Sociolinguistics Barriers: Constructing and Reproducing Temporary Migrants’ Social Inequalities
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Background
- Canada is well recognized because of its immigration policies and settlement programs that include ESL/FSL classes that help newcomers in their adaptation and integration process.
- In this way, the authorities recognize that linguistic competence is crucial for the social inclusion and engagement of migrants.
- However, immigration laws do not contemplate this kind of help for temporary migrants that come to Canada with programs such as the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP).
- The SAWP has been in operation since the 1960’s and its main objective is to address the labour shortage in Canada’s farms importing temporary agricultural workers from the Caribbean and Mexico.

Methodology
- The methodology used followed an ethnographic approach with a transnational orientation, because ethnography demands to address situated language practices in real circumstances (i.e. real time, space, environment) (Blommaert et al., 2005).
- The transnational approach allowed me to study the participants across the physical borders and thus to be able to better understand their sociolinguistic situation, and the way that this experience (temporary migration) has impacted them.
- The ethnographic instruments that were used in this study were observations, field notes, recordings, interviews, and photographs.

Rationale
- For the current project, my main interest is to fill a gap in the sociolinguistic research on language issues faced by temporary migrants. Specifically, my research will involve a compilation and analysis of the sociolinguistic facts relating to the situation of transnational Mexican temporary agricultural migrants (MTAM) who come to Canada through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP).
- Through Sokoloff and Engerman (1997) ideas that explain how initial differences in factor endowments are the reason of wealth and political power inequalities between Latin America and North America. I assumed that these proposed differences lead to development inequality that perpetuates the status quo.
- I propose that both, the initial differences in factor endowments plus the colonial legacy, leave levels of human and social capital inequalities that expand and persist in a seasonal migration setting where slave labor only looks for economic return.

Context
- This study is based on the fieldwork done between June 2009 to December 2010 in Canada, in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.
- Four (3) towns were visited in the province of Ontario: Leamington, Simcoe, and Virgil.
- One (1) town was visited in the province of Quebec: St. Remi.

Participants
- A total of 80 Mexican Temporary Migrant Workers (MTMW) participated in the study.
- Gender: 78 males and 2 females
- Age: 41 years old (media)
- Education level: grade 6 (media)
- Occupation in Mexico: 52% farmers, 11% construction, 37% other (blacksmith, bodyguard, woodcutter, driver, electrician, baker, etc.)
- Years in the program: an average of 10 years

Some Findings
- Some of the findings show a sociolinguistic dependency of the MATW to their patron, any support institution representative, as well as any other language broker because of…
- Basic or none proficiency in the L2 or L3
- Low literacy level in work L1 and/or L2, L3
- Lack of access to ESL/FSL classes
- Long working hours (an average of 70/week), farm location, transportation, ESL/FSL availability in their region.
- Language barriers Increase and perpetuate, in this way, their slavery condition and therefore the colonial legacy.

Results (continued)

Conclusion
- Speakers of less privileged languages, in specific spaces, become socially invisible and, as we know, marginalized and excluded; language in this sense is a gate-keeping practice (Gal, 2006). Thus, having linguistic competence in the language(s) of the nation is part of the exclusion/inclusion realities of immigrants that perpetuate the status quo.
- The relationship between language and equality is a very complex one, where the availability and accessibility to language practices are linked to the access of human rights and social inclusion (Piller & Takahashi, in press), but also to space (territory), time, and the concept of nation-state in both sides of the physical boundaries.
- The discourse of immigrants lacking linguistic proficiency can be an excuse instead of the reason for inclusion to the society and the labour market, where linguistic ideologies and attitudes come in play with variables as linguistic discrimination that sustains their racial or ethnic discrimination because “linguistic discrimination is largely invisible” (Piller, in press).