

L2, Heritage, and Native Spanish Speaker's Attitudes to Mexican-Accented and English-Accented Spanish: A Matched-Guise Study

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By means of a matched-guise study, we examine the attitudes of L2, native, and heritage Spanish speakers in the State of Washington towards two particular varieties of Spanish: Mexican-accented Spanish and English-accented Spanish. We consider our findings in wake of previous research about attitudes towards Spanish (e.g. Beckstead & Toribio 2003, Carranza & Ryan 1975) and English-accented Spanish (e.g. Hosoda, Nguyen & Stone-Romero 2011) in the United States.

The data for this study was collected through an online questionnaire in which 95 Spanish-speaking participants residing in the State of Washington listened to four guises (2 Mexican-accented voices and 2 English-accented voices). The guises were produced by two Spanish-English bilinguals (1 male and 1 female). In addition to providing demographic information, respondents rated each voice using six-point semantic differential scales along several dimensions similar to those found in Zahn and Hopper (1985), i.e. superiority, solidarity, dynamism, and physical characteristics.

Our central hypothesis was that there would be attitudinal differences among the different groups of Spanish-speakers towards the aforementioned varieties. In particular, we hypothesized that L2, native, and heritage speakers of Spanish would rate the English-accented guises higher than the Mexican-accented guises in the dimension of superiority. We reasoned this would be a manifestation of the ideological dominance of English over Spanish in the United States (Fuller 2013) and the fact that Spanish-speakers tend to view English as more important than Spanish for socioeconomic mobility (Beckstead and Toribio 2003). Contrary to this prediction, preliminary analysis shows that the Mexican-accented voices were rated higher along the dimensions of superiority, solidarity, and dynamism. However, further analysis is being conducted to determine if these attitudinal differences are statistically significant and, if so, to investigate which demographic factors (e.g. length of residence in the US, level of bilingualism, ethnicity) condition these differences.