

Growing up bilingual with friends from the “East Side” of Las Vegas, otherwise known as Sunrise Manor, my ears were keener to speakers of Mexican descent than the rolling of dice on gambling tables. To the surprise of my Colombian and Salvadoran family, I soon adopted the unique nuances of the Mexican speech varieties I heard. My Honors Undergraduate Thesis “Spanish from the ‘East Side’ of Las Vegas” sought to see whether others had a similar experience. Looking back on the research process, my goals were to gather primary and secondary sources to develop a historical framework of the Latinx community of Las Vegas and a sociolinguistic framework on Spanish heritage speakers in the United States.

Before jumping into any literature, my first course of action was to meet with my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Margarita Jara. Through the UNLV Libraries website, she directed me to *Language Contact & Change* (1997) by Silva-Corvalán and *Research Methods in Linguistics* (2013) edited by Podesva and Sharma, which would subsequently become pivotal works in the development of my thesis. Further, to evaluate and select my sources I focused on acquiring most of them from the library databases to ensure that I gathered information from peer-reviewed journals and from reputable authors in the field. In doing so, I made sure that my sources had sufficient authority and currency over the author’s claims. Moreover, by modifying my searches to more recent years I was able to review the newest language acquisition and sociolinguistic studies on Spanish heritage speakers. I also spoke with subject librarian Priscilla Finley to target certain academic journals such as *Sociolinguistic Studies*. It was in reviewing specific journals that I was drawn to consider linguistic investigations outside of Spanish including Chinese and French to understand how verb morphology was acquired through other languages.

To better understand the socio-historical context of the Spanish-speaking community of Las Vegas, I directed my search to population records and works from Special Collections & Archives. When reviewing Census records, I had a difficult time finding specific data that divided the community by heritage and language background. With the help of subject librarian Brittani Sterling, we found similar information through an alternative set of records with the Pew Research Center. I also focussed on the existing literature on the Latinx community of Las Vegas with the *People of Las Vegas: One City, Many Faces* series edited by Simich and Wright, among others. To further support the literature, the best primary source proved to be right under my nose—The Latinx Voices Oral History Project. As an Undergraduate Research Assistant with the project, I was well-versed in the stories collected. With the help of project manager Barbara Tabach, I selected, listened to, and read the oral histories of people such as Liliam Lujan-Hickey (2018) and Paco Álvarez (2020) in my research.

Within the course of the literature review process, however, I was no stranger to failure; the pile of books looked as though it was about to topple at any given instant and several days had passed without seeing the carpet from the array of printed journal articles sprawled across the floor. Every piece directed me to at least two other articles that I believed to be necessary references. My ease of access to sources, whether through the library or Interlibrary Loan, soon led to an overwhelming amount of information that had to be synthesized for approaching deadlines. In an effort to be more proactive, I scanned each of them and organized them by themes such as “Mexican community of Las Vegas” and “Spanish Verb Morphology Acquisition studies.” Comparing the findings of other investigations with my own, I found similar and dissimilar patterns between the speakers of the “East Side” and other regions in the United States. Although the patterns didn’t align with my hypothesis, I became more aware of the importance of recording the differences among the Spanish varieties of the United States.

The Latinx community is anything but a monolith. It is a mosaic that one sees and, as this investigation highlights, *hears* distinctively. The research process behind my work has allowed me to consider my own experiences as a heritage speaker and see how it connects with the past, present, and future of the evolution of language in Las Vegas. Connecting with librarians and the team in Special Collections & Archives, gave me the confidence to delve into this interdisciplinary work and ultimately learn more about myself as a researcher and heritage speaker from Las Vegas.