Anderson, T. K &Souza, B. J. (2012). English-Spanish bilinguals' attitudes toward L2 pronunciation: Do they identify with native Spanish speakers? In. J. Levis & K. LeVelle (Eds.). *Proceedings of the 3rd Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference*, Sept. 2011. (pp.27-38). Ames, IA: Iowa State University.

ENGLISH-SPANISH BILINGUALS' ATTITUDES TOWARD L2 PRONUNCIATION: DO THEY IDENTIFY WITH NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS?

Tyler K. Anderson, Colorado Mesa University

Benjamin J. Souza, Appalachian State University

This study investigates the perceptions of English-influenced pronunciation of Spanish in order to determine how factors such as second language proficiency and identity influence these attitudes. To answer these research questions a modified matched-guise technique was created, with stimuli consisting of seven recordings of the introduction to the fairytale *Little Red Riding Hood* in English and Spanish. Analyses of the data reveal that the English-Spanish bilingual participants, when asked whether or not the person in the speech sample was like them, did not identify with the poor English sample, the native Spanish sample, or with the poor Spanish sample. As expected, participants identified strongly with the native English sample and only somewhat identified with the non-native Spanish with English aspiration and the non-native Spanish samples. Interestingly, the participants were evenly divided when responding to the Spanish with English interference sample; roughly half identified with this sample while the other half did not. As hypothesized, more proficient bilinguals were capable of making more fine-tuned distinctions between the samples, indicating that they are indeed more aware of the subtle differences in English-influenced Spanish pronunciation.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most notable aspects of non-native speech is the absence of native-like pronunciation of the target language. An L2 learner can enjoy nearly perfect morphological and syntactic structures in the L2, even approaching native-like abilities, and yet have deficiencies in phonetics and phonology.

If accented speech is so noticeable, why does it routinely receive so little attention in the L2-learning classroom? One study found that intermediate-level Spanish instructors rated correct pronunciation the tenth (of 14) most-important classroom goal (Harlow & Muyskens, 1994). Research suggests (Bosch & Sebastián-Gallés, 2001) that infants begin learning the L1 with the basic properties of sound (i.e., phonemes). However, the typical L2 classroom does not use a similar starting point.

Many researchers have investigated the factors that contribute to perceptions of foreign-accent in L2 speech. Studies suggest that some of the contributing elements include musical ability, careful versus spontaneous speech, as well as who rated the speech samples (Suter, 1976). Other factors include motivation, social acceptance and social distance, personality variables, gender, oral and auditory capacities as well as other contextual constraints, including sociolinguistic determinants, stylistic determinants, and discourse determinants (cf. Piske, Mackay & Flege,

2001). These same authors determined that of all the constraints claimed to have affected degree of L2 foreign accent, the following had received the most attention in the literature: age of L2 learning, length of residence, gender, formal instruction, motivation, language learning aptitude, and language use.

These studies have provided important information regarding the factors that influence L2 foreign accentedness. Nonetheless, one criticism of these studies is that their investigations centered on the reasons learners have foreign accents without even verifying if learners know the difference between native-like pronunciation and foreign-accented speech. It might prove equally fruitful to begin by asking whether our learners even know what the end-goal of their L2 pronunciation acquisition is, and (perhaps more importantly), whether they care.

English-influenced pronunciation

English speakers learning Spanish face a host of challenges mastering native Spanish-like pronunciation. For example, English has an aspirated ("pie" > [p^haj]) and unaspirated ("spy" > [spaj]) allophonic variation of the voiceless stops /p,t,k/, while Spanish has only the unaspirated[1] phonemes /p,t,k/; "*pie*" (foot) > [pje]. Hence, English speakers learning Spanish often have longer-than-prescribed aspiration durations when producing /p,t,k/ sounds in Spanish (Teschner 1999).

English-influenced pronunciation in L2 Spanish also typically includes challenges with trilled [r], the intervocalic voiced fricatives [β,δ,γ], word-final laterals [l], and diphthongs within- and between-words (Díaz-Campos 2004, Lord 2005), among other challenges.

Language Attitudes

One way to determine if observers are aware of language variation is by investigating how they react toward language variation. While it is a strongly-held tenet that all language varieties are linguistically equal, it is similarly true that all linguistic varieties trigger beliefs regarding a speaker and his/her group identity, which can lead to assumptions about their attributes (cf. Garrett, Coupland & Williams, 2003). These reactions toward linguistic forms are known in the literature as language attitudes. While no single definition exists for language attitudes, in the present study we will define it broadly as both the way in which observers react toward language varieties and language users (cf. Grosjean, 1982; Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum, 1960). In order to investigate these attitudes, this study will implement a modified matched-guise technique (see Anderson, 2006 and Garrett et al., 2003 for an in-depth look at the matched-guise technique).

Attitudes toward L2 pronunciation

Much of the previous research dealing with attitudes toward L2 pronunciation simply investigated second language learners' attitudes toward only two levels of pronunciation: native versus non-native (cf. Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck & Smit, 1997). Similarly, much of the existing research on this topic includes how native speakers react toward L2 speech, failing to look at how L2 learners perceive their peers' pronunciation (cf. Moyer, 2007). In this research, we incorporate more subtle differences in L2 influenced pronunciation by L2 learners themselves.

[1] Although categorized phonologically as unaspirated, voiceless stops, small durations of aspiration are not uncommon at the phonetic level.

Present Study

In endeavoring to examine bilinguals' perceptions of nuanced L2 pronunciation and their evaluation of the second language learners themselves, a study was designed to address the two interrelated research questions:

1. Do Spanish L2 speakers of different proficiencies identify more with native Spanish speakers, or with novice Spanish speakers?
2. Do these evaluations change based on proficiency in the L2?

METHODOLOGY

Participants.

English- Spanish bilinguals of differing proficiencies at the university level were recruited for participation in this study. A total of 94 subjects were included for analysis. Participants were recruited from classes of all levels of Spanish, from first year to graduate level; however class enrollment was not tracked. The responses of 75 females and 19 males were included in this study. Of these 11 had taken less than one semester of Spanish, 12 had taken one year, 26 had completed between two and four years and 30 had studied Spanish for more than four years; 15 participants did not provide information regarding duration of study in Spanish.

Procedures and materials.

Participants were asked to complete a 45-minute survey housed on www.surveymonkey.com. A three-part battery was designed for the purpose of this study: seven speech samples, a language history questionnaire, and a language attitudes survey. All materials (recordings excluded) were available in English. Participants first completed the language history questionnaire followed by the completion of the language attitudes surveys.

Language history questionnaire.

The first part of our study consisted of the completion of a language history questionnaire, which elicited personal information (e.g. place of birth, gender) as well as language use patterns, and language proficiency in English and Spanish. Based on their self-reported abilities, subjects were assigned to one of three groups representing a level of proficiency: Low (N=34), Mid (N=38), and High (N=22).

Speech samples.

The stimuli for the matched-guise survey consisted of seven total recordings, each from one of three speakers reading the introduction to the fairytale *Little Red Riding Hood* in English or Spanish. The readers were all female. Speaker one was a balanced bilingual, who grew up with both Spanish and English in her home, and is also a trained linguist. Speaker two is an English dominant bilingual, having learned Spanish in her early adult life; she too has had ample training in Spanish-English phonetics and phonology. The third speaker is an English monolingual speaker who has had little exposure to the Spanish language.

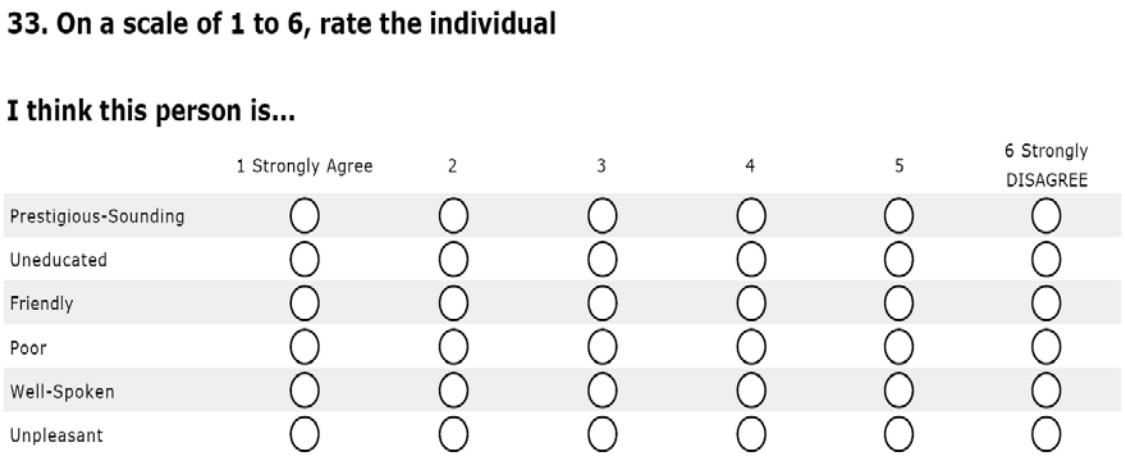
1) Speech samples
    1. Native English (labeled *English Native*)
    2. Bad English pronunciation, with common Spanish pronunciation interference (labeled *English-bad*)

3. Native Spanish
4. Near native Spanish, few pronunciation errors (labeled *Spanish few pronunciation*)
5. Non-Native Spanish with English Aspiration (labeled *Non-native with aspiration*)
6. Bad Spanish, with additional common English pronunciation interference (labeled *Spanish more errors*)
7. Novice Spanish, with extreme pronunciation errors (labeled *Spanish extreme errors*)

The first English text was recorded by the English dominant bilingual in her native English, and the second text was recorded by the balanced bilingual, who was asked to record the sample using common Spanish pronunciation interference in her English. The third sample was also recorded by the balanced bilingual, who produced a native Spanish recording. These recordings were followed by samples four through seven, which represent a continuum of non-native Spanish pronunciation, beginning with a near-native sample down to novice Spanish. Samples four and five were produced by our English-dominant bilingual, with sample four being a near-native sample; sample five was a similar recording, but this time the speaker was asked to insert /ptk/ aspiration in her speech. The sixth recording was produced by our balanced bilingual, who created a Spanish sample with common English interference (discussed above). The final recording was also done in Spanish, but this time was produced by the English monolingual, and consisted of strongly noticeable errors in her Spanish pronunciation.

Language attitudes surveys.

Upon completion of the language history questionnaire, subjects participated in the matched-guise survey. After listening to one of the recordings, the subjects were asked to give their first impressions of the reader, followed by questions regarding the reader's intelligibility and whether they felt that the readers were native speakers of Spanish or English. This was followed by the adjectival scales presented in Figure 1. After completing this task for the first speaker, the survey was repeated for the remaining six recordings.



33. On a scale of 1 to 6, rate the individual

I think this person is...

	1 Strongly Agree	2	3	4	5	6 Strongly DISAGREE
Prestigious-Sounding	○	○	○	○	○	○
Uneducated	○	○	○	○	○	○
Friendly	○	○	○	○	○	○
Poor	○	○	○	○	○	○
Well-Spoken	○	○	○	○	○	○
Unpleasant	○	○	○	○	○	○

Figure 1. Scales used in the modified matched-guise.

After listening to all seven samples and completing the corresponding matched-guise surveys, the subjects were presented with a direct survey which included questions regarding the importance of good pronunciation in Spanish, how the subjects felt that a second language learner could improve his or her pronunciation, and whether or not they identified themselves with a good Spanish accent.

For the purpose of the current analysis, we will only report on two of the questions: "This person is a lot like me" and "This person is a native speaker of Spanish", with 1 being strongly agree and 6 strongly disagree.

Hypotheses

With the above research questions in mind, the following specific outcomes are anticipated:

a. A hierarchy of identification will exist among bilinguals for diverse types of L2 influenced pronunciation, with native pronunciation eliciting the most positive identification and highly influenced pronunciation the least positive; with near native pronunciation being more favorably evaluated than near-native pronunciation with aspiration, which will be more favorably evaluated than non-native pronunciation with common English-influenced interference.

b. Differential identifications will surface based on judges' proficiency, with the more proficient bilinguals being more capable of making more fine-grained distinctions among the speech samples.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identification.

From prior research (Anderson & Souza, 2009) we are aware that our subjects 1) want to have a native-like accent, 2) are able to distinguish between nuanced differences in the speech samples, and 3) that their ability to distinguish the differences is influenced by proficiency in the L2. But how do these speakers identify with the various levels of Spanish interference? In order to determine this, we present the results from the analysis of the data solicited from the survey question "I think this person is a lot like me".

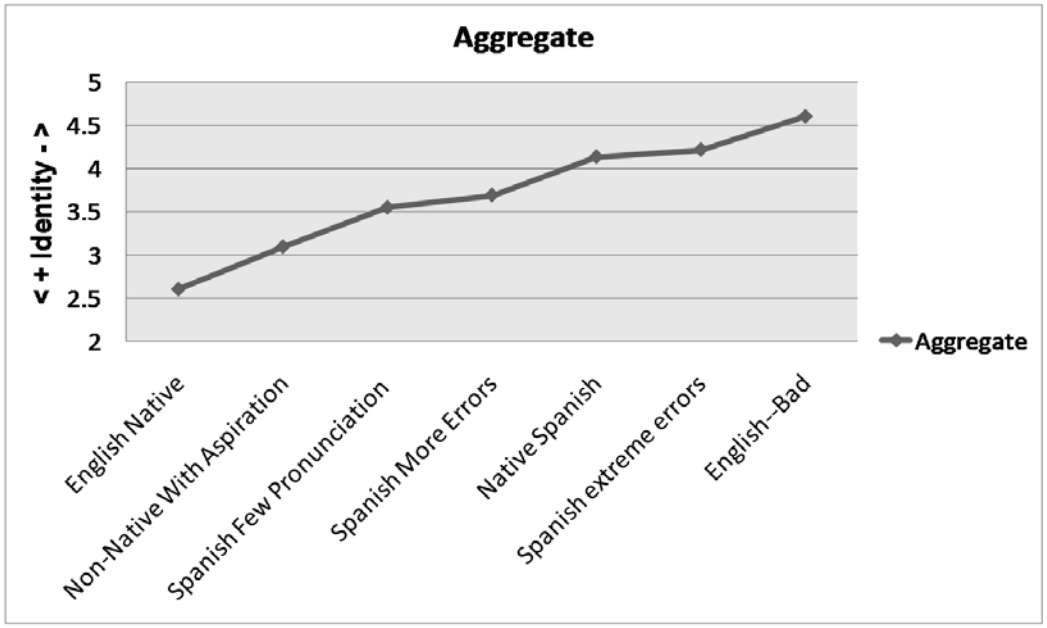


Figure 2. Trends of identification to sound samples (lower number = a greater identification of the sample).

From the results presented in Figure 2, we note that on the aggregate, our participants identified most with the native English sample, and least with the highly influenced English sample. From this we can determine that our subjects are identifying most with their L1 and least with the non-native version of their L1. But what happens with the L2 samples? Interestingly, they identify least with the sample of the highly influenced Spanish and the Native Spanish sample. Statistically these two responses are not significantly different. From this we can deduce that they do not self-evaluate as native-like speakers, nor do they see themselves as poor Spanish speakers.

How, then, is this identification influenced by their proficiency? One of the most salient differences between the groups is how they identified with the highly influenced Spanish sample. As seen in Figure 3 the High proficiency group least identified with this sample, while the other two groups identified least with other samples (i.e. Bad English). Interestingly, for the Low group, the highly influenced sample was in the middle of their continuum, perhaps indicating indifference toward this sample.

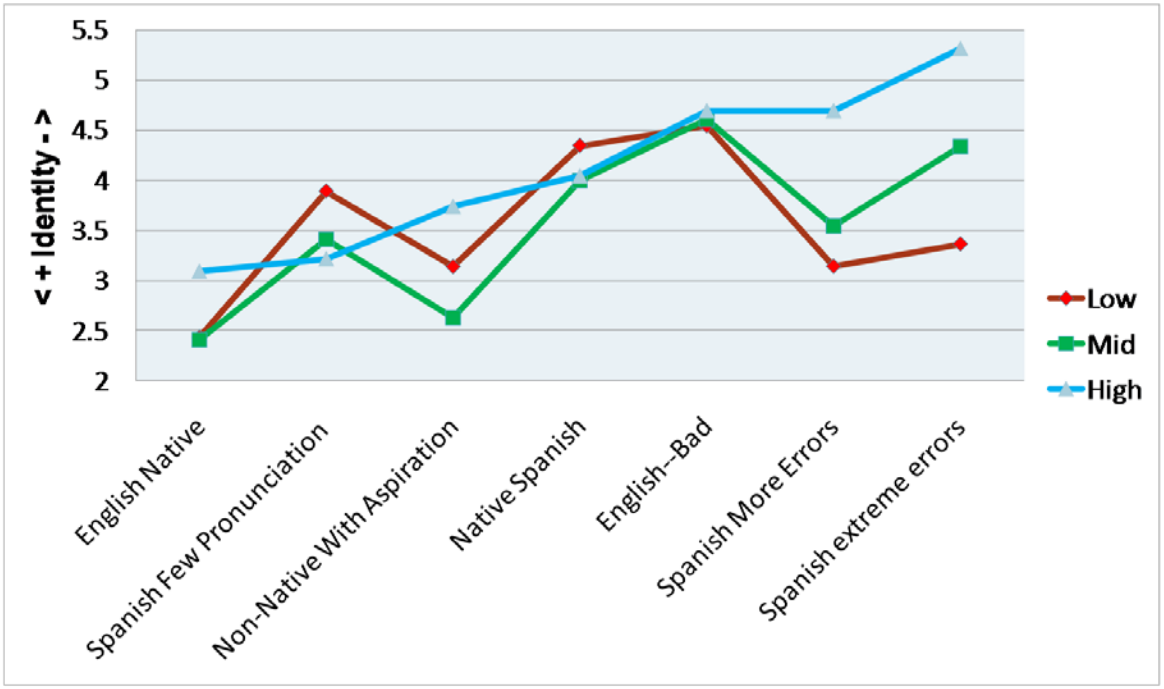


Figure 3. Trends of identification to sound samples, separated by proficiency (lower number = a greater identification with the sample).

The participants' identification with the native-Spanish sample is of interest. In Figure 3, Mid and High participants identified with this sample at precisely the same level, while Low group members diverged somewhat away from identifying with the native-Spanish sample. Further, the Mid group seems to identify the most with the sample containing aspiration, while the High group identifies the least with this sample. This is to be anticipated, as we would expect the High group to be more attuned to such highly-nuanced English-influenced Spanish. Finally, we see that the High group identifies the most with the near-native Spanish sample, followed by the Mid and then the Low groups. Statistically, there is a significant effect between Spanish ability and the speech sample. The High group differed significantly from both the Mid and Low groups ($p < .05$), but the Mid and Low did not differ significantly from each other ($p = .9999$).

In Table 1, we see the trends of identification with the speakers of each speech sample. All groups identified most with the Native English sample, the participants' native language. However, how they identified with the other samples differs greatly. The High group shows what could be considered an ideal continuum of good to bad Spanish, with the Native-Spanish sample (our control) being right in the middle. They show the ability to distinguish between good and bad Spanish in a very consistent manner, and identify more with the near-native samples than they do with both samples of the highly influenced Spanish. This group did not identify with the extreme errors, which was expected. But they also did not self-identify with the Native Spanish sample. This is somewhat surprising, but one possible explanation is that they know that their Spanish is better than other learners' Spanish, but they are also conscious of the fact that they don't sound like native Spanish speakers.

On the other extreme, the Low group identified most with the English-influenced Spanish, and least with the native-like Spanish. We infer that they realize their Spanish is not near the target pronunciation or fluency that they hear in the native and native-like samples, and thus fail to identify with that speaker. In fact, they more closely identified with the samples that include English-influenced pronunciation; the good pronunciations of Spanish are actually lower on the scale than those with aspiration.

Table 1

Summary of identification trends, divided by proficiency

High	Mid	Low
English Native	English Native	English Native
Spanish Few Pronunciation	Non-Native With Aspiration	Non-Native With Aspiration
Non-Native With Aspiration	Spanish Few Pronunciation	Spanish More errors
Native Spanish	Spanish More errors	Spanish Extreme Errors
English Bad	Native Spanish	Spanish Few Pronunciation
Spanish More errors	Spanish Extreme Errors	Native Spanish
Spanish Extreme Errors	English Bad	English Bad

The results further suggest that participants in the Mid group were not making as fine-grained distinctions as the High group. Although they failed to distinguish between the near-native and aspiration sample, they nonetheless showed a trend of decreasing identity from good to bad Spanish, with the extreme errors being furthest on the Spanish continuum.

Identifying native language of speech sample.

From this and prior research we know that these judges are capable of distinguishing between differing levels of L2 interference. But the question remains of whether they are able to identify native and non-native speakers of Spanish. The findings presented in this section are based on the response to the statement "This person is a native speaker of Spanish".

As seen in Figure 4, on the aggregate, there was a statistically significant difference between all speech samples ($p < .05$), except the following: Bad English and Native Spanish ($p = .9999$), Non-Native Spanish with Aspiration and English Native ($p = .118$), and Spanish extreme errors and Spanish More Errors ($p = .9999$). In other words, on the aggregate they were fairly successful at distinguishing whether a person was a native speaker of Spanish or not.

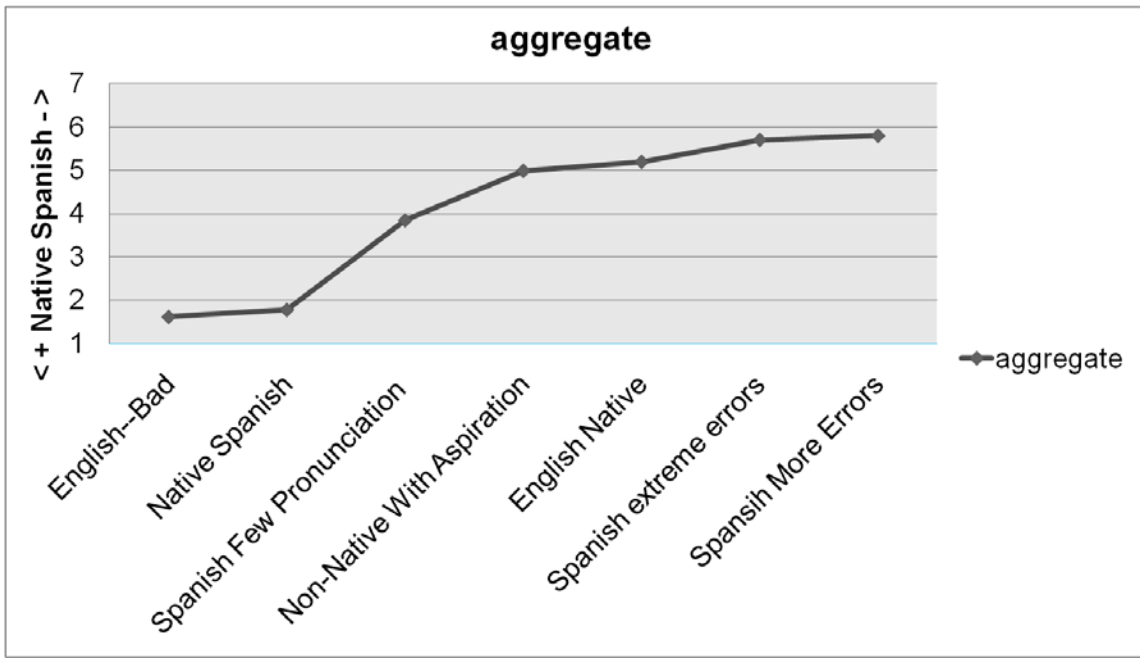


Figure 4. Identification of native Spanish speakers.

Taking proficiency levels into consideration, we see that the High proficiency group was much more capable of determining that the near-native speaker was not a native speaker of Spanish. In Figure 5, all the trends are the same (all of them attributed 'nativeness' in the same way), but the High group seems to be able to make more fine-tuned distinctions between samples. Statistically, the difference in evaluations between the High and the Low groups were significant ($p < .05$).

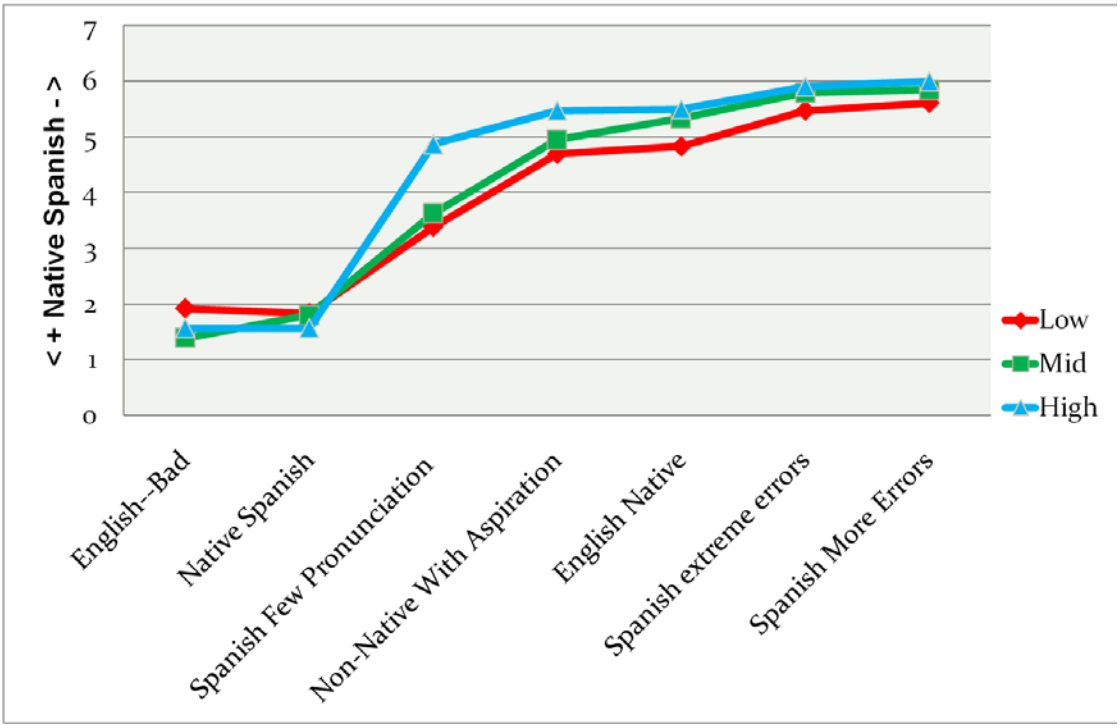


Figure 5. Identification of native Spanish speakers, divided by proficiency

CONCLUSION

The data indicate that on the aggregate our Spanish L2 speakers identified more with the native-like Spanish varieties of the language and less with the L2-influenced samples. We believe this suggests that our participants do want to develop good pronunciation in Spanish. The data also indicate that proficiency greatly influences both ability to identify native language as well as how subjects identify with the speech samples.

Additional questions arise based on the results of the current research. What causes this greater identification and greater ability to recognize a speaker's L1? One possible cause—and perhaps the most logical—is that greater proficiency in the L2 leads to a greater ability to recognize phonological aberrancies in the L2 pronunciation. However, perhaps wanting to sound like a native Spanish-speaker likewise has positive outcomes on a L2 learner's ability to have good L2 pronunciation. Similarly, our data have shed light on the idea that identification with the speakers of the target language may amplify their desires to sound like the target language speakers. These and other questions need to be addressed in future research.

Pedagogically, we infer that there is a need to provide opportunities to L2 speakers to connect with L1 speakers of the target language and their cultures. Our belief is that such opportunities will foster a sense of identifying with its speakers, and that greater identification should carry with it a greater desire to acquire a better pronunciation in the L2.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tyler K. Anderson is Associate Professor of Spanish at Colorado Mesa University. His research interests include language use and identity, and language attitudes toward manifestations of contact linguistics. He is currently researching the perceptions of phonetic interference in second language acquisition and the attitudes toward Spanish language variation among Latinos living in western Colorado.

Benjamin J. Souza is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Appalachian State University. He graduated from Penn State University where he completed a dissertation on the frequency effects of Spanish hiatus resolution. He teaches all levels of Spanish in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, including classes on Spanish linguistics and general linguistics class. He is interested in issues of foreign accentedness and second language learning.

REFERENCES

Anderson, T. (2006). *Spanish-English bilinguals' attitudes toward code-switching: proficiency, grammaticality and familiarity*. (Doctoral dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University).

Anderson, T. & Souza, B. (2009). *English-Spanish bilinguals' attitudes and perceptions toward L2 pronunciation*. Unpublished paper presented at The Linguistic Association of the Southwest (LASSO), Provo, UT.

Bosch, L. & Sebastián-Gallés, N. (2001). Evidence of early language discrimination abilities in infants from bilingual environments. *Infancy, 2*, 1, 29-49.

Dalton-Puffer, C., Kaltenboeck, G. & Smit, U. (1997). Learner attitudes and L2 pronunciation in Austria. *World Englishes, 16, 1*, 115-128.

Díaz-Campos, M. (2004). Context of learning in the acquisition of Spanish second language phonology. *Second Language Acquisition*, 26 : 249-273.

Garrett, P., Coupland, N. & Williams, A. (2003). *Investigating language attitudes*. Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press.

Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Harlow, L.L., & Muyskens, J.A. (1994). Priorities for Intermediate-Level Language Instruction. *Modern Language Journal 78, 2*, 141– 54.

Lambert, W.E., Hodgson, R.C., Gardner, R.C., & Fillenbaum, S. (1960). Evaluational reactions to spoken languages. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 50, 1*, 44-51.

Lord, G. (2005). (How) Can we teach foreign language pronunciation? On the effects of a Spanish phonetics course. *Hispania, 88*, 3, Sept, 557-567.

Moyer, A. (2007). Do language attitudes determine accent? A study of bilinguals in the USA. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 28, 6*, 502-518.

Piske, T., MacKay, I., & Flege, J. E. (2001). Factors affecting degree of foreign accent in an L2: a review. *Journal of Phonetics, 29*, 191-215.

Suter, R.W. (1976). Predictors of pronunciation accuracy in second language learning. *Language Learning, 26*, 233-253.

Teschner, R. V. (1999). *Camino Oral, 2nd ed.* Texas: McGraw-Hill.