Language attitudes in an Anglo-Hispanic context: the role of the linguistic landscape

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Abstract

Using the verbal-guise technique, 190 Anglo and Hispanic adolescents listened to and evaluated a series of Anglo- and Hispanic-accented speakers reading an ethnically neutral radio announcement across a broad range of seven judgmental dimensions. Anglo-accented speakers were evaluated more favorably across all dimensions, although the effect was attenuated for Hispanic raters. The reported linguistic landscape of the raters was also investigated to determine its role in predicting language attitudes. While this had no effect on Anglo raters, the linguistic landscape significantly affected Hispanic ratings; the more Spanish the perceived local climate (e.g., in terms of road signs, media available), the less favorably Anglo-accented speakers were rated, whereas the more English their perceived landscape, the more favorably Anglo speakers were rated.

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1. Introduction

Attitudes towards speakers of different dialects and language has had a long cross-disciplinary history (e.g., Bresnahan et al., 2002; Garrett et al., 2003). Much of the American work in this tradition has centered on attitudes towards Anglo- and Hispanic-accented speakers using the matched- or verbal-guise techniques (see Carranza, 1982). Perhaps surprisingly, little research in this genre has emerged in...
recent years despite the well-publicized demographic increase of Latino immigrants, a pattern fueling the English-only Movement (Barker et al., 2001). The current study was designed, in part, to fill this void.

Prior research in the Midwest, Texas, and California has shown that Hispanic-accented English speakers have been consistently downgraded on traits of competence (e.g., intelligence) yet upgraded, albeit less often, on traits of solidarity (e.g., liking) than their Anglo-accented counterparts, and especially so in formal task-oriented contexts (e.g., Ryan and Carranza, 1977; Giles et al., 1995). Moreover, the former have also been rated as less suitable for higher status occupations (e.g., de la Zerda and Hopper, 1979). Given that Hispanic immigrants are now the largest growing ethnic minority in the United States and particularly California (US Census Bureau, 2000), the question arises as to whether language attitudes towards representative speakers of this group would become more favorable, especially amongst its users and along dimensions of solidarity.

Recent data, however, suggests this might be a complex matter to predict with any degree of confidence. For instance, Barker and Giles (2003) found that the more Anglo students construed less of a differential between their own group’s and Latino vitality (on levels of perceived power, wealth, political, economic and business control), the more they supported English-only initiatives. However, the academic attainment of Latino children has been lacking compared to Anglos (see Belitz and Valdez, 1997; Rumberger and Larson, 1998). In the school district of southern California where data for this study were collected (an area in which the number of Latino/a schoolchildren have doubled in recent years), high school graduation rates have been proportionally much lower, and drop-out rates much higher, than Anglo children (California Department of Education, 2002).

As alluded to above, studies have pointed to the fact that the sociopolitical context can be—although not always (Genesee and Holobow, 1999)—a powerful determinant of language attitudes (e.g., Woolard and Gahng, 1990). Given the quite visible institutional support provided to Spanish matters in the community (e.g., increased number of signage, government forms and a variety of media in that language), a valuable new construct for studying attitudes towards accented speakers might be Landry and Bourhis (1997) notion of the “linguistic landscape” (see also, Bourhis and Landry, 2002). As these authors noted, “...the linguistic landscape, at least in the Canadian context, may indeed constitute the most visible and most salient marker of perceived in-group versus out-group ethnolinguistic vitality” (Landry and Bourhis, 1997, p. 45). Moreover, they found (across a variety of Canadian provinces) that the more French-speaking 11th and 12th graders perceived their linguistic landscapes to be French-inclined (e.g., on signs and in advertising), the more they used this language within their social and family networks. Interestingly, Barker and Giles (2003), in their Californian study, found that the more Anglo students believed Spanish media was used in their neighborhoods (viz., through music, television, magazines, movies, video rentals, and radio), the less they endorsed social limitations on immigrants (e.g., that the government enforce immigration controls more strictly). In other words, the same changing linguistic landscape can have socially beneficial effects—at least on certain dimensions—for both in- and outgroups.
In sum, “although the Hispanic population is growing significantly, and their presence is felt in the mass media and linguistic landscape of some communities, their political and socioeconomic power is still very limited” (Barker et al., 2001, p. 16). Our study then, had two aims. First, we wished to ascertain the intergroup attitudes of Anglo and Hispanic Californian 8th and 9th graders to (male and female) Anglo- and Hispanic-accented speakers. The sociopolitical backdrop provided above is equivocal as to what attitudes these adolescents would be predicted to hold. For this reason, the design included, arguably, the most comprehensive set of trait attributional factors used in this research domain to date, namely seven. Second, we wished to determine if there was any direct relationship between our teenagers’ perceptions of the ethnonlinguistic make-up of their linguistic landscape and their language attitudes. Again, our measure of linguistic landscape was broad and comprehensive, including 28 items relating to the extent of Spanish in the local media, signage, neighborhood, school, and so forth (see Bourhis and Sachdev, 1984). (See Landry and Bourhis, 1997, on the close relationship between their measures of linguistic landscape and media).

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Of the 238 students from the Santa Ynez High School Union who participated, 190 cases were retained for analysis. Having invited respondents to declare their ethnicity on the questionnaire, several cases were excluded due to substantial missing data or questionable responses (i.e., response set). A small percentage (11.7%) of the students were of various ethnicities other than Anglo or Hispanic and, thus, were also excluded from the analysis. Forty of the students (21%) of the sample were Hispanic; 150 (78.9%) were Anglo. Although this was an uneven distribution, it is quite representative of the area in which the data was collected; that is, 22.9% Hispanic, 73.2% Anglo, and 3.9% other (California Department of Education, 2002). There was a fairly even split between males (45.8%) and females (54.2%). All students were in either 8th or 9th grade (that is, 15- to 16-year-olds). On 7-point scales, the self-reported overall English proficiency of the Anglo informants was 6.65 (SD = 0.76) and 5.98 (SD = 1.07) for Hispanics (t[188] = 4.515, p < 0.01), while their respective Spanish proficiency scores were 2.25 (SD = 1.54) and 4.57 (SD = 2.04) (t[188] = −6.934, p = 0.003). Although Anglos and Hispanics reported more proficiency in their ingroup languages, the latter were quite bilingual and the former were not unfamiliar with Spanish; these trends are interesting given the evaluative profiles of the verbal-guises that emerged.

2.2. Materials

2.2.1. Vocal stimulus preparation

A short, 20-s passage of prose was prepared on an ethnically neutral topic, namely, the announcement of an upcoming athletic event. Because concerted efforts
seeking a matched-guise format (see Lambert, 1967) resulted in non-authentic guises, we adopted the verbal-guise technique (see Cooper, 1974). In other words, after a comprehensive rehearsal with dozens of potential speakers, we selected two males and two females from each ethnic group (aged in their early twenties) to record the passage on audiotape. These were selected so as to be matched for reading style, clarity, and were fairly homogeneous in paralinguistic features such as rate and pitch per gender. The Hispanic-accented speakers all possessed a distinctive, yet mild, ethnic accent (see Brennan and Brennan, 1981), while the Anglo speakers can be characterized as possessing a standard Californian accent. The guises were played to groups of local students who validated their authenticity as representing the ethnic accents in an equivalent manner. A vocal stimulus tape was constructed so as to convey eight different sequencings of the eight stimulus speakers so that order of speakers rated could be controlled.

2.2.2. Trait attribution measures

On the basis of past speaker evaluation research, seven sets of traits (comprising 28 items) were selected for use in evaluating the speakers (see, for example, Zahn and Hopper, 1985). These were: Competence (lazy, ambitious, smart, and educated), Dynamism (active, confident, enthusiastic, and talkative), Attractiveness or Solidarity (friendly, good-natured, kind, and nice), Positive Characteristics (grateful, religious, proud, and family oriented), Negative Characteristics (cruel, vulgar, dominant, and unethical), Social Distance (sharing projects with speakers, being on the same team as them, disclosing secrets, and going to parties together), and Respect (respect for speaker personally, others’ respect, kind of person you would put-down, and others’ putdown). All these items were rated on Likert 7-point scales anchored by “definitely yes” to “definitely no”.

2.2.3. Linguistic landscape measures

This was measured by 28 items (after and beyond Landry and Bourhis, 1997) on seven-point scales. Examples included: posters at your school are in Spanish/
English; the language you hear on TV is English/Spanish; and how many people in your after-school clubs and activities speak Spanish/English. Both Anglos and Hispanics reported predominantly English linguistic landscapes. However, as would be expected, Anglos rated their landscape as being more English ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.61$) than did Hispanics ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.69$; $t[188] = -4.45$, $p = 0.026$).

2.2.4. Other measures

Besides naming their ethnicity, respondents were also asked to rate how well they read, wrote, understood, and spoke English and Spanish on 7-point scales anchored “very well” to “not very well”. The composite English and Spanish proficiency scores were reliable for both groups (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.85$ for English with Anglos; 0.87 for English with Hispanics; 0.95 for Spanish with Anglos; and 0.95 for Spanish with Hispanics).

2.3. Procedure

The respondents were introduced to the task in small groups of about a dozen each. They were told that we were interested in determining who might make a good radio announcer for an upcoming sporting event (a marathon). They were invited to assist us in that regard by rating eight candidate recorded as potential announcers on the 28 trait items referred to above. The groups of respondents were randomly assigned one of the eight orderings for speakers, with half of them completing the linguistic landscape items before doing this, and the other half afterwards.

3. Preliminary analyses

In order to reduce the Linguistic landscape scale into composite scores, a principal components analysis was conducted with an oblimin rotation on all 28 items. Though several eigenvalues were greater than one, the first eigenvalue was greater than nine and explained 32.48% of the variance. The remaining eigenvalues were less than 1.39, and the scree plot reflected this distinctive drop after the first factor. Thus, the analysis revealed one strong factor, and all items were averaged to form an overall score for linguistic landscape. Cronbach’s $\alpha$ for the 28 items was a solid 0.92.

As above, the Trait Attributions included four items assessing each of the seven judgmental dimensions. Due to the within-subjects nature of the data (i.e., rating eight speakers – four for each ethnicity) and the number of items to assess perceptions of these speakers (i.e., 28), a complete factor analysis was not possible without summing scores across speakers. That said, the inter-item reliabilities of the seven components were relatively high across speakers (see Tables 1 and 2 for the reliability coefficients and intercorrelation matrix, respectively). Ratings for each set of four items were thus combined to form composite scores for the seven factors.

Despite the small numbers of Hispanics in general, and their dispersion across gender and ethnicity of speaker, we opted for an initial comprehensive 2 (rater ethnicity) $\times$ 2 (speaker ethnicity) $\times$ 2 (rater gender) $\times$ 2 (speaker gender) repeated
measures MANOVA anticipating interactions regarding gender to inevitably emerge. Results showed a three-way interaction between ethnicity of speaker, gender of rater, and gender of speaker (Wilk’s Lambda = 0.886, $F(7, 177) = 3.264$, $p = 0.003$). Overall, when the guises were male, evaluating differences between ethnicity of speaker were smaller than when speakers were female; this was especially the case for Hispanic male raters. Anglo voices were most positively rated when they were female speakers rated by other Anglo female raters, and Hispanic voices were most positively rated when they, too, were female speakers, but this time when rated by Hispanic males. However, this summary is speculative as the current analysis lacks sufficient power to accurately assess the contribution of gender in addition to ethnicity. Hence, while gender of speaker and gender of rater may be influential variables, we contend that in our case, by far the most parsimonious model emerged from a $2 \times 2$ MANOVA omitting the gender factors.

4. Results and discussion

To determine how ratings of the seven factors varied by speaker ethnicity and rater ethnicity, a $2$ (speaker: Anglo and Hispanic) $\times 2$ (rater: Anglo and Hispanic) repeated measures MANOVA was conducted. Speaker ethnicity was a within-subjects, and rater ethnicity was a between-subjects, factor. (See Table 3 for a
summary of the results.) The multivariate tests revealed that both of these factors were significant predictors of trait ratings. Additionally, the interaction between speaker ethnicity and rater ethnicity was also significant.

Univariate tests on the seven factors separately showed that all differed by speaker ethnicity. In contrast to the overall multivariate test, the univariate tests for rater ethnicity revealed no significant differences for any of the seven trait factors. However, the interaction between speaker and rater ethnicity was significant for all traits with the exception of Positive Characteristics and Attractiveness (see Table 3).

Profile plots using the estimated means were examined for the seven factors to identify the nature of these interactions. In the five factors that were significant, the same pattern was found. (Similar trends were found in the Attractiveness and Positive Characteristics traits plots, but to a lesser degree than the other traits.) Overall, Anglos rated Anglo speakers more favorably than Hispanic raters, whereas Hispanics rated Anglos somewhat lower than Anglos’ ratings of Anglos and rated Hispanic speakers somewhat higher than Anglos’ ratings of Hispanics. More simply, while both Anglos and Hispanics rated Anglo speakers higher on all five factors than

### Table 3
Multivariate and univariate results of 2 × 2 MANOVA predicting ratings of speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Univariate F</th>
<th>Multivariate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td>A = 0.365, F(7, 181) = 45.044***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency</td>
<td>170.25***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
<td>240.506***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>62.687***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive characteristics</td>
<td>19.575***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative characteristics</td>
<td>19.610***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social distance</td>
<td>79.865***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>41.529***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td>A = 0.865, F(7, 181) = 4.042***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competency</td>
<td>1.382</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
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<td>Negative characteristics</td>
<td>1.991</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social distance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>1.567</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>A = 0.913, F(7, 181) = 2.473*</td>
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<td>Competency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
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<td>Attractiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative characteristics</td>
<td>5.192*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social distance</td>
<td>12.550***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>7.858**</td>
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* \( p < 0.05. 
*** \( p < 0.001. 
** \( p < 0.01. 

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Hispanic speakers, there is less difference between Hispanics’ ratings of Anglo and Hispanic speakers than Anglos’ ratings of Anglo and Hispanic speakers. Thus, Anglo raters perceive a greater difference between Anglos and Hispanics regarding Competence, Dynamism, Negative Characteristics, Social Distance, and Respect. Interestingly, this attenuation of intergroup differentials by an ethnic minority group has been reported previously on studies of in- and out-group vitality (Giles et al., 1985; see also, Harwood et al., 1994). Nonetheless, the present analyses also suggest that adolescents tend to provide the same pattern of ratings of Anglo and Hispanic speakers across the different trait dimensions.

Because a similar pattern was found for all the traits in addition to the bivariate correlations among the seven traits being high (see Table 2, again, for the correlations.), the seven factors were thus combined into overall scores for Anglo and Hispanic Speakers, and a $2 \times 2$ MANOVA was conducted with speaker ethnicity as a within-subjects factor and rater ethnicity as a between-subjects factor. As expected, similar results were found. Speaker ethnicity was significant (Wilks Lambda = 0.642, $F(1,188) = 120.654, p < 0.001$). Additionally, the interaction was also significant (Wilks Lambda = 0.951, $F(1,188) = 9.660, p = 0.002$). However, rater ethnicity did not emerge as a significant predictor of trait ratings ($F(1,188) = 0.798, p = 0.373$) in this overall analysis. Again, the profile plot of the estimated means (see Fig. 1) shows that the difference between how Anglos rate Anglo and Hispanic

Fig. 1. Profile plot of overall trait rating estimated means.
speakers is greater than the difference between how Hispanics rate Anglo and Hispanic speakers.

Multivariate regressions were conducted to evaluate the impact of participants’ linguistic landscape on their ratings of Anglo and Hispanic speakers. Linguistic landscape, rater ethnicity, and their interaction were used as predictors of the trait ratings. Separate regressions were conducted for Anglo and Hispanic speakers using the overall rating across the seven trait factors (see Table 4 for regression results.) The regression predicting ratings of Hispanic speakers show that none of the predictors were significantly associated with the ratings. However, the regression predicting ratings of Anglo speakers reveals that linguistic landscape and rater ethnicity interact to predict speaker ratings ($\beta = -0.857, t = -2.247, p = .026$). Analysis of the computed predicted values showed that Anglos rated speakers the same regardless of their perceptions of the linguistic landscape. In contrast, the more Hispanics considered their linguistic landscape to be in Spanish, the lower they rated Anglos’ traits, whereas the less Hispanics perceived their linguistic landscape to be in Spanish, the higher they rated Anglos’ traits. In other words, Hispanics who experience more English in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools tend to rate Anglos higher than Hispanics who experience more Spanish in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools. (See Fig. 2 for a visual depiction of this relationship.)

The above findings are intriguing for a number of reasons. First, across virtually all judgmental dimensions (even including attractiveness or solidarity), Anglo speakers were upgraded relative to Hispanic-accented speakers, albeit this effect was attenuated for Hispanic raters. Such a homogenous language attitudes profile has not been found frequently in the literature (see Ryan et al., 1984) and may also suggest that Hispanic adolescents may well have internalized, at least to some degree, mainstream views of their group. Indeed, the previously highlighted and recent demographic surge of representation of Hispanics in society (and the social meanings attending this), together with their less than optimal educational attainment, might be responsible for this evaluative profile. Clearly, more work of this ilk needs to be accomplished in different urban and regional settings in the United States – and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall ratings of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic speakers</td>
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<td>-0.368</td>
<td>-0.964</td>
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*p < 0.05.
longitudinally so while monitoring, potentially causal, changes along different dimensions of objective and subjective ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, 2001; Giles et al., 1977; see also, Kraemer and Olschtain, 1990) that might emerge in tandem. Besides taking into account rater and speaker ages as well as respondents’ levels of ethnic identification and bilingualism, genders of rater and speaker clearly need to be examined in future as there appears interesting trends from our data (see also, Lambert, 1967).

Second, we have substantiated that the perceived linguistic landscape is an important variable in language attitudes research. Interestingly, and given previous data mentioned on other social and linguistic outcomes (Barker and Giles, 2002; Landry and Bourhis, 1997), the linguistic landscape was not associated with Anglos’ evaluations. It did, however, have a significant relationship with Hispanics’ ratings where the more Spanish the socio-ecological climate, the less positive attitudes towards Anglo-accented speakers were manifest among the group. Moreover, those Hispanics who had a linguistic landscape that favored English rated Anglo-accented speakers more positively. Having one’s language maintained through these visual as well as vocal institutional parameters clearly has an impact upon favoring one accented speaker over another, and possibly an effect on ingroup language maintenance as well. In future work, it would be interesting to locate communities where
the linguistic landscape is even more Spanish in its character. Indeed, we call for more work incorporating this variable into work of this genre and obviously the nature of and changes in the landscape need to be monitored longitudinally as well. Our work also suggests – in contrast to the findings of Landry and Bourhis (1997) – that the net of issues underlying the construct should be quite broad. In other words, media and language variables were found to be integrated into the perceived Californian landscape whereas they were that much more independent of it in Canada.

In conclusion, we hope to have given studies of speaker evaluations in Anglo-Hispanic contexts an important empirical fillip. We also urge the further development of theories of language attitudes to take on board the construct of linguistic landscape (for an overview, see Cargile and Bradac, 2001; Giles and Billings, in press). Finally, studies of how the latter impact not only intergroup impression formation in other intergroup settings (e.g., interability, and gay-heterosexual), but also the nature of intercultural accommodation between Hispanics and Anglos (as well as other ethnic groups), could also be profitably undertaken.

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References


