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Research Statement

As an applied linguist with interests in sociolinguistics, and specifically languages in contact, I investigate Spanish speakers' attitudes towards Spanish in the U.S. My current research concentrates on Spanish-speaking immigrants' attitudes towards Spanish in the state of Indiana. Relying on data from 100 participants, I investigate how background factors and experience with language prejudice influence their attitudes towards Spanish in the U.S., a country in which this language is the most widely spoken after English. My research also investigates how language attitudes are expressed in this underrepresented minority population's discourse.

Current Dissertation Research

Language attitudes (LAs) are social evaluations of a language and its speakers. These attitudes influence the maintenance of the language within families and communities. It also affects the language-related policy decisions made among communities, and the reactions that people have towards one another in local or global communities. Knowledge about a population's LAs benefits the fields of sociolinguistics, language variation, maintenance and shift, and language policies. It gives us insights about how speakers are perceived in their communities on the basis of their language, as well as how relations of power in a community may influence groups' attitudes towards their own language. A bilingual environment like the U.S. is particularly interesting for the study of LAs because languages in contact do not generally share the same status but rather are often classified hierarchically.

Among Spanish-speaking immigrants in the U.S., LAs have been investigated in different contexts, such as in states with large populations of Spanish speakers, and using different methodologies including survey questionnaires, interviews, and matched guise techniques. However, my research project, "Spanish-speaking immigrants in Indiana: Quantitative and qualitative analyses of their attitudes towards Spanish in the U.S." offers three main contributions to the field of LAs studies. Considering the lack of studies investigating Spanish speakers who live in communities with small numbers of Spanish speakers, research projects like mine that investigate this type of population's LAs provide critical insight into understanding the U.S. communities, the Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S., and the influence of LAs in our multilingual communities. As the number of Spanish speakers grows in the U.S., so does the number of communities with small percentages of Spanish speakers, therefore making my project particularly important.

Prior research has addressed various types of LAs, such as attitudes towards bilingualism or Spanish in the U.S. My dissertation investigates four components of LAs, specifically (a) Spanish in general, (b) Spanish in the U.S., (c) Spanish maintenance in the U.S., and (d) Spanish/English bilingualism, with the aim of determining the relationship among the different components.

A third main contribution is the use of a Discourse Analysis framework to complement quantitative methods of analysis. While the survey data provide an overarching summary of the participants' LAs, the Discourse Analysis provides an increasing understanding into why participants may have answered the survey in certain ways. Additionally, the tools of Discourse

Analysis have been shown to be effective in unveiling attitudes; people often do not express their attitudes in straightforward ways, but they do it through linguistic structures such as pronoun usage and discourse markers that indicate implied meanings about LAs.

The results of my project contribute information about an underrepresented population's attitudes towards their language in the U.S. Although my research has shown a trend of positive attitudes towards Spanish among Spanish-speaking immigrants in the U.S., I have also found that some participants surrender to the negative attitudes towards their first language and reproduce this lack of acceptance in discourse. They seem to believe that the language spoken outside of their home should be English, as most have had this idea reinforced multiple times by U.S.-born citizens. This shows a need for anti-discriminatory policies and educational practices.

Other Research Experiences

In addition to my current research, I have had the opportunity to develop research expertise related to language pedagogy, as evidenced by my first two publications about critical applied linguistics in the teaching of a second language, and the role of the teaching assistant in class. I have also developed research on second language acquisition through my MA thesis on the acquisition of null objects in Portuguese by English-speaking learners. Finally, I also have expertise in intercultural communicative competence development during study abroad programs, as demonstrated in my latest publication with Professor Lori Czerwionka and Tatiana Artamonova. These experiences have prepared me to collaborate as well as lead research on language learning and acquisition, in addition to sociolinguistic research.

Future Directions

I have prepared myself as a researcher by taking classes in quantitative and qualitative methods and various sociolinguistics courses, completing original research independently, and collaborating with others on second language research projects. For my dissertation I have identified important gaps in the field of LAs, and I am excited and fulfilled to have given voice to an underrepresented population. I have applied for several conferences where I will present results related to the individual research questions in my dissertation. I plan to publish my work, aiming for top-tier journals *Journal of Sociolinguistics* and *Discourse and Society*. In the future I will continue my research by analyzing the interview data to identify additional evidence of the participants' LAs. The next step in my research is to investigate the effect of generation on Spanish speakers' attitudes towards Spanish in the U.S. I will apply for grants to collect, transcribe and code data for this next step. I already have a history of collaboration, as evidenced in some of my publications, and I imagine myself cultivating collaborations with other faculty members interested in Spanish in the U.S. as well as engage with students driven to study the attitudes of this population.