Expression of Cultural Standing in Miami: Cuban Spanish Discourse about Fidel Castro and Cuba

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ABSTRACT: This study draws upon Strauss' (2004) model of cultural standing to analyze opinions regarding Fidel Castro and US-Cuba relations among three major groups of Miami Cubans, identified according to their time of immigration: early 1960s exiles, "Marielitos" and their children (1980 exiles), and the younger generation (Miami-born grandchildren of 1960s exiles). I argue that the discourse features used to convey differing ideological stances on sending aid to Cuba or visiting the Island are reflective of two rather distinct "opinion communities" in Cuban Miami. To that end, I explore the relationship between processes of simplification in the Spanish verb system and the discourse features of cultural standing by focusing on members of the younger generation, who generally perpetuate the exile discourse of their grandparents. The possibility of returning permanently to a post-Castro Cuban homeland is also analyzed through the lens of the discourse of common opinion.

KEY WORDS: Cuban Spanish, Cuban Miami, Cuban exile politics, US-Cuba relations, Spanish in the USA, sociolinguistic variation, linguistic simplification, hypothetical discourse, language and ideology.

RESUMEN: Este estudio analiza las opiniones de tres grandes grupos históricos de la población cubana en Miami respecto a las relaciones cubano-estadounidenses durante el gobierno de Fidel Castro. El análisis parte del modelo de "posicionamiento cultural" (cultural standing) planteado por Strauss (2004). Los tres grandes grupos, según el momento en que llegaron a Miami, son: (1) los exiliados de la década de 1960, (2) los llamados marielitos y sus hijos, que salieron de Cuba en 1980, y (3) los nietos de los exiliados de la década de 1960. Mi argumento es que las características del discurso utilizado por estos tres grupos difieren en lo que respecta a la posibilidad de enviar ayuda a Cuba o visitar la Isla. Estas distintas posiciones ideológicas reflejan la existencia de dos "comunidades de opinión" claramente diferenciadas. A este fin, investigo el vínculo entre los procesos de simplificación del sistema verbal del español y los rasgos del discurso de la generación joven, que generalmente perpetúa el discurso del exilio de sus...
abuelos. La posibilidad de volver permanentemente a una Cuba postcastrista también se analiza a través de la visión de la opinión común.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Español cubano, cubanos de Miami, política de los exiliados cubanos, relaciones cubano-estadounidenses, español en Estados Unidos, variación sociolinguística, simplificación lingüística, discurso hipotético, lengua e ideología.

1. Introduction

Since Fidel Castro’s takeover of Cuba in 1959, Miami has been the center for political dissent against his self-proclaimed communist regime. Anti-Castro discourse, as the foundation of Miami’s Cuban institution of political exile, has constituted the language of legitimacy for the community’s unified voice. This voice has contributed to exile Cubans’ stronghold on local politics as well as their national political presence. Washington’s recognition of Cuban immigrants as exiles of a dictatorial communist regime accorded them exceptional political status through the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966,¹ and the Cuban American National Foundation continues to play a crucial role in shaping US policy toward Cuba. In July 2006, the Cuban-American US Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutiérrez presented an official plan with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to democratize Cuba within 18 months after Fidel Castro’s demise. Of the $80 million approved by the Bush Administration for promoting democracy in Cuba over the next two years, $35 million were deemed to support discourse on Radio and TV Martí, a popular Miami-based broadcast voice in the struggle against Castro (Cancio Isla 2006). Only two weeks after Rice and Gutiérrez presented their plan, thousands of Cuban exiles and their Cuban-American children and grandchildren rushed into the streets of Miami in a high-spirited celebration anticipating Castro’s death, just moments after it was announced in Havana that the leader would cede control to his brother, Raúl Castro. As Fidel Castro faced a risky surgical procedure, the mass media transmitted images of jammed Miami streets adorned with Cuban flags, where Miami Cubans toasted his death with bottles of champagne and run in hand. Elated abuelitas danced on Calle Ocho at midnight, and teenagers yelled “¡VIVA CUBA!” as the voice of renowned musician Celia Cruz blared from their car stereos.

De La Torre has likened the political fervor of Miami Cubans to a religious struggle —la lucha— through which “Exilic Cubans internalize, naturalize, and legitimize their religious [i.e. anti-Castro] view ... in order to mask their position of power as they shape Miami’s political and economic structures” (2003: 31). He argues that their discursive construction of la Cuba de ayer serves to “... create a common past, symbolically linking them to the land they left behind” and at the same time “... traps them in a social construction that prevents them from moving forward” (p. 32). Cámara describes the relationship between ethnic memory and language in Miami’s Cuban community as follows:

¹ The Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 granted Cuban immigrants political asylum and a pathway to US residence and citizenship. It afforded them legal work opportunities and access to US government benefits.
[T]hinking that “Castro is about to fall” is a kind of collective delirium, a firm desire that keeps people united in their identification as a community of exiles. Precisely this phenomenon is one of the factors that make [sic] Miami a difficult enclave in which to work for political choices and cultural alternatives. It is not an apt space for accepting and cultivating difference or Dialog. Even so, I think that the city, for reasons of historical legitimacy, is an indispensable space for reconstructing the map of our fragmented [Cuban] nation. . . . Miami, apart from its expressways and McDonalds, has created and maintained the important language of memory, whose oppressive orality is at the same time a guarantee of its perpetual renovation. (Cámara 2003: 164)

Despite the deterioration of many forms of ethnic solidarity among Cubans in Miami over the past four decades (Alberts 2005), their political solidarity—in a rapidly growing pan-Hispanic city with a global economy (Yúdice 2003)—has seemingly been maintained by the force of the common opinion that Castro has devastated Cuba and its people. Grenier/Pérez argue that “[a]nti-Castroism might well be considered to be the master status of the community, establishing the limits and potentials for all group activity” (2003: 87). Anti-Castroism, then, is a key factor of one’s social identity in the Miami Cuban community, with all of the ideological, political, and cultural baggage that it carries. The construction and (re)production of anti-Castro discourse in Miami faces a particular hurdle, however, in that the strong anti-Castro sentiment of the overwhelming majority of Miami Cubans does not translate to anti-Cuba politics for all. Despite the fervent support that some lend to the economic embargo against Cuba, others maintain close contact with family members and friends on the Island, send financial and other aid, and return to visit the Island.

Anderson (1991) argues that “communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined”. He also contends that cultural artefacts are the essence of nationality, nation-ness, and nationalism. Along these lines, then, we could affirm that political discourse is one of the principal artefacts of the cultural phenomenon that some scholars call “Havana, USA” and “Miami, Cuba”. Without discourse, exile does not exist, and without exile, the foundations of Cuban identity in Miami are highly precarious. When asked about exile in Miami, Luis Ortega—a Cuban journalist who resides in that city—stated:

No hay tal exilio. Hace muchos años que los cubanos están viviendo una verdadera comedia política. Han convertido la palabra en un sitio. “Aquí en el exilio”, dicen, como si se tratara de un punto geográfico. (Cited in Baez 2001: 53)

Ortega’s observation on turning exile into a concrete geographic point suggests that discursive practice among Miami Cubans is proof that the imagined exile community is based upon something more than the memory of Cuba, the desire for a “Cuba libre”, or the thought of returning there to live. The ways in which Cubans in Miami speak about Cuba—and concomitantly about Castro—reconstruct the Island and at the same time con-

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2 The terms *culture* and *cultural* in the present study refer in a general sense to “the collection of ideas and habits” which members of a community “learn, share and transmit from generation to generation” (Linton 1945: 203).
struct Miami. The threads and the glue that hold together “Havana, USA” are linguistic and cultural in nature. They are discursive.

In this article, I draw upon Strauss’ (2004) model of cultural standing to analyze the expression of opinions on Fidel Castro and US-Cuba relations among three major groups, each of which may be considered to represent a distinct “generation” of Miami Cubans in terms of their time of immigration: (1) the older generation (early 1960s exiles), (2) the “Marielitos” and their children (1980 exiles), and (3) the younger generation (grandchildren of the 1960s exiles who were born in Miami). The oral discourse analyzed in this study is drawn from personal observations, recorded conversations, and interviews with Cubans and Cuban-Americans in the city of Miami between 1998 and 2006. In the discourse of the younger generation, none of whom has ever been in Cuba and all of whom are English-dominant bilinguals, I highlight the inherent connection of cultural standing to processes of Spanish language contact in Miami. First, I describe the establishment of Cuban Miami according to principal waves of immigration from the Island. I state how an important social division developed between the early exiles of the 1960s and those arriving after 1980. I then highlight the basis of Strauss’ (2004) model of cultural standing, and explain the relevance of such a culturally oriented approach to the political discourse of Miami Cubans. In the remaining pages, I analyze, from the point of view of cultural standing, the discourse features of common opinions and controversial views of Castro and US-Cuba relations as expressed by members of the above defined groups.

2. Immigration and cultural diversity in Cuban Miami

The US Census indicated in 2000 that more than half (52%) of the nation’s 1.2 million Cubans lived in Miami-Dade County. Greater Miami may thus be classified as the second largest “Cuban” city after Havana. Upon the eve of Castro’s takeover in 1959, however, only about five to six thousand Cubans resided in Miami. In the 1940s, several airlines made daily flights between Cuba and Florida, bringing nearly 40,000 middle- and upper-class Cubans to Miami annually for vacation and shopping. In the 1950s, the number rose to about 50,000 each year (Pérez 1999: 435). Thus, many Cubans who immigrated to Miami upon Castro’s takeover were already familiar with the city. Pérez observed that “powerful economic and cultural forces had set in place the basic structures that would facilitate and, indeed, foster the gigantic post-1959 migration. The more Miami became familiar, the more it became Cuban” (Pérez 1999: 444). Portes/Stepick described this phenomenon in similar fashion:

When the Cuban middle class did start to exit the island, it went to a social environment made utterly familiar by years of proper travel. No culture shock here. Unlike later refugees from other communist regimes ... Cubas exiles did not really move to a foreign land. Southern Florida was known territory. This perceptual frame allowed early escapes from the revolution—members of the old elite came to await the “inevitable” downfall of Castro—to define their sojourn to South Florida simply as an extended vacation. (1993: 101)

By the 1960 US Census, Dade County had experienced a 250% increase in its Hispanic population attributable to the initial stage of the first wave of Cuban immigration
into Miami. Resnick maintained that the first wave of immigrants was "ideologically and racially compatible with America by virtue of their near-universal work ethic, their flight from the oppression of communism, and their light skins" (1988: 96). Moreover, many of these immigrants who represented pre-Castro Cuba's political and professional elite, were officially welcomed into the US as political exiles. Many were highly educated entrepreneurs who established businesses that provided a network of employment opportunities for Cubans, and kept capital within the Spanish-speaking sectors of the city. Resnick further stated that

[Like no other immigrant group in the history of the United States, the Cuban community had the necessary mass, know-how, economic power, legal status, and cooperation of the host community to be able to demand that needed social and governmental services be provided for them in Spanish. In doing so, they established a legitimacy of Spanish language use that was to have a lasting impact on South Florida. (1988: 96)]

Exilic Miami Cubans had also firmly established a strong and highly outspoken political agenda, united in the common opinion that Castro's communist regime would destroy Cuba. In their view, Castro therefore must be removed from power.

The second major wave of immigrants, who arrived via so-called "Freedom Flights" between 1969 and 1973, was younger, less wealthy, and had lower educational backgrounds than the first wave. But these newcomers were readily accommodated by already established Cuban social, economic and political networks (Boswell 1994). As skilled laborers, these immigrants altered the socioeconomic profile of Cubans in Miami. Though only 7% to 10% of Miami Cubans in the 1960s were service workers, by the early 1970s more than 25% occupied service positions of the lower socioeconomic ranks (Olson/Olson 1995: 70-71).

Between April and October of 1980, nearly 125,000 Cubans arrived in the US seeking political asylum (Olson/Olson 1995: 81). This third major wave of Cuban immigrants, whose exodus began at the port of Mariel in Cuba, came to be known as the "Marielitos". They met far greater political and social resistance than prior groups of Cubans arriving in Miami; according to Alberts, "... ethnic solidarity in the Cuban community has not recovered from the divisions that developed during the Mariel crisis" (2005: 243). As a result of what has been termed the "Blue Jeans Revolution" of 1979-1980, and a crippling economic recession coupled with political dissent in Cuba in the late 1970s, thousands of Cubans flooded the Peruvian Embassy in Havana when Castro opened it to those wishing to emigrate. In turn, there was mass exodus to Peru and Costa Rica in early April of 1980; on April 21, Castro opened the port of Mariel to anyone desiring exit. Although some 26,000 Marielitos had prison records in Cuba, only 4% to 6% of them were believed to be hard criminals. The vast majority of Marielitos were socioeconomically and educationally quite similar to the previous wave of Cuban immigrants in the 1970s (Portes/Stepick/Clark 1985), yet the criminal element among them was greatly publicized in Miami and across the nation, with movies like "Scarface" and the hit TV show "Miami Vice" popularizing a stereotyped criminality among Miami Cubans. After three years in the US, 75% of Marielitos indicated that they had been clearly discriminated against by "older" pre-1980 Miami Cubans; 21% reported frequent experiences of anti-Mariel discrimination in the Miami Cuban community (Portes/
Stepick/Clark 1985: 8). Garcia (1996) explained that because Cubans arriving in Miami in 1980 or thereafter had lived most, if not all, of their adult lives under the Castro regime, their social and economic ideologies often contrasted with those of early exiles.

A Cuban-American writer who immigrated to Miami in 1970, at the age of 15 (what some refer to as the “1.5 generation”), reflected upon the arrival of the Marielitos in a personal interview with me in 1998. She remarked upon the ideological and cultural conflicts between Marielitos and 1960s exiles:

Los marielitos eran despreciados al principio. Decir que tú eras de Mariel no era muy buena referencia, entonces empezaron a hacer a establecer una distinción entre la gente que había venido antes de Mariel y después de Mariel ... Yo noté un gran conflicto entre los marielitos a su vez. Asumieron una posición militar ante eso, ¿no? Entonces ellos quisieron apropiar muchos de ellos quisieron decir que eran ellos los que habían traído la cultura cubana aquí a Miami, o la “gran cultura”, o que ellos eran los escritores, y que aquí no había nada, que esto era un desierto. Se armó toda una y al mismo tiempo esta gente acusaba a aquellos de haber sido criados con Castro, y que eran malos o que eran delinquentes, o sea que hubo conflictos. (December 1998)

Through the 1990s and into the new millennium, Cuban immigrants continued to cross the Florida Straits from Cuba on makeshift rafts, earning them the community label of “Balseros”. Since current law provides that any Cuban who touches dry ground in the US is legally permitted to remain in the country and may apply for residency within one year, the US Coast Guard and US Border Patrol became more aggressive in post 9/11 efforts to keep Balseros at sea. Nonetheless, an estimated 130,000 Cubans arrived in the US from 2000 to early 2006, the vast majority settling in South Florida. Miami-born Cubans of the younger generation, who differentiate themselves socially through the use of English and their more “American” manner of dress, often refer to these recent arrivals pejoratively as “refs” (short for ‘refugees’). The majority take low-wage jobs in sectors of the community where speaking English is not a must, and their struggle to assimilate into Cuban Miami begins.

Even though the bitter cultural disputes between the older generation and the Marielitos have diminished over time, generational status as an immigrant clearly remains a central aspect of one’s identity in Cuban Miami. The aforementioned writer observed that

[h]oy día también a veces te dicen, “Ah, ese es balsero, ese debe ser un vago porque es balse-ro ...”. Ves que entre los propios cubanos están poniendo carteles por grupos migratorios, si viniste antes del 80, si viniste después del 80, si viniste en los 90. Esas cosas están pasando. (December 1998)

It was in the 1980s that Miami Cubans seemed to have solidified their existence as an imagined community. This was also the moment when exile status began to be threatened in the face of ideological differences and relatively apathetic political stances among newer arrivals. With each passing decade, immigrants arriving from the Island appear less Cuban within the reality of Miami, based on the pre-Castro memory of the early exiles. It is not uncommon to hear early exiles affirm that recent arrivals lack a firm work ethic, that they speak “un español anegrado” (Alfaro 2002), and that they are not political enough. With regards to this latter point, Corral observes that
In light of these social and cultural differences between distinct segments of Miami's Cuban population, I turn to a model of discourse analysis that accounts for ideological and cultural factors for purposes of the discussion.

3. The expression of cultural standing

Strauss argues that, in the verbalization of opinions, cultural standing is "an under-appreciated pragmatic constraint" (2004: 161). Departing from Bakhtin's notion that all discourse is "oriented toward the 'already uttered', the 'already known', the 'common opinion' and so forth" (Bakhtin 1981: 279), and building upon Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of social dogma ("universe of discourse [or argument]") and doxa ("universe of the undisputed [or undisputed]"), Strauss (2004) elaborates a continuum that ranges from highly controversial opinions to widely accepted opinions. The continuum is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controversial opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debatable opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken for granted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cultural standing is conceived as —and expressed according to— the speaker's degree of perceived acceptability of a view on a given topic within a determined community.³ As members of an opinion community, competent speakers reflect through discourse con-

³ Strauss defines the concept of "community" relevant to her model in the following terms:

An opinion community is any social group, of any size, in which opinions are discussed (or, at the taken-for-granted end, in which assumptions are shared). It can be a face-to-face group like a family, social clique, or local community, or a far-flung one in which various media—electronic chat rooms, newspapers, music, movies, and television—mediate the discussion. Opinion communities are formed by prior discussion of a topic, and familiarity with this prior discussion is part of the expected competence of members of that community (...). (2004: 170).
ventions the cultural standing of their expressed opinions. Strauss explains that an opinion considered controversial within the community (at one extreme of the continuum) would have lower cultural standing than an opinion more commonly shared by community members. At the other extreme of the continuum, an opinion that is "taken for granted" is one that is so widely accepted and uncontested among community members that it is assumed a priori and need not even be stated, i.e., it is implicit in what the speaker says. By way of illustration, Strauss explains that if someone began an affirmation with "Since the earth is flat, it follows that ...", or stated that "You may think this is crazy, but you could almost say that it is important to be kind to others," that person would be judged as "culturally or mentally incompetent, or—if the speaker appears to be a properly enculturated adult in possession of his or her faculties—the hearers would draw the implication that they must be speaking ironically, metaphorically, wishfully, or playfully, because they could not possibly be serious" (2004: 162).

The above two examples illustrate the powerful social expectation that the cultural standing of one's views be marked—or indexed—accordingly by discourse means. According to Strauss (2004: 181-184), the means by which common opinions are often expressed are: (1) short sentences with no qualification or support; (2) clichés, maxims and semi-formulaic expressions; (3) avoidance of hesitations; (4) use of rhetorical questions; (5) use of the discourse marker you know; and (6) taboo words or emphatic language. "When speakers believe their opinions to be controversial, they will try to soften their statements in various ways to make them seem less out of step with the common opinion" (Strauss 2004: 174). Strauss identifies eight ways of "softening" a controversial opinion: (1) self-censoring or use of euphemisms or indirect language; (2) denial; (3) hedging; (4) attribution to others or use of the second or third person; (5) lamination; (6) apologies, requests for permission, preemptive concession, or other verbal acknowledgments of uneasiness; (7) self-initiated repairs; and (8) pauses, disfluency, and hesitation (pp. 174-178). More openness and less hesitation characterize the expression of a debatable opinion, but unlike the common opinion, "it is still uttered defensively and shows signs of dispute in the prior social discourse" (Strauss 2004: 178). Among the discourse features that characterize debatable opinions, Strauss highlights: (1) statement of position and support; (2) qualification of the views expressed as being one's own; (3) comparison with alternative views; and (4) occasional use of intensifiers.

To have a cultural standing, a proposition has to have been the topic of prior discourse or agreement. In a sense, then, topical opinions form part of a community's linguistic repertoire which speakers must be able to manage in order to fit in with others. Strauss maintains that

[opinion norms are like behavioral norms. Members of a community do not automatically follow them, but they are expected to know them, and if they deviate, to acknowledge that somehow. Not to do so is to signal that one does not know or care about the group's opinion. (2004: 172)

The discourse features that a speaker employs to mark cultural standing constitute, in Strauss' words, "a prime rhetorical means of creating a 'subject position'—that is, of representing self and other as certain kinds of people (e.g., people who take certain stances for granted)" (p. 172). If one expresses views that diverge from common opinion and at the same time fails to frame those views within the linguistic/discursive conventions that
serve to mark cultural standing in the community, one runs the risk of being chastised or socially excluded.

In Cuban Miami, a community of more than 600,000 people whose cultural, political and economic foundation was predicated upon the fervent anti-Castro discourse of the early 1960s exiles—i.e., its raison d'être was precisely its opposition to Castro—the expression of opinions in reference to Castro and the situation of Cuba(ns) under Castro is necessarily laden with markers of cultural standing. It is my impression that a fundamental aspect of the perceived language competence of any Cuban Spanish speaker in Miami, irrespective of having been born in the US or in Cuba, is precisely how s/he expresses views and thoughts on the situation of Cuba.\(^4\)

4. **Contrasting common opinions in Cuban Miami**

4.1. *Early exile families: “Nada para Castro”*

In Cuban Miami, the older generation concurs with the politically and economically most powerful segments of the community: according to them, no one should travel to Cuba as long as Castro’s regime is in power. Doing so, they claim, would channel money into the Island, and thus prevent an economic collapse of the communist system that, in their view, is inevitable. This belief, stated repeatedly in Miami Cuban discourse for five decades and politically manifested in the longstanding US economic embargo against Cuba, is so commonly accepted as a truth that it is often expressed in truncated fragments, with no sort of qualification or supportive explanation needed. This phenomenon is evident in the discourse of Onelia (76-year-old woman) in Example 1, taken from a recorded conversation with her husband Armando (age 73). Both immigrated to Miami from Cuba as adults in the early 1960s.\(^5\) In this conversation, we find evidence that both Onelia and Armando regard the issue of sending aid to Cuba as highly controversial.

**Example 1:**\(^6\)

*Onelia*  ¿Cuántos millones le producen los cubanos a Fidel cuando van allá- cuándo están yendo allá y cuando están mandando dinero para allá? Millones. Millones.

\(^4\) Bourdieu’s conceptualization of *language competence* corresponds to my use of this term here. He states that:

In emphasizing the linguistically pertinent constants at the expense of the sociolinguistically significant variations in order to construct that artefact which is the “common” language, the linguist proceeds as if the capacity to speak, which is virtually universal, could be identified with the socially conditioned way of realizing this natural capacity, which presents as many variants as there are social conditions of acquisition. The competence adequate to produce sentences that are likely to be understood may be quite inadequate to produce sentences that are likely to be listened to, likely to be recognized as acceptable in all the situations in which there is occasion to speak. Here again, social acceptability is not reducible to mere grammaticality. Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are de facto excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence. (1991: 50)

\(^5\) All personal names used in the present discussion are pseudonyms.

\(^6\) In all of the transcribed examples, a dash represents a self-interruption, or a very short pause or hesitation on the speaker’s part.
Armando Y el dinero que mandan de aquí. Aquí se mandan dinero, se mandan ropa, se mandan zapatos, medicina, de los exiliados cubanos.

Onelia De los exiliados cubanos.

Armando Aparte de lo que mandan las- las- eso- las instituciones católicas y protestantes y-

Onelia Yo no, porque yo tengo la satisfacción de que nunca, ni una medicina, ni un centavo, ni una ropa, nada. Para Cuba, nada.

A.L. ¿Pero piensa que si tuviera familia allá mandaría cosas?

Onelia Bueno...

Armando Medicina sí, yo creo que sí. No sé.

Onelia Tal vez la medicina, tal vez la medicina. Pero ropa y esas cosas- ir para Cuba a llevar cosas como están yendo la gente de aquí que van a Cuba y lo de menos que van a- a ver a la familia. Se van a los cabarets y se van a divertir, y van de turista y a dejarle dinero, dólares a Fidel Castro; ¡no chico!

Armando Bueno, eso no. Pero si yo tuviera a mi mamá o a mi papá enfermo allá y eso, yo iba a Cuba y les llevaba medicina.

Onelia Sí yo tuviera a mi papá y a mi mamá allá la cosa sería distinta, ¿no?

Armando Como hermanos, verdad? Pero yo no tengo familia ninguna en Cuba.

Onelia Yo tampoco.

Numerous elements of the discourse indicate that Onelia viewed the question of sending aid to Cuba as highly controversial: (1) her hesitation after beginning with the discourse marker bueno (“well”); (2) her repetition of the hedge tal vez (“perhaps”) in relation to sending medicines; and (3) her rather lengthy third-person reaffirmation of the common opinion about not going to Cuba, which ended with the emphatic tag no chico. One noteworthy feature is Armando’s usage of the verbs iba and llevaba in the Imperfect Indicative, giving them a higher degree of assertion than if he had chosen the Conditional (iría and llevaría) or the Imperfect Subjunctive (fuera and llevara), both of which are commonly heard in the apodosis of conditional sentences in Caribbean varieties of Spanish. The variation of these verb forms in hypothetical contexts is discussed in a subsequent section of this article. Also noteworthy is Onelia’s use of the Conditional (“la cosa sería distinta”) followed by the tag no? so as to echo her husband’s sentiment, stating that if her mother or father were in Cuba, the situation would be different. This usage of the Conditional allowed Onelia to convey a more tenuous argument than the one being asserted by her husband, and through the tag she appeared to seek confirmation for being a bit out of line with common opinion. As Armando continued his response in reaction to his wife’s remark, his emphatic denial of having any family members back in Cuba (“Yo no tengo familia ninguna en Cuba”) conveyed that perhaps what he had just stated was somewhat controversial, in the eyes of his spouse as well as the community. All of those present were already aware that his entire family was in the US. Thus, his denial merely seemed to have the discourse function of relieving himself of the presupposed burden to aid any relatives on the Island.

Short, verbless fragments like those of Onelia (“... ni una medicina, ni un centavo, ni una ropa, nada. Para Cuba, nada”) were produced by many younger Miami-born Cubans whose parents also grew up in Miami. Examples 2 and 3 illustrate this tendency. Both

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7 My own interventions are identified as “A.L.”
examples are taken from interviews with third-generation speakers Rosa (age 20, born in Miami) and Ramón (age 19, born in Miami). 8 Rosa used the fragments “no ahora” and “después de Castro” in response to the question of whether she would visit Cuba if given the opportunity; she then affirmed simply that Castro “tiene que morir”.

Example 2:

A.L. ¿Tú visitarías Cuba si tuvieras la oportunidad?

Immediately after stating that he would like to go to Cuba and that he would even move there to help people if Cuba were liberated, Ramón offered a bald negative response to my question about the possibility of visiting Cuba now. When I asked him why he would not visit, he responded in a fragmented and highly assertive style. As shown in Example 3, his concluding remark (“Todo eso va pa’ Castro, y yo de eso nada. Ni un kilo, ni un kilo pa’ Castro”) was strikingly similar to that of Onélia (Example 1), in syntactic (fragmentary) and semantic terms.

Example 3:

Ramón Me mudaría de Miami si Cuba se liberara. Y nunca he ido pero- pero quisiera ir. Y esa es una de mis cosas, que si el día que- yo creo que en mi vida se va a liberar Cuba y este, ya con haber sido médico hay veinte mil cosas que yo pudiera ir a hacer a mi patria.
A.L. ¿Irías a hacerlo?
Ramón Yo iría a hacerlo. Iría a hacerlo, sí.
A.L. Si tuvieras la oportunidad de visitar Cuba ahora, ¿irías?
Ramón No. No, yo no iría a Cuba.
A.L. ¿Por qué?
Ramón Por- por- por la política, del dinero que yo gaste allí, inclusive el pasaje de avión. Todo eso va pa’ Castro, y yo de eso nada. Ni un kilo, ni un kilo pa’ Castro.

In Example 4 below, after baldly asserting that he would not return to visit Cuba under Castro, 57-year-old Lázaro, who left Cuba in 1964, related that his sister had chosen to stay in Cuba. He was explicit that he had refused to send her money when she called him for the first time in nearly four decades. Clearly, the purpose of Lázaro’s recounting the telephone conversation with his sister was to provide support for his position that his money “no va para ese país en cuanto existe ese gobierno” (stated in the highly assertive Present Indicative). Also, he ended his thought with an implicit command (“que espere hasta el fin”) in reference to his sister’s situation, emphasizing the inflexibility of his stance. His highly assertive and emphatic speech style in this case is

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8 I use the term “third generation” to refer to Cuban-Americans who were born and raised in Miami, and whose parents were also born in Miami or arrived before the age of 5. “First generation” refers to someone who immigrated to Miami as an adult. In this study, all “third generation” speakers were between the ages of 18 and 24.
typical of common opinions, according to Strauss (2004). Example 4 also illustrates two other salient markers of common opinion described by Strauss: First, Lázaro used the cliché expression “abrir los ojos” to convey the unacceptability of Castro’s regime and, second, he referred to Castro throughout the interview as “él”, without saying his name, a discursive strategy that is highly common among older-generation Miami Cubans.

Example 4:

A.L. Si tuvieras la oportunidad ahora para ir a Cuba a visitar, ¿irías?
Lázaro No. Mi hermana vive en Cuba. Ella fue de él, yo fui de él, nosotros éramos fidelistas. Yo ébrí los ojos y dije “esto no sirve”, y me fui. Mi hermana se quedó. Y por primera vez en cuarenta años yo hablé con ella hace dos meses atrás. Ella me llamó para pedir dinero, y mi respuesta para ella fue que el dinero mío, si yo lo tuviera, no va para ese país. No va para ese país en cuanto existe ese gobierno. Y que si ella esperó y vivió durante cuarenta años con él, que espere hasta el fin.

Perhaps Castro brings such grief to early exile immigrants that they choose to avoid saying his name, thus avoiding others’ having to hear it said. This corresponds to what Brown/Levinson (1987) classify as an act of negative politeness. But it seems more likely that older Miami Cubans generally refer to Castro with the potentially derogatory “él”, “ese hombre”, or “el señorito” as a means of establishing solidarity with their interlocutor. This same strategy is used by younger, US-born speakers. In Example 5, Ana, an 18-year-old Miami-born woman whose parents emigrated from Cuba as young adults in the 1960s, referred to Castro pejoratively as “el señorito”:

Example 5:

Ana Yo nací aquí pero yo tengo una cultura cubana y yo quiero a ese país como sí yo hubiera nacido allí, porque mi eso es de donde mis padres vinieron, donde se criaron, vaya, todo eso. Y como ellos hablan siempre de Cuba, Cuba, yo quisiera ver a Cuba. Ahora no, porque está el señorito allí, pero sí, tú sabes, quisiera conocer ese sitio.

Ana’s desire to visit Cuba, fronted by the discourse marker “tú sabes”, is a common sentiment among speakers of the younger generation whose only personal experience with the Island has been through discourse. Nonetheless, they are usually careful to qualify the statement that they would visit Cuba: “ahora no, porque está el señorito allí”. It appears that they do so partly out of respect for the older generation who, in some cases, lost property or were imprisoned for political reasons when Castro took control.

9 Varela makes an interesting and relevant observation on the use of “Fidel” and “Castro” in Cuban political discourse:

Entre los vocablos castrismo y fidelismo que se identifican con el mismo líder, el mismo país y el mismo régimen, hay una distinción de preferencia. Los cubano-americanos emplean castrismo con más frecuencia porque fidelismo les parece demasiado personal. Los cubanos dentro de Cuba, sin embargo, prefieren fidelismo precisamente por lo que de popular tiene la voz y porque además saben que el mandamá es Fidel que ni siquiera consulta con sus hermanos porque todo depende de su voluntad y capricho (1992: 160).
In Example 6, José, a 24-year-old third-generation speaker born in Miami, immediately qualified his claim that he might travel to Cuba if someone gave him the chance. He used the Future Indicative form ("no daré") to assert that he will not spend his own money to pay for a plane ticket or hotel room. He will not do so because he does not want his money to benefit Castro or communism. He thus swiftly realigned himself with the common opinion.

Example 6:

A.L. Si tú tuvieras la oportunidad de ir a Cuba a visitar ahora, ¿irías?
José Bueno, creo que sí, si me dieran el chance. Yo no daré mi propio dinero porque yo sé que todo ese dinero va a Castro y el comunismo. Si fuera un viaje de gratis que alguien me regalaba, sí voy, pero de mi propio dinero no pienso comprar ticket de avión ni hotel ni nada porque no creo que mi dinero debe ir a Castro y su comunismo.

Although José assertively employed the Present Indicative form to convey his strong desire to visit Cuba ("sí voy"), he countered this assertion by conceding his view to the common opinion ("yo sé que todo ese dinero va a Castro") and by reaffirming his belief that no one should channel money into the Island under Castro ("no creo que mi dinero debe ir a Castro"). Two of the discursive strategies identified by Strauss (2004) as features of debatable opinions surface in this example: José prefaced his statement in the beginning with the hedge "bueno", and then added the qualifier "creo que sí". In using these two strategies, he conveyed to his interlocutor from the onset that what he was about to say may be considered debatable, if not controversial, in light of the common opinion that no one should visit Cuba as long as Castro is in power. In a retrospective conversation with José several days later, he clarified to me that when he speaks about Castro and Cuba, he feels compelled to show respect for his grandfather, who was imprisoned by Castro during the revolution and who, until his death in Miami in 1994, had fervently supported the economic embargo against Cuba in the hope that Castro would fall from power. The importance of discursively paying respect for the hardships that many early exiles faced under Castro likely underlies the verbal conflict that is sometimes sparked between early exiles and post-1980 immigrants, whose discourse I highlight in the following section.

4.2. Marielitos: "Sí, yo iría"

While the discourse of early exiles and their grandchildren is structured to reflect the common opinion that no one should visit Cuba or send money to anyone living under Castro, the discourse of Marielitos and their children reflects an opposing common opinion that it is acceptable to travel to Cuba or send aid to those living on the Island. This was apparent in the response of Andrés, a 20-year-old who came to the US in the Mariel exodus at the age of 2. When I asked Andrés whether he would visit Cuba if given the chance, he simply responded: "Sí. Sí, yo iría." The shortness of his response, its assured and affirmative tone, and the forceful reiteration of "sí" (re)affirms the common opinion of Miami Cubans with whom he identifies. This expression was given additional force
by the absence of any sort of hedging or subsequent qualification. Interestingly, his answer syntactically mirrored Ramón's response in Example 3 above, but it was semantically inverse ("No. No, yo no iría a Cuba."). Unlike the grandchildren of early exiles, the children of Marielitos, when interviewed, tended to be unapologetic in the expression of their openness toward Cuba. Indeed, many Marielitos proudly stated to me that they had recently visited Cuba, and recounted stories of their trips to the Island. Others who had not visited their homeland told of their parents' visits or of their own desire to travel to Cuba in the future, making no mention of Castro or the economic embargo. In Examples 7 and 8, both Javier (age 19) and Marisol (age 24), who left Cuba from Mariel in 1980 at the ages of 2 and 5 respectively, responded to my questions in such fashion:

**Example 7:**

*A.L.* ¿Piensas que si tuvieras la oportunidad, visitarías Cuba?

*Javier* Bueno, sí. Mi mamá ha ido tres veces, y mi hermano ha ido dos veces ... A mí me encantaba ir para visitar a Cuba.

**Example 8:**

*Marisol* Mis padres están aquí ahora mismo. Están en Cuba ahora.

*A.L.* ¿No querías ir con ellos?

*Marisol* Yo hubiera querido ir, pero es bien caro el viaje.

In Example 9, Alex, a 27-year-old Marielito who arrived in Miami at the age of 8, described to me the emotional turmoil caused by his first return visit to Cuba in the preceding year.

**Example 9:**

*A.L.* ¿Crees que si tuvieras la oportunidad, visitarías Cuba?

*Alex* Ya visité a Cuba el año pasado.

*A.L.* ¿Sí? ¿Y qué tal?

*Alex* Un shock.

*A.L.* ¿Por qué?

*Alex* Es... es un mundo completamente diferente. Y fue algo personal, algo íntimo, ver la situación allá, la situación que viven mis primos, mi familia, mis abuelos, amigos. Hay pobreza y hay cosas malas y uno lo puede- se siente por toda esa gente.

Example 10 is taken from a recorded conversation in which Alex's mother, Clara (age 56), described to Elia (age 55, and an early exile who arrived in Miami in 1961) the emotional aspects of her 27-year-old son's recent visit to Cuba. She recounted how her son, upon returning to Miami, began to express his experiences in Cuba through works of abstract art. After Elia had sat there quietly, I asked her if any of her children had ever visited the Island. Her curt response was followed by silence. The tone of annoyance in her voice as well as the forlorn look on her face contrasted starkly with Clara's discourse (Example 10):

**Example 10:**

*Clara* [Alex] hizo una serie de cosas que fueron la- lo- como él se sentía. Por ejemplo puso una colcha o una esponja o un tapiz, lleno de como las puntillas en las que se acues-
In sum, the emotional ties that many Marielitos and their children maintain with family members who remain in Cuba, and the acceptability of visiting Cuba for them, create a discourse of common opinion that is highly contrastive—and potentially conflictive—with that of the early exiles. Speakers on neither side of the issue seemed to express their views from the cultural standpoint of debatable or controversial opinions, but rather through the discourse of common opinion (e.g., no qualification, no supportive reasoning, no hedging), suggesting that in Cuban Miami two quite divergent opinion communities exist.

In reference to whether or not they would return to a post-Castro Cuba, both Marielitos and early exiles (their grandchildren included), appear much more culturally united in the belief that they would visit but not return to live on the Island. Curiously, this unity is expressed by speakers of all three of these groups (Marielitos, early exiles, and the grandchildren of the early exiles) through the discourse of debatable opinion rather than as common opinion. I examine this point more closely in the subsequent section, which begins with a consideration of the important function of modality.

5. Modality in the expression of debatable opinions

As already described, a debatable opinion is one that deviates to some extent from the common opinion. Debatable views are generally characterized by statements of support for the position taken, markers that qualify the view as the speaker’s own belief, and the use of intensifiers and hedges. From a linguistic point of view, all of these elements are bound up in the expression of modality.

5.1. Modality, linguistic simplification and ideological connotation

Hengeveld explains that

[In]odality, as opposed to illocution, pertains to the domain of propositional content. Lexical or grammatical elements giving expression to modal distinctions are part of the information S [the speaker] wishes to transmit when putting forward for consideration some predication. (1988: 233)

Hengeveld distinguishes between two types of modality: (1) objective modality, related to the speaker’s evaluation of the actuality of a state of affairs based on her knowledge of
possible states of affairs; and (2) subjective modality, through which the speaker expresses her commitment to the truth of a proposition. According to Hengeveld, epistemic modality involves aspects of both objective and subjective modality, with adjectives characterizing the former (It is possible/probable/certain that Maria will come) and adverbs characterizing the latter (Possibly/probably/certainly Maria will come).

The issue of epistemic modality is of special importance to the present study since the Spanish verb system, which normally encodes mood inflectionally through the opposition of subjunctive and indicative morphological forms, is reduced in the speech of many US-born or US-educated Latinos (Ocampo 1990, Silva-Corvalán 1994, Lynch 1999). This morphological reduction or simplification of the verb system, especially characteristic of the third generation, compromises the speaker’s ability to express degrees of assertion and presupposition. In those discourse contexts in which the degree of speaker commitment is conveyed almost exclusively through the morphology of the subordinate clause, the overgeneralized use of indicative forms in third-generation speech may create a more assertive style. This pattern is illustrated in the example No creo que venga (PresSub) María versus No creo que viene (PresInd) María. Even though both of these sentences could be translated to English as I don’t believe that María is coming, the use of the Present Indicative form viene in the latter sentence increases the speaker’s degree of commitment to the proposition, making it more assertive. The sentence would thus be better translated as I really don’t believe that María will come or I believe that María won’t come. Hengeveld (1988: 266) affirms that in such cases, in which use of the indicative or the subjunctive contributes to the meaning of a sentence, speakers must determine whether or not they wish to express their reservation with regard to the assertion, as reflected in the mitigation of a declarative sentence.

In her extensive study of Mexican Spanish in Los Angeles, Silva-Corvalán concluded that at the lower levels of the bilingual continuum, i.e., among speakers who use Spanish more restrictedly and who exhibit limited proficiency in the language, “the use of almost exclusively Present Indicative morphology conveys a strong degree of assertiveness and predictive certainty, without differentiating between more or less possible situations in the hypothetical world created” (1994: 91). According to a scale of assertiveness conveyed by verb morphology in reference to non-past situations in Spanish, Silva-Corvalán observed that Present Indicative (viene) and Preterite (vino) forms are related to factuality and assertion; Future (vendra) and Imperfect Indicative (venga) forms transmit slight degrees of hypotheticality; Present Subjunctive (venga) is more hypothetical; and the Conditional (vendría) and Imperfect Subjunctive (viniere) are the most hypothetical and least assertive. This scale is shown graphically in Figure 1.

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10 Typically, subjunctive forms are displaced by indicative forms in bilingual speech (especially in contexts where either form is possible in monolingual varieties), thus leading to a verb system that cannot formally express modality in some constructions.
11 Although unacceptable in some varieties of Spanish (e.g., Spain and Argentina), the use of the indicative in subordinate clauses following “No creo que...” is common in the Caribbean as well as in Mexico.
FIGURE 1
Scale of assertiveness conveyed by verb morphology in reference to non-past situations
(Silva Corvalán 1994: 78)

Bybee points out that although epistemic modality is often expressed inflectionally, it “may also be periphrastic or lexical” (1998: 263). For the first-generation speakers in the present study, we may expect verb morphology to bear much of the burden of conveying degrees of assertion and presupposition in the expression of opinions (see Figure 1). For many third-generation speakers, on the other hand, we may expect periphrastic and lexical elements of discourse to play a more crucial role in transmitting the degree of speaker commitment or assertion. In the case of the highly charged political and ideological issue of US-Cuba relations, in which one’s social identity as a Miami Cuban is at stake, compensatory discursive strategies must naturally be expected among US-born speakers who exhibit a simplified verb system yet speak the language with native-like fluency.12

12 Although it is clear that English is the dominant and more frequently used language of US-born Miami Cubans, there is little consensus among scholars in the field regarding the extent to which they use Spanish and the actual proficiency that they possess. Otheguy/García/Roca (2000: 184) observed that “intergenerational maintenance of productive ability in Spanish, especially of full Spanish literacy, is difficult to achieve” among Miami Cubans, and Porcel’s (2006: 107) questionnaire study of 68 Miami Cubans, 14 of whom were born in the US, concluded that there is “a clear pattern of transitional bilingualism among Miami Cubans”. On the other hand, Lambert/Taylor (1996: 496), in an ethnographic study of 108 Cuban-origin mothers in Miami, affirmed that the dynamic bilingual social reality of Miami and the influence of siblings foment second-generation use of Spanish in working class families, despite mothers’ promotion of subtractive bilingualism for their children. For mothers in middle class Cuban-American families, the aspiration to a balanced bilingual future for their children was more prevalent. Lambert/Taylor explained that “... these mothers are oriented towards an ‘additive’ form of bilingualism/biculturalism for their children” and that they “... appear to realize that the maintenance of a solid Hispanic identity, along with English fluency, is necessary if their offspring are to rise to occupational prominence in Miami’s multi-ethnic community” (1996: 496). Similar to Lambert/Taylor, Roca (1991), Fortes/Schauffler (1996), and Lynch (2000) have suggested that the social and economic
In my own view, epistemic modality depends not only on periphrastic and lexical elements in discourse, but also on the topic of the discourse itself and its ideological and cultural connotations. The affirmation *No creo que viene María* would, in most cases, carry little ideological or cultural value. It is an everyday sort of utterance that would likely express an opinion unworthy of much debate. But what about the expression of modality in relation to a concept such as justice or fairness, which is ideologically and culturally imbued? Consider the following variants, ordered loosely from most affirmative and assertive to least affirmative and assertive:

Es injusto.
No es justo.
Creo que es injusto.
Creo que no es justo.
No es justo, creo.
No creo que sea justo.
Tal vez no es justo.
No es justo, tal vez.
Tal vez no sea justo.

The use of the indicative form es and the subjunctive form sea in these variants is only one rather limited dimension of the linguistic factors at play. Statements related to the topic of justice or fairness are much more ideological and cultural in nature, and so they may involve a rather different set of discourse-pragmatic constraints on the usage of verb forms in relation to other linguistic features. The topic of discourse and its cultural value may provide us with insight into some instances of linguistic variation and patterns of language acquisition. In the expression of views and opinions of substantial cultural value for the community—such as thoughts on Castro and Cuba in Miami—we may expect many third-generation speakers to depend upon periphrastic and lexical elements to a substantial degree, and to observe the discourse patterns prevalent among their grandparents who have served as the principal locus of their contact with the Spanish language. This issue is explored in the following section, in which the topic of a possible return to a post-Castro Cuba is discussed.

5.2. *Debatable opinions: “A visitar, pero no para vivir”*

Between the realm of common and debatable opinion lies the question of what will happen, both in Miami and in Cuba, at the end of Castro’s regime. For comparison purposes, we begin with responses of the older generation, all of whom represent first-gen-

value of Spanish in Miami, as well as sociolinguistic “recontact” through the constant influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants and visitors there, are vital factors that foment use of and ability in the language among many Miami-born Cuban-Americans. The cross-generational fate of Cuban-origin Spanish in Miami remains largely undetermined, given the recent arrival of the early exiles (just over four decades ago) and the constant influx of near-monolingual speakers.
eration (early exile) speakers of Cuban Spanish. We then turn to the discourse produced by the generation of their grandchildren.

Of particular interest in Example 11 is 57-year-old Lázaro's selection of verb morphology. He began his response to my question about whether many Cubans would return to the Island by asserting that both young and old, himself included, would do so if it were possible to board a time machine and travel back to the year 1960—a hypothetical situation expressed with Imperfect Subjunctive (ImpSub) and Conditional (Cond) forms. In all of the remaining examples, key phrases containing the verb forms under analysis are highlighted.

Example 11:

Lázaro

¿Piensas que muchos volverían a la Isla?
De los viejos sí y de los jóvenes sí, si pudiéramos (ImpSub) viajar al pasado. Si entrenáramos (ImpSub) en una máquina del tiempo y cayéramos (ImpSub) en 1960, iríamos (Cond), yo iría (Cond) para Cuba.

Lázaro continued his thoughts (Example 12) by anchoring them in the reality that no one could actually return to the Cuba of 1960. In doing so, he changed his verb morphology to the Present Indicative. Although the situation remained hypothetical, the contrast that he established between the Imperfect Subjunctive and the Conditional in the first part of his response and the Present Indicative in the second part clearly conveyed his skepticism about ever returning to Cuba permanently. At the same time, this contrast reaffirmed his certainty that very few would ever return to Cuba given the current state of affairs. In support of his position, he affirmed that no one would voluntarily leave the comfort of life in Miami. This reaffirmation is couched in highly assertive Periphraastic Future (PerFut) forms:

Example 12:

Lázaro

Mas que hoy en día, si el día de mañana, en un mes, en un año, en tres años el gobierno de Cuba cesa (PresInd) y nosotros tenemos (PresInd) el chances de regresar; en la actual situación que está Cuba muy pocos regresan (PresInd), por falta de que estamos acostumbrados a una cierta comodidad, a la comodidad de aquí que no va a existir (PerFut) allá. Por ejemplo, ¿regresaría (Cond) yo a mi pueblo? Nunca, jamás ... ¿Nosotros los que estamos aquí vamos a dejar (PerFut) la tranquilidad y la comodidad del exilio para ir a Cuba? Los ciudadanos americanos no. Ahora, los residentes tal vez nos manden a todos, eso, del gobierno americano se espera cualquier cosa ... Mas dejar la comodidad, el confort, para ir a vivir sin aire acondicionado, sin agua caliente, sin esto, sin aquello, sin el paper towel y sin el disposable dishes, va a ser (PerFut) muy difícil.

It is noteworthy that in the midst of his assertions in the Periphraastic Future, Lázaro posed the rhetorical question "¿regresaría yo a mi pueblo?" in the Conditional to counter it with the highly emphatic response "Nunca, jamás". Strauss highlights precisely this strategy as a marker of common opinion, affirming that "it makes sense that a rhetorical question-answer pair would express the common opinion. After all, the question would not be considered rhetorical if the answer were in doubt" (2004: 182-183).
In Example 13, Elia (age 55), another early exile speaker who immigrated to Miami in 1961, said that she had lost hope of ever returning because the Cuba to which she would return is now entirely different than the Cuba she knew in 1961. For her, the differences between the mentalities of Cubans on the Island and Cubans in Miami would be too strong to overcome.

**Example 13:**

**Elia**

Ya yo he perdido mis esperanzas. Quisiera (ImpSub) volver pero- sinceramente, a vivir así, no sé. Porque lo que nos **vamos a encontrar** (PerFut) eso va a **chocar** (PerFut) mucho. **No es** (PresInd) lo mismo. **No es** (PresInd) la Cuba que yo dejé. Quisiera (ImpSub) volver pero no sé. Eso **no va a ser** (PerFut) jamás igual. Ha sido mucho el tiempo, mucho, mucho el daño que se ha hecho. Es otra etapa, otra gente, otra generación, y nosotros **no nos vamos a sentir** (PerFut) bien con ellos allí, otro tipo de pueblo, otra cosa.

In no part of Elia’s response was a Conditional or Subjunctive verb form employed, except in the highly formulaic *quisiera*, used to convey her hypothetical desire to return, a desire curtailed by the stark economic and social reality of present-day Cuba. Elia’s use of Present Indicative and Periphrastic Future forms throughout the discourse conveyed a high degree of assertion, and forcefully stated her conviction that members of her generation will never return to live in Cuba.

Onelia’s response (Example 14), as well as her choice of verb morphology, echoed that of Elia. Her assertion that the older generation would remain in Miami was expressed with Present Indicative (“nos quedamos”), emphasized by the qualifier “Yo creo que sí”. Her high degree of certainty that they will not return to Cuba was conveyed through use of the Periphrastic Future (“no van a volver”):

**Example 14:**

**Onelia**

Ya los viejos **nos quedamos** (PresInd) de la parte de acá. **Yo creo que sí**, que los viejos **nos quedamos** (PresInd) acá porque ya los viejos tenemos hijas, tenemos nietos. Ya es que **no van a volver** (PerFut).

Given the generalized usage of Present Indicative and Periphrastic Future forms among speakers of the older generation in discourse on this particular topic, these same forms are natural in the discourse of the younger generation. In Example 15, 20-year-old Maite (born in Miami) used Present Indicative forms to relate her certainty that her parents would definitely visit Cuba after Castro (“seguro que regresan a ver cómo está”), as well as her own conviction that she would never go live in Cuba (“yo me quedo aquí”). She used the Present Subjunctive to express uncertainty as to whether her parents would return to live in Cuba on a permanent basis (“no creo que regresen permanente”). The appropriateness of this discourse strategy is highly meaningful: by using Present Subjunctive, she conveyed that although she was fairly certain that her parents would not choose to live in Cuba, she was less committed to this proposition than to the idea that they would visit (marked by Present Indicative). In other words, from her perspective, they would **definitely** visit Cuba but **most likely** would not move there.
Example 15:

Maite  Yo creo que muchos- muchos de como de la edad de mis abuelos y algunos de la edad de mis padres, seguro que regresan (PresInd) a ver cómo está. No sé si se mudan permanente. Pero yo ya creo que los hispanos de mi edad, hasta mis padres, no creo que regresen (PresSub) permanente. Visitán (PresInd) pero no permanente.

A.L.  ¿Piensas que tu abuela volvería a Cuba a vivir?
Maite  No, ya toda la familia está aquí, y ella está viejita. Ella tiene ochenta y pico años.
A.L.  ¿Y tú? ¿Te quedárias aquí?
Maite  Sí, yo me quedo (PresInd) aquí. Yo estoy muy acostumbrada a esta vida.

In Example 16, when asked if she would go live in post-Castro Cuba, 18-year-old Diana (whose mother was also born in Miami), provided the same response as Maite ("yo me quedo aquí"), in the highly assertive Present Indicative. This assertion contrasted markedly with her choice of verb morphology in the immediately preceding turn of the conversation, when she expressed her opinion that one of her grandmothers would return to visit—but not to live—in the Conditional ("volvería"), hedged by the preceding phrase "puede ser que". She then used the Subjunctive ("vayan a vivir") in the subordinate clause following the qualifier "yo no creo que" to establish doubt that any of her family members would go live in Cuba.

Example 16:

A.L.  ¿Crees que tus abuelas volverían a Cuba?
Diana  Una de ellas sí, la otra no sé. Ya le gusta aquí y no se quiere ir de aquí. Entonces la otra, puede ser que volvería (Cond) a ver cómo está y para visitar, pero no a vivir. Yo no creo que ninguna de mi familia se vayan (PresSub) a vivir.

The view that most Cubans would not return to live in a post-Castro Cuba may be expressed inflectionally even among those third-generation speakers who exhibit simplification of the subjunctive/indicative opposition. This tendency is reflected in Example 17, from José (age 24, born in Miami), where "yo no diré que él ... VAYA" features the subjunctive. When asked if his only living grandparent would return to Cuba if Castro’s government were to cease, José stated:

Example 17:

José  Para vivir (Inf) no, pero para visitar, creo. Creo que sí, él vi- antes que se muere (PresInd). Pero no para vivir (Inf). Ya él está muy cómodo aquí. Tiene su familia, tiene sus hermanos y hermanas, todos están acá ... Yo diré que él l- él ir- él iría (Cond) a Cuba sólo para ver- verlo una vez más antes que se muere (PresInd). Pero es si- si cae (PresInd) Castro. Yo no diré (FutInd) que él l- él vaya (PresSub) pronto.

José’s opinion that his grandfather would not return to Cuba to live was twice stated with an infinitival construction. The use of the infinitive in this context not only has the pragmatic effect of being more emphatic but also avoids the morphologically more complex
Conditional (such as No volvería a Cuba para vivir) or a subordinate clause that would require a selection between Indicative and Subjunctive (such as No creo que él fue/a vuelva a Cuba para vivir). José then added the tag “creo” to convey that his opinion is debatable; the same tag also served as a compensatory strategy to attenuate the strong assertiveness and emphatic style of the infinitival construction “Para vivir no, pero para visitar”. He continued by repeating “creo que sí” and then seemingly censored himself by uttering only the first syllable of the verb visitar.

José’s use of Present Indicative in the repeated clause “antes que se muera” reflects a simplified verb system in which Indicative usage is overgeneralized at the expense of the Subjunctive. All first-generation Cuban speakers analyzed in Lynch (1999) categorically used the Present Subjunctive in futurity clauses of this type (“antes que se muera”). In this context, use of Indicative rather than Subjunctive does not affect the meaning in any way. That is, for first-generation speakers, the difference between “antes que se muera” (PresSub) and “antes que se muere” (PresInd) is purely morphological. “Antes que se muera” is simply deemed incorrect, and not interpreted as having a different semantic content from “muera”. However, in the final sentence (“Yo no diré que él i- él vaya pronto”), where the choice between Indicative and Subjunctive does convey a semantic difference in the degree of assertion, José used the Subjunctive (“vaya”) after self-repairing (“él i- ” [= él iría]). His use of the Subjunctive in this particular context was possibly conditioned by two factors: first, he had just stated that his grandfather’s visiting Cuba depends on Castro’s fall from power (“Pero es sí- sí cae Castro”), emphasizing the hypothetical nature of the affirmation “Yo no diré” which followed. His choice of Future Indicative (“diré”) in this context created a highly assertive tone in the matrix clause which, as he likely recognized, required attenuation with a less assertive Subjunctive (“que él vaya pronto”) in the subordinate clause.

In Example 18, Vanessa (age 20, born in Miami) used the assertive Imperfect Indicative in the apodosis “mi padre seguía viviendo aquí”, in keeping with first-generation speech patterns and with the colloquial register of other monolingual varieties of Spanish. Her subsequent uses of the Imperfect Indicative reflect linguistic overgeneralization. When Vanessa began the following sentence with the Imperfect Indicative (“tenían”) to express that “they would have like a [vacation house]” in this hypothetical situation in the future, she self-repaired, changing the structure of the sentence to an infinitival construction (“tener una casa allí de vacaciones será lo más mejor”). Her self-repair could perhaps be attributed to a realization that the use of the Imperfect Indicative here would create potential confusion on the hearer’s part, since she had just used this same verb form (“tenía”) to affirm that her grandfather actually used to own property in

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13 Although the Imperfect Indicative is indeed used for hypothetical discourse functions by some older first-generation speakers of the present study, and is fairly common in colloquial registers of many varieties of Spanish, it seems to be restricted to the apodosis of conditional sentences and to the expression of events or actions which are possible given a present set of real circumstances. We can observe these semantic restrictions in the following sample sentences taken from the Nuevo manual de español correcto, a thoroughgoing reference source published in Spain: (1) Si supiera que me iba a tocar la lotería, jugaba; (2) Si viviéramos en Madrid, estábamos mejor; (3) De haberlo sabido, yo me iba ahora a Barcelona; (4) Si Juan encontrara trabajo, seguro que se compraba mi coche (Gómez Torrego 2002: 411-412).
Cuba. In the turn that followed, she once again used the Imperfect Indicative form “querían” to assert that her grandparents would not want to live without her father, and for that reason they would not return permanently to a post-Castro Cuba. Although the potential for confusion caused by use of the Imperfect Indicative was much less in this latter context than in the previous one, the utterance could have been interpreted as an actual past situation (i.e., her grandparents did not want to live without her father in the past) rather than a hypothetical, non-past situation (i.e., her grandparents would not want to live without her father in the future).

Example 18:

*Vanessa*  
Yo sé que mi abuelo tenía mucho* propiedad ahí en Cuba. Tenía, ahora no. Pero no sé. Cuando si moriría (Cond) Castro, yo sé que mi padre seguía (ImpInd) viviendo aquí pero- y mis abuelos también, porque la medicina aquí en los Estados Unidos es lo más mejor. Pero yo no sé. Tenían (ImpInd) como una- tener una casa ahí de vacaciones será (Fut) lo más mejor.

*A.L.*  
¿Y tus abuelos no volverían?

*Vanessa*  
A vivir no, porque no- mis abuelos no querían (ImpInd) vivir sin mi padre.

*A.L.*  
¿Y piensas que muchos cubanos de aquí, de Miami, volverían a la Isla?

*Vanessa*  
Sí, yo creo que sí. Yo creo. Los que no tienen como negocios aquí volverían (Cond).

Although it is evident that Vanessa possessed the competence to produce some Conditional forms, her use of these forms appeared to be neither fully functional nor systematic. In her answer to my last question (“piensas que muchos cubanos ... de Miami volverían a la Isla?”) she may have merely reproduced my own use of “volverían”. With respect to her use of the Conditional in the phrase “si moriría Castro”, I should note that in the protasis of conditional sentences, Conditional never occurred among my first-generation informants, and is likewise unattested in Cuban Spanish dialectology (Lipski 1994, Vaquero 1996).14

In Vanessa’s speech, we can observe at least three strategies aimed at compensating for the tendency to overgeneralize the Imperfect Indicative in hypothetical discourse contexts: hedging, self-repair, and qualification. In her first use of Imperfect Indicative “seguía viviendo aquí”, Vanessa mitigated the assertiveness of the verb form by using the hedge “pero no sé”, not only before the sentence, but again after it. In her second use of Imperfect Indicative “tenían como una [casa]”, she self-repaired, as already observed. And finally, she doubly qualified her conjecture that those Cubans who do not have businesses would return to Cuba by repeating “yo creo”, despite her use of the Conditional “volverían”. As a whole, then, her discourse did not appear overly assertive, and only a very slight potential for misinterpretation occurred in one instance. What seems most striking is that all three of the discourse strategies that Vanessa employed to side-

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14 Lavandera documents usage of the Conditional in the protasis of conditional sentences in the speech of Buenos Aires. Some examples from her study include: “si tendría que hacerlo, lo haría a la fuerza, pero extrañaría”; “si a él le darían circunstancias, él iría a la provincia”; “saben que también si ellos estarían en peligro, también nosotros ayudaríamos” (1984: 28).
step the potential pitfalls of overgeneralizing the Imperfect Indicative are fully in keeping with the normative discourse of a debatable opinion. Even though her verb usage violated norms of first-generation usage in some occasions, the discourse strategies that she used to compensate for those violations were of the same sort that first-generation speakers used to express modality: hedges, self-repairs, and qualifications. Perhaps for this reason she appeared a competent speaker who almost always produced a highly fluid discourse.

In summary, the view that Miami Cubans would go to a post-Castro Cuba to visit or help rebuild ("levantar" in their words) the Island, but not to live, was often expressed in the discursive guise of a somewhat debatable opinion. Qualification and support were sometimes given, usually in relation to helping rebuild Cuba after Castro's demise, or helping family members who remain in Cuba. In the case of the younger generation, the desire to see the places where parents or grandparents once lived was at times offered as support for visiting Cuba. Even in the cases of those third-generation speakers who reflected processes of simplification with regard to mood selection, Subjunctive was meaningfully employed in particular contexts and, if Subjunctive was not used, lexical or periphrastic features often worked to compensate for modal functions.

5.3. The cultural dimension of language acquisition

The analysis described in this section suggests that the generalized usage of Present Indicative, Periphrastic Future, and Infinitive forms among third-generation speakers in the context of political discourse about Castro and Cuba is, in part, a discourse pattern transmitted to them by first-generation speakers. Among the early exiles, the predominance of these forms intentionally creates an assertive style. At the same time, this same predominance also conveys a confident tone for the expression of political convictions and cultural standing within the social institution of Miami Cuban exile. It thus follows that the preponderance of these same forms in relation to this topic in younger generation speech is culturally motivated, at least partially so. Although linguistic simplification of the verb system—attributable to incomplete acquisition of Spanish among English-dominant bilinguals—surely plays a role in the use of morphology among the younger generation, I argue that in the expression of views on Castro and Cuba, cultural influence is also involved.

From the perspective of language acquisition, Tomasello's explanation in *Constructing a Language. A Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition* lends support to my present hypothesis. He argues that

the acquisition of most cultural skills, including skills of linguistic communication, depends on a special type of social learning involving intention-reading that is most often called cultural learning, one form of which is imitative learning. In human linguistic communication the most fundamental unit of intentional action is the utterance as a relatively complete and coherent expression of a communicative intention, and so the most fundamental unit of language learning is stored exemplars of utterances. Children can hear an utterance for a particular communicative purpose and when they have the same communicative purpose use that same utterance—perhaps with some small modifications appropriate to the discourse context. (2003: 296-297)
Expression of cultural standing in Miami

Focusing on the expression of tense, aspect and modality, Tomasello lends further support to my argument through his “piecemeal fashion” account of acquisition. He explains that children’s TAM [tense-aspect-modality] marking is initially done for each constructional island separately, and only gradually and in piecemeal fashion do children begin to abstract some notion of verb phrase or clause that is common across all different utterance-level constructions. But again in this case the abstraction only represents commonalities that exist at a very general level. People probably operate most often at a much lower level in which, for example, TAM marking... is done the way that [a] particular construction does it—without much concern for other constructions (or the deep similarities that linguists can, with much time and effort, dig up). (Tomasello 2003: 320)

Following Tomasello (2003), I argue that the mechanism that drives the acquisition and use of particular verb forms and discourse features, or markers such as hedges and intensifiers and the like, to some extent has a cultural and ideological basis. The discourse that children produce about culturally and ideologically laden topics echoes the discourse that their caretakers produce, and it is not until they reach a more advanced stage in cognitive and social development (cp. Piaget 1972) that they cultivate the capacity—or competence in the sociolinguistic sense—to manipulate particular discourse patterns within the limits of certain topics. Language acquisition is, just as the scholars of the Bakhtin Circle declared nearly a century ago, culturally and ideologically mediated.

6. Conclusion

The construction and (re)production of the discourse of cultural standing relative to Fidel Castro’s regime and US-Cuba politics in present-day Miami is crucial to social relations within South Florida’s Cuban community. This discourse is also fundamental to one’s social identity as a Miami Cuban or Cuban-American. I have shown that among many US-born Cuban-Americans of the younger generation, the exile discourse of their grandparents is perpetuated by those who speak and use Spanish with some degree of fluidity. Two important observations made in this analysis are that: (1) the discourse features of early exile Cubans and their grandchildren and those of Marielitos reflect the existence of two distinctive—and potentially conflictive—opinion communities within Cuban Miami; and (2) the patterns of simplification of the Spanish verb system attested among US bilinguals may respond in part to cultural and ideological factors.

The discourse that filled Miami’s streets and local media during the days of celebration of Fidel Castro’s failing health in July 2006 incited Miami Cubans—of all generations and immigrant sectors—to assume that communist Cuba is now in its final days, and that the politics of exile are soon to be over. The phrase Cuando volvamos a Cuba..., nearly forgotten after more than four decades of exile, has begun to reverberate with new life in Miami. Ironically, though, it appears that the great majority of those Miami Cubans who were celebrating the end of Castro’s regime have no intention of returning to Cuba or reestablishing themselves there. In their sociological survey, Grenier/Pérez (2003: 120) found that only about 20% of Cubans interviewed in the US said they would return to Cuba permanently. If post-Castro Cuba is “democratized” (as the Bush Admin-
istration and the Cuban American National Foundation intended), Miami Cuban political discourse and ethnic solidarity will be left somewhat in limbo. De La Torre offered the following thoughts on the matter:

When they look in the mirror, both Exilic and Resident Cubans see what they consider to be true Cubans. Patriots and traitors are presented in mirror-image reversal, depending on which side of the Florida Straits you look from. La lucha's maintenance of la Cuba de ayer ensures the condemnation of perceived enemies of Exilic Cubans while mythically creating the Cuba of tomorrow, a post-Castro Cuba based on horizontal oppression, where Resident Cubans will be subjected to Exilic Cubans. (2003: 73)

Without a doubt, the political and cultural discourse of Cuban Miami will be significantly impacted by changing US-Cuba relations. A more open interchange between Miami and the Island at the economic and political levels would have far-reaching cultural and sociolinguistic repercussions for US-born Cuban-Americans. If, on the other hand, communism persists in post-Castro Cuba and the standoff continues on both sides of the Florida Straits (cp. Latell 2005), the evolution of the anti-Castro isolationist discourse that has for nearly five decades provided the language of legitimacy in Miami's Cuban community will be greatly impacted. As Fidel Castro, his brother Raúl, and their Miami exile contemporaries cede their arguments and convictions to posterity, what De La Torre (2003) has characterized as the "religion of Miami" will almost certainly confront a reformation in the coming years, thus providing a rich area for the analysis of political and cultural discourse as well as the sociolinguistic study of cyclical bilingualism (or "recontact"), dialect contact, and socially motivated linguistic variation in Caribbean Spanish.

References

Expression of cultural standing in Miami


