Language Learning Motivation and Language Attitudes in Multilingual Spain From an International Perspective

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In Spain, more than 40% of the population lives in officially bilingual regions in which the minority language is used as a means of instruction at school and university. In addition, the increasing importance attached to learning English has led to the proliferation of multilingual school programs in which different languages are used to teach content. With this background in mind, this article analyzes students’ motivation to learn Spanish, minority languages (Basque, Catalan, or Galician), and English (as the predominant foreign language). Because the percentage of immigrant students has steadily increased in the last 2 decades, special attention will also be paid to how they react to the multilingualism they have to face in the education system. The review of the literature will critically discuss the impact of global English on motivation to learn the other languages in contact and will examine the adequacy of current research approaches with a view to developing an agenda for needed research.

Keywords: language attitudes; motivation; minority language; immigrant students; English; bilingual programs; multilingualism

SPAIN IS A MULTILINGUAL COUNTRY IN which 41% of the population lives in officially bilingual regions. Although the 1978 Spanish constitution stipulates that Spanish is the only official language for the State as a whole, it also recognizes the right of regional languages (Basque, Catalan, and Galician) to be co-official in their respective autonomous communities (or regions), that is, 6 of the 17 that make up Spain: Catalonia, Galicia, the Balearic Islands, Navarre, the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC henceforth), and the Valencian Community. This article focuses on Catalonia and the BAC. Although language-in-education policies have historically been a very controversial issue in Spain, it is important to note that Catalonia and the BAC have spearheaded the conflict with the central government. In fact, both regions endeavored to pass new Statutes of Autonomy in the first decade of the 21st century that were declared unconstitutional by the Spanish Constitutional Court. The enduring and unresolved tensions have generated heated conflict at both the State and the autonomous community level, a thorny political situation that has undoubtedly had a bearing on language attitudes and language learning motivation. Despite their idiosyncratic differences, Catalonia and the BAC illustrate how socio-political context and language-in-education policies interact and affect the learning of the local languages and English as the hegemonic foreign language.

For centuries, minority languages in Spain have been in a diglossic situation and, not long ago, their public use was even forbidden. During the Franco dictatorial regime (1939–1975), the superimposition of Castilian Spanish was part of the nation-building project in order to maintain national unity and strengthen the sense of being veritably Spanish, while any separatist or differing feeling was harshly repressed. These centralizing policies resulted in the denial of linguistic rights,

while “minority languages were portrayed as inferior and inconsequential and the use of any non-Castilian language was heavily suppressed, and even prohibited in public” (Hernández-Campoy & Villena-Ponsoda, 2009, p. 184). Such linguistic repression fueled a sense of resistance and a close tie between language and identity, which has led to a situation in which language issues still spark spirited and acrimonious social debates. With the advent of democracy, normalization processes were stimulated with a view to revitalizing Basque, Catalan, and Galician in their respective communities after centuries of decline.

In bilingual Spanish regions the education system must therefore guarantee that Spanish and the co-official language are taught at school and university; but, depending on the context, different linguistic programs are available. For example, whereas some autonomous communities such as Catalonia have implemented total immersion programs in Catalan for the whole school population, others such as the BAC have decided on three different linguistic models (see the subsequent discussion) in which the use of Basque as the medium of instruction varies considerably from one model to another.

Against this backdrop, the study of language attitudes and language learning motivation in the Spanish context has been high on the research agenda in the last two decades, especially at a time when the need to learn English due to its role as lingua franca is taken for granted by a large part of education stakeholders. To make linguistic matters yet more challenging, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programs in English are mushrooming, which some people believe may negatively affect attitudes and motivation to learn the local languages (let alone other foreign languages). In addition, this linguistic complexity has been increased by the remarkable upsurge in the number of immigrant students in the last few years. All these novel developments have had a profound impact on Spanish society in general and on the education system in particular. Since language policies and societal attitudes are inextricably linked, the impact of the former on students’ attitudes and language learning motivation will be under scrutiny in this article.

The objective of this article is thus to summarize the findings of the foremost studies completed in the Spanish context, providing a snapshot of Spain’s multilingualism and the language attitudes and language learning motivation that the different languages in contact spark. In the following sections the available empirical evidence will be reviewed in order to analyze (a) local students’ attitudes toward Spanish and the minority languages (in particular the connection between language attitudes and language use), (b) immigrant students’ motivation to learn the different languages in contact, and (c) any negative influence on attitudes and motivation to learn Spanish and the regional languages on the part of global English. Therefore, the article focuses on the two focal questions of this special issue. First, it analyzes whether the current motivational perspectives can account for motivation to learn languages other than English (LOTEs), namely Spanish as the majority language and the minority languages spoken in Spain. The article thus presents the process through which students’ cosmopolitan view is constructed (which clearly relates to the ideal second language [L2] self and ought-to self notions and how they interact), and it shows how local socio-contextual factors need to be considered. Second, the article examines the impact of the increasing presence of English on attitudes and motivation in the Spanish multilingual context.

With these objectives in mind, the article analyzes those studies whose participants are enrolled at school or university level, recognizing the fact that the role of this young generation is paramount to the survival and revitalization of minority languages, whereas their attitudes toward Spanish as the majority language and their motivation to learn English will help to shape Spain’s multilingualism.

From an international perspective, the multilingual situation in Spain will help to inform L2 motivation theory. Many useful insights regarding motivation to learn LOTEs in other bilingual/multilingual settings can be gleaned, taking into account the importance of local socio-contextual factors. Despite the obvious differences, lessons learned from the Spanish context might help halt the current trend away from bilingual education in many different parts of the world (Wiley & García, 2016). In addition, the focus on bilingual education programs and their effect on language learning motivation will also be of great interest to all those involved in bilingual programs in many diverse contexts. Last but not least, since there has been little research into how students’ prior linguistic knowledge and multilingual possible selves (Henry, 2011) may affect how new foreign languages are learned, Spain’s multilingual language policies may open new research agendas at a time when foreign languages are increasingly being learned as a third language (L3) (Collins & Muñoz, 2016).
ATTITUDES TOWARD SPANISH AND MINORITY LANGUAGES

Ó Riagáin (2008) points out that “language attitudes held by both the majority and minority groups affect the success or failure of entire minority language planning strategies” (p. 329). In Spain, minority languages have traditionally been valued for their role concerning identity and solidarity issues, but for many years their status has been upstaged by Spanish. However, the language policies implemented in the 1980s have changed this situation, and nowadays their status in the autonomous communities where they are spoken is higher than ever. These revitalization policies have significantly increased the symbolic and economic value of the minority languages on the linguistic market (O’Rourke & Ramallo, 2015).

In this context, new speakers have become a cornerstone of the revitalization process. By new speakers O’Rourke, Pujolar, and Ramallo (2015) mean those who have learned the language by means other than family transmission. The new speaker concept is thus used to describe “individuals with little or no home or community exposure to a minority language but who instead acquire it through immersion or bilingual education programs, revitalization projects or as adult language learners” (p. 1). Although the new speaker category is not exclusive to minority languages and clear parallels exist between new speakers and heritage speakers in English-speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand (O’Rourke et al., 2015), the fact is that it is mainly this group who account for the dramatic rise in the number of minority language speakers in the last three decades in Spain. New speakers have thus become an indispensable part of reversing language shift, which is why special heed has been paid to their language attitudes and language learning motivation.

To master a new language demands great effort and considerable sacrifice and the transition period is often described as challenging, sometimes frustrating, and in most cases difficult. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the strong motivation shown by new speakers to learn the minority language, as well as their commitment to invest time and energy in the process, has drawn researchers’ attention, because “in the field of L2 learning research, these conative features of purposeful and effortful striving have been core to the analysis of motivation” (Ushioda, 2014, p. 31).

The impact of new speakers can be observed by comparing Basque speakers in 1991 and 2011. In 1991 Basque native speakers were the majority in all age groups, but two decades later new speakers represented more than half of the 60% of Basque speakers in the 16–24 age range (Basque Government, 2013). This increase is due to the bilingual models available in the Basque education system. Since 1983 in the BAC parents have been able to choose between three linguistic models in which to enroll their children:

(a) **Model A**: This is a program in which Spanish is the vehicular language and Basque is only a subject (usually taught 3–4 hours per week). The first language (L1) of the students is Spanish.

(b) **Model B**: This is an early partial immersion program in which both Basque and Spanish are used as means of instruction. Students’ L1 is usually Spanish, although some students may be Basque L1.

(c) **Model D**: Basque is the means of instruction, which is why it is a total immersion program for those students whose L1 is Spanish and a maintenance program for those with Basque as their L1. Spanish is only taught as a subject (usually around 4 hours per week).

As time went by, the two bilingual models (B and D) became much more popular than the monolingual model A and, in fact, in the 2015–2016 academic year more than 83% of pre-university students were enrolled in models B (18.8%) and D (65.5%, the most popular model by far), whereas only 15.7% chose model A. Research studies recurrently bear out that even after more than 12 years of learning Basque as a subject, proficiency in Basque among model A students is very low.

As far as language attitudes are concerned, studies (e.g., Lasagabaster, 2005) reveal that students in model A harbor negative attitudes toward Basque and hold positive attitudes toward Spanish, whereas students in models B and D are more favorably disposed toward Basque. On some occasions the attitudes and motivation to learn Spanish are negative among model D students, but these attitudes only represent a low percentage of the total population (Rojo, Madariaga, & Huguet, 2010). This unfavorable disposition fits within what Baker (1992) labels as bunker attitude, which is found when minority language speakers hold the belief that the majority language represents a risk to the survival of the minority language (Lasagabaster, 2005). When the impact of different individual variables on students’ attitudes
and motivation is scrutinized, two independent variables stand out, namely the linguistic model and the language mainly used at home, as both variables function as a catalyst of students’ attitudes.

In Catalonia, Newman, Trenchs–Parera, and Ng (2008) examined how language attitudes changed among adolescents since the Catalan normalization process started in the 1980s. Using the matched-guise technique as their research tool, these authors observed that in a generation the differences found between youths of Spanish and Catalan background had diminished and that bilingual proficiency is currently valued by and for both communities. On the solidarity scale one of the most remarkable changes was the disappearance of assigning greater solidarity to guises speaking the judges’ home language, especially reflected in the shift of Spanish background participants’ preference for Catalan (the previous generation preferred Spanish), whereas those of Catalan and bilingual background continued to hold favorable attitudes toward Catalan. Therefore, new Catalan speakers helped to soften the ethnolinguistic divisions captured in previous studies carried out in 1980 and 1987. These results led the authors to conclude that linguistic cosmopolitanism, which they define as “getting along across ethnolinguistic boundaries by accommodating the other groups’ linguistic preferences or at least being open to doing so” (p. 328), can boost social harmony and respect for a group associated with another language. This is why they consider that minority languages will be highly regarded if they assume this symbolic value, which may reduce and minimize competition between the minority and the majority language. The authors consider that the normalization policy is yielding a linguistic cosmopolitanism that will help to foster social cohesion and to facilitate the coexistence of diverse identities.

This conclusion is shared by Woolard and Frekko (2013), who state that in Catalonia, when dealing with identity issues, Catalan and Spanish have traditionally been presented as “two mutually exclusive languages and corresponding identities against each other” (p. 129). However, these authors state that “many bilingual and polylingual speakers now invoke universalistic and/or cosmopolitan frameworks for interpreting their own choices to use Catalan” (p. 132), a cosmopolitan attitude that is embraced by young people who feel uncomfortable with the nationalist political rhetoric and the traditional lingering binary oppositions, while they see Catalan as a resource for the construction of their cosmopolitan selves. The need to foster students’ cosmopolitan selves is closely linked to the ideal self of the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009), as both selves clearly overlap. In fact, it could be stated that the cosmopolitan self should be an integral part of the ideal self, as it becomes a future self guide that helps to foster values such as tolerance as well as social cohesion. However, if the cosmopolitan self guide is to be effective, schools need to implement pre-designed activities and plausible action plans to achieve this aim. In bilingual contexts, the development of an ideal self that encompasses a cosmopolitan self becomes of the utmost importance and the education system should aim at helping learners construct and develop it.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND LANGUAGE PRACTICES

One of the main concerns of education authorities in the Spanish bilingual communities has to do with the difficult transition from a positive predisposition toward the minority language to a clear commitment to use it in different sociolinguistic contexts. In fact, many students (new speakers) learn the minority language at school but hardly make any use of it outside the formal learning context. The same trend is observed in the two contexts under analysis in this article because the knowledge of Basque and Catalan often does not translate into common use among youths of Spanish background groups and mixed groups (Newman & Trenchs–Parera, 2015; Uranga, 2013), a lack of bilingual language use that cannot be put down only to ethnolinguistic motivations.

In a study (Uranga, 2013) carried out in the BAC among more than 35,000 students—all students enrolled in the fourth year of primary education (9–10-year-olds) and the second year of secondary education (13–14-year-olds)—several interesting facts were found: 60% of students always or mainly used Basque in class in primary education, whereas this percentage plummeted to 40% in secondary education; 59% always or mainly used Spanish on the playground in primary education, but this percentage rose to 75% in secondary education.

The linguistic model exerts a significant influence in the case of the language used both in class and on the playground, as can be seen in Table 1. Model D students spoke Basque much more often than those enrolled in model B, and this difference was even more remarkable when compared to students in model A. There was,
however, a clear age effect that permeated the two bilingual models, in the sense that the older students became the less often they used Basque in both contexts, even among model D students whose use of Basque significantly decreased from 79% to 44% in class and from 41% to 29% on the playground. These results concurred with those obtained in Catalonia (see Trenchs–Parera & Newman, 2015), where it was also observed that children whose language use was initially Catalan dominant tended to become increasingly bilingual, whereas those that showed a bilingual use or learned Catalan at school steadily moved toward an exclusive use of Spanish. Thus, it can be concluded that the influence of the use of the minority language as a means of instruction has a strong influence in the early stages of schooling, but its positive effect diminishes when students reach adolescence, a trend also detected in other European bilingual contexts such as Wales (Baker, 1992).

The research team coordinated by Uranga (2013) concluded that, in order to boost the use of Basque in the school context, two main courses of action should be considered. First, there is a need to improve model B students’ Basque proficiency. Almost a third of students do not reach the expected level of competence by the end of primary education (B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and the end of secondary education (B2). Second, model D students’ language learning and language use motivation needs to be addressed. The authors state that the many linguistic limitations of model A leave no leeway to design any efficient measure to boost students’ Basque learning motivation and improve their Basque competence. As for the use of Basque out of school, two main aspects were highlighted: the need to foster significant and real contexts of Basque use in students’ everyday activities and to spread the use of Basque among those individuals who are social referents, as this is believed to help strengthen students’ Basque ideal selves (Dörnyei, 2009).

Attitudes are often defined as the predisposition to react favorably or unfavorably toward a given object (in the case of this article, the objects are the languages in contact). But this perspective is overly simple because attitudes may encompass both positivity and negativity due to their complex and multilayered nature (Loureiro–Rodriguez, Boggess, & Goldsmith, 2013), as the studies previously reviewed attest. In fact, although the inclusion of the minority languages in the education system has undoubtedly helped to raise their status, it has not always guaranteed an increased use in the broader social context (i.e., outside school and university).

Against this backdrop, it is worth considering the theoretical framework put forward by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), according to which language attitudes cannot be regarded as a unitary concept, but rather as a complex of three classes of components:

(a) The cognitive component has to do with thoughts and beliefs. A favorable attitude may entail a stated belief in the importance of learning a particular language.

(b) The affective component relates to feelings toward the language concerned. It is the emotional component of an attitude and the feeling may concern like or dislike of language learning. The cognitive and affective components may not always be in harmony, as a person may express positive attitudes to language learning, but more covertly that same person may have negative feelings about the actual learning process due to the effort needed to carry it out successfully. As a result, feelings might occasionally be at variance with formally stated beliefs (Baker, 1992).

(c) The conative (readiness for action) component is defined as an intention or plan of action in a particular context and under specific circumstances. A person with a favorable attitude to a particular language may state...
they would be willing to learn it and use it in all possible contexts. Nevertheless, an individual’s behavior may not match with the cognitive and affective components, which is why the three components are usually linked, although all three may not always be present in a given attitude (Loureiro–Rodriguez et al., 2013). Consequently, attitudes to different languages can usually be inferred from cognitive, affective, and conative responses. Research has demonstrated that it is possible to distinguish between these components both empirically and conceptually (Hewstone, Manstead, & Stroebe, 1997).

This tripartite division helps to understand the inconsistencies found by O’Rourke and Ramallo (2015) among new speakers of Galician, whose ideological commitment to Galician (the cognitive and affective components), that is, their positive attitudes toward the language, did not actually match their Galician language practices (the conative component) as they did not speak it often. However, this state of dissonance made them aware of the need to adopt Galician language practices and led them to switch to predominantly Galician language practices. Consequently, the three components were eventually aligned and balanced and the positive attitude toward the minority language crystallized in its more habitual use in their everyday social exchanges.

In the end, the revitalization process cannot be wholly understood by focusing exclusively on the education system and, in fact, the analysis of the role played by society at large is of crucial importance. A qualitative study by Pujolar and Puigdevall (2015) that included 24 interviews and 15 focus groups with 105 participants from different backgrounds, all of whom were under 35 years old, illustrates this well. The researchers examined the specific biographical junctures in which native speakers of Spanish incorporated Catalan into their lives. They call these junctures mudes, a Catalan term that refers to variations in social performance that allowed them “to identify linguistically-bound performative changes associated with specific events and conditions” (p. 169). Mudes would thus be closely linked to the conative component of language attitudes. The authors report that mudes (muda in singular) can be typified in six main moments, three of which take place within the education system:

(a) The primary school muda: Besides the use of Catalan as the language of instruction, the language predominantly spoken by classmates in the playground emerged as very significant, since, when it was Catalan, people took to speaking mostly Catalan.
(b) The high school muda: This involved a change of school where the participants met new students from other neighborhoods or villages, which triggered their use of Catalan to speak with peers.
(c) The university muda: For those respondents whose high school social environment was predominantly Spanish-speaking, university embodied their definitive encounter with bilingualism. At university level there is a wider presence of Catalan speakers and Spanish-speaking functional monolinguals are very rare.
(d) The workplace muda: At the workplace, bilingualism is the norm in the Catalan context, to the point that it is the social setting where the indexes of use of Catalan are highest.
(e) The new family muda: This partner muda was highly relevant in the case of new speakers who used no or little Catalan before, but whose partner’s habitual language use opened up the possibility of developing fluency that they reinforced through the partner’s family and networks of friends.
(f) The children muda: The parent-to-child communication yields the highest rates of minority language use in Catalonia.

Pujolar and Puigdevall (2015) conclude that new speakers cannot be silenced any more, which is why the future of Catalan (and that of many other minority languages) hinges on them, but without losing sight of the social sphere and the impact of the mudes. Thus, the mudes nicely fit within the so-called person-in-context relational view of language motivation put forward by Ushioda (2009). These results indicate that there is a need to focus research on “persons rather than on learners or individual differences in an abstract theoretical sense” (Ushioda, 2009, p. 216): How speakers construct relevant features of their social context happens to be more illuminating than any objective measure.

IMMIGRATION, LANGUAGE ATTITUDES, AND MOTIVATION

According to the Spanish Institute of Statistics, in January 2015 the total population in Spain reached 46,624,382 inhabitants, 4,729,644
of whom (10.1%) were of foreign origin. In the last decade the Spanish population has grown by around 3.5 million inhabitants, a rise explained mainly by the arrival of immigrants.

At the European level the European Commission has been striving in the last two decades to develop and implement policies aimed at securing the integration of immigrant children, adapting the education systems to the reality of these new students by promoting a more pluralistic and intercultural kind of school. Notwithstanding, the newly arrived students’ unfamiliarity with the language in which the teaching is done is a serious and immediate obstacle to their rapid integration, especially when they arrive in an officially bilingual region.

Although immigrant students’ attitudes toward Spanish are usually positive, especially among those whose home language is Spanish, those who come from Latin America, and those whose parents have a high socio-professional status, their attitudes toward the minority language often leave much to be desired. The following paragraphs review some of the most prominent studies tackling immigrant students’ language attitudes.

In a study limited to model A in the BAC, Ibarraran, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2008) observed that both local and immigrant students held negative attitudes toward Basque, whereas the attitudes toward Spanish were very positive and there was practically no rejection among the immigrant group as a whole. Immigrant students’ attitudes toward English were neutral/positive, results which concur with those obtained by Bernaus et al. (2004) in Catalonia. In both contexts the participants put forward two main reasons to explain their positive stance toward the foreign language—its role as lingua franca and its perceived usefulness for obtaining a job.

However, Rojo et al. (2010) report that immigrant students’ attitudes toward Basque were mainly neutral (37.4%) and favorable (41.2%), in contrast to the aforementioned results by Ibarraran et al. (2008). This dissonance was due to the fact that Rojo et al.’s sample also included students enrolled in models B and D, which, once again, underscores the significant impact of the linguistic models. However, when Rojo et al. (2010) compared Latinos with those immigrant students whose L1 was not Spanish, they also found that the former were significantly less positive toward Basque.

In line with the previously mentioned study, Huguet and Janés (2008) and Newman et al. (2008) observed that Latinos expressed more negative attitudes toward Catalan than any other immigrant group. Similarly, Lapresta, Huguet, and Janés (2010) carried out in-depth interviews among autochthonous and immigrant adolescents and detected that students of Latin American origin believed that Catalan should be learned by those immigrant students whose L1 is different from Spanish. Their opinion was based on the belief that Spanish is their mother tongue, it is a co-official language in Catalonia and, therefore, they should not be obliged to learn Catalan. Interestingly, they stated that learning Catalan was easier for those whose L1 was not Spanish. Nonetheless, the authors of the study observed that students who had a higher perception of social and school integration held the most positive attitudes toward Catalan. Thus, the students who felt more at ease in their social environment and who perceived themselves to be valued held the most positive attitudes toward both Catalan and Spanish.

In one of the few longitudinal studies available on immigrant students’ language attitudes, Ianos et al. (2017) explored changes in attitudes over a 2-year period. Their findings indicated that attitudes toward Catalan improved, while attitudes toward Spanish and English remained stable. The authors observed that, although Catalan was initially seen as a troublesome surprise (many immigrant students are unaware of the existence of another official language besides Spanish), as they became familiar with it they started to appreciate it because it helped to foster their social integration (they perceived the positive reactions elicited by their use of Catalan) and increased their opportunities in the job market. Despite the fact that attitudes toward Catalan tend to be relatively resistant to change among immigrant students, Ianos et al. conclude that attitude change can be encouraged and fostered, provided that attention is paid to the attitudinal component of the curriculum (Lasagabaster, 2014).

In Spain, immigrant students tend to hold more favorable attitudes toward Spanish and English than toward the minority languages. This is an issue of the utmost importance at a time of increasing immigration, not only in Spain, but on a global scale. Immigrant students need to become aware of the importance of learning and having positive attitudes toward minority languages and their use, because this will help them enhance their integration in the host communities not only from a social and personal perspective, but also from a professional one. Nowadays knowledge of the minority language has become a sine qua non condition for gaining access to many vacancies in the job market, such as the teaching profession,
the health system, or any other position related to the regional administration. Hence, immigrant students’ language learning motivation needs to be addressed so that the current education and language policies aimed at fostering the learning of the two co-official languages and English are successfully implemented. A pedagogy based on multilingual future selves could contribute to improving the situation by harmoniously aligning students’ L1-, L2-, and L3-speaking/using selves. Teachers working in multilingual settings and multilingual schools should work on the concept of possible selves in their classrooms and help students develop strong multilingual ideal selves. Teachers should discover who students in specific multilingual contexts strive to become and how their future selves affect their language learning motivation. In societies where multilingualism is highly valued, strengthening students’ multilingual ideal self is of the utmost importance. The combination of students’ cosmopolitan view of themselves (Newman et al., 2008) and their multilingual ideal self will bring not only individual but also social benefits.

The education system has to bend over backwards to foster positive attitudes toward the different languages in contact, because this will boost student’s motivation to learn them. However, the necessary measures cannot be restricted to linguistic issues. There is a compelling need to build bridges between the different ethnolinguistic groups that are represented in classrooms so that the lack of contact between autochthonous and immigrant students in some contexts, and even among the immigrant students themselves due to boundaries between ethnic groups (Lapresta et al., 2010; Trenchs–Parera & Newman, 2009), can be overcome. Knowledge of other languages and their cultures and the promotion of intercultural awareness and multilingual selves should help pave the way to multicultural and multilingual understanding, an enterprise of utmost importance at a time when immigration is a main concern of European institutions.

THE IMPACT OF THE INCREASING PRESENCE OF ENGLISH ON ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION

When language-related political tension arises, attitudes toward both minority and majority languages exacerbate, especially when English is incorporated into the linguistic equation by some vested interests with the aim of undermining the position of the minority language. This situation has a direct impact on all the stakeholders of the education system and sparks a linguistic conflict that may eventually have a significant bearing on students’ language learning motivation.

Reflecting global trends, today’s schoolchildren start to learn a foreign language sooner than ever as education authorities introduce early-start compulsory foreign language policies (Collins & Muñoz, 2016). A knock-on effect of globalization can be seen in the increasing importance attached to English in the curriculum in Spain and the rapid and widespread proliferation of CLIL programs in English on all rungs of the education ladder (Juan–Garau & Salazar–Noguera, 2015; Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010).

Despite the fact that Spanish students spend quite a few years trying to learn English, dissatisfaction is the common denominator when their proficiency is scrutinized. One of the measures undertaken to improve these frustrating results was the early introduction of English into the curriculum, implemented after the passing of the Education Reform Act in 1993. This established the teaching of English from the age of 8 onward (down from the age of 11). Indeed, some Spanish autonomous communities such as Catalonia and the BAC have gone further by setting up programs in which foreign language teaching starts at age 4. The desire to improve English proficiency has led education authorities to take yet another step, with the launch of CLIL programs. One of the main reasons posited by CLIL advocates to vigorously defend its implementation is that it enables English to be taught on a relatively intensive basis without taking up additional time in an already crammed school timetable.

This increasing presence of English has led some voices to warn against its purportedly negative effects on language competence and attitudes toward the minority language, while Spanish is believed to remain impervious due to its majority language status. In a study that researched language attitudes toward all languages in the curriculum, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009) reported that CLIL students held positive attitudes not only toward English, but also toward Spanish and Basque. When CLIL students were compared with non-CLIL students, the only significant differences were found in attitudes toward English, with CLIL students being significantly more favorably disposed. The authors conclude that CLIL does not negatively affect attitudes toward the two other languages present in the curriculum, despite the fears and concern expressed by some voices, particularly regarding the minority language.
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In Asian, European, and Latin American contexts CLIL is usually equated with teaching and learning in English, so much so that Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010) argue that “CLIL as a promoter of LOTE (languages other than English) has yet to reach its potential in the global arena and may not do so until after the ‘saturation’ of English as the CLIL medium” (p. 9). There is research that seems to indicate that the hegemony of English has a detrimental effect on students’ motivation to learn other foreign languages (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006; Henry, 2011), but this issue needs further research.

In the BAC, Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2014) observed that all main constituencies—teaching staff, students, and administration—supported the spread of multilingualism at university level. At the same time, students showed concerns about the possibility of English upstaging the incorporation of additional foreign languages, were critical about the imposition of English (or any other foreign language for that matter), and demanded a more prominent role for LOTEs. Importantly, all three university constituencies were against the possibility of having to achieve a certain standard in two foreign languages by the end of the degree. This was due to the fact that the University of the Basque Country (UBC) is an officially bilingual institution where the presence of English is increasing; thus, including an obligatory second foreign language would place an impossible strain (Basque + Spanish + English + a second foreign language) on many members of the community. In sum, while students show a positive stance (e.g., cognitive and affective attitudinal components) toward learning additional foreign languages, this multilingual complexity also makes them more skeptical about the conative component (their actual commitment).

Another way to analyze the attitudinal and motivational landscape in Spain is through Dörnyei’s (2009) L2 Motivational Self System. This model encompasses three components: two forms of possible selves and the learning experience. The first component is the ideal L2 self and refers to the person the individual would like to become as a speaker of the L2. The ideal L2 self generates motivation which reduces the discrepancy between our actual and our ideal selves. The second component is the ought-to L2 self and refers to the attributes (duties, obligations, responsibilities) one believes one ought to possess to meet the expectations of significant others. The final component is the L2 learning experience, that is, the motives related to the environment in which the language is being learned and the language learning experience. With this framework in mind, Lasagabaster (2016) confirmed that in English-medium instruction contexts undergraduate students’ motivation is generated by self-identification processes, specifically by students’ aspiration toward an imagined L2 future self, as well as by the English-medium instruction (EMI) learning experience itself. Conversely, the ought-to L2 self played a subservient, insignificant role, as university students do not feel obliged to meet the expectations of others.

From a multilingual perspective, this self-based approach can pave the way to examining different selves (i.e., L2, L3, LX selves) and how they interact, a research approach that should help overcome the limitations of previous context-independent research on motivation (Ushioda, 2009). This is an issue well worth considering because studies suggest that “individuals’ L2 and L3 self-concepts are interrelated and, further, that when one of these languages is English, the self-concept for the other may be negatively affected” (Henry, 2011, p. 237). However, and in order to prevent the L2 Motivational Self System from becoming a somewhat static category system (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), L2 and L3 self-concepts have to be approached from a more situated understanding, as this will provide insights into the subtle changes that students’ self-concepts undergo “as a result of their interrelations with one another, as well as with other self-conceptions and forms of self-knowledge that are present in cognition” (Henry, 2011, p. 238). Moreover, studies on English as an L3 are needed because the majority of researchers address it as an L2 (Henry, 2011).

Against this backdrop, Lasagabaster (2016) also considered the influence of students’ L1 on their motivation to learn English as an L3, since previous studies carried out in the BAC in the early 2000s showed that Basque L1 students regarded English as a threat to the minority language which prompted “Basque speakers to build attitudinal fences in order to stand up for their linguistic rights” (Lasagabaster, 2004, p. 221). However, the results obtained in 2016 revealed that there has been an attitudinal change and Basque L1 students are nowadays more motivated than those researched a decade ago. The previous conflicting picture between global (embodied by English as L3) and local (represented by Basque as L1) forces seems to have waned significantly because participation of the minoritized community has widened, a context in which EMI may help to overcome previous misgivings. These results indicate that attitudinal and motivational studies have
to be undertaken at different points in time if a clear picture of a particular context is to be obtained: Changes may take place in as short a time period as a decade, especially when a new approach such as EMI becomes more commonplace. Although previous research has proved that the L2 self remains one of a number of the components implicated in the development of the L3 self (Henry, 2011), Lasagabaster’s study (2016) seems to indicate that the L1 ideal self also needs to be considered.

These results open up a new avenue of research, inasmuch as both L1 and L2 selves may play a role in L3 motivation. Researchers working on multilingualism (Cenoz, 2013; De Angelis, 2007; Jessner, 2006) claim that monolingual and bilingual perspectives are not sufficient to account for the complex processes involved in multilingual contexts. They argue that the learners’ previous linguistic knowledge (their L1 and L2) is activated when learning an L3 and this interactive process also seems to apply to L3 motivation, as both the L1 and L2 ideal selves seem to interrelate with the ideal L3 self. Because the number of students learning an L3 is steadily increasing all over the world, multilingual pedagogies are much in demand: Students’ future self-image should be in harmony not only with other parts of their self-concept (i.e., the ideal and ought-to selves), as proposed by Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014), but also with all the languages encompassed in their multilingual self (i.e., L1, L2, and L3).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

From an international perspective, four main implications can be drawn. First, schools and higher education institutions should pay more attention to the attitudinal component of the curriculum in an attempt to defuse the language tensions generated by social debates. The education system should foster a cosmopolitan attitude (Newman & Trenchs–Parera, 2015) so that students naturally accept other groups’ linguistic preferences and uses. This is an indispensable step to take if social cohesion and the coexistence of diverse identities and languages are to be fostered. More specifically, in answering the first focal question of this special issue—whether current motivational perspectives can help account for the motivation to learn LOTEs)—it may be useful to invoke the concept of vision, understood as “one of the highest-order motivational forces, one that is particularly fitting to explain the long-term, and often lifelong, process of mastering a second language” (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014, p. 4). For students to develop into the kind of multilingual speakers they would like to become, long-term and multi-perspectival efforts are needed. For example, to avoid the common occurrence that immigrant students relinquish their linguistic heritage they should be exposed to writers, artists, TV and cinema actors, and sportspeople who are fully bilingual role models: “modeling is known to be highly effective in changing people’s attitudes” (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014, p. 62). It goes without saying that, before any motivational intervention based on vision is implemented, it is indispensable to understand multilingual students’ identity concerns and to gain insight into learners’ self-beliefs in other domains connected with their language learning life history (Mercer, 2011; Pujolar & Puigdevall, 2015).

Second, with regard to the impact of English, its hegemonic position as the main lingua franca is related to students’ lack of motivation to learn other foreign languages (Dörnyei et al., 2006; Henry, 2011) both at the macro (Europe/Asia/America) and micro (Hungary/Spain/Canada/Mexico/United States) levels. The widespread belief that English is a sine qua non condition for development exerts great pressure on families and schools, which is why in the Spanish context the ought-to component stands out and motivation to learn English remains constant both in primary and secondary education (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2015; Uranga, 2013). At the same time, it is worth considering the extent to which English may also inhibit the development of local/coexisting languages. It is striking that the analysis of multiple selves has hardly drawn researchers’ interests (but see Henry, 2011; Lasagabaster, 2016), despite the potential benefits of a pedagogy that takes into account students’ full possible selves. In that case, our understanding of language learning motivation would be informed by research that explores the interconnection of different ideal selves. Studies reveal that students need to gain heightened awareness of who they are as multilingual speakers, as they are hardly ever invited to reflect on their multilingual self (Pedrosa & Lasagabaster, 2011) despite the fact that this self-exploratory process may help to surmount negative attitudes toward some languages. Potential research agendas should consider longitudinal case studies of the impact of a pedagogy based on developing multiple selves and how this affects language learning motivation, paying special heed to how English bears on additional foreign language learning.
While motivation researchers tend to analyze a student’s self-system from an individual perspective (one language at a time), in future research it would be productive to delve into it from a holistic perspective in which languages are not considered in isolation but rather as dynamically interrelated and interdependent (Jessner, 2006; see also Sugita McEown, Sawaki & Harada 2017, this issue). Therefore, researchers should pay attention to how L1, L2, and L3 ideal selves interact so that practical implications can be drawn that may help teachers develop students’ multilingual self systems. Indeed, scholars like Cenoz (2013), De Angelis (2007), and Jessner (2006) claim that the multilingual ideal speaker should be the focus of both researchers and teachers, while the monolingual ideal speaker should be relinquished once and for all. In order to reach this goal, monolingual parameters should be abandoned to start working with multilingual parameters in mind.

In the case of Spain, multilingual language policies are helping to avert the potential conflicts between multiple self-concepts, as the status of all the languages concerned is reaffirmed by their use as means of instruction. Within the social turn of applied linguistics, studies on identity and investment led Darvin and Norton (2015) to assert that “language constructs our sense of self, and that identity is multiple, changing and a site of struggle” (p. 36). These authors highlight the fact that learners invest in a language if they believe that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, and that this will increase their cultural value and social power. It is in this context that investment becomes a sociological complement to the psychological construct of motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). For example, a Latino student in the United States may have a strong ideal Spanish self, but it may be hindered by her ought-to self, as the teachers expect her to improve her English while shunning her heritage language. However, if bilingual programs are enacted, both Spanish and English will be on an equal basis and students will be more willing to invest in both languages.

Reference to the implementation of bilingual programs leads us to the third implication. It is an undeniable fact that not all the languages spoken in a given country can be officially recognized. However, all languages should be accepted in some social spheres such as school. It is paradoxical that many of those who are strongly in favor of a laissez-faire policy when it comes to economic issues, are usually dead against a laissez-faire policy in education and, in fact, deliberately enforce restrictive policies for bilingual education (Wiley & García, 2016). Bilingual education programs do foster linguistic cosmopolitanism and encourage social harmony, social integration, respect for all language groups, as well as the coexistence of diverse identities, while competition between the official and minority languages is minimized. Lack of any kind of recognition of the languages spoken within a particular society generates tensions, whereas a cosmopolitan framework at school avoids artificial binary oppositions (Woolard & Frekko, 2013) and enables students to hold positive attitudes toward all languages. If students’ languages and cultures are not recognized in the school curriculum, they will hardly identify with what they are taught.

Finally, by promoting a more pluralistic and intercultural school, education authorities will contribute to securing the integration of immigrant children, an issue of the utmost importance when partisan and anti-immigrant discourse is becoming more and more commonplace. The globalization process has led to an enormous flow of immigrants all over the world. If immigrant students feel that they are valued and at ease in their social environment, they will embrace the host country’s language and culture. The current globalized context demands the education of the general public about the benefits of bilingualism as social, economic, and cultural capital, while cogent arguments have to be put forward concerning why minority languages ought to be supported, how bilingual programs foster language learning motivation in particular and learning in general, and why multilingualism should be a desired goal.

CONCLUSION

The Spanish experience demonstrates that, when students observe that minority languages appear in a positive light at school and social levels, a positive attitudinal change takes place, the mudes are more likely to take place (Pujolar & Puigdevall, 2015), and the gap between students’ actual and their future ideal selves is bridged—developments that favorably impact all the languages concerned (Ianos et al., 2017).

In Spain, certain vested political interests are prone to spread the stereotypical and misguided idea that new speakers are supporters of Basque/Catalan/Galician nationalism, whereas studies indicate that the majority of new speakers reject the influence of such nationalism and position their motivation and the reasons for their language shift from Spanish into the minority language “within a discourse of linguistic human rights” (O’Rourke & Ramallo, 2015, p. 157). This
may explain the fact that, despite high levels of social and above all political conflict and some mischievous efforts to present English and the minority language as exclusive rather than complementary, multilingual language policies have exerted a positive impact on students’ language attitudes and language learning motivation.

Taken together, the results indicate that bilingualism in the two local languages and multilingualism (by including English in the linguistic equation) are highly esteemed by the majority of the population living in officially bilingual Spanish regions. This is especially noteworthy in the case of the younger generation who support a cosmopolitan attitude that is in sharp “contrast to the traditional ideology of one language-one people-one nation lingering in Spanish media” (Newman & Trenchs–Parera, 2015, p. 291). The education system—through teachers’ everyday classroom practice—should therefore continue to foster an ideal self that encompasses a cosmopolitan view of language learning motivation so that students’ learning experience becomes really multilingual.

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NOTE

1 The letter C does not exist in the modern Basque alphabet and, since the labels for the models needed to be the same in both Basque and Spanish, model C became model D.

REFERENCES


