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The “Other” Latinx: The (Non)existent Representation of Afro-Latinx in Spanish Language Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

The present study conducted a critical discourse analysis and a visual analysis on 12 beginner-level Spanish textbooks. The goal of the study was to examine the representation of Afro-Latinxs and the ideologies behind these representations. The frameworks that guided the study were Fairclough’s framework for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Kress and Van Leeuwen’s model for conducting a visual analysis. The results indicate that there is hardly any representation of Afro-Latinx in these textbooks. This finding is described as erasure. Interestingly, in the few instances in which Afro-Latinx are represented, we find instances of colorism, racial stereotypes, collectivization, and tourism discourse. In the light of these results, the study reechoes the importance of examining underlying ideologies in educational textbook materials.

KEYWORDS

Afro-Latinx; colorism;
discourse; ideology;
textbooks

Introduction

One of the essential aspects of foreign language teaching and learning is how the target language speakers are represented to learners. Since many students taking foreign language classes, especially beginner-level classes, have had little or no contact with speakers of the target language, one of the most important sources for this representation is the language textbook used in their classes.

Textbooks have become one of the key components of many language classes; they are the prime sources of language, grammar, and cultural information for students of various backgrounds. They also provide the scope and sequence to supplement the instruction of many language teachers. However, even though textbooks play a crucial role in education, textbooks do not contain “neutral” information or facts as one is likely to assume (Van Dijk, 2004). On the contrary, they are tools used by dominant groups in society to manipulate and disseminate ideologies to advance the interests of these dominant groups. For instance, ideologies on race, gender, and social class are evidenced in these textbooks and function to discriminate against minority groups in society (Padilla & Vana, 2019). One such minority group is the people of African descent in the Spanish-speaking world and the Caribbean. They are referred to as “light-skinned,” “mulattos,” or “mestizos” in the Hispanophone world, and in the USA, they are referred to as “Afro-Latinxs,” “Afro-descendants,” “Blacks,” or “Afro Latin.”

Interestingly, despite the abundance of research on textbook materials, specifically Spanish textbooks, to the best of our knowledge, no study has questioned the representation of Afro-Latinxs in beginner-level Spanish textbooks. Against this backdrop, this study examines the representation of Afro-Latinxs in beginner-level Spanish textbooks. By representation, the study refers to the textual/linguistic and visual ways Afro-Latinxs are depicted in the textbooks. This analysis is crucial because visual and written representations play a vital role in identity formation and the formation of social realities for viewers (Moyo, 2017).

The study examines beginner-level textbooks as they are fundamental in providing students with an overview of the language. Consequently, in examining the representation of Afro-Latinx life and culture, we examine not only elements that appear (textual and visual) in these beginner Spanish textbooks but also the elements that do not appear as well. In the analysis, the study excludes supplementary material such as audio, videos, and workbooks because the availability of these materials is not uniform across textbooks.

Furthermore, over the years, several terms such as Latinx, Latin@, and Latine (Vidal-Ortiz & Martínez, 2018) have emerged to challenge the binary system of gender, recognize the ever-changing nature of language, and show diversity when referring to Latinos and Latinas as a group (Santos, 2017). Therefore, this paper chooses to use Latinx to include all individuals in this community regardless of how they identify. With this study, we hope to contribute to the findings of previous textbook studies, join the fight for the visibility and recognition of Afro-Latinxs, and make a significant contribution in the field of curriculum design.

The following research questions guide the present study: (1) How are Afro-Latinxs represented in beginner-level Spanish language textbooks? (2) What are the ideologies behind these representations?

The history and reality of Afro-Latinxs in the Hispanophone world

According to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade database, 91% of the slaves brought to the New World were sent to what is known today as Latin America and the Caribbean. These African slaves from Congo, Nigeria, and Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), were transported to the New World in the 16th and 19th centuries. As a result, about 130 million Latinx of African descent live in Latin America, with Brazil having the largest Afro-Descendant population (45% of the population) (Telles, 2014). In Cuba, they make up 35% of the people, in the Dominican Republic 50%, and in Colombia 10.3% (Telles, 2014). In the USA alone, the Pew research center found that 25% of US Latinxs identified as Afro-Latinxs, Afro-Caribbean, or descendants from Africa (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Afro-Latinx identity is not simply a darker skin complexion or melanin content in comparison to other Latinx. It is an identity shaped by how one identifies with one's lineage (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Romo, 2011). As Rosa (2018) posits, there is the tendency to view Afro-Latinx as the "other" Latinx, which is the sociological and experiential reality faced by Afro-Latinx. They tend to be marginalized and neglected in society and educational realms as they do not fit within the "US social construction of race and ethnicity" (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020, p. 2).

Therefore, it is essential to investigate race and language as one entity. It is also important to examine "the role language ideologies play in establishing racial difference, and the role of racialization in the production of linguistic difference" (Torres, 2019, p. 3). However, a narrow focus on (socio) linguistic practices misses a critical point since identity and language use are intertwined and subjected to racialized attacks. It is thus now more important than ever that scholars and activists speak out to challenge ideologies that devalue marginalized groups (Torres, 2019). The examination of the written and visual representation of Afro-Latinx is a step in this direction.

Language textbooks and ideologies

Lippi-Green (1997) defines an ideology as "the promotion of the needs and interests of a dominant group or class at the expense of marginalized groups, using disinformation and misrepresentation of those non-dominant groups" (p. 64). These dominant groups could take the form of institutions (such as schools, churches, courts, etc.). They may use misrepresentations and unequal access to resources to perpetuate and maintain their power and hegemony in society.

Kroskirty (2010) argues that language ideologies should be viewed as cluster concepts with several convergent dimensions. He summarizes these dimensions in four overlapping layers: (a) language ideologies protect the interests of those in power, (b) they are multiple because the divisions in social groups can produce various perspectives (e.g., class, age, gender), (c) members in society may or may

not be aware of these ideologies and (d) language ideologies mediate between social structures and linguistic forms. Based on these dimensions, it is no surprise that language ideologies have been found in various language textbooks over the years. However, the ideologies of interest to the present study are the standard language ideology, erasure, tourism discourse, and colorism.

The standard language ideology is defined as “bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions” (Lippi-Green, 2004, p. 289). Specifically, educational institutions indispensably socialize students to adhere to the so-called standard that is free from regionalism or unattractive language structures (Leeman, 2012). Thus, despite Spanish being a pluricentric language, there is a negation of the regional, geographic, and individual spoken variations (Leeman, 2012), and teaching and learning is situated around the so-called “hyperstandardized variety” (Train, 2000, 2003). This “hyperstandardized” Spanish finds itself situated at the top of the language hierarchy, and it erases any viability and visibility of language variation. This finding was reechoed by Padilla and Vana (2019). The authors found the privileging of the so-called “standard” peninsular variety of Spanish in instructor editions of textbooks at the expense of non-peninsular varieties. Vana (2020) posits that the standardized notions of language in the classroom give privilege to the so-called hyper-idealized monolingual while it erases the real-world linguistically diverse speaker.

Erasure, as defined by Irvine and Gal (2000, p. 38), “renders some persons or activities (or socio-linguistic phenomena) invisible.” This ideology has been found to negate the existence of groups of individuals or concepts even though they are a substantial population or real-world occurrence. As texts have the power to disseminate and shape ideologies, they also have the power to erase the experiences of minority groups, language practices, and other elements by a lack of representation (Hooks, 1992).

Coupled with erasure is collectivization, where the differences that exist within minority groups are disregarded. Instead, these groups are presented as one homogenous group while the dominant groups are seen as heterogeneous. Instances of erasure and collectivization abound in previous literature. For example, Ducar (2006) found that the representation of US Latinxs and US varieties of Spanish in Spanish language textbooks solely focused on representing celebrities who were presented as symbols of success while the experiences of the ordinary people were overlooked. In addition, Thompson (2013) found a standardized, monolingual view of the Swahili speaker and where Swahili is spoken. For example, the textbooks presented only one type of Swahili speaker (the L1 speaker) and excluded the diverse, multilingual individuals such as L2 speakers or those on the African coast. Similar instances of collectivization were found in Uzum et al. (2021) study of French, German, and Arabic textbooks as well as in Risager’s (2018) study of Danish, English, French, Esperanto, German, and Spanish textbooks used in Denmark.

Moreover, the “tourist gaze” has also been recognized in language textbooks. The term “tourist gaze” was borrowed from Urry’s (2002) Critical Tourist studies. It is a term that is used to refer to a way of looking at another from the point of view of a tourist. Kramsch and Vinall (2015) explain that Spanish textbooks, for instance, are increasingly tourist in nature to avoid controversial or political topics and present all instances of the language and culture as ideal. Macedo (2019) also points out that most textbooks would rather talk about monuments and great buildings instead of the experiences of certain groups of people.

Although these textbooks provide students the starting point in acquiring cultural and linguistic information, “they are doing so from the position of tourist in which the purpose of this information is to acquire it, but not to interrogate the underlying beliefs or practices in order to engage with these cultures” (Vinall & Shin, 2018, p. 13). Bori (2018) found that tourism discourse was manifested through informal genres, such as brochures, ads, and conversations between customers and agencies. For French textbooks, Chapelle (2016) found that the textbook aligned itself with a superficial tourist gaze instead of including more political context in the presentation of the culture.

The tourism discourse in these books promotes dominant ideologies such as consumerism, capitalism, and the commodification of culture. Students view the “other” from the tourist perspective, gaining superficial information while erasing the other aspects of such culture and

language. The students are shown what is considered the norm in these specific languages and cultures, thus explaining such instances to the other in the others' language (Urry, 2002; Vinall & Shin, 2018).

Finally, colorism has also been found in educational materials. According to Hunter (2007), colorism is the "process of discrimination that privileges light-skinned people of color over their dark skin counterparts" (p. 237). Colorism differs from racism because the discrimination is made "in-group." Similar to the previously mentioned ideologies, colorism has also been found in textbooks. For instance, Reddy-Best et al. (2018) and Ducar (2006) found a higher representation of light-skinned individuals than dark-skinned individuals in the textbooks they examined.

The findings of previous studies no doubt re-echo the importance of examining language textbook materials. These findings also bring to light the absence of research that focuses on the representation of Afro-Latinx in Spanish language textbooks and how these representations are shaped by the standard language ideology, tourism, erasure, and colorism. The present study thus aims at filling this gap in previous literature.

Theoretical framework

The representation of Afro-Latinx is a complex issue that cannot be explained by a single theory alone. Thus, our theoretical framework is a comprehensive framework grounded in both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995) and the grammar of visual design (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006), with explorations of the standard language ideology, tourism discourse, erasure, and colorism.

We draw on CDA because CDA can critique the hegemonic discourse surrounding Afro-Latinx in these textbooks. Moreover, CDA takes as its starting point social inequalities exhibited in text and talk (Van Dijk, 2004). It determines whose interests are being served and offers a social explanation for the existence of these inequalities. Fairclough's (1995) framework for CDA proposes three interdependent stages in CDA: the description of the text, the interpretation of the text, and the explanation based on the social context.

Similarly, we draw on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) visual design framework as the processing and understanding of visuals are also based on what is deemed acceptable or not by dominant groups in society. For this reason, Van Leeuwen (2006) argues that visuals in particular "are able to 'disguise' power structures and hegemony as 'objective' representations" (p. 4) because to the uncritical eye, language used in visuals is "transparent" and "universally understood" (p. 4). The analysis of these images thus helps understand the relationship between the images, the viewer, and the producer.

Our framework extends CDA and the grammar of visual design because the representation of Afro-Latinx in these textbooks reflects the social order in the real world. In this world, being given a voice is shaped by colorism (Flores & Rosa, 2019), the standard language ideology, and tourism discourse. This comprehensive framework explains why the "standard language" is associated with the dominant groups, why minority groups are erased, why the practices of dominant groups are seen as the status quo, and why that of minority groups practices are viewed as the "other" from a tourist lens.

Although there are significant differences between these theories, the present study's concern is that they work in tandem in providing a framework that examines the representation of Afro-Latinx in Spanish language textbooks.

Methodology

The selected textbooks

There were 12 beginner-level Spanish textbooks analyzed for this study (see Table 1 below). The publication years for these books ranged from 2010 to 2017. In selecting the textbooks, the researchers aimed to select the most widely used Spanish textbooks at beginner levels in southern California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. To do this, the researchers did an internet search of the textbooks used in

different university Spanish language programs ($n = 65$). This information was derived from the syllabi for the course websites that listed the textbooks used. If syllabi were not available, the researchers contacted the directors of the language program to get an insight into the textbook used in the beginning level courses ($n = 20$). The most widely used beginner-level Spanish textbooks were selected through internet search and contact with language program directors. With this information, we also discovered that the most popular publishers were Pearson, Cengage, McGraw Hill, and Vista Higher Learning.

It is important to note that all the textbooks examined had a similar scope and sequence. In each textbook, there was an average of 12 chapters and 500 pages. Moreover, each book had a hard copy book, an e-book, an online component, videos, graded activities, and audio components. Nonetheless, the textbooks differed with respect to the availability of supplementary materials such as videos, workbooks, and instructor editions. For this reason, supplementary materials were not included in the analysis. [Table 1](#) below provides a list of the analyzed textbooks designed for beginner-level Spanish students.

Analysis

Our analysis had two primary purposes: (1) uncover the representation of Afro-Latinxs in these textbooks, and (2) unveil the ideologies surrounding this representation. To ensure that we achieved reliable and quality results regarding the representation of Afro-Latinxs, we analyzed both text (dialogues, cultural readings, descriptions, grammatical exercises) and visuals (people, buildings, animations, etc.). The identification of Afro-Latinxs was based on explicit reference to Afro-Latinxs or African elements. We did this coding independently and then met frequently to compare our results, agreeing on the coding and the analysis. Some of the codes we derived were abstract, for instance, “superficiality,” and others were descriptive, for instance, “collectivization,” “colorism,” and “impersonalization.” These codes also had subcodes; for example, under “superficiality,” we found sports, music, rhythms, food, dance, among others. In the end, we had interrater reliability of 95%. We present examples of our coding scheme in [Table 2](#) below.

Textual representations

We followed Fairclough’s (1995) three-step model for conducting CDA: description, interpretation, and explanation to analyze the text. These three stages are interrelated and thus cannot be independent of each other. Fairclough (1989, p. 26) states, “Description is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of text.” Thus, we carefully read the text, paying attention to linguistic features and the choice of words at this stage. We also looked for recurring grammatical constructions, choice of pronouns, use of the passive voice, and individualization.

Table 1. List of Spanish textbooks analyzed.

Title	Publisher	Textbook Author(s)	Year of publication
<i>Puntos de partida</i>	McGraw Hill	Dorwick, Pérez-Gironés, & Becher (2017)	2017
<i>Unidos</i>	Pearson	Guzmán, Lapuerta, & Liskin Gasparro (2013)	2013
<i>Viajes</i>	Cengage	Hershberger, Navey-Davis, & Alvarez (2010)	2010
<i>¡Claro que sí!</i>	Cengage	Garner, Rusch, & Dominguez (2010)	2012
<i>Conectados</i>	Cengage	Marinelli & Fajardo (2015)	2015
<i>Plazas</i>	Cengage	Hershberger, Navey-Davis, & Alvarez (2017)	2017
<i>¿Cómo se dice?</i>	Cengage	Jarvis, Lebrede, & Mena-Ayllón (2015)	2015
<i>Portales</i>	Vista Higher Learning	Blanco (2016)	2016
<i>Nexas</i>	Cengage	Long, Carreira, Velasco, & Swanson (2017)	2017
<i>Apúntate</i>	McGraw Hill	Pérez-Gironés & Dorwick (2010)	2010
<i>Experience Spanish</i>	McGraw Hill	Amores, Suarez Garvia, & Wendel (2014)	2014
<i>Tu Mundo</i>	McGraw Hill	Andrade, Cabrera-Puche, Egasse, & Muñoz (2013)	2014

Table 2. Example of the coding scheme used in the study.

Textual or Visual Example	Code/Theme
Visual- Dark-skinned child described as <i>Garifuna</i> (<i>Unidos</i> , p. 188)	Collectivism/ Impersonalization
Visual- An AfroPeruvian singer that combines Peruvian, indigenous, and Spanish music (<i>Claro que sí</i> , p. 134)	Impersonalization
Text- <i>La comida puertorriqueña es una combinación de las comidas de los tainos, de los esclavos africanos y de la comida española y Americana</i> [Puerto Rican food is a combination of food of the Tainos, African slaves, Spainards, and Americans]. (<i>¿Cómo se dice?</i> , p. 49)	Superficiality/culture as a product
Text- <i>Honduras tiene una población afro indígena muy grande; los garifunas que viven a lo largo del golfo de Honduras</i> . [Honduras has a large Afro-indigenous population; the Garifunas that live along the Gulf of Honduras]. (<i>Puntos de Partida</i> , p. 99)	Collectivism/colorism/ superficiality
Text- Blacks were originally brought to Panama to work on sugar plantations. Many descendants of slaves worked to build the Panama Canal and a large number died during this period. (<i>Claro que sí</i> , p. 64)	Colorism/ impersonalization

Furthermore, according to Reisigl and Wodak (2016), when analyzing texts that deal with race issues, ethnicity, and identity, it is crucial to employ specific discursive strategies to determine how discursive tools drive ideologies. These strategies include nomination strategies, which is the use of in-group and out-group identities with the help of devices such as metaphors, verbs, and nouns. Thus, we looked at which group was included or excluded from the text, named or unnamed, portrayed positively or negatively, etc. We also examined how Afro-Latinx and African elements were referred to in the text, such as if they were referred to as Black, Afro-Latinxs, Afro-Indigenous, Descendants of slaves, etc. The second strategy suggested by Reisigl and Wodak (2016) is predication strategies. Predication strategies refer to the characteristics attributed to groups. Thus, we examined how Afro-Latinxs are described, their characteristics, attributions to negative or positive traits, qualities and features, and stereotypes. The third strategy by Reisigl and Wodak (2016) is argumentation strategies. Hence, we examined the arguments employed in the discourse regarding Afro-Latinxs and African elements in Latin America and the justification of any positive or negative attributions. With the fourth strategy, perspectivization, we questioned the perspectives from which these groups were presented. Finally, with the mitigation and intensification strategy, we examined the use of vague expressions, exaggerations, hesitations, indirect speeches, verbs of thinking, and feeling.

At the interpretation stage, we looked at the text as a discursive practice. We considered the setting where these texts were produced and examined the relationship between the readers and the textbook authors. We asked questions about time and place, such as when the text was produced, whether it could have been produced outside the US, who the audience was, and what contextual factors influenced the production of the texts.

Fairclough (1989) argues that the third step, explanation, is “concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context” (p. 26). At this stage, we considered dominant ideologies uncovered in previous textbook research and the power relations between the groups considered. Important questions considered were the social and political representation of Afro-Latinxs in Latin American countries and their access to social and economic opportunities. Also, we examined how people of African descent are treated in the US, considering historical and social facts regarding Blacks in the United States.

Visual

We examined all the images that contained people, as opposed to buildings, nature, or scenery. Since racial identifications can never be fully determined by phenotypical assumptions, we only analyzed images that were specifically referenced as representing Afro-Latinx individuals. For example, these images were specifically textually identified as “Garifuna children” or “descendants of slaves constructing the Panama Canal.” Every image that was textually identified as Afro-Latinx was then coded and categorized into recurring themes. The reason for this categorization was to avoid problematic tropes of phenotypical racial determinism since Afro-Latinx identity cannot solely be determined through phenotype and visual categorization.

Furthermore, following Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), we performed a visual analysis of the images by examining and coding the representational meaning, the interactive meaning, and the compositional meaning of the visuals. As stated by Van Leeuwen (2008), the representational meaning is revealed by the represented participants. Thus, it was necessary to analyze the representation of the social actors being portrayed. In the case of this study, it involved examining Afro-Latinxs in the visuals and how they added meaning to the surrounding text. We examined whether they were given voices, demonstrated feelings, whether they were salient actors or not, among others.

Moreover, to determine the interactive meaning, which is the relationship between the visuals of Afro-Latinxs and the target audience/readers, we examined the most striking elements of the images, contact, distance, and point of view. We recorded all instances where participants looked directly into the viewers eye, looked away from the viewer, and the type of facial expressions made. To determine social distance, we examined the framing of Afro-Latinxs, whether they were long shots, short shorts, horizontal angle, or vertical angle. For instance, images of Afro-Latinxs taken at frontal angles show equality between the elements and the participants, whereas an oblique angle suggests otherwise.

Finally, to determine the compositional meaning, we examined the information value, salience, and framing. For instance, we considered whether the images were placed in the center or margins, the presence or lack of frames, among others.

Results

In this section, we present a deep contextualization of the results from our data analysis. We provide descriptive information regarding the visual and textual representation of Afro-Latinx in textbooks (i.e., number of pages, number of images, etc.). The analysis of the 12 books revealed intriguing similarities in the text as well as in the visuals. Out of the 12 books examined, we found only 52 textual representations of Afro-Latinxs. Regarding the visuals, we found only 364 pictures (16%) of dark-skinned Latinx while the remaining 2229 pictures (84%) were light-skinned Latinx. Our results thus present instances of erasure, superficiality, impersonalization and collectivization.

Erasure

Our examination of these textbooks hardly revealed any representations or references to Afro-Latinx. For example, Table 3 below shows that even the slightest textual reference to Afro-Latinx occurred only 52 times.

As seen below, *Viajes* has the highest representation of Afro-Latinxs. This was followed by *Puntos de Partida* and *Conectados*. Conversely, the least representation was found in the *Portales* textbook.

Table 3. Number of textual representations with clear reference to Afro-Latinx.

Title	Number of textual representations of Afro-Latinx
<i>Puntos de partida</i>	6
<i>Unidos</i>	3
<i>Viajes</i>	9
<i>¡Claro que sí!</i>	5
<i>Conectados</i>	6
<i>Plazas</i>	2
<i>¿Cómo se dice?</i>	5
<i>Portales</i>	1
<i>Nexos</i>	5
<i>Apúntate</i>	4
<i>Experience Spanish</i>	4
<i>Tu Mundo</i>	2
Total	52

Table 4. Number of pages with pictures of dark-skinned and light-skinned Latinx.

Textbook	Total pages with visual images of dark-skinned Latinx	Total pages with visual images of light-skinned Latinx	Total pages with pictures of Latinx
<i>Puntos de Partida</i>	30	303	333
<i>Unidos</i>	34	209	243
<i>Viajes</i>	15	147	162
<i>¡Claro que sí!</i>	32	238	270
<i>Conectados</i>	40	195	235
<i>Plazas</i>	22	213	235
<i>¿Cómo se dice?</i>	30	175	205
<i>Portales</i>	32	208	240
<i>Nexos</i>	40	211	251
<i>Apúntate</i>	26	98	124
<i>Experience Spanish</i>	20	159	179
<i>Tu Mundo</i>	43	73	116
Total	364	2229	2593

With respect to the images, we found that there were only 364 pictures (14%) of dark-skinned Latinx while the remaining 2229 pictures (86%) were that of light-skinned Latinx. Therefore, we present this summary in [Table 4](#) above.

Among the images with dark-skinned Latinx, we then analyzed the roles or activities of these dark-skinned Latinx. Across the 12 analyzed Spanish textbooks, the most popular depiction of dark-skinned Latinx was the engagement in some entertainment—singing, dancing, playing drums, playing guitars, or some other musical instrument, with images of them dancing being the most popular. This type of representation was displayed in a total of 97 images. The next popular depiction was related to sporting events, a total of 85 images. These activities included playing football, baseball, basketball, lifting weights, jogging, and tennis. Next, dark-skinned Latinx working, in 70 images. The last category, miscellaneous, contains activities we could not classify (e.g., waiting, staring, smiling), which make up 112 images. [Table 5](#) below is presented by way of illustration.

Next, we analyzed how many of these images of Latinx (both dark and light-skinned), expressly represent Afro-Latinx. However, because phenotypical assumptions cannot fully determine racial identifications, we focused on only images that were specifically labeled as representing Afro-Latinx individuals, for instance, an image that specifically stated “Garifuna child” or “descendants of slaves.” A summary of our findings is presented in [Table 6](#).

As seen in [Table 6](#) below, only 22 images (9.8%) out of 2593 were clearly referenced as Afro-Latinx. These representations do not correspond to the reality of Afro-Latinxs in the Hispanophone world.

Table 5. The roles and activities in which dark-skinned Latinx are portrayed in visual images.

Textbook	Entertainment	Sports	Working	Miscellaneous	Total images
<i>Puntos de partida</i>	9	5	8	8	30
<i>Unidos</i>	6	8	8	12	34
<i>Viajes</i>	3	4	3	5	15
<i>¡Claro que sí!</i>	12	9	3	8	32
<i>Conectados</i>	8	12	6	14	40
<i>Plazas</i>	5	6	3	8	22
<i>¿Cómo se dice?</i>	7	6	7	10	30
<i>Portales</i>	5	10	7	10	32
<i>Nexos</i>	15	4	3	18	40
<i>Apúntate</i>	8	5	7	6	26
<i>Experience Spanish</i>	5	4	5	6	20
<i>Tu mundo</i>	14	12	10	7	43
Total	97	85	70	112	364

Table 6. Number of pages with clear reference to Afro-Latinx.

Title of Textbook	Total number of visual images with clear reference to Afro-Latinx	Percentage of visual images with clear reference to Afro-Latinx	Total number of pages with pictures of people
<i>Puntos de Partida</i>	6	1.8%	333
<i>Unidos</i>	2	0.82%	243
<i>Viajes</i>	0	0%	162
<i>¡Claro que sí!</i>	1	0.37%	270
<i>Conectados</i>	1	0.43%	235
<i>Plazas</i>	1	0.43%	235
<i>¿Cómo se dice?</i>	0	0%	205
<i>Portales</i>	2	0.83%	240
<i>Nexos</i>	3	1.2%	251
<i>Apúntate</i>	4	3.23%	124
<i>Experience Spanish</i>	2	1.12%	179
<i>Tu Mundo</i>	0	0%	116
Total	22	9.8%	2593

Moreover, it was not just the scarce representation that we found unsettling but also the sequencing of these representations. In most of the books examined, the first representation of Afro-Latinx was made after reading about half of the textbook. For instance, in *Puntos de Partida*, the first representation was on page 99 in a book with 559 pages, in *Unidos* it is on page 113 in a book with 419 pages, and in *Experience Spanish* it is on page 165, in a book with 464 pages. Other textbooks delayed the first representation till the last quarter of the book; for instance, in *Portales*, it was on page 575 in a book with 642 pages. In *Tu Mundo* it was on page 408 in a book with 521 pages. Interestingly, these books chose not to represent Afro-Latinx in previous pages that detailed the life and culture of Latinx.

Superficiality: Culture as a product

Our analysis also revealed that in instances where Afro-Latinx were represented, these textbooks offered superficial representations of these Afro-Latinxs, basically “culture as a product” (Lundahl, 2014). As previously mentioned, the cultural elements found in these books were limited to music, sports, and entertainment. For instance, in the text below, we found that the percussion instruments and the Mexican Son were used to represent Afro-Latinx culture.

- (1) *El cajón es un instrumento de percusión similar a la caja . . . Hoy es un instrumento muy popular que se usa en la música afro peruana y también la música de otros países. (Puntos de partida, p. 429)* [The cajon is a percussion instrument similar to the box. Today it is a very important instrument that is used in Afro-Peruvian music as well as the music from other countries].
- (2) *El Son mexicano es un tipo de música con influencias indígenas, españolas y africanas. (Viajes, p. 57)* [The Mexican Son is a type of music with indigenous, Spanish, and African influences].
- (3) *Salsa is a combination of American jazz with Caribbean music and African rhythms. It is said to have originated in New York City (Claro que sí, p. 67)*
- (4) *La comida puertorriqueña es una combinación de las comidas de los tainos, de los esclavos africanos y de la comida española y Americana (¿Cómo se dice?, p. 49)* [Puerto Rican food is a combination of food of the Tainos, African slaves, Spainards, and Americans].

Similarly, in the visuals, superficial elements were used to represent Afro-Latinx culture. For instance, in *Experience Spanish*, we found a picture of Afro-Latinxs dancing the Cumbia on page 264. Interestingly, in this image, the Afro-Latinxs seemed to be disappearing in the background. The most salient image was the yellow skirts worn by the women dancing, reinforcing the superficial cultural products being used to represent Afro-Latinx.

Impersonalization

Like the women dancing in the above example, all references to Afro-Latinxs were impersonalized, in the third person singular/plural, or with passive constructions. With respect to the verbs, we found Afro-Latinx being described with actions such as “to live,” “to create,” “to mix,” “to maintain,” with the most recurring being “to originate.” One might argue that the textbook seeks to construct Afro-Latinxs as lacking agency.

At the description stage, we found that not one text referred to Afro-Latinxs using personal pronouns. These types of constructions tend to create social distance between the participants and the reader. By way of illustration, we present, the use of the passive tense in example 1 and 2.

- (1) *Blacks were originally brought to Panama to work on sugar plantations. Many descendants of slaves worked to build the Panama Canal and a large number died during this period. (Claro que sí, p. 64).*
- (2) *Aunque están separados por fronteras nacionales, los garifunas se mantienen no obstante unidos en su determinación por preservar su cultura Rica en influencias africanas y americanas. (Nexos, p. 197) [Although they are separated by national borders, the Garifunas still maintain their determination to preserve their culture rich in African and American influence].*

In the visual mode of the image in *Claro que sí*, page 64, we glossed the participants represented as seven people. The process involved is the construction of the canal. One character looks at the viewer while others do not. Their faces are blurred in the black and white background, making it impossible to make them out. The image seems to portray the hardships that the descendants of slaves encountered. However, it is a highly simplified representation. By showing the facial features of one and hiding the rest, it is clear they are impersonalizing the individuals in the visual and solely demonstrating their work abilities.

In addition, in the image described above, the Afro-Latinxs seem to be offering contact (70% of the images) in contrast to demanding contact (30%) from the viewer/reader. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), there are two types of contact; the participant in the image can either be demanding contact from the viewer and engaging the viewer (e.g., by gazing at the viewer), or offering contact with the viewer and engaging the view (e.g., gazing away from the viewer). The latter mostly characterized images of Afro-Latinxs in the images in the textbooks. This type of contact fails to involve the reader emotionally with the viewer, thus resonating with the distance created in the text and mirroring the unequal power relations in society.

Collectivization

The kinds of labels and adjectives used to describe Afro-Latinx as a group are also noteworthy. For instance, we find adjectives collectively describing Afro-Latinx as “former slaves,” “descendants of slaves,” “negros” and “descendants of African slaves,” “African,” “Blacks,” with the most recurring of all being “the Garifunas.” Perhaps more telling is that all the books examined, there was no attempt to teach students about the cultures of this group, just the collective labels. To exemplify these collective labels:

- (1) *Honduras tiene una población afro indígena muy grande; los garifunas que viven a lo largo del golfo de Honduras. (Puntos de Partida, p. 99) [Honduras has a large Afro-indigenous population: the Garifunas that live along the Gulf of Honduras].*
- (2) *Los Garifunas son un grupo étnico de origen africano con una gran presencia en el golfo de Honduras. Mantienen una cultura Rica en ritmo, música y baile. (Unidos, p. 188) [The Garifunas are an ethnic group of African origin with a large presence in the Gulf of Honduras. They maintain a culture rich in rhythms, music and dance].*

- (3) Today 6% of the Panama population is Amerindian and tend to live in remote areas. Blacks were originally brought to Panama to work on the sugar plantation. (*Claro que sí*, p. 54).

In the examples above, Afro-Latinxs were collectively represented by a subgroup of Afro-Latinxs known as the Garifunas. Moreover, we found that in ten out of the 12 books examined, Afro-Latinx were referred to as Garifunas. This grouping of all Afro-Latinxs in these texts results in a loss of individuality and supports the strategy of collectivization. Moreover, by referring to all Afro-Latinx, as “Blacks,” these textbooks erase the unique identity of Afro-Latinx. This collectivization of the group speaks volumes as to the power relations with respect to Afro-Latinxs and the sociocultural environment.

Interestingly, other data found in the texts differentiated between the Afro-Latinxs who are part of the “collectivized actors” and the “other Afro-Latinxs,” who are the famous ones. The “other Afro-Latinxs” are represented by famous football players, actors, and musicians. Unlike the “collectivized” Afro-Latinxs, the famous Latinxs were given an identity, as they were mentioned by name.

- (1) *Miguel “Sugar” Santos, un jugador de béisbol dominicano que tiene 19 años.* (*Claro que sí*, p. 103) [Miguel “Sugar” Santos, a Dominican baseball player who is 19 years old].
- (2) *Entre ellos se destacan Pedro Martínez, Alfonso Soriano y Albert Pujols.* (*¿Cómo se dice?*, p. 279) [Among them, Pedro Martinez, Alfonso Soriano and Albert Pujols are the most outstanding].

Furthermore, in example 2, the use of the argumentation strategy “entre ellos” meaning “among them” reechoes the alienation from the collective group, as well as a distinction between the general Afro-Latinx population and the famous ones who the textbooks deem as necessary to be named. For instance, sports players (e.g., Miguel Santos, Alberto Pujols, and Pedro Martinez) or entertainers (e.g., Susan Baca, Zoe Saldana). By giving an identity to only famous Afro-Latinxs, these textbooks continue the marginalization of Afro-Latinxs in society.

Like erasure, collectivization manifested in the textbooks reinforces racial stereotypes, and colorism, both in text and visuals.

In the next section, we present the discussion of the results.

Discussion

The findings of the present study make two important contributions to research in textbook studies. Firstly, our analysis corroborates the findings of previous textbook studies and shows that textbooks are not ideologically neutral materials. Secondly, our study expands on earlier findings by examining an underrepresented group that has not yet been examined in Spanish textbooks. The scarce representation of Afro-Latinx in text and visuals show how textbooks deliberately partake in denying the existence of Afro-Latinx in the Hispanophone society. The erasure of Blackness, and consequently Afro-Latinxs, attests to the hegemonic relations in society. These relations can be traced as far back as the colonial times when European colonizers degraded the language, culture, religion, and features of Afro-Latinxs and instead promoted the superiority of “whiteness.”

By erasing their historical, linguistic, and social representation, these textbooks misrepresent the history of Latin America and the reality of who and what is considered a Spanish speaker, or even who speaks a standard variety of Spanish. Specifically, the scarce representation contributes to the erroneous idea that Latinxs are either of European or indigenous descent. Potential reasons for erasure include the aftermath of slavery, the stratification of society during colonial times, and the lingering subtle forms of racism that persist in society. Interestingly, in the few instances in which Afro-Latinx appear, we find colorism, racial stereotypes, collectivization, and tourism discourse.

Colorism evident in these textbooks promotes the notion that educational materials advance a binary division of race based upon previous colonialization; emphasizing the light-skinned elite in obvious communities of color (Hunter, 2007; Keith & Monroe, 2016). The clearest indicators of these coloristic

stereotypes are the consistent collectivist portrayal of the darker-skinned Afro-Latinxs as entertainers, sports icons, and skilled workers. Colorism is an ideology propagated by the media, and even now, textbook materials. Although African Americans and Afro-Latinxs may differ linguistically and socially, in the United States where these books are used, they both have a shared heritage that goes beyond their phenotype (Busey & Cruz, 2015). Since these books used in the USA may be used by African American students, colorism may contribute to the marginalization of these individuals in society.

Moreover, the reinforcement of racial stereotypes was evident in both texts and in the visuals. Some of the clearest indicators of these stereotypes were the consistent portrayal of Afro-Latinxs as entertainers, sports icons, and skilled workers. Furthermore, the stereotype of dark-skinned Latinx being musicians can be traced back to the era of slavery, with images of Africans singing as they picked cotton, and in the present day, movies depicting blacks singing in church choirs. This is an ideology propagated by the media, and even now, textbook materials. These stereotypes can be interpreted as a reflection of what society expects from Afro-Latinxs. It is a subtle form of racism that has been the foundation for the characterization of blacks as having more physical strength than whites, whites being more cognitively developed or intelligent than blacks, and blacks being more skilled laborers than professionals (Ferrucci et al., 2013). Consequently, this reinforces systematic racism in schools, in places of work, and in the justice system. Although to the uncritical eye these depictions on their own may not be described as racial stereotypes, the repetitiveness in which they occur in all the textbooks examined is indeed problematic, especially when the only time an Afro-Latinx is mentioned by name is when he/she is an entertainer, a sports icon, or a musician.

In addition, the use of collectivization, a strategy evident in several texts and visuals, implies that all members of the group are the same and belong to a homogenous group (Baker et al., 2013). In this case, Afro-Latinxs are put into one large group: the Garifunas. One might wonder who the Garifunas are, why they are named without any explanation or historical information, and if all Afro-Latinxs are Garifunas. The only named Afro-Latinx are famous Afro-Latinx, for instance, “Susana Baca,” a Peruvian Afro-Latinx singer and songwriter, and Zoe Saldana, an actress.

Finally, the tourist nature of the textbooks analyzed supports the ideology of the tourist-gaze. According to Vinall and Shin (2018), this ideology aims to establish notions of difference that are commodified and consumed by the tourist. The tourist gaze thus successfully constructs Afro-Latinxs as an outside entity. Readers are only aware of the exotic instruments, rhythms, percussion instruments, and drums used by Afro-Latinxs. These written and pictorial representations demonstrate how these individuals are solely to be enjoyed by a wider audience, as some insincere entertainment that those who have the luxury of traveling can experience. Similarly, the textbooks highlight the commercial aspects of Afro-Latinx culture, such as singers, dancers, and entertainers, while omitting historical and political information. Tourism discourse is increasingly being used in textbook materials to avoid controversial topics and provide learners a thoughtless passport to experience the culture of the language under study (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015).

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the representation of Afro-Latinxs, both visually and textually, in beginner-level Spanish textbooks. The theoretical framework that guided the study was critical discourse and visual analysis. The goal was not just to portray how Afro-Latinxs are represented but also to bring to light what information is absent from the texts and its implications.

The study found little representation of Afro-Latinxs; out of the 12 books examined, only 52 textual representations of Afro-Latinxs were found. These textual representations do not correspond to the number of Afro-Latinxs found in Spanish-speaking countries. Similarly, out of the 2,593 pages that contained images of people, only 364 pages (14%) included an image of a dark-skinned Latinx. Likewise, out of the same 2,593 images found, there were only 22 images that specifically textually referenced an Afro-Latinx (e.g., Garifuna, *moreno*, among others). In both the texts and the visuals,

Afro-Latinxs were collectivized, impersonalized, and represented with superficial elements of their culture, specifically music, sports, and entertainment. Concerning the ideologies, the study uncovered erasure, the tourist gaze, stereotypes, and blatant issues of colorism.

The scarce representation of Afro-Latinxs aligns with studies that have found that textbooks deliberately decide to include or exclude minority groups in society. As Uzum et al. (2021) argue, “textbooks tend to foreground certain linguistic and cultural components while erasing others and tend to offer tokenistic representations of ‘peripheral’ dialects and cultures” (p. 5). In sum, Afro-Latinx were underrepresented, and in cases where they were mentioned, the textbooks offered very tokenistic representations.

Nonetheless, this study’s intention is not to attack any of the writers of the examined textbooks or assume that they have exclusionary views. This is because textbook contents are not just determined by the authors but by the publishing house in general. In many cases, there is often the desire to avoid controversy and stick with the status quo. The textbooks examined also do not represent all Spanish textbooks used at beginner levels in US colleges. However, because of the importance teachers and students place on textbook materials, textbooks must accurately represent their users. These results also show that language educators need to examine language textbook materials used in their classes constantly. Most importantly, as second language educators increasingly abandon traditional textbooks for open access resources, improvements must be made to educational materials that reflect real-world issues and ways of life.

As evident in these results, Blackness or being “Afro” is not just a matter of phenotype. However, it also involves challenging various ideologies that lead to the marginalization of black individuals. Therefore, Afro-Latinxs must be included in historical, cultural, and social narratives provided in Spanish language textbooks, not from a “tourist gaze” or ideological perspective, but a perspective that portrays them as an integral part of the culture and language community.

Future research should interview textbook users with respect to their perception of Afro-Latinx presence in Spanish language textbooks. Also of interest also is the investigation of Spanish textbooks used at the advanced levels. Finally, this paper calls language educators to act as social agents to bring change to the marginalization of “Afro-Latinxs” and Blacks in general, not only in language textbooks but also in society.

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