

## Students' Stances and Evaluations toward Spanish Language: A Case Study

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### Abstract

*This paper is a case study that analyzes the evaluations made by undergraduate students with respect to the value of Spanish language in United States society, and the pedagogical repercussion of these evaluations for the acquisition of Spanish in the academic curriculum. Drawing on ethnography and the use of elicitation techniques, the students' reactions were analyzed by means of discourse analysis. The study finds that students who hold attitudes of appreciation toward Spanish are more likely to acknowledge the symbolic capital associated with bilingualism, but those students who hold judgmental views toward Spanish are more likely to denigrate the symbolic capital associated with the speaking of both languages. Judgmental attitudes are seen as a serious pedagogical problem in the light of the literature that has shown correlations between positive attitudes and language attainment. Practice of linguistic awareness is recommended as a pedagogical tool to educate students about the benefits of bilingualism.*

**Keywords:** stances, appreciation, judgmental, linguistic attitudes, awareness, bilingualism, symbolic capital.

### Background

This paper analyzes the stances taken and evaluations made by undergraduate students with respect to the value of Spanish language in United States society, and the ideological repercussion of these evaluations for the acquisition of Spanish in the curriculum. The participating students attend a small private university (PUEP) located in an eastern city in Pennsylvania, which will not be named for confidentiality reasons. As a case study, this paper illustrates the conflict between students' potentially negative evaluations of the Spanish language, and the fact that they must fulfill general educational requirements. The small sample of this study only allows us to present the problem and to point out the need for further research on the topic, with more data from different universities. The number of college students who take Spanish as a second or foreign language has significantly increased in the last decades across schools in the United States.

A report in the Modern Language Association indicates, "Spanish continues to account for more than half (53.4%) of all enrollments" (<http://www.adfl.org/resources/enrollments.pdf>, 2002, p.12). Economic reasons, relating to social mobility and access to the globalized economy, along with a significant increase in the Hispanic population in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau) that has made Hispanics the largest minority group in the country, have had an impact on the students' selection of the Spanish language. Notwithstanding, Hispanophobia is a social reality expressed in many different ways, such as anti-immigration laws or discriminatory language policies that have popularized the belief that Hispanics do not want to learn English. Zentella (1995) calls this phenomenon the *chiquitification* of the U.S. Latinos. Hispanics are the target of stereotypes that make assumptions such as, "they don't want to learn English," or "they don't want to integrate to mainstream America," which are in turn associated with criminalization and immigration policies that lead to massive deportations.

According to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), during the fiscal year that ended in September 2011, the agency has deported the largest number of individuals in the agency's history ("U.S. Departs," 2011). In this context, the author argues that the Spanish language is seen among students as a vehicle of socioeconomic mobility on the one hand, but also as a threat to their national identity and English supremacy on the other. Spanish classrooms are not independent from this anti-immigration trend and *chiquitification* attitudes. The literature in applied linguistics has shown that several variables influence students' attainment of a second language, including social factors such as those emanating from learners' membership affiliations to certain social groups (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Gatlinton and Trofimovich, 2008; Lambert, 1967); attitudes and motivations (e.g. Brown, 1973; Brown and White, 2010; Dörnyei, 2003; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Lambert and Gardner, 1972), and emotions (Krashen, 1981).

At the same time, studies on language attitudes have shown that speakers' evaluations have an impact on language policy and planning (Crawford, 2008; Schiffman, 2005; Farrell and Kun, 2007). On the other hand, relatively little attention has been directed towards studying the evaluations students may make about Spanish language in the United States, as well as how they accommodate their evaluations within an educational system that requires them to study a foreign language. I suggest that although students' positions toward multilingualism are being elicited during class activities as part of language teaching practices, the students are mostly unaware that their orientations toward the worth of Spanish in society may also influence the way they acquire the language (or not), i.e., as passive or active learners (Kimoen and Nevalainen, 2005). Traditionally in language-teaching classes, not much space and time are devoted to developing an awareness of students' ideological positions with respect to the target language (see, for example, Auerbach 1995).

In summary, the questions investigated in this study are: (1) How do students evaluate Spanish in society either while taking courses or having recently done so? (2) If it is the case that students hold negative evaluations toward Spanish and Hispanics, how do they reconcile their views with their curricular requirements? And finally, (3) do they express any sign of awareness regarding the conflict between these values and the practice of taking Spanish courses?

An ethnography of Eastern City of Pennsylvania (ECP) and the university in question is presented for the purpose of interpreting the results in their local context. It is important to bear in mind that the results and their interpretations are likely to vary among places with different socio-cultural backgrounds and history. The data for this study comprise twenty-four undergraduate students who, after giving their consent, were asked to first respond to a questionnaire and then write their reactions to a podcast. The data were analyzed qualitatively by drawing on the appraisal theory, as pioneered by Martin and White (2005) in discourse studies, and quantitatively by a simple calculation of the total percentages of responses followed by a critical comparison of the results.

To address the research questions above, the author departs from a sociolinguistic perspective on second language acquisition that views the learner as a social being, whose acquisition of the second language (L2) is affected by their social context, social interactions, and social relationship with others, including their own instructors (see Tarone, 2007 for a review). Drawing on Pennycook (2001), the classroom is seen not only as reflecting and reproducing the world, but also as a site of cultural struggle in which different versions of the world are defended. According to this perspective, "it is also possible to see how students and teachers operate in accordance with or in opposition to different cultural possibilities" (p.128). Auerbach (1995) observes that the influence of social factors has mostly focused on other areas such as the curriculum, the instructional content, and the pedagogical material we use in class, but not in classroom dynamics. Consequently, I intend to offer a critical reflection of the interplay between the local social perceptions of Spanish, and the classroom dynamics that may develop.

### ***1. An Instructor's Experience***

The idea for this paper originated from a personal experience that occurred while teaching the Miranda Warning, in Spanish, to law enforcement majors who were taking Spanish as part of their general education requirement. We reviewed the historical circumstances in class and explained the vocabulary, before I announced to the students that I expected them to internalize the content and recite the Miranda warning in Spanish by heart; this would be in order to avoid the precise series of events that led to the issuing of the Miranda rights in the first place (1966). After practicing the recitation of the text with the students, I went a step further and mentioned that in the future it would be useful for them to carry the Spanish version of the Miranda warning in their wallets, for the benefit of their professional lives. At this point, a defiant student raised his voice and asked, "Why should we say the Miranda warning in Spanish if we live in the United States?" Other students echoed his position.

Although it seemed that they were not calling into question the study of the Miranda warning in Spanish as part of the content instruction, they appeared to be reacting negatively to my suggestion of carrying a Spanish version of the warning. It seemed that my intent to bridge the course learning material with the situation that some people may not understand the English version crossed an uncomfortable boundary for them. As an instructor, I believed I was attempting to engage the students to act upon reality rather than simply filling them with information, as if they were receptacles; Freire (1993), for example, has warned us about the oppressive effects of the "banking education." Returning to the student's comment, it can be inferred that his pragmatic implications align with the position of the "English Only" discourse (see for example Crawford, 2000).

Beyond merely objecting to my expectations, the student was calling into question the very purpose of studying Spanish as a second language in the United States if, according to his position, English is and should be the primary language publically spoken in the country. This student's negative reaction is not new for language instructors. However, a dichotomy seems to exist in the implicit division between what corresponds to the instructional curriculum and therefore to the instructor's role, and what corresponds to real life application, and therefore is seen as beyond the instructor's role in terms of language acquisition. This has led me to pose the questions mentioned above.

## 2. *Ethnography*

### 2.1. Eastern City of Pennsylvania

According to the 2010 census, Eastern City of Pennsylvania (ECP) has a population of 88,082 inhabitants. Historically, in the 18th and 19th centuries the city received immigrants from Eastern Europe, but following World Word II many immigrants also came from Puerto Rico to better their lives. By 1970, the city was home to 10,000 Latinos, which constituted 10% of the population; by 2010, the city had 51,230 Latinos. This figure indicates that Latinos or Hispanics make up 58% of the total population in ECP ("In Search of Opportunity," 2011). While Hispanics constitute the largest ethnic group of the population, they also represent the poorest and the most socially deprived group. The U.S. Census Bureau statistics indicate that ECP is the poorest city of its size, in comparison with other U.S. cities larger than 65,000 people.

In a report prepared by Escobar-Haskins (2001) for the Wyomissing Foundation of Berks County, it was found that the social problems faced by the Hispanic community are associated with the fact that newcomers require linguistically appropriate services to assist them through the acculturation process. However, Latinos who are second generation and beyond, are predominantly English-speakers. This particular segment of the population actually tends to have little competency in Spanish. For this reason, the study notes that "the data speaks to the stereotype held by a segment of the mainstream population that Latinos 'don't want to learn English'" (p.7). Among other important observations made in the report is the lack of political representation of Hispanics in proportion to their population. Simultaneously, the Anglo community criticizes the perceived apathy on the part of Hispanics with respect to participating in leadership positions in public offices. Despite this perception, residents of ECP have witnessed the social mobility of some Hispanics who are indeed occupying leadership positions, including posts within the Chamber of Commerce, as Departmental chairs in Hospitals or even as university presidents. In the next section, ethnographic information is presented about Private University of Eastern Pennsylvania (PUEP), its mission and students.

### 2.2. Private university of ECP

PUEP originated as an orphanage in 1958, and in 2008 the school was awarded university status by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Franciscan heritage of the school recognizes the importance of diversity of thought, faiths, and cultures, with the philosophy of *service to others* lying at the core of the school's mission. In fact, students are required to fulfill forty hours of community service before graduation.

PUEP has almost 3,000 students, the majority of which are from Pennsylvania (89%) and are County residents (48%). Among this student body, 1,500 are considered *traditional* students. While Whites constitute the 78% of students and Blacks 10.6%, Hispanics make up only 5.6% of students. Languages at PUEP are considered part of the school's general educational requirements, along with other courses such as arts, philosophy, and theology. Students must take two consecutive semesters of a language to fulfill the school requirement. The school does not offer any language majors, and Spanish is the only language with a minor.

A growing area of the curriculum is the offering of Spanish courses aimed at professions, for the purpose of specifically tailoring Spanish usage for individuals in the medical or law enforcement fields. The fact that languages are required in the curriculum may indicate the school's recognition that languages contribute to cultural diversity, in keeping with the Franciscan spirit of tolerance. However, for several reasons, the school does not facilitate students' pursuit of advanced courses in a second language; therefore, the majority graduates with a novice or intermediate level. The school administrators and advisors provide justifications for this problem, often citing reasons related to course schedules. The next section will present the methods of data collection.

### 3. Methods of Data Collection

The methods of data collection combine the ethnographic description presented above with a questionnaire, and a narrative reaction to a podcast by Patrick Cox aired on PRI (Public Radio International) on April 14th 2011, in the program “The World in Words”. In total, twenty-four participants responded to the questionnaire and the podcast reaction. Participants were attending summer courses in Spanish 101 taught by a part-time instructor, and Theology 101 taught by an associate professor. The data were analyzed by drawing on appraisal theory (Martin and White, 2005). I explained to the students that I was conducting a study on the importance of the Spanish language among the university population, and for that purpose I needed them to answer a questionnaire first and listen to a podcast later in order to record their reactions. All students consented to participate. None of the students in these classes had been my students previously. The instructor and I remained in the class during these activities, but we did not interfere with their writing. My intention in the combination of these two methods of data collection was, on the one hand, to obtain explicit information by means of the questionnaire that contained direct, yes or no questions, and on the other, to elicit students’ values and stances through their reaction to the podcast.

#### 3.1. Questionnaire

The researcher designed the questionnaire and it has not been previously validated by other studies. The questionnaire comprises two types of questions. The first type was aimed at collecting information about the students’ reasons for studying Spanish instead of the other languages offered at the school. The questionnaire explores motives that range from the need to fulfill a language requirement within the school or as part of better job opportunities, to other reasons such as a true fondness and appreciation for the language. The second type of questions aimed to collect information concerning the students’ positions on the value of Spanish, which indirectly triggers students’ positions on language policies and the public usage of Spanish in the marketplace. Questions were assorted to prevent participants from recognizing patterns of topics associated with the questions.

#### 3.2. Reaction to the podcast

The podcast, originally aired on the radio show “The World in Words,” focuses on language issues around the globe. I selected this podcast because it presented two sides of the linguistic debate in the United States, featuring discussions with both English Only advocates and multilingual advocates. The English Only position is voiced in the podcast through an interview with Tim Schultz (a leader of the advocacy group “U.S. English”), and by the airing of Ron and Kay Rivoli’s song, “Press one for English” (2007). This song has received more than 14,000,000 hits on YouTube. The multilingual position in the podcast is voiced by Robert Lane Greene, author of the recently published book *You Are What You Speak* (2011). In the book, Lane Greene explores the effect of language beliefs and nationalism on people’s lives, and on language policies that lead to what he refers to as the *politics of identity*.

For data collection purposes, I presented students with the short version of the podcast (six minutes), which included interviews voicing the two positions. The webpage of the program includes the YouTube link to the video clip of the Rivoli’s song, which I also played in its entirety for the participants. The lyrics of this song ask immigrants “to choose to learn English” as they chose to come to the United States. There are two presuppositions associated with this utterance. The first and most obvious one is the generalization that immigrants do not learn English. The second is the presupposition that immigrants intentionally choose not to learn English, which also assumes that they always have the option to learn the language. While the lyrics do not explain possible reasons for immigrants to “choose not to learn English,” they nevertheless imply the popular belief that stereotypically sees immigrants as resisting assimilation. The arguments behind the lyrics are visually reinforced by the display of photos that show various ethnic groups learning English, such as Germans, Italians, and Chinese, but not Mexicans, Puerto Ricans or Central Americans. Consequently, by means of their exclusion, the video clip implicitly indexes these populations as those resistant to learning English.

The selection of this podcast (including this video clip) was intended as an elicitation technique. The participant’s reaction is subjectively determined by the participant’s subjective interaction with the text (Martin and White 2005). Consequently, the podcast could elicit as many comments of approval as of disapproval with respect to the ideologies presented, depending on the participants’ previous positions regarding the politics of language.

#### 4. Methods of Data Analysis

The analysis of the questionnaire data constituted a simple quantification of the number of yes or no responses. The data collected from the podcast reaction were analyzed by selecting the statements or paragraphs that instantiated the students' evaluations of the Spanish language. The students' statements were classified according to the components of the Appraisal analysis (Martin and White, 2005). The themes emerging from this classification are laid out and discussed in the context of the ethnography of the city and the school, as presented earlier. Also, a comparison between the questionnaire results and the students' stances was carried out to triangulate the results, i.e., to analyze whether or not the responses to the questionnaire were congruent with the reactions to the podcast.

Appraisal theory is concerned with how speakers or writers instantiate their attitudes toward propositions by considering *affect* (registering positive and negative feelings), *judgment* (assessing behavior according to normative principles), and *appreciation* (claiming the value of things), but also with how speakers or writers instantiate their positions toward other voices by means of *engagement*, i.e., by quoting or reporting other people's words, by making concessions, by countering, etc. At the same time, Appraisal theory considers *gradability*, which is the degree of an evaluation in terms of whether the feelings and attitudes are upgraded or downgraded. The attitude subtypes of affect, judgment, and appreciation, also referred as *emotion*, *ethics*, and *aesthetics*, were the most productive in the classification.

Given that this paper draws on the previous literature concerning the influence of variables, such as emotions, attitudes, and motivations on students' acquisition of a second language, as well as the impact that these variables have on language education and language policies, it seems relevant and innovative to analyze the data from the perspective of the speaker's stance, which appraisal theory makes possible. Furthermore, this paper attempts to integrate an analysis of the students' evaluation of Spanish from the appraisal theory with a socio-critical analysis that includes issues of power and difference from the perspective of Critical Applied Linguistics.

#### 5. Results

##### 5.1. Questionnaire results and analysis

Out of twenty-four respondents, thirteen (54%) students indicated that they would not continue studying Spanish, while eleven (45.8%) would. Those who indicated that they would continue taking Spanish were all in their freshman and sophomore years. These particular students universally responded that they have to fulfill the school's language requirement, and that to have a Spanish course in their transcripts will benefit them in the job market. Five students (45.4%) answered explicitly "yes" to the statement "I love the sound of Spanish, the music, food and its culture," while another five (45.5%) skipped the question or did not mark an answer. Only one student (9%) answered negatively. The thirteen students who would not continue studying Spanish were in their junior and senior years; they were therefore expected to have finished their language requirement at that stage. This result seems to confirm the trend within the school observed in the ethnography, which aims to offer two consecutive semesters of a language in a student's first two semesters, but does not accommodate advanced language courses, particularly given that students with previously arranged schedules are instructed to take courses other than Spanish.

The majority of students answered "yes" to statement #13, "I recognize that Spanish is useful in the marketplace"; only one student out of the sample answered "no". The interesting result is that if the majority of students recognize the usefulness of Spanish language in the market, it seems logical to expect that the majority would also answer positively to question #16. This question is split in two sections: 16.a asks, "Do you feel that people in the U.S. should be given the option to choose between English and Spanish?" while 16.b asks, "If you were the CEO of a larger corporation, business or a government representative, would you offer your clients the chance to choose between English and Spanish?" While these questions are semantically related, 16.a asks the students to adopt a distant relationship by making reference to "people" in general, as if they were not part of that situation. Conversely, 16.b asks the students to position themselves in a proximal relationship using the pronoun "you," as if they were the ones occupying powerful financial positions. The perspectives within the two questions are intentionally different. For 16.a, half of the students responded yes and the other half responded no; for 16.b, fourteen students agreed to offer a bilingual option and eight answered no. The reason for this discrepancy between 16 a. and b. may lie in the position that the students were asked to adopt.

When asked to imagine themselves enjoying a powerful position within a large business or corporation, they were twice as likely to offer bilingual services, likely motivated by the consideration that bilingual services could attract more businesses. However, when asked to judge the value of bilingual services from an external viewpoint, they were equally divided. The students' explanations to their answers were classified according to the emerging themes.

On the one hand were answers oriented to the United States' values of *diversity* and *democracy*. In this view, bilingualism is seen as a reflection of that political social context, and the option to choose among languages is a reflection of the value of freedom and free market. Accommodating the linguistic needs of others, including clients, is associated with economic prosperity and progress of the country in its internal economy, but also in its international relationships. Moreover, it is associated with satisfaction and social harmony through fulfilling meaningful communication with others. On the other hand, the second set of answers were oriented towards *nationalistic* sentiments in which "English" is seen as the "primary/native/official language of the United States," and those who wish to live and work in the country should speak English. The idea of accommodating the linguistic needs of others is seen as costly to the country, coming at the expense of the government or taxpayers. Some of these themes will reappear in the analysis of the podcast reaction.

With reference to the apparent discrepancy between the results associated with questions 13 and 16, it can be speculated that students interpret question 13 as recognizing the usefulness of speaking Spanish from a private rather than public perspective. The usefulness of speaking Spanish acknowledged in private does not seem to extend to the recognition that it could be equally beneficial for the community or country. This point will be further discussed in the next section.

## 5.2. Analysis of the podcast reaction

In this section, I present students' excerpts of their podcast reaction to illustrate how they position themselves and evaluate Spanish language in the context of the U.S. society.

### *Excerpt 1*

"It is a Shame [that] when going into a career field, you are asked if you speak some Spanish. It is sad that I won't be able to fully help all the clients because of the language barrier. If you want the medical treatment here in the U.S. you should be able to communicate in English."

In this excerpt, the participant refers to strong emotions such as "shame" (even written with capital letters) and sadness, but the position of these emotions is expressed by means of nominalizations "it is a shame" and "it is sad," which obscures the agent who is experiencing these downgrading emotions. The first sentence makes reference to being asked if *you* speak some Spanish. While the pronoun *you* refers to the participant, the use of the second person distances the emotions of shame from the speaker, and places the responsibility on the recipient rather than on the one experiencing that emotion. Moreover, the participant evaluates the authorities in the career field as the *agents of shameful behavior*, as they ask interviewees whether or not they speak Spanish. In the second sentence, the subject, first person singular I, states that he/she will not be able to help his/her clients. The use of the first person brings to the fore the agent's sadness in her/his inability to communicate with her/his clients, at the same time placing the client's responsibility in the foreground ("if *you* want the medical treatment"), due to their failure to speak English. Finally, in the last sentence, the participant stresses that it is *you*, the client, and not himself or herself, that must be able to communicate in Spanish in order to receive the services. According to this analysis, the speaker is positioned in proximity to his/her deictic ego when constructing an argument that serves to favor his/her position as a compassionate (non racist) person, but is distant from his/her deictic ego when constructing an argument that judges the client's failure to speak English.

### *Excerpt 2*

"It is unfair that bilingual people get paid more at work because people won't learn English."

In this excerpt the participant judges as "unfair" the fact that bilingual people receive better monetary compensation than monolinguals. This situation, which could alternately be seen as "better qualifications," is judged as unethical behavior that requires compensation from those who do not learn English. The statement also seems to generalize that "bilingual people" are *naturally* bilingual, as if the people who speak two languages had not had to learn either Spanish or English.

*Excerpt 3*

“I think speaking two languages can be good for the economy and improve foreign relationships and trade. Bilingualism is good for the economy of the U.S. People understanding goods and service become established consumers.”

In this excerpt the participant aligns himself/herself with an appreciation of bilingualism, mostly stressing the benefits of good communication as a contributing factor in making consumers comfortable with the services, and therefore becoming “established consumers.”

## 6. Discussion

The results of this study are not surprising considering the current debate on bilingualism in the United States, along with PUEP’s orientation toward foreign languages and the socio-economic alienation experienced by Hispanics in ECP. Although the small sample is a caveat to generalizations, these evaluations can be summarized in two main positions, which reproduce the social and political discourse in which the students are immersed. Drawing on the Appraisal analysis, we can see that on the one hand, students hold attitudes of *appreciation* toward Spanish. These attitudes are constrained however, to certain contexts, for instance when Spanish coexists with English and is associated with the values of diversity, democracy, open markets and better job opportunities. Moreover, Spanish is further appreciated when its speakers use the language in the *private domain* rather than in the public domain. On the other hand, the way students evaluate Spanish language in society can be categorized as *attitudinally judgmental*. This perspective is associated with nationalistic attachments that have been studied extensively in the area of sociology of language (e.g., May 2008). As analyzed in the students’ reactions to the podcast, evaluations falling into this category tend to position English speakers as victims of unfair and unethical behavior on the part of bilingual speakers, who are seen as intentionally resistant to learning English.

The usage of Spanish is evaluated as costly to taxpayers and the government, and as a threat to the U.S. national identity. Furthermore, Spanish is evaluated as a culturally alien to U.S. history and identity, despite colonial ties to Latin America and the Caribbean. One participant illustrates this historic connection, stating, “[Spanish] needs to be treated with more respect because it is part of the U.S.” Both positions, appreciative and judgmental, confirm other authors’ studies (see Crawford, 2008). While these results are not original, what interests us most in this paper is to see how students may accommodate their judgmental attitudes with the fact that they have to take foreign language courses, with the majority choosing Spanish. In light of the literature mentioned in the introduction, students’ judgmental attitudes toward Spanish will probably affect their levels of attainment of the language. This paper argues that what makes the situation even more problematic is that students are taking these courses despite holding (either consciously or unconsciously) evaluations that consider Spanish and, for association, Hispanics as disloyal to the country’s linguistic identity (perceived as English only); even the mere action of speaking Spanish is seen as *unfair* and *unethical* toward monolinguals.

Consequently, the important question that follows is how students manage to reconcile their emotions with the school requirements, and whether or not they are aware of their own emotions toward the symbolic capital of Spanish. One suggestion in this paper is that students who hold judgmental attitudes may dissociate the practice of taking Spanish courses, not only from their emotions and attitudes but also from their future realities, i.e., by resisting the likelihood that they may have to speak Spanish as future professionals. This is well illustrated by the case of the student discussed in my personal story, who opposed the suggested image of (himself) as a law enforcement official who, in the future, will have to say the Miranda Rights in Spanish.

In summary, it seems that those students who hold appreciative values toward Spanish are more likely to acknowledge the symbolic capital associated with the speaking of both languages. These students, while perhaps still troubled by national ideals that see English as the primary language of the United States, may accommodate their beliefs by having internalized Cashman’s (2006) observation. That is, that the bilingual skills of Anglo language majorities are seen as a resource and often rewarded economically, but the bilingual skills of language minorities are perceived as, at best, a barrier to full participation in the democracy, and at worst, a sign of divided loyalty or disloyalty to the country. On the other hand, those students who hold judgmental views toward Spanish are more likely to denigrate the symbolic capital associated with the speaking of both languages; the means by which they are doing so indicate that they do not take responsibility for their evaluations and emotions. Considering the analysis of excerpts 1 and 2, one denigrating strategy is the displacement of responsibility.

For instance, feelings of shame are not recognized as one's own feelings, but displaced onto the reality that *employers* seek employees who are competent in Spanish. Feelings of sadness are projected onto the frustration of those (Hispanics) who cannot communicate in English, rather than personally assuming the frustration of not being able to assist all clients or patients. Students holding judgmental attitudes seem to be caught in the dissociation between what should be (everybody should speak English) and the social reality of a globalized economy in which thousands of people are forced to emigrate and leave their home countries.

As mentioned in the introduction, the classroom is seen as a site of cultural and socio-political struggles in which alignments with bilingual or monolingual positions, ethnic stereotypes and resentments are constantly being negotiated. These positions were elicited in this study by means of the questionnaire and the reaction to the podcast, rather than through the direct observation of class dynamic. Therefore, this is a limitation of the study. However, an asset could be seen in the attempt to combine appraisal analysis of the stances with a critical applied linguistics approach.

As illustrated with the example of my own classroom experience, it seems that role-playing activities may not be pedagogically sufficient to help students make links with their future realities, particularly if they internally hold judgmental attitudes. Students may participate in these activities as part of what they have internalized, specifically in terms of what is expected from them in the curriculum in order to comply with course requirements. In other words, these types of students position themselves as *passive learners*.

This paper concludes that as language instructors, we must do reflective practices that lead us, and the students, to gain an awareness of the language attitudes in class by making this activity an essential component of the curriculum. This is, however, a political and challenging educational practice that will require further research.

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