish has an approximate mean of 1.90 for the grammaticality judgment questions, which is not very distanced from the 1.91 average of GFL. This proximity in values is due to the negative association of grammaticality of Dominican Spanish, but for GFL, it has to do more with the higher uncertainty that participants feel about the phenomenon.

General rejection of Dominican Spanish is at 30.12 percent, contrasted by the 51.81 percent, which is a 21.69 percent difference—a meaningful one. The hypothesis for this research question was that, although Dominican Spanish is less innovative than GFL and is an established dialect of participants, rejection of Dominican Spanish would relate to rejection of GFL. However, the results show that rejection of Dominican Spanish is lower than GFL, which correlates with the literature of linguistic change and variation, explaining that change—in its initial stages—is seen exclusively as deviant and is not understood as a process (Gelbes et al., 2020). This information reveals that the hypothesis cannot be sustained, but the results still yield useful information to comprehend the phenomenon more closely.

One of Sayago's (2019) criterions of analyzing GFL usage is linguistic *habitus*. It refers to a speaker's insecurity regarding the lack of confidence they might feel when employing the phenomenon. The demographic information of the survey reveals that only six participants have had any linguistic formation or education, which could be relating back to that criterion, even if most participants, meaning all minus three, have at least attended college if not graduated. While this criterion also discusses youth as leading change, 58.97 percent describe being between 18 and 23 years old, and 76.92 percent between 18 and 39 years old. This makes the survey responses more biased toward youth and their linguistic attitudes.

iv. Differences in GFL Content Topics

GFL pertaining to topics that are not social justice, peace, or human rights having the smallest neutrality rate (6.29 percent versus 8.28 for JPR topics) and, comparatively, the highest rejection with 53.21 percent of participants against it. These results are in accordance with Messina (2020), stating that GFL seeks a political effect, where communication is dependent on efficacy and not necessarily the most economical option. Similarly, this information extracted from the survey affirms that individuals use GFL with the purpose of making their ideological position explicit (Romero et al., 2018), and they potentially do that more successfully through plural forms as they refer to the Community's issues for the purpose of uniting to create social change, reflected in language.

Additionally, these results give further support to Gelbes et al.'s (2020) theory on linguistic change, particularly when they uphold that linguistic change in this context cannot be stripped away from the sociopolitical background and motivations that produce this variety. According to

the literature on this phenomenon, the differences in GFL content topics does not yield statistically significant results across genders. Reales Gil (2020) found that both men and women touch on politics and justice when commenting on inclusive language, thus this study does not focus on looking across genders. For my hypothesis, I expected to observe more extreme attitudes of GFL addressing JPR topics than other topics with less neutrality, but this was proven to be incorrect. There was a smaller neutrality rate for the GFL pertaining to other topics, giving a higher rejection.

I. Conclusions

Hispanics have been increasingly employing GFL, with the LGBTQ+ community members finding a greater sense of identity in the forms that this phenomenon entails. Considering that identity is intrinsically related to idiolect, or a person's adoption and use of language, and vice-versa, these groups have continuously fought against standard language founded on binaries in pronouns and affixes without a neutral option. GFL is a fairly new phenomenon in Spanish across Hispanic nations. It is most often employed with the exchange of gendered suffixes, such as '*-o*(*s*)' and '*-a*(*s*)', for ungendered ones, such as '*-e*(*s*)', as the newest form, or '*-x*(*s*)'. For example, a speaker could refer to a friend as *mi(s) amigue(s)* ("my friend") instead of *mi(s) amigo(s)* ("my friends"), which employs generic masculine as per traditional Spanish grammatical rules.

This thesis assessed the different linguistic attitudes to the evolving GFL phenomenon through a Qualtrics survey by recruiting participants residing in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. The study tested variables such as acceptance, rejection, grammaticality judgments, exposure and usage through written cues to answer four research

questions, two on form and two on usage. The first research question on form was: what is the relationship between the phonology of GFL and its acceptance? The second research question on form was: what are the differences in GFL acceptance between singular and plural forms? The first research question on usage, and third overall was: how does rejection of Dominican Spanish relate to rejection of GFL? And, finally, the second research question on usage, and fourth overall was: what are the differences in GFL acceptance between topics pertaining to justice, peace, and rights (JPR) and other topics?

On the relationship between phonology and GFL, the results show that the *x*-morpheme, as the least innovative choice between itself and the *e*-morpheme, is slightly less accepted in participants. When it comes to GFL acceptance by number, the results show that, on average, the singular form of GFL has slightly more acceptance than the plural form. For the third research question on the relationship between rejection in Dominican Spanish and GFL, most participants do not believe that Dominican Spanish is grammatical, choosing their responses with a higher certainty than for GFL. Results show that rejection of Dominican Spanish is meaningfully lower than GFL, which correlates with the literature of linguistic change and variation, and rejects my hypothesis. Lastly, for the fourth research question, I expected to observe more extreme attitudes of GFL addressing JPR topics than other topics with less neutrality, but this was proven to be incorrect. There was a smaller neutrality rate for the GFL pertaining to other topics, giving a higher rejection.

With people's linguistic attitudes and prejudices being potentially good indicators of ideological division on forms and varieties, this study can shed light into the phenomenon's change and evolution and its implications on standard language in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Hopefully, in this process, this thesis inspires a continuous interest in social

movements in favor of social justice and their implications in language, including its evolution as a result of the political intricacies reflected in language as speakers' needs change.

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Appendix A: Demographic and Exposure Questionnaires

Category	Questions
Demographic Questionnaire	1. What is your gender? ☐ **Female**: an individual who identifies as a woman and whose assigned biological sex at birth is female. ☐ **Male**: an individual who identifies as a man and whose assigned biological sex at birth is male. ☐ **Transgender female**: an individual who identifies as a woman and whose assigned biological sex at birth is male. ☐ **Transgender male**: an individual who identifies as a man and whose assigned biological sex at birth is female. ☐ **Non-binary/non-conforming:** an individual whose gender identity does not subscribe to binary gender categories (neither male nor female). ☐ **Genderqueer**: an individual whose gender identity and/or expression may exist outside, in between or fluctuate among the binary gender categories. ☐ **Genderfluid**: an individual whose gender identity or gender expression does not adhere to one fixed gender and may change over time. ☐ **Not listed**: 2. To which sexual orientation do you most closely identify? ☐ Asexual ☐ Bisexual ☐ Gay ☐ Heterosexual or straight ☐ Lesbian ☐ Pansexual ☐ Not Listed: 3. To which age group do you belong? ☐ 18-23 ☐ 24-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60-65 4. What's your highest level of education completed or in process? ☐ No formal education

	☐ Less than high school diploma ☐ High school ☐ Some college, no degree ☐ Bachelor's Degree (e.g. BA, BBA, BS) ☐ Master's Degree (e.g. MA, MS, MPP) ☐ Professional Degree (e.g. MD, DDS, JD) ☐ Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD) 5. What's your household's average monthly income (in Dominican Pesos RD$)? ☐ 0 - 15,000 ☐ 15,001 - 25,000 ☐ 25,001 - 35,000 ☐ 35,001 - 45,000 ☐ 45,001 - 85,000 ☐ 85,001 + 6. With what race do you most closely identify? ☐ White or Caucasian ☐ Black or Afro descendant ☐ Mixed, specify ☐ Asian ☐ Not Listed: 7. What religious denomination do you currently identify with? ☐ Christianity (Protestant) ☐ Christianity (Catholic) ☐ Islam ☐ Judaism ☐ Buddhism ☐ Atheist ☐ Agnostic
Exposure to Gender-Fair Language Questionnaire	1. In the last two weeks, what percentage of your conversations have included gender-fair language? Make your best estimate. ☐ 0% ☐ 1 < 20% ☐ 20 - 50% ☐ 50 - 80% ☐ >80% 2. In the last two weeks, what percentage of your conversations have you used gender-fair language? Make your best estimate. ☐ 0% ☐ 1 < 20% ☐ 20 - 50% ☐ 50 - 80% ☐ >80% 3. In the last two weeks, what percentage of your

	written communications (e.g. text messages, emails, social media comments and statements) have included gender-fair language? Make your best estimate. ☐ 0% ☐ 1 < 20% ☐ 20 - 50% ☐ 50 - 80% ☐ >80% 4. In the last two weeks, what percentage of written communication (e.g. text messages, emails, social media comments and direct messages) sent to you have included any use of gender-fair language? Make your best estimate. ☐ 0% ☐ 1 < 20% ☐ 20 - 50% ☐ 50 - 80% ☐ >80% 5. In the last two weeks, what percentage of media (e.g. news, opinion articles, interviews or videos) have included gender-fair language? Make your best estimate. ☐ 0% ☐ 1 < 20% ☐ 20 - 50% ☐ 50 - 80% ☐ >80%

Appendix B: Gender-Fair Language Survey

Question English	Question Spanish	Example	Category GFL	Category Non-GFL	Number
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	"El futuro es nuestro. Nuestros hijes tendrán un mejor país, más democrático, inclusivo, y más justo."	PJR		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	"Oigan, dejen de decir que la transfobia es ignorancia y que todxs nacimos siendo transfóbicxs. Es tan esencialista como falso."	PJR		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	"He sido suficientemente abusadx en esta vida como para que me importen como se sientan lxs abusadorxs. De ahí a que hagan lxs demás es su problema."	PJR		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	"Lo de que lxs diputadxs necesitan asesores es cierto, pero disponer de ese dinero rompe con todo su discurso de campaña."	PJR		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este				

Spanish in this example?	ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“La blanquitud no es una onda, ni "una forma de pensar." Dejen de ser unxs hippies.”	PJR		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Ser binarie no significa que no te sientes identificadx con los géneros binarios hombre y mujer normalizados como las únicas identidades posibles post-colonización.”	PJR		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Oímos experiencias, de lo lindo de verse representadx en la infancia y de los límites de todo ello.”	PJR		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Me presento como lx nuevx directorx regional de Afroféminas para Norteamérica, Centroamérica y el Caribe.”	PJR		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of	Este ejemplo de	“Estoy hartx de sus tuits sobre "la	PJR		Singular

Spanish is...	español es...	experiencia femenina" donde sólo hablan del cuerpo de las mujeres cis como si ese cuerpo no lo tuviéramos muchas personas no femeninas/no mujeres.”			
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Una amiga haitiana está por empezar el proceso de solicitud de asilo para personas LGBTQ+, por si conocen algunx abogadx.”	PJR		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Si no te despides de tus amigxs diciéndoles te amo, te invito a que lo hagas. Normalicemos decir te quiero a quienes apreciamos.”	Other		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Que en el 2022 se me haga viajar con mis mejores amigxs.”	Other		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“El hecho de que mis cuentas sean públicas y se sientan "cercanxs" no significa que seamos amigxs.”	Other		Plural
Do you accept the use of	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este				

Spanish in this example?	ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...		Other		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	“El tema es que lxs facilitadorxs (los pocos que vi) fueron buenxs. Fue un tema de organización y pedagogía.”			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...		Other		Plural
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	“Para tener más responsabilidad afectiva necesitas expresar tus expectativas y comprender el peso de tus acciones en lxs demás.”			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...		Other		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	“De mí, para mí: "viste que sí podías." Qué jevi es estar orgullosx de unx mismx.”			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...		Other		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject	¿Rechazas el uso	“Recordatorio de que muchas veces "ser demasiado buenx" se traduce en "no establezco límites en mis relaciones interpersonales."”			

the use of Spanish in this example?	del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Hay gente que sí se merece lo peor y eso no significa que tú estés "enfermx."”	Other		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Está bien si hoy la pasas solx, mejor solx que con mala compañía.”	Other		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“La verdad no me sentí cómodx con algo que dijiste. Si quieres lo hablamos luego y te explico.”	Other		Singular
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“La evolución del creole en el continente americano se tiende a rastrear hasta la época colonial con esclavos africanos en las plantaciones de la región.”		Standard Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				

This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Standard Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"Aunque hay diferencias fundamentales en estas dos posiciones sobre el tema, al mismo tiempo se encuentran puntos en común."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Standard Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"¡Más políticas públicas desde la evidencia, no desde el privilegio!"			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Standard Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"Condenamos enérgicamente el atentado con carro bomba ocurrido en Savarena Arauca, que lamentablemente dejó una persona fallecida y varias heridas."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Standard Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"Las autoridades tienen instalado un amplio dispositivo de seguridad para velar por el cumplimiento del protocolo para evitar el contagio y propagación del COVID-19."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept	¿Aceptas el uso del	"Se siente fuertemente la inflación. No hay forma de negarla."		Standard Spanish	

the use of Spanish in this example?	español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Standard Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"Estar en una relación abusiva es complicado. El amor, los niños, la familia, la comunidad, el dinero, la seguridad – irse nunca es tan fácil."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Standard Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"Rusia, en el plano geopolítico, implica un poder de contención frente a intereses imperiales de Estados Unidos."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Standard Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"Ministro de Salud dice pruebas rápidas solamente pueden ser compradas en farmacias, tras acuerdo con la Red Nacional de Farmacias."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"Al crear buenos vínculos con nuestros hijos estamos creando mayor autonomía en ellos."		Standard Spanish	

Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“El pana de "Y klk? Tu no ta en na tu no ta en na" tiene más talento que Rauw Alejandro.”		Dominican Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Po el uber llegó a mi casa, me canceló al frente de mí y se fue…”		Dominican Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“El lune ya me tiene cansao mano.”		Dominican Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Como se le puede tene tana gana a una gente eso no e normal.”		Dominican Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				

example?					
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Creo que lo peor de mi e que me cojo todo a chercha.”		Dominican Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Hay gente que dede que se consiguen pareja te tratan como una basura eto e' increíble.”		Dominican Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Pensando en tirame de la ecalera del trabajo a ve si me dan par de día libre.”		Dominican Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Se ta yendo como si nada el fin de semana.”		Dominican Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Po el uber taba hablando de un tema y cada ve se iba quillando ma. Yo juraba		Dominican Spanish	

Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	que me iba a entra y de to.”			
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Dominican Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	“Se me olvida que toy a dieta y voy a la nevera y sin quere me como do plato.”			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	“Yo sabo el alfabeto en inglés de atrás para alante.”			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	“El aguas del río estaba dulce como la miel.”			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	“No le di a tus amigos los ingredientes que pidieran.”		Ungrammatical Spanish	

example?					
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"El vecino piensa que a la niña no le gusta esa sitio."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"La niña dijo que la mujer se vio hoy ella misma."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?	"El autor escribió que el alumno se rió de esa lentitud."			
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...				
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?			Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you reject the use of	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este	"Yo duermes todo el día cuando hay vacaciones."			

Spanish in this example?	ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“El amigos del primo mío cogió un taxi para llegar a su casa envéz del trén.”		Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Mi madre cocina tan bueno como ti tía.”		Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
This example of Spanish is...	Este ejemplo de español es...	“Muchos amigas de mi compañero de clase les molesta los sonidos cuando uno come.”		Ungrammatical Spanish	
Do you accept the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Aceptas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				
Do you reject the use of Spanish in this example?	¿Rechazas el uso del español en este ejemplo?				

Appendix C: Tables

Appendix D: Figures