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# Language Attitudes Toward Mexican Spanish-Accented And Standard Varieties Of English

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LANGUAGE ATTITUDES TOWARD MEXICAN SPANISH-ACCENTED AND  
STANDARD VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

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Michelle Aguilar

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## **Dedication**

This text is dedicated to my parents, Juan Antonio and Eva, who have always supported me with the most intense faith and generous love. They continuously remind me of my potential to work hard to thrive in my personal and academic endeavors.

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES TOWARD MEXICAN SPANISH-ACCENTED AND  
STANDARD VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

By

MICHELLE AGUILAR, B.S., B.A.

THESIS

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The unique demographics of El Paso, Texas show that it is a site with intense Mexican-American ethnolinguistic contact that creates a co-existence of different English and Spanish varieties. In El Paso, 80 percent of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino and 95 percent of that group reported being of Mexican ancestry (Statistical Atlas, 2015). As a result, Spanish is spoken by 68 percent of the population (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Yet, my experience living in this border city has shown me that there is some stigma attached to certain Hispanic-accented English varieties spoken in the region: Chicano English and Mexican Spanish-accented English. Although these two varieties arise because of English-Spanish contact, there are important differences between them. For instance, Chicano English is spoken by native English speakers who are either monolingual English speakers or English-Spanish bilinguals. Mexican Spanish-accented English, on the other hand, is spoken by bilingual individuals whose first language is Mexican Spanish and whose second language is English, perceived as non-native. The focus of this study will be placed on Mexican Spanish-accented English, but each of these varieties will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Given the strong presence of Hispanics in El Paso, it is intriguing that Mexican Spanish-accented English could be stigmatized in this region. As will be explained later, the stigma towards Mexican Spanish-accented English in El Paso is very important to analyze because it is related to ethnic discrimination and can be an obstacle to professional development. Because of this, I decided to investigate in more detail the social factors that affect the linguistic attitudes toward *Mexican Spanish-accented English* within the context of the border city of El Paso, Texas.

*Language attitudes* can be defined as the opinions, ideas, and prejudices that both listeners and speakers have toward a language or language variety (Lippi-Green, 2012). Language attitudes can also be “understood as individuals’ predisposition to react favorably or unfavorably towards certain linguistic varieties” (Rangel et al., 2015, p. 182). A *language variety* can be defined as a variation of a particular language and identified by particular linguistic features which could include elements of phonology, morpho-syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Schane, 1973).

While several sociolinguistic studies have recorded language attitudes toward *standard* and *nonstandard* language varieties (i.e., *standard* and more prestigious language varieties, and *nonstandard* and less socially prestigious language varieties), merely recording observed sociolinguistic perspectives is insufficient; there is still a need for investigating variables and consequences of linguistic discrimination in more detail (De La Zerda Flores & Hopper, 1975; Mendoza-Denton, 1999; Rangel et al., 2009). Linguistic discrimination can arise from the subjective perception of certain language variants or speakers as inferior. Linguistic perception is believed to stem from a diverse set of factors including: ethnicity; language use; context of language use; ethnic solidarity; social status; and socioeconomic, political, and geographical situation of the region of study. (These factors will be discussed in more detail in sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.) Therefore, a detailed and multidimensional analysis is essential when studying language attitudes.

In their study of language attitudes along the U.S.-Mexico border, Rangel et al. (2015) argued that constant social and linguistic changes create a need for continuous research, and further noted:

In every speech community, individuals attempt to rationalize linguistic variation by making connections between linguistic forms and the qualities of the speakers who use them. [...] In the US-Mexico border context, it is important to note that these attitudes may vary significantly... Variation in

language and in attitudes in the US-Mexico border indicate ongoing dynamic sociolinguistic changes and...does not always represent a single and common identity or linguistic attitude, but rather several in constant change. (Rangel et al., 2015, p. 195)

Historically, there has been a constant influx of Hispanic/Latino immigrants to the United States (Gonzales, 1999; Heyman, 2017) and, approximately, 18 percent of the country's population is composed of Hispanics/Latinos with 63 percent of this group being of Mexican origin (United States Census Bureau, 2017). At the same time, there have been historic accounts of linguistic and ethnic discrimination of these minorities in the United States (Heyman, 2017; Lippi-Green, 2012).

Anzaldúa (1987), who identified as Chicana herself, recognized the value of cultural and linguistic hybridity in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and claimed her right to this hybridity, stating that, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself...I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white." (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 81). Nonetheless, Anzaldúa stated that, although recognition attained from the social movements of the 1960s helped Mexican Americans gain ethnic pride, the repression of Hispanic languages and struggles understanding the Mexican American identity persisted. With respect to this idea, Anzaldúa noted, "In childhood we are told that our language is wrong. Repeated attacks on our native tongue diminish our sense of self. The attacks continue throughout our lives (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 80). The author continued describing the identity conundrums that Mexican Americans have experienced by stating that:

*"Nosotros los Chicanos straddle the borderlands. On one side of us, we are constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side we hear the Anglos' incessant clamoring so that we forget our language. Among ourselves don't say *nosotros los americanos*, *o nosotros los españoles*, *o nosotros los hispanos*. We say *nosotros los mexicanos* (by *mexicanos* we do not mean citizens of Mexico; we do not mean a national identity, but a racial one). We distinguish between *mexicanos del otro lado* and *mexicanos de este lado*." (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 84)*

The repression of Hispanic languages was directly associated with the subjugation of the social groups that the language pertained to as well as with the persistent sociolinguistic discrimination against Hispanic minorities. Because of the pervasive racism against these minorities, Anzaldúa (1987:85) stated “...the struggle of identities continues, the struggle of borders is our reality still”.

There is a series of underlying sociocultural tensions which cause what Lapeyrouse et al. (2012) described as, “the heterogeneity of border Hispanics” (Lapeyrouse et al., 2012, p. 1). Considering the intricacy of border environments, this study focuses on El Paso, Texas, as a case study. Since the U.S.-Mexico borderland, where El Paso is located, has a remarkably large percentage of Hispanic inhabitants and is comprised of speakers of diverse English and Spanish language varieties, it exemplifies a socially and linguistically unique region in the United States.

Rangel et al. (2015) recognized that ethnolinguistic interactions along the U.S.-Mexico border shape language attitudes and are a representation of several identities in constant change. In addition, scholars who have studied language attitudes toward English and its varieties in El Paso (Hidalgo, 1986; Velasquez, 2009), a border city in constant social change, have concluded that the nonstandard variety of English (i.e., *Mexican Spanish-accented English*) is typically rated lower than the standard variety with respect to the speaker’s personal characteristics. In more recent reports, there have been accounts of sociolinguistic discrimination in professional media such as news broadcasting. Recently, a Hispanic El Paso journalist was criticized for using the Spanish pronunciation of *El Paso* in news reports (Cataño, 2018). This key example shows how prevalent language discrimination is and underlines the importance of conducting research, not only to create an awareness of the linguistic and social judgements to which some El Paso inhabitants are subjected to, but also to help identify the complex set of factors that initiate these

negative attitudes. While social scientists have written a considerable body of literature on the study of border issues and their complexity (Hidalgo, 1986; Anzaldúa, 1987; Velazquez, 2009; Heyman, 2017), more detailed sociolinguistic evaluations of the attitudes that El Paso residents have towards the region's *standard* and *nonstandard* language varieties are necessary to more closely examine the social implications of these linguistic perceptions.

The present study uses a sociolinguistic approach to examine the reciprocal relationship between an individual's processing of linguistic information and their social perception. For this purpose, a set of English speakers of two different language varieties (*Standard English* and *Mexican Spanish-accented English*) were evaluated by monolingual English speakers and English-Spanish bilinguals, all residents of El Paso, Texas. *Standard American English* is the language variety considered to be *prescribed* by the socially dominant majority in the United States (Lippi-Green, 2012; Milroy & Milroy, 2012) and used in the media, by news anchors, for instance. Here, this variety will be referred to simply as *Standard English* (SE), (referring to *Standard American English* as opposed to *Standard British English* or *Standard Australian English*).

There is a perplexity and variation among scholars on the meanings of the *Hispanic-accented* and *Mexican Spanish-accented English* terminology. In this thesis, I prefer to use the term *Mexican Spanish-accented English*, because the term *Hispanic-accented English* is overarching. *Hispanic* is a term widely used in the United States to refer to different Spanish-speaking peoples and their cultures<sup>1</sup>. Galindo (1995) stated that *Hispanic-accented English* is attributed to Spanish (of any variety) influence on English at the phonological level. Because

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<sup>1</sup> Mora (2014) noted that governing officials group people who identify as Latin American (mainly Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans) into the 'Hispanic' ethnic category despite the great political and geographical differences between the sub-groups. In this thesis, the terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably apropos U.S. demographics, unless defined otherwise.

multiple linguistic factors (e.g., semantic, grammatical, syntactical, morphological, and lexical) as well as extralinguistic factors (e.g., ethnicity, language use, etc.) can influence linguistic attitudes toward different dialects (Giles 1970; Schane, 1973; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010), as well as degree of accentedness (Brennan and Brennan, 1981; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010), I prefer to focus on the variety that results from the contact between Mexican Spanish and English, (i.e., Mexican Spanish-accented English). Therefore, the Mexican Spanish-accented English variety chosen as the focus of my investigation is that of a bilingual speaker whose first language (L1) is Mexican Spanish and whose second language (L2), English, is perceived as non-native (see section 2.2).

Considering the current social and political climate in the United States, especially with respect to social conflicts arising from U.S.-Mexico border interactions with regard to immigration, it is essential to investigate present-day attitudes toward *Mexican Spanish-accented English* vs. *Standard English*, two varieties in constant contact along the U.S.-Mexico border. The present sociolinguistic investigation in El Paso can help identify the social implications of current language attitudes of not only individuals comprising the southwest United States and its borders, but also of the country as a whole. To create a framework for this investigation, the following research questions (RQs) were asked:

1. Is Mexican Spanish-accented English regarded positively or negatively among (native and non-native) English speakers in El Paso?
2. If Mexican Spanish-accented bilinguals experience social stigmatization or prejudice, what social characteristics are attributed to Mexican Spanish-accented English (versus those attributed to a standard English variety)?
3. What are the social characteristics of the individuals who perceive Mexican

Spanish-accented English positively or negatively?

4. If Mexican Spanish-accented bilinguals experience social stigmatization or prejudice, what is the impact on the professional opportunities for them?

Discussion of the main issues associated with the linguistic discrimination of *nonstandard language varieties* is necessary to help better address societal issues such as the serious adversities faced by linguistic minorities at the personal and professional levels. The findings of this study can be used as a basis for developing contemporary social and educational interventions advocating for linguistic equality.

The second chapter of this thesis, *Literature Review*, discusses the existing scholarship relevant to the historic sociopolitical relationship between the United States and Mexico, language attitudes toward nonstandard and standard varieties of English, attitudes toward English and Spanish varieties, and attitudes specifically along the U.S.-Mexico border. The third chapter, *Method*, introduces the survey and analysis procedures used in this investigation. This chapter discusses the variables and factors analyzed in the study, and describes the stimuli, participants used, experimental design, and statistical analysis. The fourth chapter, *Results*, reviews the investigation's principal findings, presenting the results of quantitative analyses—cross-tabulation and Chi-square analyses—as well as a qualitative analysis. The fifth chapter, *Discussion*, interprets all findings in light of previous research, discusses the study's limitations, and proposes ideas for future research. The final section, *Conclusion*, provides a summary of the study, focusing on the key findings of the present research and their implications for the field of sociolinguistics and border studies.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 The U.S.-Mexico Border**

Understanding language attitudes in El Paso requires some consideration of the historical context related to the shifting of political borders, the displacement of local Mexican communities, and their subsequent loss of lands, rights, language, and social identity.

The Spanish language was first brought to what is now the United States long before the English language was established here. It was brought through Spanish occupation which commenced in these lands at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the dominion encompassed territories now recognized as Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming (Hualde et al., 2009). The actual viceroy of *Nueva España* began after this period, when Spain officially colonized what is now the southwest United States. The southwest territory later changed hands and became Mexican territory once Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821 (Hualde et al., 2009). Before then, the majority of what is now northern Mexico, mostly north of the Rio Grande, was sparsely populated by Mexican government officials, settlers, merchants, and some U.S. hunters. After Mexico obtained its independence, the territory became more densely populated. In 1846, war emerged between Mexico and the United States because of the U.S. seizure of Texas and its push for westward expansion (Library of Congress, 2018). In 1848, Mexico and the United States signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, and in 1854, the countries signed a land deal known as the Gadsden

Purchase (Library of Congress, 2018). Thus, through political, economic, military, and territorial imposition, the United States took ownership of southwest territory and the Mexican citizens living in those territories became U.S. residents, and were relegated to a subordinate status (Sánchez, 1983). It is known then, that, “The first Mexicans to become part of the United States never crossed any border. Instead, the border crossed them.” (Library of Congress, 2018, p. 2). The Mexican people living on the border at the time of the Treaty of Guadalupe had to decide which side to live on. Those choosing to stay in the U.S. were offered full citizenship rights to their land, language, and culture (Baca, 1998).

The legal ownership of the southwest property then gave U.S. governing officials the authority to impose their laws, culture, and of course, language on the Mexican citizens living on the newly acquired land. While the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo guaranteed civil rights to Mexican people living in the southwest territory, there were no provisions implemented with respect to the protection or use of the Spanish language for these new U.S. citizens. Consequently, English, the language of the socially dominant majority, propagated and dominated the regions of the United States which were once solely Spanish-speaking (Hualde et al., 2009). The language contact between Spanish and English at the time created one of the earliest conflicts in the United States with respect to sociolinguistic differentiation (Hualde et al., 2009), with English as the language with high status and Spanish as the language with lower status. This unequal linguistic situation led to a hostile treatment of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants who experienced language deprivation and marginalization in the United States.

Regardless of the adverse environment (Library of Congress, 2018), Mexican immigration continued to flow north of the *Rio Grande*, especially after the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, towards those states along the U.S.-Mexico border. It was noted that, “El Paso, Texas, served

as the Mexican Ellis Island--a gateway to a different life for Mexican immigrants and a powerful symbol of change and survival for their children and grandchildren.” (Library of Congress, 2018, p. 4). This flow of immigrants through the U.S.-Mexico border has contributed to a linguistic, cultural, and social renewal of language, food, culture, and other forms of cultural expressions that help re-energize and renew Mexican culture in this region.

The United States saw the influx of Mexican immigrants, (especially of those immigrants who were living in the country undocumented) as an opportunity to solicit cheap labor to help facilitate economic expansion (Gonzales, 1999; Heyman, 2017; Sánchez, 1983). However, resentment toward immigrant workers developed during the Great Depression, as the United States suffered major employment losses and economic hardships. The U.S. government then developed a repatriation program in which Mexican citizens were deported by force or offered free train rides to Mexico if they chose to repatriate voluntarily (Library of Congress, 2018). Towards the end of the Depression in the 1930s, many immigrant farmworkers who chose to remain in the country found refuge and even a sense of community in migrant work camps established by U.S. Farm Security Administration (Library of Congress, 2018). Other immigrants who remained in the United States found stability through the mining, ranching, and railroad industry, an industry which also gave them physical mobility. This provided the opportunity for Mexican Americans to experience urban life in other parts of the U.S., which, in turn, led to new social tensions since other, more established, ethnic groups reacted negatively toward the growth of Mexican American communities in cities (Library of Congress, 2018). Social and political turmoil continued through the years.

In 1942, at the start of World War II, American workers became scarce and the U.S. and Mexico created the *Bracero* program which solicited Mexican citizens to work in the United States

for low wages and under harsh conditions (Library of Congress, 2018). Ironically, after this period, another governmental program was put into place to enforce the deportation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans alike. These sociopolitical injustices along with the lack of recognition of Mexican Americans and their labor led to several social rights movements throughout the years after the second World War, the most significant one being recognized as the United Farm Workers Union movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Considering the conflicting historical relationship between Mexico and the United States, Sanchez (1983) asserted that the chronological disparities that Mexico-U.S. interactions encountered created the precedent for the continuous sociopolitical and sociocultural disparities between the two countries, which are present still today. With respect to current sociocultural disparities, Acuña (1972) emphasized that, despite the conjecture (or “myths”) that westward expansion liberated people of Mexican descent, this colonization of southwest territory and its inhabitants should be considered the beginning of the perpetual oppression and degradation of these people. He added that, “The tragedy is that the myths have degraded the Mexican people—not only in the eyes of those who feel superior, but also in their own eyes.” (Acuña, 1972, p. 1).

The apparent modern disparities within multinational/multicultural U.S.-Mexico border environments have also been described as a result of “uneven and combined development” (Smith, 1984). The uneven political, social, and economic development of the twin cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez is evident today while crossing the international bridge that connects them. While the U.S. side of the bridge appears to be constructed with quality material, is well-kept, and with no people wandering about, the Mexican side of the bridge seems older, dilapidated, and filled with drifters and people selling street food and cheap merchandize. Heyman (2017) stated that the

current socioeconomic and sociopolitical asymmetry between the United States and Mexico is rooted in the ways in which the United States has exploited people of Mexican origin for cheap and often expendable labor, as well as in an uneven flow of capital, and inequality of social benefits, political, and legal systems. Heyman (2017) also stated that the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border region's imbalanced relationships are complex because of the simultaneous process of weakening interactions through bordering (i.e., the legal separation of the U.S. and Mexico) and strengthening them through debordering (i.e., creating connections through trade and migration routes, ports of entry, and the flow of capital and commodities).

El Paso has been recognized as the oldest and largest city on the U.S.-Mexico border as well as one of the oldest sites of Spanish-English contact in the United States (Velázquez, 2009). As stated in the introduction, due to the constant influx of Mexican immigrants into U.S. territories along the border, there is a high percentage of Hispanic population in the city of El Paso (80 percent) (Statistical Atlas, 2015), which shares a border with Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. This border region is known to have diverse sociocultural tensions, rooted in the historical precedents previously mentioned. For instance, when border policies which reject mass immigration and support militarized policing at the border are implemented (Heyman, 2017), sociopolitical tensions inevitably arise. Consequently, debates over the disparity of social values (e.g., diverse discourse over policy vs. social justice/ethics) on the border between Ciudad Juárez and El Paso arise and lead to imbalance within the border communities themselves.

While sociopolitical differences create an ambivalence in this border region, sociolinguistic differences do so, as well. A prime example of a sociolinguistic distinction made in El Paso is that of its two most prominent varieties of Hispanic-accented English: *Chicano*

*English* and *Mexican Spanish-accented English*. With the presence of two nonstandard language sub-varieties, along with a complexity of sociocultural interactions in border communities, there arise particular questions with respect to personal identity. In view of this issue of identity, Sánchez (1983) describes people in the United States who encompass the “Mexican origin population” as, “...descendants of...Third World immigrants” who have “never completely assimilated” (Sánchez, 1983, p. 4). Additionally, Sánchez notes that:

The Mexican-origin population is essentially a bilingual national minority for whom Spanish continues to be either the first or second language. Although a segment of the Chicano population has ceased to function in Spanish, the majority retain the same degree of passive or active competence in the language. (Sánchez, 1983, p. 32)

This quote shows how Sánchez (1983) refers to people of Mexican origin in the United States as a distinct sociocultural and sociolinguistic group, since they are considered neither exclusively Mexican nor American. Thus, the sociocultural identity of people of Mexican origin living in the United States is oftentimes ambiguous because within the group, there are Chicanos who are either English-dominant or do not even speak the Spanish language, and Mexican immigrants who have not fully assimilated to the American culture. This detail is important to note when comparing Chicanos and Mexican immigrants in the United States because, despite the fact that both fall under the same category, (i.e., people of Mexican origin), the varieties of English they use entail distinct social implications. Though Chicano English speakers are prevalent in the U.S.-Mexico border region (Anzaldúa, 1987; Sanchez, 1997), the Hispanic-accented English variety chosen to constitute the focus of my investigation is *Mexican Spanish-accented English*, which is that of a foreign-born bilingual speaker whose first language (L1) is Mexican Spanish

and whose second language (L2) is English. The variety of English spoken by these bilinguals is often perceived as non-native (generally acquired after the age of primary language acquisition).

It seems that the various perceptions of Mexican Spanish-accented English in the United States are significant reflections of the sociocultural nuances along the U.S.-Mexico border and are therefore important to consider in language attitude analysis. So, studying language attitudes in U.S.-Mexico border regions, especially in a border metropolis such as El Paso, is of great importance. As aforesaid, the distinctiveness of the region's geographical, political, economic, cultural, and linguistic conditions creates a complex social situation altogether.

## **2.2 Linguistic Perception**

Before analyzing studies on the discrimination of nonstandard language varieties such as Mexican Spanish-accented English, one must first have a well-defined understanding of how language is perceived both linguistically and extralinguistically.

Psycholinguists have noted that listeners take dialogue heard as input while simultaneously taking-in linguistic and extralinguistic information to formulate the most probable meaning of the linguistic signal being processed (Kess, 1992). For instance, a listener's perception of (i.e., attitude toward) a language variety could be influenced by extralinguistic factors such as: regional background, experience with exposure to different native/non-native accents and dialects, or even gender (Chappell, 2016), to name a few. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that there is a bidirectional relationship between linguistic and social information, in the sense that, "...linguistic information conditions social perception, and social information conditions linguistic perception" (Chappell, 2016, p. 357).

With respect to discerning speech as non-native (i.e., “foreign”), many questions arise in an attempt to understand which linguistic features explicitly prompt classification. Flege (1981) established that differences in pronunciation of a language are those most recognized when comparing native and non-native speech. That is, an individual’s perception of language as non-native is most notably stimulated by the recognition of established phonological representations of sounds in a target language (e.g., a second acquired language) that are identical to phonological features of the speaker’s native language sounds (Flege, 1981). However, it should be noted that perception of accented speech can also occur at other linguistic levels including: semantic, grammatical, syntactical, morphological, and lexical (Giles, 1970). These levels can also carry linguistic significance and help to identify a particular language variety. In my study, however, these levels will not be analyzed. Instead, the focus will be on the phonetic/phonological aspects of speech.

The following section elaborates on the notion of socially-conditioned language attitudes, specifically linguistic discrimination, and some of its societal implications.

### **2.3 Linguistic Discrimination in Society**

Because linguistic variables are known to carry social meaning, the goal of many sociolinguists is to examine the social reactions to linguistic variables. It is presumed that when linguistic cues reveal social information about a speaker, a listener’s social perspectives are reflected in the reaction to them. For example, if a speaker’s perceived language categorizes her/him as part of a speech community associated with a marginalized social/cultural group, socially-constructed stereotypes will be considered in the listener’s assessment of the speaker.

Lippi-Green (2012) stated that social ideologies shape language attitudes and consequently induce language discrimination. Linguistic anthropologists also suggest that certain social tensions

(e.g., social discrimination conveyed through language attitudes/discrimination) stem from *language ideologies*, which are defined as, “ideologies that people have about the superiority of one dialect or language and the inferiority of others” (Welsch & Vivanco, 2015). It is plausible that language ideologies themselves are caused by social differences which imply a sort of power regime or social hierarchization comprised of complex sociocultural and geopolitical situations (Heyman, 2017; Velasco Ortiz and Contreras, 2011).

Societal differences are, in fact, known to lead to the establishment of standard/nonstandard varieties (Lippi-Green 2012). Naturally, a standard variety is the one used by the higher and more powerful groups in the social ladder and all other varieties are regarded as nonstandard. As Milroy & Milroy (2012) recognized, a standard language variety is imposed by the socially dominant majority and is perceived as the variety with the highest *status* or *prestige*. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the term *prestige* describes the level of respect associated with a language variety or speech community.

With respect to my study, it is important to grasp the notion of linguistic discrimination derived from particular social dynamics because it helps to explain the distinctions created between standard (prestigious) and nonstandard (non-prestigious) language varieties. Most importantly, understanding this notion helps to comprehend precisely how prestige in language is reflected in language use and language attitudes. The notion of *prestige* will be further discussed in section 2.8 below.

The following section briefly discusses the repercussions of sociolinguistic discrimination in modern social contexts.

## 2.4 Repercussions of Linguistic Discrimination in Contemporary Society

In a recent analysis of whether/how sociolinguistic cues affected the success of job applicants, Cocchiara et al. (2014) noted that in the United States, a nonstandard accent or dialect did, in fact, affect employment decisions. The study also found that “race-recognizable dialects” were the most negatively affected and stereotyped, showing that the negative perception of a nonstandard dialect was directly linked to the preconceived notions of ethnic minorities associated with a language variety (Cocchiara et al., 2014). As a result of this, the authors noted that individuals responsible for hiring decisions cautiously masked their rejection of particular job candidates based on racial bias by using viable non-race related reasons to justify their decision (Cocchiara et al., 2014). The findings of this study are important to consider because they provide an actual and contemporary example of linguistic discrimination that affects people’s professional development and, consequently, their chances to progress in society.

In the scope of my particular area of focus, it has been reported (Valles, 2011; Cataño, 2018) that Mexican Spanish-accented professionals have been openly criticized and linguistically discriminated against in modern society, particularly in professional media settings such as news broadcasting. For instance, news reporter Michelle Valles provided a testimonial of how her use of two Spanish words (*hasta mañana*), at the end of her regularly-presented news segment, caused an influx of negative comments from her viewers (Valles, 2011). Valles said that while some audiences reacted positively and supported her use of Spanish on-air, other viewers reacted negatively, sending hate mail and making comments such as, “I expect my news in English” and “Go back to Mexico!” (Valles, 2011). Most recently, a journalist in El Paso was similarly criticized for using the Spanish pronunciation of *El Paso* in her reports. Surprisingly, in these two cases, the

journalists were criticized for speaking in Spanish and for using a Spanish accent to pronounce words of Spanish origin in Texas, a state with a large representation of Hispanics/Latinos (about 39 percent) (United States Census bureau, 2017). These examples are important to recognize because they show proof of explicit ethnolinguistic discrimination in a society that is Hispanic in its majority.

The following section describes the two main methods of data collection used in sociolinguistic research to more accurately reflect people's linguistic attitudes.

## **2.5 Implicit and Explicit Language Attitudes**

When conducting sociolinguistic investigations, there are typically two main types of studies used: those which elicit explicit language attitudes and those which elicit implicit ones. With respect to the former, researchers analyze the language attitudes of individuals that provide their overt perceptions of a language or language variety. Social scientists and linguists in turn use the explicit factors conveyed by individuals as justification for their attitudes. On the other hand, social psychologists have argued that, despite the freedom to respond openly in self-reported studies, people are not always completely honest when giving their opinions about certain social topics, especially when these topics are controversial or sensitive (Greenwald, 1992; Karpinski and Steinman, 2006). Because of this reasoning, sociolinguistic investigations often elicit implicit language attitudes. These types of studies typically use multivariate analyses to find correlations between the evaluator's characteristics (both linguistic and extralinguistic) and attitudinal responses that help identify significant language attitude factors which were not explicitly provided by the evaluator. Studies have found that both implicit and explicit language attitude studies have the potential to provide significant sociolinguistic and social-ideological information

(McKenzie & Carrie, 2018). Using a combination of explicit and implicit attitudinal research is beneficial for understanding the complex and multidimensional influences behind linguistic perception, specifically language attitudes. Because of these advantages, my study is designed to elicit both implicit and explicit language attitudes.

The following section provides a detailed discussion of the most relevant studies that elicited implicit language attitudes toward standard and nonstandard varieties.

## **2.6 Pioneering Research on Language Attitudes Toward Nonstandard Varieties**

Most of the studies synthesized in this literature review used a *guise* method for recording language attitudes. The method has been replicated or adapted from the *matched guise* test, which Lambert et al. (1960) pioneered in a study conducted in Montréal in 1960. In the study, English and French bilinguals were asked to evaluate French and English speakers based on specific social characteristics which were: height, good looks, leadership, sense of humor, intelligence, religiousness, self-confidence, dependability, entertainingness, kindness, ambition, sociability, character, and likability (Lambert et al., 1960). The characteristic rankings ranged from “very little” to “very much”. The matched guise presented the evaluators with ten recordings from six speakers; four *matched* bilinguals who were recorded in both English and French and two filler participants. The evaluators, however, were not aware that they were listening to the same speaker in both French and English and therefore assumed to be evaluating ten different speakers. The results of this study showed that with respect to characteristics that Lambert et al. (1960) associated with *status*, native English speakers rated English speakers more favorably and surprisingly, native French speakers also rated English speakers more favorably. In addition, results showed that French-speaking evaluators gave even less favorable ratings to French speakers than English-speaking evaluators apropos *leadership*, *intelligence*, and *self-confidence*.

With respect to these unexpected findings, Lambert et al. (1960) discussed how in Montréal, at least at the time when the study was conducted, French speakers seemed to regard themselves as members of an inferior group, deducing that, "...minority groups sometimes adopt the stereotyped values of majority groups" (Lambert et al., 1960, p. 49). It should be noted that even in more recent studies on language attitudes in Canada, researchers (Allard et al., 2015) determine that French Canadians, who are still the linguistic minority in the country, perceive themselves as social minorities. Lambert et al.'s (1960) study was ground breaking because it not only created the first *guise* technique, but it also established the predominant framework for future sociolinguistic studies. In addition, Lambert et al.'s (1960) investigation of language attitudes was the first to establish the use of a multidimensional analysis in an attempt to identify how sociolinguistic variables function independently as well as dependently to influence language perception. This study highlighted the importance of expanding the understanding of sociolinguistic attitudes and their societal implications.

In the succeeding sections, I discuss studies of attitudes specifically towards Spanish, English, and their accented varieties. Since the focus of the following investigations is on two particular language varieties, *Standard English* and *Mexican Spanish-accented English*, the first two of the following subsections provide a concise description of each variety, respectively.

## **2.7 Varieties of Hispanic-Accented English in El Paso**

The two main sub-varieties of Hispanic-accented English found in El Paso, Texas are *Chicano English* (henceforth ChE) and *Mexican Spanish-accented English*. The former is spoken by U.S. Latinos, more specifically, by U.S. *Chicanos*, identified as U.S.-born English monolinguals or Spanish-English bilinguals (Sánchez, 1983; Mendoza-Denton, 1999). A *Chicano*

is also defined as a person who self-identifies as Mexican-American, (i.e., as an American of Mexican heritage (Anzaldúa, 1987; Mendoza-Denton, 1999), or, as Sánchez (1983) put it, as the Mexican-origin population within the United States. Previous linguistic investigations noted that ChE has been viewed as the result of “the imperfect acquisition of English as a second language at the phonological level” (Fishman et al., 1971; Baugh, 1984; Torres, 1991) since it carries certain phonetic features of Spanish, and it is considered to be an “interlanguage” (Mendoza-Denton, 1999, p. 377). An *interlanguage* is considered to be a separate linguistic system that can contain features of both a speaker’s native language and target language (Tarone, 2006). However, Mendoza-Denton (1999) does not refer to ChE as an ‘interlanguage’ or “an imperfect acquisition of English” but, instead, focuses on the idea that the English spoken by Chicanos simply has Spanish linguistic features, typically as result of regular language contact with Spanish, since, as aforementioned, ChE can also be spoken by monolingual English speakers.

Mexican Spanish-accented English, on the other hand, is spoken by non-native speakers of English who are first-generation immigrants (Flege, 1981; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010) from Mexico. Though ChE speakers are prevalent in the U.S.-Mexico border region (Anzaldúa, 1987), Mexicans who speak English as a second language are also prevalent in El Paso. In fact, foreign-born and immigrant populations constitute 26 percent of the El Paso population (World Population Overview, 2018), and 90 percent of those populations are from Latin America, predominantly from Mexico (Valdez, 2015). Since a large percentage of the El Paso population is made up of Mexican immigrants who speak this variety of Mexican Spanish accented-English that, as stated earlier, is downgraded and discriminated against, it is important to investigate and understand in detail social aspects associated with the linguistic discrimination of the particular linguistic minorities who

speak it. The following section discusses previous studies which investigated attitudes specifically toward the Hispanic-accented English spoken by Mexican Americans within the United States.

## **2.8 Attitudes Toward Mexican Spanish-Accented English: Status and Solidarity**

Previous sociolinguistic research (Lambert et al., 1960; Labov, 1966, 1972) postulated that speakers of nonstandard English varieties are socially stigmatized because of societal assumptions and prejudice toward the particular cultural group that speaks the language variety. Mendoza-Denton (1999) added that historical, socioeconomic, and demographic conditions as well as the degree of contact with other ethnic and linguistic groups are some of the factors most considered when investigating language attitudes.

A significant study that looked at the attitudes and prejudices against Hispanic-accented English spoken by Mexican Americans was one conducted by Brennan and Brennan (1981). The authors used a scale to rank social factors similar to those used in Lambert et al.'s (1960) guise in an attempt to assess implicit language attitudes. The researchers had participants evaluate a variety of recordings which consisted of what they referred to as, 'Mexican American-accented speech' (i.e., Mexican Spanish-accented English) with varied levels of accentedness. The speakers were Mexican-American bilinguals who spoke English as a second language, with Spanish as their native language. For rating, listeners, who consisted of two ethnic groups, Mexican American and Anglo, were asked to rank listed adjectives provided for each speaker. The characteristics symbolizing *status* and *solidarity* were grouped into two categories. The *status-stressing* adjectives consisted of: wealthy-poor, educated-uneducated, intelligent-unintelligent, successful-unsuccessful. The adjectives selected to indicate *solidarity* were: trustworthy-untrustworthy, friendly-unfriendly, good-bad, and kind-cruel (Brennan and Brennan, 1981).

The results of Brennan and Brennan's (1981) study showed that as the *level of accentedness* increased from speaker to speaker, all evaluators (Mexican American and Anglo alike), would give a significantly lower *status* rating, concluding that accentedness correlated with *status* and the two were inversely proportional. Conversely, the characteristic ratings tied to *solidarity* did not diminish among Mexican American evaluators as accentedness increased (Brennan and Brennan, 1981.) The authors therefore inferred that linguistic profile (e.g., language use and ethnic self-reference) has a noteworthy effect on specific language attitudes. The latter observation affirms that the *solidarity* ratings among Mexican American evaluators reflect *ethnic solidarity*, supported in Labov (1960, 1972) and Trudgill's (1972) analyses of *covert* and *overt prestige*<sup>2</sup>. That is, raters who did not reduce solidarity ratings as speaker accentedness increased seemed to show their acceptance of this variety (*covert prestige*), and those whose *solidarity* ratings decreased as accentedness increased suggested *overt prestige*, or acceptance for the overt standard variety (Brennan and Brennan, 1981).

These findings suggest that Mexican Spanish-accented English speakers were perceived as having a lower social *status*, especially as accentedness became more prominent, and these were based on perceived speech alone. The authors attributed the blatant linguistic prejudice, or as they called it, the "systematic downgrading of nonstandard speech varieties" (Brennan and Brennan, 1981, p. 209), to a diverse set of factors including: a speaker's perceived occupation and socioeconomic status, the actual demographic information provided to the evaluator for each

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of *overt* vs. *covert prestige* was first presented by Labov (1966) in his study of how social stratification affected speech production. The use and overt acceptance of a standard language variety defines *overt prestige* and the high regard for a nonstandard variety by an ingroup member is an example of *covert prestige* (Labov, 1972). While linguistic minorities are aware that their language variety is not overtly prestigious, their high evaluation of it (amid ingroup interactions, at least) is an example of *solidarity* and "is prestige in the sense of being [favorably] regarded by one's peers, and of [signaling] one's identity as a member of a group" (Chambers & Trudgill, 1988; 85).

speaker, and the order in which the listener heard the different speakers. Overall, the authors concluded that, "...the evaluative reaction results of the study have revealed the complexity of the social situation...", and that there is a significant "...need for multidimensional language attitude studies" (Brennan and Brennan, 1981, p. 220), since dimensions recognized as *instrumental* (for getting a job), *integrative* (to interact with particular social groups), and *affective-communicative* (see Carranza, 1977) seem to play an important role in how evaluators assess a language variety.

The following section highlights the key findings of studies which analyzed explicit language attitudes in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border region specifically.

## **2.9 Language Attitudes in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez Border Region**

In Hidalgo's (1986) research which analyzed the language attitudes found in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, the aim was to understand the correlation between diverse language attitudes and the local environment in which they were immersed. In the study, Hidalgo (1986) interviewed approximately 85 Ciudad Juárez residents using a detailed questionnaire that extracted data on the participants' sociodemographic characteristics, language use, and language attitudes. Results showed that participants who had better access to formal English language instruction, informal exposure to English through the mass media, and habitual dealings with people from the United States claimed to use English quite frequently. *Juarenses* of higher social status and higher income also claimed to use English more frequently (Hidalgo, 1986). However, despite the frequent use of English, these participants did stress the importance of claiming loyalty to the Spanish language. This expressed loyalty seemed to be one of the means utilized by Mexicans to assert their *ethnic identity* and *solidarity* (Hidalgo, 1986), or as she explicitly called it, *language loyalty*.

Hidalgo's (1986) findings suggest that in Ciudad Juárez, the perception and use of English and the notion of language loyalty are two distinct sociolinguistic dimensions (see Hidalgo, 1986; Carranza, 1977). On one hand, the high frequency of contact with the United States in Ciudad Juárez, as well as its apparent structural dependence on the country, makes the use of English in Ciudad Juárez essential. On the other hand, as aforementioned, the loyalty to Spanish among Mexicans in Ciudad Juárez was regarded as equally essential. Therefore, Hidalgo (1986), similar to Heyman's (2017) assessment of border relations, concluded that these contradictory views stressed the importance of addressing language attitudes in a much broader context. It was also noted that the interactional dynamics in this border region create an environment where "major tensions, conflicts and contradictions coexist because of the arbitrary demarcations" (Hidalgo, 1986: 21).

On the other side of the border, Velázquez (2009) investigated how the linguistic attitudes of parents in El Paso influenced the language development of their children. Velázquez interviewed English-Spanish bilingual adults and elicited responses with respect to their beliefs on the importance of Spanish vitality and the promotion of Spanish language development in their community. The study's results showed that bilingual parents expressed positive attitudes toward the idea of fostering the development of Spanish along with a bilingual and biethnic identity, and in fact, regarded this development as essential for ethnolinguistic vitality (Velázquez, 2009). However, these voiced opinions did not correlate with what the parents actually put into practice; it was observed that the parents did not invest time or resources for the promotion of Spanish development in their children, let alone the children's use of Spanish (Velázquez, 2009). It was hypothesized that these contradictory principles are a consequence of underlying sociocultural tensions in the community (Velázquez, 2009).

In addition to recording the linguistic insights of these individuals, Velázquez (2009) sought to understand with more detail, “why a community like the one found in El Paso, where Spanish shares so much of the public domain, where a Spanish-language cultural industry is readily available and opportunities for contact with Spanish-speakers abound, some families successfully transmit Spanish to their children while others do not” (Velázquez, 2009, p. 69). A factor presumed to have influenced perception in Velázquez’s (2009) research was the varied level of English-Spanish bilingualism among the parents interviewed. Results also showed that the differences in perceptions reflected each family’s perception of *ethnic pride*<sup>3</sup> and *bilingual identity* (Velázquez, 2009). The families with the highest scores for ethnic pride/bilingual identity were ranked as having greater opportunities for Spanish literacy development than families with the lowest scores (Velázquez, 2009). This means that the children in those households with higher scores were reported to be frequently reading or being read to in Spanish and were enrolled in or had completed their elementary education within a bilingual program (Velázquez, 2009), while children from families with lower scores had little to no access or exposure to Spanish at home and school. Velázquez (2009) did, in fact, take socioeconomic status into account and noted that all but one of the families interviewed reported to earn less than \$5,000 above median household income and one family reported to earn less than \$10,000 above median household. It was also noted that all but one parent self-reported as first-generation American (Velázquez, 2009).

During home interviews, Velázquez (2009) found that all the participants stressed the importance of Spanish in the public domains of media and business. Regarding acceptability within the domain of education, bilingual mothers stated that although Spanish is important in El

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<sup>3</sup> *Ethnic pride*, a term frequently used in Velázquez’s (2009) analysis, is considered analogous to *ethnic solidarity*

Paso, all instruction at school should take place solely in English. When asked to elaborate on this idea, mothers said that they believe that a bilingual education hinders a child's full acquisition of English and makes the child more susceptible to discrimination later in life (Velázquez, 2009). Some of the mothers interviewed referred to Standard English as, "*el inglés correcto*" or "*inglés sin acento*"<sup>4</sup> (Velázquez, 2009, p. 75), and said that speaking Mexican Spanish-accented English could impede their children from having access to higher-status employment. Further, all but two of the mothers interviewed agreed that teaching their children Spanish was important and that knowing how to speak Spanish was very beneficial, especially in a city like El Paso. Yet, similar to what Brennan and Brennan (1981) observed, the attitude depended on the contexts in which mothers expected their children to use Spanish. For example, the use of Spanish in social contexts appeared acceptable, yet it was seen as significantly less acceptable in professional settings in the U.S. (Velázquez, 2009).

## **2.10 Conclusion**

Previous research has showed that there are negative attitudes towards the nonstandard language varieties used by linguistic minorities (Lambert et al., 1960; Labov, 1966, 1972; Trudgill, 1972; De La Zerda Flores & Hopper 1975; Brennan and Brennan, 1981; Hidalgo, 1986; Anzaldúa, 1987; Galindo, 2005; Velázquez, 2009; Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012; Milroy & Milroy, 2012). The results of these studies also indicated an apparent correlation between language attitudes (both implicit and explicit) and the interlocutor's ethnicity, sociolinguistic affiliation (e.g., language use and ethnic solidarity/pride), social status, context of language use, and socioeconomic, political, and geographical situation of the region of study.

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<sup>4</sup> Translated to English as, "correct English" and "English without an accent", respectively.

Several studies discussed here (Velázquez, 2009; Heyman, 2017; Anzaldúa, 1987; Hidalgo, 1986) suggested that in the unique and linguistically diverse communities along the U.S.-Mexico border, underlying social and linguistic tensions develop due to the historically changing relationships between the United States and Mexico. Studies have also stressed the need to make a clear distinction between different types of language varieties, since various linguistic and extralinguistic factors affect their production and attitudes towards them (Chappell, 2016; Giles 1970; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Schane, 1973). With respect to my research in particular, it is important to make a clear distinction between the two types of Hispanic-accented English found in El Paso: *Chicano English*, a language spoken by native monolingual English or bilingual English-Spanish speakers, and *Mexican Spanish-accented English*, spoken as a second language by Mexican immigrants (Sánchez, 1983). Recording and analyzing current attitudes toward Standard English and Hispanic-accented English varieties could potentially help attain a better understanding of sociocultural factors affecting linguistic perception today.

Language attitudes toward linguistic varieties in El Paso have been previously recorded (Hidalgo, 1986; Velázquez, 2009), but supplemental analyses of language attitudes along the border, especially in El Paso, Texas, are necessary in order to address the significant social repercussions of linguistic discrimination toward Mexican Spanish-accented English speakers in modern society. Studying modern attitudes in this region is especially important because of the continuous influx of Hispanic/Latino, (particularly Mexican), immigrants to the United States.

## Chapter 3

### Method

#### 3.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the review of previous literature, Hispanic-accented English could be generally defined as English with Spanish influence at the phonological level (Galindo, 1995). The present study examines the attitudes toward one specific variety of Hispanic-accented English spoken in El Paso, that of Mexican Spanish-accented English. To examine the attitudes toward this variety, a verbal guise test was administered to ninety-eight Spanish-English bilingual participants and English monolingual participants from El Paso. The guises were recorded by two different speakers: a monolingual English speaker and a bilingual Spanish-English speaker. The guises were then evaluated by participants who rated them along different social attributes. Details about the procedure of data collection, the participants involved in study, and the analysis performed are provided below.

#### 3.2 Stimuli

Two individuals were recorded for the verbal guise and were identified as ‘Speaker 1’ and ‘Speaker 2’. Both speakers were female, in their late 20s, and of middle socioeconomic status. Speakers of the same age and gender were selected in the hopes of eliminating the factors of gender and age as factors that could influence the evaluators’ decisions. Speaker 1 was considered to be a speaker of *Standard English* and Speaker 2 was considered to be a *Mexican Spanish-accented English* speaker (i.e., a bilingual speaker whose L1 is Mexican Spanish and whose L2, English, is perceived as non-native), as assessed by Linguistics professors at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) along with a group of Linguistics students which consisted of both Standard and

Hispanic-accented English speakers (i.e., both Chicano English and Mexican Spanish-accented English speakers).

Based on examples of procedures within the research of Lambert et al. (1960), Brennan and Brennan (1981), and Dailey et al. (2005), the voice recordings consisted of the two speakers previously described, reading the same brief ethnologically-neutral weather forecast (See Appendix A). The recordings were approximately 30 seconds-long and were presented always in the same order: Speaker 1 using Standard English first and Speaker 2 using Mexican Spanish accented English second. The recordings were played only once each.

The particular text about the weather forecast was developed with two characteristics in mind: i) it had to be easy to understand and ii) it had to contain certain sounds and/or sequences of sounds that are different in English and in Spanish. For example, considering the phonological rules of standard English, the vowels /a/ and /i/ are pronounced as mid front vowels and high front vowels, respectively (Amastae, 2012). Words such as *radar* and *wind* are pronounced as [ɹædɑɹ] and [wɪnd] by native English speakers. In contrast, according to studies on Spanish-accented English (Galindo, 1999), a Spanish-English bilingual speaker (i.e., a speaker of Mexican Spanish-accented English) would pronounce the same words as [ɹædɑɹ] and [wind]. In addition to differences in vocalic structure, Spanish and English also differ in the realization of consonants. For example, phonetically, the consonants /θ/ and /v/ are considered voiceless dental fricatives and voiced labiodental fricatives, respectively (Amastae, 2012). Native Spanish speakers who speak English as a second language tend to pronounce words such as *northeast* and *very* as [nɔɹdist] and [bɛɹi], respectively, as opposed to the pronunciation of Native English speakers which would be: [nɔɹθɪst] and [vɛɹi].

### 3.3 Participants

The evaluators for this study were English-Spanish bilinguals and monolingual English speakers recruited from various areas of El Paso, Texas via online media. With respect to characterizing evaluators as bilingual, it should be noted that there can be numerous factors which influence characterization. That is to say, bilinguals vary depending on different factors which could include: the sequence of acquisition (whether Spanish is a speaker's L1 and English is their L2 or vice versa), acquisition timing (whether the speaker acquired their L2 early or late) (Newport, 1990), dominance (proficiency of production), and by whether they can be considered native speakers of a language. However, for this study, bilingual participants were only characterized by what they selected as their L1 and L2. No other assessment was conducted to measure the participants' bilingualism and what is identified as their *linguistic profile* in this study is with respect to the general definition of bilingualism (Hamers & Blanc, 2000).

The study questionnaire was distributed through email, Facebook, and Instagram postings, as well as through direct messages (See Appendix B for a copy of the questionnaire). The questionnaire was distributed and taken solely online, and all participants volunteered their time. Ninety-eight questionnaires were completed from February to March of 2018 and the majority of participants ranged from ages 18 to 34 years of age. Also, approximately 75% of the participants self-identified as 'Hispanic or Latino', and the remaining identified as 'White' (10%), 'Afro-Hispanic or Latino' (3%), 'Black or African American' (4%), 'Asian' (2%), 'Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander' (2%), or 'Other' (4%).

### **3.4 Experimental Design**

A verbal guise technique was chosen to obtain data with respect to language attitudes. As discussed in Chapter 2, a verbal guise technique records a variety of speakers reading a single text, then has a series of evaluators rate the speakers on a set of social characteristics. In the present study, a reading passage was provided to the speakers who recorded the stimuli. To help limit the influence of extralinguistic factors on listener perception, no details were provided to the evaluators with respect to the speaker's ethnicity, Spanish variety spoken (i.e., speaker's specific L1 if speaker is Spanish-English bilingual), level of education, etc. The eight characteristics chosen for this investigation (see Figure 1) were presented on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Very Low' to 'Very High'. Several of the characteristics selected for the evaluation were chosen based on those used in previous research (Brennan and Brennan, 1981) and were as follows: Education, Socioeconomic Status, Intelligence, Ambition, Success, Passiveness, Friendliness, and Trustworthiness. The software used to create the study questionnaire was the Qualtrics program.

To begin the evaluation of speakers, participants (also referred to here as 'listeners' or 'evaluators') were asked to take the questionnaire which took an average of fifteen minutes to complete. The questionnaire itself was a single online questionnaire, all in English, divided into 3 different parts. The first part of the questionnaire elicited specific demographic information about the participants. Based on previous research (Rangel et al., 2015), the purpose of eliciting participants' demographic information was to obtain data on the factors that are predicted to influence particular listener language attitudes (e.g., socioeconomic status, education level, first and second languages, etc.). The second part of the questionnaire asked about the listeners' opinions on the speakers; more specifically, which speaker they would rather hire to present a

weather section in the local news in El Paso and why. This section also asked participants to rate the two speakers on a list of the aforementioned social characteristics selected (See Figure 1).

Please rate the speaker's characteristic levels below.

	Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Socioeconomic Status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intelligence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Passiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 1. Screenshot of the social characteristics used to rate speakers

The final portion of the questionnaire consisted of several open-ended questions with respect to language attitudes (see Appendix B) with the final and most general question reading, “Please provide some of your thoughts with respect to Hispanic and standard English accents in the United States and the attitudes you have personally or that you have observed towards them.”

### 3.5 Statistical Analysis

Before a statistical analysis could be applied to the data, all questionnaires were checked for full completion. The total number of surveys collected was approximately 200 and about 50% were discarded due to incomplete responses, leaving 98 fully-completed questionnaires available for analysis.

The question where participants had to self-identify provided several options: ‘Afro-Hispanic/Latino’, ‘American Native or Alaska Native’, ‘Black or African American’, ‘Hispanic or Latino’, ‘Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander’, ‘White’, and ‘Other’. It should be noted that the

‘Other’ category included participants who reported that they were of other ethnicities that constitute a small percentage of the El Paso population (e.g., Turkish, Brazilian, and Palestinian). Because certain groups were small (i.e., groups with fewer than 5 people), reported ethnicities were collapsed into three major groups: ‘Hispanic or Latino’, ‘White’, and ‘Other’. As aforementioned, the smallest percentages of responses within this question were grouped into the ‘Other’ category. In addition, the ‘White’ category included participants who identified as ‘White’ and those who selected both ‘Hispanic or Latino’ and ‘White’ for self-identification.

The verbal guise rankings were recoded into scalar, numerical values, ranging from 1 to 5 as opposed to ‘Very Low’ to ‘Very High’. Lastly, all participants were separated into three language groups based on their linguistic profile (i.e., English as their L1 or L2); the three groups of participants were as follows:

- English-Spanish bilingual (Spanish L2)
- Spanish-English bilinguals (English L2)
- Monolingual English speakers

Two particular open-ended question responses (see Figure 2) as well as the ratings of the social characteristics of both Speaker 1 and Speaker 2 were selected for conducting a factor analysis.

<i>Q21: “Imagine that you have to hire one of them to present a weather section in the local news in El Paso. Which one would you hire...?”</i>
<i>Q25: “If the speaker had the necessary pedagogical (teaching) training, do you think this speaker could successfully teach an English language course? Why?”</i>

Figure 2. Questions for which responses were used in factor analysis

For the purpose of conducting this statistical analysis, the participants’ recorded ethnicity (SelfID), L2, gender, and annual average income were the factors chosen. Information about income was used to get an idea about the participants’ socioeconomic status (Class or SES). The question with respect to the participant’s annual average income consisted of several options ranging from ‘Less than \$10,000’ to ‘More than \$150,000’. The wide range of options was collapsed into three groups: ‘Low’, ‘Middle’, and ‘High’, based on the reported average yearly income (Orozco et al., 2016) as well as the cost of living in El Paso.<sup>5</sup>

Lastly, of the eight social characteristics that the speakers were rated on, three were selected (‘Education’, ‘Ambition’, and ‘Friendliness’) to represent two main categories: Status and Solidarity, based on the categorization done in a previous investigation (Brennan and Brennan, 1981). ‘Education’ and ‘Ambition’ were the characteristics used to represent an evaluator’s ranking of Status and ‘Friendliness’ was the feature used to represent the ranking of Solidarity.

Once the most important dimensions were selected, a cross-tabulation and Chi-Square analysis was used within the Minitab statistical analysis program. These particular statistical

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that most of the students who participated were placed in the ‘Low’ category because their wages are relatively low, but this is a temporary situation, thus, it may not accurately represent their socioeconomic status.

analyses are useful to determine the distribution of the data according to the categories analyzed and to compare the relationship between two variables (e.g., the evaluator's L1 or L2 vs. their choice of Speaker 1 and 2).

The following section presents the results of the implemented statistical analyses.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### 4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis: Cross Tabulation and Chi-square Analysis

A Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test was conducted for the categorical variable: ‘Hire’ to determine if there was a significant difference between Standard English and Mexican Spanish-accented English. The results of the test showed that the differences were statistically significant ( $p < 0.000$ ). Analysis of the data showed that 83 percent of all participants chose to hire the Standard English speaker (Speaker 1) and 17 percent chose to hire the speaker of Mexican Spanish-accented English (Speaker 2). These results are shown in Figure 3 below.

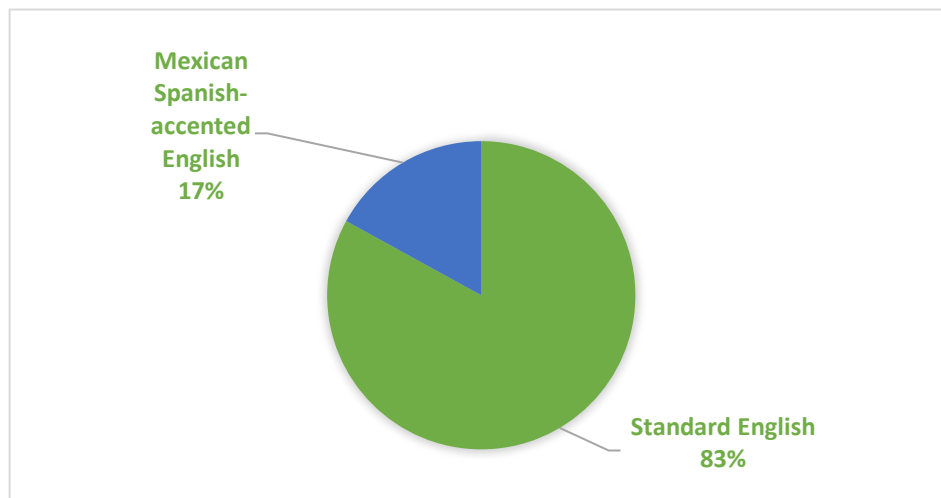


Figure 3. Percentage of evaluators that chose to hire standard English and Mexican Spanish-accented English speakers

The cross tabulation and Chi-square analyses determined that ‘Gender’ was a statistically significant factor in respect to hiring choice (see Table 1 showing  $p < 0.05$ ) with female participants preferring to hire the speaker with the Standard English accent. Results from the cross-tabulation of ‘Gender’ vs. ‘Hire’ (see Table 1) show that female participants had the highest percentage of ‘Hire’ for the Standard English speaker (88%), while male participants chose to hire

the speaker of Standard English at a lower percentage (70%). Results of the analysis are presented in Table 1. Table 1, 2, and 3 include cell counts and row percentages.

Table 1. Tabulated Statistics of Variables: Gender vs. Speaker Hired

<b>Gender</b>		<b>Standard English</b>	<b>Mexican Spanish- accented English</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Female</b>	N	59	8	67
	%	88.06	11.94	100.00
<b>Male</b>	N	22	9	31
	%	70.00	30.00	100.00
<b>All</b>	N	81	17	98
	%	82.65	17.35	100.00
<b>Chi-Square Test</b>		Chi-Square	DF	P-Value
		Pearson	4.318	1 0.038
		Likelihood Ratio	4.064	1 0.044

The cross tabulations and Chi-square analyses also determined that the other groups of variables that were hypothesized to affect evaluator responses (participant's L2, ethnicity (i.e., response to 'SelfID')), and socioeconomic status (according to response to 'Income', referred to here as 'Class or SES') were not statically significant.

Though the variables mentioned above were not statistically significant, within the cross-tabulation of L2 as an independent variable against the responses recorded for 'Hire', there was an unexpected result which showed that among the three groups of evaluators (Spanish L2, English L2, and Monolingual English speakers), the monolingual English speakers (listed as 'Non-

applicable' in Table 2) were the ones with the higher percentage (33%) of 'Hire' for the Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker (See Table 2).

Table 2. Tabulated Statistics of Variables: Evaluator's L2 vs. Speaker Hired

<b>Evaluator's L2</b>		<b>Standard English</b>	<b>Mexican Spanish-</b>	<b>All</b>
			<b>accented English</b>	
<b>English</b>	N	39	8	47
	%	82.98	17.02	100.00
<b>Non-applicable</b>	N	10	5	15
	%	66.67	33.33	100.00
<b>Spanish</b>	N	32	4	36
	%	88.89	11.11	100.00
<b>All</b>	N	81	17	98
	%	82.65	17.35	100.00
<b>Chi-Square Test</b>				
		Chi-Square	DF	P-Value
	Pearson	3.654	2	0.161
	Likelihood Ratio	3.327	2	0.189

The cross-tabulation of 'Social Class or SES' vs. 'Hire' did not reach statistical significance ( $p=0.400$ ), but the distribution shows that of the three groups of evaluators labeled as 'High', 'Middle', and 'Low' ('H', 'M', and 'L', respectively) class, the 'H' group had the highest percentage of 'Hire' for the Mexican Spanish-accented speaker (29%).

Another cross-tabulation was done to analyze the influence of the participants' L2 on their response to the question asking if the Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker would be

qualified to teach English. Results showed that monolingual English speakers yielded the highest percentage of the three groups of evaluators to select ‘No’ (33%), and English L2 evaluators gave the lowest percentage (8.51 %). The results of this analyses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Tabulated Statistics of Variables: Evaluator’s L2 vs. Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker Qualified to Teach English

Evaluator’s L2		No	Yes	All
English	N		43	47
	4		91.49	100.00
	%	8.51		
Non-applicable	N	5	10	15
	%	33.33	66.67	100.00
Spanish	N	8	28	36
	%	22.22	77.78	100.00
All	N	17	81	98
	%	17.35	82.65	100.00

Chi-Square Test				
	Chi-Square	DF	P-Value	
	Pearson	5.830	2	0.054
	Likelihood Ratio	5.829	2	0.054

Table 3 also shows that, while the results did not reach statistical significance (i.e.,  $p < 0.05$ ), the value is close to significant (see P-Value in Table 3), which suggests that there may be some correlation in the data. In addition, it is interesting to note that the group of English-Spanish bilinguals (see column labeled, ‘Evaluator’s L2’ and row labeled, ‘Spanish’ in Table 3 above) was the group with the second highest percentage to select ‘No’ with respect to the question asking if the speaker of Mexican Spanish-accented English would be qualified to teach English. In addition, 92% of the

Spanish-English bilinguals, that is, those who speak English as a second language (see column labeled, 'Evaluator's L2' and row labeled, 'English' in Table 3), think that the speaker of Mexican Spanish-accented English is qualified to teach English as a Second Language. However, overall, 83% of all the participants thought that the Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker was qualified to teach English while 92% of the participants thought that the Standard English speaker was qualified to teach English, showing that the speaker of Standard English has an advantage.

As aforementioned, the cross tabulation and Chi-square analyses of the variable, 'SelfID' vs. the response to the question asking if the Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker would be qualified to teach English did not yield results of statistical significance ( $p = 0.185$ ). Nonetheless, it should be noted that cross tabulation of these variables showed that participants who self-identified as, 'Hispanic or Latino' yielded the lowest percentage of the three groups of evaluators to select 'No' (14%), and those who identified as 'White' gave the highest percentage (40%). In other words, Latino participants seem to be more positive towards the opinion that the speaker with Mexican Spanish-accented English is qualified to teach English. Those participants who fell under the 'Other' category behaved similarly to the 'Hispanic or Latino' group, with 18% selecting 'No'.

Cross tabulation of hypothesized main factors (participant's response to 'L2', 'SelfID', and 'Class or SES') vs. the three main speaker characteristics ('Education', 'Ambition', and 'Friendliness') which were evaluated as independent variables, revealed that these participant factors were not significant predictors of characteristic ranking on the guise test. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the overall characteristic rankings of the Standard English speaker when compared to those of the Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker. The

present analysis also showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups of bilingual evaluators with respect to responses since both groups tended to perform similarly.

#### **4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis: Perceptions of Hispanic-accented English vs. Standard English**

In the final portion of the three-part questionnaire, participants were asked to share their personal opinions on Hispanic-accented English and Standard English varieties. Although the explicit attitudes recorded varied, several participants stated that being an English-Spanish or Spanish-English bilingual is advantageous, especially in a border region such as El Paso. Many participants recognized that a Hispanic accent suggests that an individual is bilingual and is thus a sign of intelligence. Consequently, a large number of participants expressed admiration towards bilingualism. Below are some of the collective remarks that were used to positively describe those perceived as having a Hispanic accent:

“...a sign of high intelligence”

“Hispanic accents sound pretty and impressive when spoken.”

“Hispanic accents...reflect a person who is trying, someone that is intelligent and versatile.”

“English was my first language, but I also learned Spanish almost simultaneously as a child, because of this I have a slight accent that I'm proud of.”

“BEING BILINGUAL IS A VERY GOOD THING...IT IS IMPORTANT.”

“I don't have any negative attitudes towards Hispanics with any kind of accent. I being a Hispanic and growing up in a household that spoke Spanish often...understand what struggles we have as Hispanics to achieve success on a scale that favors English speakers and favors non Hispanics. I hold a lot of respect for the Hispanics that have to work twice as hard for something others can achieve much easier because of the way they talk. However, having always lived in El Paso you have two different groups of Hispanics...”

The final phrase noted in the last quote above indicates an apparent awareness of two sub-varieties of Hispanic-accented English in the El Paso region (i.e., Chicano English and Mexican

Spanish-accented English). This response also mentions that non-native bilingual Hispanic-accented English speakers experience more adversities because of the negative connotations associated with their speech and cultural group.

Although most participants stated that they had no negative attitudes toward Hispanic-accented English in general, the vast majority of all responses stressed the awareness of this language variety being habitually stigmatized in society. In fact, the most unanimous perceptions exposed that people with Hispanic accents are, “looked down upon”, “discriminated against”, “seen as uneducated”, seen as “less intelligent”, “ridiculed”, personally judged more harshly, and have more difficult experiences with respect to obtaining employment. These explicit attitudes listed with respect to speaker characteristics help to answer the second of the four research questions posed for this investigation which asked: *If Hispanic-accented bilinguals experience a social stigmatization or prejudice, what social characteristics are attributed to Hispanic-accented English...?*

Additionally, when asked why a Hispanic-accented English speaker is perceived as disadvantaged in the United States, some participants expressed the following:

“I think that Hispanic people, who have an accent are sometimes looked at as being uneducated, and not able to speak English 'properly' and are often times passed over for opportunities in social and work environments. Maybe this is not seen so much in this region of the country but in other areas, the discrimination is more noticeable.”

“Even though they may be qualified, their pronunciation of the English language with an accent makes it harder to be considered for employment for people stereotype them as uneducated.”

The quotes above reiterate the negative attitudes attached to Hispanic-accented English and how these attitudes affect the job opportunities for to Hispanic people. Given these points, the results of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses in this study show some parallelism between the implicit and explicit attitudes recorded. That is, while the quantitative data trends show an implied

preference for Standard English, the qualitative data recognizes the importance of being bilingual and the stigmatization placed on Hispanic-accented English in social and professional settings.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The principle findings of the works most relevant to my study (Lambert et al., 1960; Brennan and Brennan, 1981; Velazquez, 2009) concluded that linguistic minorities perceive and evaluate the language of the linguistic majority more favorably than their own. The results of these studies also show the presence of covert and overt prestige. That is, the prescribed *standard* language variety was overtly evaluated more positively than *nonstandard* varieties with respect to the notion of *status* (i.e., education, socioeconomic status, and professionalism), indicating *overt prestige* (Trudgill, 1972). Conversely, nonstandard varieties have positive but hidden (i.e., *covert*) estimation that indexes solidarity rather than status (Trudgill, 1972). Previous studies (Velasquez, 2009) also showed both a correlation, as well as a contradiction, between implicit and explicit language attitudes towards nonstandard varieties of English.

In my study, I used a sociolinguistic approach to examine the reciprocal relationship between an individuals' reactions to different varieties of English and the social attributes attached to each variety. Using a verbal guise technique, a set of English speakers with two different language varieties (*Standard English* and *Mexican Spanish-accented English*) were evaluated by monolingual English speakers and English-Spanish bilinguals in El Paso, Texas. The study was framed by addressing the following research questions (RQs):

1. Is Mexican Spanish-accented English regarded positively or negatively among (native and non-native) English speakers in El Paso?
2. If Mexican Spanish-accented bilinguals experience social stigmatization or prejudice, what social characteristics are attributed to Mexican Spanish-

accented English (versus those attributed to a standard English variety)?

3. What are the social characteristics of the individuals who perceive Mexican Spanish-accented English positively or negatively?
4. If Mexican Spanish-accented bilinguals experience social stigmatization or prejudice, what is the impact on the professional opportunities for those with an accent?

The principal findings of my study show that, although the evaluators' characteristic ('Education', 'Ambition', and 'Friendliness') rankings of the Standard English speaker and the Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker were quite similar, a significant result was shown with respect to who the evaluators chose to hire for the job. The results of my investigation showed a significant preference for the Standard English speaker apropos employment (83% vs. 17%).

The variable analysis of 'Gender' vs. 'Hire', showed that female listeners preferred the Standard English speaker in higher percentages than male listeners. This result could be due to the fact that both speakers used in the study were female, a factor which could affect the evaluations of listeners of the same sex. In addition, previous sociolinguistic studies showed consistently that women tend to give more value to linguistic forms that are overtly prestigious and associated with a higher status. For instance, Labov's (2001) research on gender and variation found that women tend to use standard language variants more than men. In a study on language variation in Costa Rica, Chappell (2016) found that while the production of a nonstandard language variant decreased *status* evaluation in both male and female speakers, male speakers were evaluated significantly higher with respect to social characteristics such as 'niceness', 'confidence', 'local status', and 'masculinity'. From these results, Chappell (2016) concluded that since women did not benefit

socially from the production of a nonstandard variant and wanted to avoid social criticism, they employed the standard variety more consistently. The effect of gender on the choice of Standard English and Mexican Accented English can partly answer RQ3 which asked: *What are the social characteristics of the individuals who perceive Mexican Spanish-accented English positively or negatively?* The present results suggest that females tend to perceive Mexican Spanish-accented English more negatively than men. However, to corroborate these results, it is necessary to extend this study to include both male and female speakers.

Cross tabulations and Chi-square analyses also determined that the other groups of variables that were hypothesized to affect evaluator responses (participant's L2, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (i.e., 'Class or SES')) were not statically significant. However, further analyses showed that among the three groups of evaluators (Spanish L2, English L2, and Monolingual English speakers), the monolingual English speakers were the ones with the higher percentage (33.33%) of 'Hire' for the Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker (Table 2). This finding is surprising since the bilingual groups were those expected to hold the strongest positive attitudes towards the Mexican Spanish-accented speaker considering that previous research has argued that evaluators' behaviors reflect their linguistic profile (Brennan and Brennan, 1981). These seemingly contradictory results could be related to the small sample size of participants, especially monolingual listeners. Thus, to verify these results it would be important to increase the participant sample size.

Interestingly, cross-tabulated statistics which analyzed the participants' L2 vs. the response to the question asking if the Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker would be qualified to teach English showed that English L1 evaluators, including monolingual and bilingual, were the ones with the highest rates of negative responses (i.e., those who answered, 'No') (see Table 3). These

results are interesting to note because, though they did not reach statistical significance, ( $p = 0.054$ ), the value is close enough to recognizing a trend which implies that an individual's L1 can influence their attitudes toward accentedness in their own language. That is, while those participants with L1 English did not believe that the speaker with accented English was qualified to teach English, those with L1 Spanish showed a more positive opinion about the teaching abilities of the speaker with Mexican Spanish-accented English. This observation suggests that besides analyzing whether participants are bilingual or monolingual, the effect of the L1 should be analyzed further in order to provide a more appropriate response to RQ3. As stated earlier, one limitation of the present study is the low number of monolingual participants recruited, so I believe this question should be addressed in a future study.

The results of my study's qualitative data analysis showed that many participants see bilingualism as "a good thing" and an "important" ability to have in a border city like El Paso. Participants also indicated that the speakers of Mexican Spanish-accented English are, "intelligent and versatile". Bilingual participants also voiced that bilingualism is something to be "proud of". Yet, the majority of these participants selected to hire the speaker of Standard English, and additionally stated that, although bilingualism is important and beneficial, especially in El Paso, it is still preferred that one speak English without a Hispanic accent. The participants also noted that Mexican Spanish-accented English speakers in the United States are oftentimes perceived as "uneducated" and therefore unqualified for higher ranked professional positions. These characteristics noted above answer RQ2, which asked: *If Mexican Spanish-accented bilinguals experience social stigmatization or prejudice, what social characteristics are attributed to Mexican Spanish-accented English (versus those attributed to a standard English variety)?*

The qualitative results of my study therefore reveal a distinct awareness of the social stigmatization of Hispanic-accented, more specifically Mexican Spanish-accented English speakers. This conclusion helps answer the main question, RQ1, which asked: *Is Mexican Spanish-accented English regarded positively or negatively among (native and non-native) English speakers in El Paso?* The answer is: yes and no. That is, the findings of my study show a contradiction between the quantitative (implicit) and qualitative (explicit) results. Bilingual groups preferred the Standard English, yet they explicitly stated that they have no negative views toward Mexican Spanish-accented (nonstandard) English. Therefore, the varied results demonstrate the importance of conducting guised tests, since subjects do not always mean, or at least put into practice, what they explicitly state. These findings mirror those reported in Velázquez's (2009) study which showed that despite stressing the importance of speaking English and Spanish, as well as holding a biethnic identity, English-Spanish bilinguals favored a monolingual English education for their children for the fear of discrimination in a professional setting if their child spoke Mexican Spanish-accented English (Velazquez, 2009). Based on her results, Velázquez (2009) concluded that these social and linguistic beliefs must be understood as a consequence of underlying tensions present in the U.S.-Mexico border community, reiterating the notion of *covert* and *overt prestige* and asserting its presence in El Paso.

The study conducted in Montréal (Lambert et al., 1960) and this one conducted in El Paso also show notably similar results despite a considerable difference in time and location. The differences in the factors analyzed in both studies make it even more surprising that the findings are so similar. Similarities in the findings included: the listener preference for the standard language variety, including a greater percentage of preference from listeners who speak a nonstandard (i.e., minority) variety. The findings of Lambert et al.'s (1960) investigation also

revealed the salience of *overt prestige*, more than likely reflecting the sociopolitical climate of Montréal in 1960. Similarly, the results of my study, which showed an *overt* preference for the language variety spoken by the socially dominant majority, reflect the social disparities historically experienced in El Paso which stem from the constant sociopolitical conflicts occurring between the U.S. and Mexico. Although current research has shown the persistence of linguistic discrimination and social differences in Canada (Allard et al., 2015), one should consider that the factors behind the discrimination there could vary significantly from those speculated to affect sociolinguistic perceptions in El Paso. For example, the difference in the physical proximity of Mexico to the United States vs. the one of France to Canada is incomparable. This means that the constant sociocultural interaction along the U.S.-Mexico border, especially in El Paso, along with the aforementioned historical economic, political, and social tensions between the United States and Mexico, are undoubtedly significant factors influencing language attitudes in the city. Also, the degree of language contact in the El Paso region could create a higher sense of ethnic solidarity than the one recorded in Lambert et al.'s study (1960). Consequently, the close language contact forms a much more positive view of a nonstandard variety, at least with respect to the perceptions recorded in the qualitative portion of my own study.

In sum, with respect to the participants' hiring choice (i.e., Standard English speaker vs. Mexican Spanish-accented English speaker), the stark results in my study answer RQ4 by showing that, yes, Mexican Spanish-accented bilinguals do, in fact, experience social stigmatization/prejudice. In addition, the impact on the professional opportunities for those with an accent is that they are deprived of equal opportunity when compared to speakers of the Standard English variety.

For future research, the stimuli used should be recorded by both a male and a female speaker. As stated earlier, participants' genders seem to affect the way female and male voices are rated (Chappell, 2016). In addition, the wording used in the questions asked to participants should be reconsidered: whether they preferred Standard English over Hispanic-accented English could create a misinterpretation of social variables. That is to say, for aim of this study, the term *Hispanic-accented English* was the general term used to elicit explicit language attitudes in the qualitative portion of the survey, although it was specifically Mexican Spanish-accented English which was selected to be evaluated against Standard English in the verbal guise portion. The difference between Mexican Spanish-accented English and Hispanic-accented English may have affected the answers obtained.

Because of the notion that Mexican Spanish-accented English, spoken by Mexican immigrants, is considered more of a linguistic minority language than Chicano English, a language spoken by U.S.-born Chicanos, for future studies, it is crucial to consider and evaluate in more detail the social perceptions of Chicano English. Evaluating Chicano English in El Paso could help build on previous research (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010) that has discussed intergroup relations and the social factors influencing the perceptions of linguistic minorities. Using a speaker of Chicano English in the verbal guise, as opposed to one of Mexican Spanish-accented English, is likely to yield different results, especially in El Paso. As mentioned in section 2.7, the perception of Chicano English could help describe the complexity of the environment in this region. Nevertheless, considering that various arbitrary factors are attributed to language perception (Schane, 1973), even when defining a Hispanic accent more specifically as Chicano English, it is difficult to measure exactly what the speaker is uttering vs. what is being perceived by the listener. Previous studies have discussed the importance of controlling variables for a more detailed linguistic

analysis but not many have implemented the ideas still. Thus, to help minimize discrepancies and to help more accurately identify sociolinguistic elements in future investigations, particular linguistic variables should be isolated. Variables considered in speech should include: phonological features such as place and manner of articulation, prosodic elements (i.e., *stress*, *pitch*, and *length*), the identification of morphological features (e.g., verb tenses in the L2) (Schane, 1973), as well as syntactic, semantic, and semiotic elements (Chappell, 2016). These aspects are especially important to consider since previous research has noted that an individual's language variety characteristics also lead a listener to label speech as native or non-native (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010).

Another divergence that could have inappropriately influenced the evaluators' reactions to the speakers is the fact that the Standard English speaker and the Mexican Spanish-accented speaker (i.e., Speaker 1 and Speaker 2, respectively) were consistently presented in the same order. Therefore, the order of presentation should be randomized in future studies to eliminate bias. Due to the fact that the questionnaire was taken online and the environment in which the participant took it was not controlled, it is not clear whether there were other factors influencing their responses (e.g., friend sharing their perception). The fact that the questionnaire was presented online could have also affected participant reactions. In future research, an in-person interview should be conducted to investigate whether/how this form of presentation influences and/or changes participant responses.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

To summarize, the findings of this investigation showed that standard English was seen more positively when compared to a nonstandard Mexican-Spanish accented English in El Paso, Texas, especially with respect to *status*. This was the case for all participants in the study, bilinguals and monolinguals alike. This finding validates the idea that linguistic minority groups accept the stigmas placed upon them by the socially dominant majority group and regard the language of the linguistic majority as more prestigious than their own (Romaine, 1995). The results also showed that implicit and explicit language attitudes reveal contradictory perceptions of accented speech (related to the idea of *covert prestige*), which may be due to the social and linguistic tensions in the border area of El Paso.

The analysis of social factors demonstrated the effect of participants' linguistic background and gender on their attitudes toward Mexican Spanish-accented English, with female participants showing a more negative attitude toward the nonstandard variety. These results also showed that while overall, all speakers preferred Standard English, bilinguals with Spanish as their L1 had more positive views about the speaker with accented speech. In other words, those participants with similar linguistic backgrounds to the speaker who read the accented guise (i.e., Spanish L1 speaker who acquired English later in life) were more sympathetic about her accented speech, an example of ethnic-linguistic solidarity.

This thesis documents the results of survey participants' negative attitudes toward Mexican Spanish-accented English speakers and how this prejudice can affect people's chances to be hired for a job. Negative sociolinguistic perceptions consequentially lead to larger professional, public, and personal repercussions. At the personal level, these observed tensions and the lasting

consequences of language prejudice seem to make it difficult for Mexican-Americans and other sociolinguistic minorities (e.g., Mexican immigrants who speak Mexican Spanish-accented English) to retain an authentic cultural identity.

The present study gives an insight to the sociocultural perspectives and ambivalence of the El Paso community. It also shows that it is crucial to create a collective awareness of pervasive negative sociolinguistic attitudes in order to push for the development of new social standards with the hope of attenuating the negative perspectives of Mexican Spanish-accented English. Other current studies have attested the discrimination of employees based on linguistic characteristics (Cataño, 2018; Valles, 2011), and some have begun advocating for the modification of hiring practices to protect speakers of different language varieties from sociolinguistic bias in professional settings (Cocchiara et al., 2016). However, there is still a need to promote awareness of the issue in order to create communities with more socially-conscious activists for sociolinguistic equality.

This study contributes to the field of sociolinguistics by adding to the discourse on border studies which focus on sociolinguistic disparity in the U.S.-Mexico border region. The findings of my study add to the body of sociolinguistic literature by incorporating new dialogue that presents a contemporary reexamination of linguistic perspectives in El Paso, Texas. On one hand, the quantitative portion of this study showed a significant preference for Standard English over Mexican Spanish-accented English in a professional setting. On the other hand, the qualitative portion of the study provided a unique counter-narrative which captured numerous positive opinions toward Mexican Spanish-accented English. In this portion of the study, participants explicitly expressed that a nonstandard English accent implies bilingualism and versatility and is, “impressive” and “a sign of high intelligence”. Thus, my investigation has documented that,

despite the prevalence of sociolinguistic repression toward nonstandard language varieties in the United States, there still appears to be a shift in language attitudes towards the valuation of other people's linguistic diversity. Nevertheless, as shown in the quantitative portion of my investigation, in practice, linguistic minorities are still being penalized for speaking nonstandard language varieties of English. For this reason, future research within this field should place a focus on not only creating an awareness of linguistic discrimination and its influential factors, but on avidly and explicitly addressing the issue in both educational and human resource programs. Addressing the issue in these contexts can help to share with our society the need of being aware of linguistic biases, to avoid making decisions on people's academic and professional qualifications based on their accents. I believe that the teaching of linguistic justice in educational and professional settings has the potential to help redefine how society values language.

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## **Appendix A: Prompt Given to Stimuli**

Please read (in an enthusiastic voice) the text below and record yourself in a quiet room. Pretend you are giving a weather report on the local news. Thank you for your help!

Good morning, everyone! Hope you're all having a great day so far. Now, here we can see that overnight we had reports of wind gusts of 61 miles per hour. Also, on the east side of town as well as in the more northeast part of the city, the radar shows that it is pretty dry out there. As for tonight, temperatures will drop to about 30 degrees, but it's going to be very nice tomorrow. We're still seeing clear skies throughout the region over the weekend with warmer temperatures on Monday.

## Appendix B

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO



[https://minersutep-my.sharepoint.com/personal/maguilar6\\_miners\\_utep\\_edu1/\\_layouts/15/guestaccess.aspx?docid=12e78536e4aca42d6aed8eb2731dd77d3&authkey=Aaq5dthRFm9PFtqcZjCrJLY&e=kYj7Vn](https://minersutep-my.sharepoint.com/personal/maguilar6_miners_utep_edu1/_layouts/15/guestaccess.aspx?docid=12e78536e4aca42d6aed8eb2731dd77d3&authkey=Aaq5dthRFm9PFtqcZjCrJLY&e=kYj7Vn)

Please see the IRB consent form attached through the link above. After reviewing said form, do you agree to participate in this survey?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No



What is your age?

- ☐ 18 - 24  
☐ 25 - 34  
☐ 35 - 44  
☐ 45 - 54  
☐ 55 - 64  
☐ 65 or older

What is your gender? If 'other' is selected, please specify.

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female  
☐ Other

How do you self identify? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Afro-hispanic/Latino
- ☐ American Native or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other

- ☐ I prefer not to respond

---

Where were you born?

---

In which area do you live in within the city of El Paso? Please select your area below. If 'other' is selected, please specify.

- ☐ East
- ☐ West
- ☐ Northeast
- ☐ Central
- ☐ South Central
- ☐ Lower Valley
- ☐ Downtown
- ☐ Other

What is your occupation?

---

Please select your annual average income.

- ☐ Less than \$10,000
- ☐ \$10,000 - \$19,999
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000 - \$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000 - \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$149,999
- ☐ More than \$150,000

Please select the highest level of education you have completed.

- ☐ No formal education
- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ Secondary school
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ College degree (Associate's or Bachelor's Degree)
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Professional or Doctorate degree

---

What is your first language? If 'other' is selected, please specify.

- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Other

What is your second language? If 'other' is selected, please specify.

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Other

☐ Non-applicable

---

What is your primary spoken language within social groups? If 'other' is selected, please specify.

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Other

What is your primary spoken language at home? If 'other' is selected, please specify.

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Other

What is your primary language spoken at work? If 'other' is selected, please specify.

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Other

---

What is your primary language spoken at school? If 'other' is selected, please specify. If this is non-applicable, please write 'N/A'.

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Other

Listen to these recordings of two different people talking about the weather.

Speaker 1: 

Speaker 2: 

Imagine that you have to hire one of them to present a weather section in the local news in El Paso. Which one would you hire and why?

☐ Speaker 1 because...

☐ Speaker 2 because...



Play the first recording again and complete the form on the following page for the speaker.

Speaker 1: 



What do you think the speaker's first language is? If 'other' is selected, please specify.

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Other

---

If the speaker had the necessary pedagogical (teaching) training, do you think this speaker could successfully teach an English language course? Why?

☐ Yes, because


☐ No, because

---

Please rate the speaker's characteristic levels below.

	Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Socioeconomic Status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intelligence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Passiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trusworthiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Play the second recording again and complete the form on the following page for the speaker.

Speaker 2: 



What do you think the speaker's first language is? If 'other' is selected, please specify.

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Other

---

If the speaker had the necessary pedagogical (teaching) training, do you think this speaker could successfully teach an English language course? Why?

☐ Yes, because

☐ No, because

---

Please rate the speaker's characteristic levels below.

	Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Socioeconomic Status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intelligence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Passiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trusworthiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following question by selecting one of the two choices and providing a short detailed explanation:

Native English Speakers are at a/an

☐ advantage because

☐ disadvantage because

---

Please answer the following question by selecting one of the two choices and providing a short detailed explanation:

Speakers of English as a second language are at a/an

☐ advantage because

☐ disadvantage because

---

In the United States, it is favorable to speak English as a first language.

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

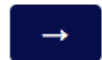
☐ Strongly disagree

---

Please justify your answer to question above.

---

Please provide some of your thoughts with respect to Hispanic and standard English accents in the United States and the attitudes you have personally or that you have observed towards them.



## **Appendix C: Bilinguality Profile Worksheet by C. Elerick (2016)**

### Bilinguality Profile Work Sheet

Simultaneous vs. early/late Consecutive

Age at which L2 is introduced

Balance: General Proficiency

Balance: Occupational/Life Activity Repertories

Balance: Control and use of formal/informal registers

Polarity-Evidence of English in Spanish or vice versa?

Language used at different points in Formal Education

Literacy

Valorization/Preference

## **Vita**

Michelle Aguilar is a Linguistics graduate student and teaching assistant at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). She obtained a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Biomedical Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts in French at UTEP. Michelle has taught youth French classes with the Alliance Française d'El Paso and also taught an introductory French course at Radford School in El Paso, Texas. Michelle's current research is in the field of Sociolinguistics, focusing predominantly on the perceptions of Mexican Spanish-accented English spoken in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border region. The goal of her research is to create a heightened awareness of the modern societal perceptions of ethnolinguistic minorities such as Hispanics/Latinos in the United States.

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This thesis was typed by Michelle Aguilar.