Heritage Language Learners' Attitudes Towards Familiar Varieties of Spanish

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Abstract: Research on Spanish Heritage Language Learners' (SHLLs) language attitudes has demonstrated they typically present positive attitudes towards their Spanish HL and their Spanish classes. Nevertheless, other research shows that SHLLs still rely on dominant ideologies and discourses in society when discussing their language abilities, suggesting that they are aware of these negative attitudes present in society. This study answers the call for more research regarding language attitudes of SHLLs towards U.S. Spanish and dialect awareness as well as the need for critical language awareness in the classroom. It also contributes to the line of research by analyzing SHLLs' attitudes towards two familiar varieties: a U.S. contact variety of Spanish and a monolingual Mexican Spanish variety. A total of 14 intermediate-level SHLLs' attitudes were analyzed by direct and indirect methods to answer the following research questions: 1. What are the SHLLs attitudes towards a U.S. contact variety of Spanish and a monolingual Mexican Spanish variety? 2. How are these attitudes reflected through direct and indirect methods? Results demonstrate that participants did not have negative attitudes towards either variety of Spanish. Indirect methodology did not demonstrate any significant disparateness. However, the direct methodology produced distinct attitudes towards both varieties, showing that participants overall had greater positive attitudes towards the monolingual variety.

Keywords: Spanish as a Heritage Language, language attitudes, Spanish in the U.S., matched guise

Introduction

Sociolinguistic research on language attitudes "underpin all manner of sociolinguistic and social psychological phenomena: how we judge other individuals, how we position ourselves within social groups, how we relate to individuals and groups other than our own" (Garrett, Coupland and Williams 2003: 12). Previous research of language attitudes in the SHL (Spanish as a heritage language) classroom have demonstrated that SHLLs can show positive (e.g., Alarcón 2010; Carrasco and Riegelhaupt 2003; Ducar 2008; Sanchez-Muñoz and Amezcua 2019) as well as negative (e.g., Beaudrie and Ducar 2005; Potowski 2002; Sánchez-Muñoz 2016, Vana 2020) attitudes towards their HL variety. Furthermore, research has shown that students that present the most negative attitudes in the spectrum of HLLs tend to be receptive bilinguals (Beaudrie and Ducar 2005).

Given the heterogeneity of SHLLs, this dichotomy is not startling, and it is due to each student having different experiences with their language variety. However, it is pertinent to keep studying the attitudes students bring to the classroom as this can inform our teaching and pedagogies and how as instructors, we can invite positive attitudes towards students' varieties and others. This

study answers the call for more research on language attitudes of SHLLs towards U.S. Spanish and dialect awareness (Ducar 2012; Leeman and Serafini 2016) by analyzing intermediate-level SHLLs attitudes towards a U.S. contact variety of Spanish and a monolingual Mexican Spanish variety.

Literature Review

In the U.S. context, Valdés (2001) defines a Heritage Language (HL) as "all non-English languages including those spoken by native American peoples" (39). Moreover, in the instances that bi/multilingual speakers choose to formally enroll in a language course of its HL, these students do not fit the description of second language learners (L2s) and therefore have different needs and bring different experiences and skills to the classroom. A student with this type of background would be classified as a HLL. For the purposes of this study, the author adapts Valdés (2001)'s definition which describes a HLL as an individual who "is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken. The student may speak or merely understand the heritage language and be, to some degree, bilingual in English and the heritage language" (Valdés 2001: 1). This spectrum makes for many SHLLs' needs, and just as their linguistic knowledge can vary, their attitudes towards their heritage dialect and towards other dialects of the Spanish language can differ. Previous research on SHLLs attitudes in the classroom has accounted for positive attitudes towards their Spanish HL and their Spanish classes (Alarcón 2010; Beaudrie and Ducar 2005; Beaudrie and Fairclough 2012; Carrasco and Riegelhaupt 2003; Carreira and Kagan 2011). However, Beaudrie and Ducar (2005) also found that the students with the most negative attitudes in the spectrum of HLLs are the receptive bilinguals, which if enrolled in an HL course, are typically found in the earlier levels. The authors demonstrate these negative attitudes were typically associated with the nervous feeling these students felt while speaking Spanish (Beaudrie and Ducar 2005).

Along with positive attitudes, previous research conducted in SHL programs has shown that students have an interest in learning different varieties of Spanish. For example, Ducar (2008) surveyed 152 students who expressed their goal was to learn a Mexican or Mexican American variety of Spanish as well as an academic variety of Spanish. Additionally, the author found that the majority of the students wanted their own Spanish dialect corrected. The author postulates this could be due to internalized stigmas associated with U.S. Spanish varieties as well as considering their varieties "not proper." In a different study that analyzes students' linguistic self-esteem, Sanchez-Muñoz (2016) surveys and interviews 50 Latino students, mostly of Mexican descent. Aside from demonstrating that over the course of a year students had improved in their Spanish skills, the author also finds that HLLs were interested in learning a Mexican or Mexican-American variety of the language due to the fear of rejection from their own community.

Similarly, Beaudrie and Fairclough (2012) find that many HLLs have the integrative motivation to gain access to their local Spanish-speaking community.

Positive attitudes towards both the HL and various dialects of a language and its cultures have been identified as one of the goals of HL instruction (Valdés 1995). Furthermore, a lack of positive attitudes could affect the progress towards other goals such as language maintenance. It is also pertinent to mention that in the U.S., Spanish being both a historical and immigrant language has been looked down upon by society. Moreover, Vana (2020) demonstrated that Hispanics often have negative attitudes towards their ancestral language and that these attitudes can vary according to different geographical areas. Additionally, a stigma towards "nonstandard" varieties of Spanish still exists. Phenomena associated with the linguistic contact that occurs between English and Spanish such as codeswitching or translanguaging that is present in U.S. Spanish is considered to be less prestigious compared to monolingual varieties of Spanish (Escobar and Potowski 2015; Leeman and Serafini 2016; Toribio 2002; Vana 2020). Moreover, these contact varieties are charged with dominant hegemonic ideologies (Beaudrie et al. 2014; Potowski 2002; Sánchez-Muñoz 2016). However, many researchers agree that a "standard variety" represents the prestige society gives to a certain variety and does not indicate a superior variety exists (Beaudrie, Ducar and Potowski 2014: 201). Moreover, it is considered an "abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions" (Lippi-Green, 2012: 67). Ideals of the "standard" are always in conflict with languages in contact and the stigmatization of languages in contact usually appear when these varieties are compared to monolingual varieties of a language (Amaste and Elías-Olivares 1982). These comparisons can make HLLs create negative attitudes towards their Spanish dialect. However, more recently, researchers have shown that varieties spoken in the U.S. are required and needed in various contexts, such as doctor-patient interactions (Beaudrie, Ducar and Potowski 2014; Martinez 2010).

In sum, researchers have recommended that HL instructors teach the value of the students' own Spanish dialects alongside an "academic" or "standard" variety (Beaudrie and Ducar 2005; Ducar 2006; Martinez 2003). Additionally, HL classrooms must encourage positive attitudes towards the HLLs varieties of Spanish, as more positive attitudes can lead to language maintenance. Since many HLLs speak a U.S. contact variety of Spanish, this study analyzes HLLs' perceptions and attitudes towards a variety of U.S. Spanish and a monolingual Mexican Spanish variety.

Methodology

To investigate language attitudes towards a U.S. contact dialect of Spanish as well as a monolingual standard Mexican dialect of Spanish, two methods

were utilized. First, the author used an indirect method, which included a matched-guise test. The matched-guise technique has been used in many studies that observe language attitudes (e.g., Abrams et al. 1988; Cargile et al. 1994; Fernández-Mallat and Carey, 2017; Garrett et al. 2003; Lambert et al. 1960; Vana 2020). Additionally, this technique is considered an indirect approach of obtaining language attitudes from speakers given that speakers are aware that the test is an attitude task but are unaware of what exactly they are rating (Garret 2010). The second method, coined a direct method, focused on the participants' conscious reflection towards what was heard during the matched guise. In a way, this second method functioned as a stimulated recall and allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of the attitudes the participants held.

The data comes from 14 HLLs from two intermediate-level Spanish as HL courses at a university in the Southwest. While the courses were of intermediate level, they are the first two sections offered in the HL program at this institution. With the instructor's permission, the researcher promoted the study in the classroom, and consent forms and the sociolinguistic background questionnaires (Carreira 2011) were handed to all interested students. All participants were born in the United States except for one who was born in Colombia but moved to the United States when they were 10 months old. All participants were second or third generation, twelve out of fourteen of Mexican heritage and two out of fourteen of South American heritage (Ecuador and Colombia).

Both the indirect and direct methods in this study were designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the SHLLs' attitudes towards a U.S. Spanish contact variety and a monolingual Mexican variety of Spanish?
2. How are these attitudes reflected through the indirect and direct methods?

The matched-guise test for the present study included eight guises: four female and four male. All guises were recorded by four colleagues who were also HL speakers of Spanish. Each speaker produced two guises, one with lexical characteristics of a U.S. Spanish contact variety and the other with lexical characteristics of a monolingual Mexican variety. For example, while the U.S. Spanish passage uses the word *bloques* for "blocks," the monolingual Mexican passage uses the word *cuadras*. The guise volunteers' sociolinguistic awareness and language background allowed the volunteers to be able to produce both varieties. A total of eight guise recordings were alternated so that the same speaker's voice did not play twice in a row; this step is important so that the participants are not able to tell that the same person recorded two different voices. The voices representing the Mexican monolingual variety were guise 2, guise 4, guise 5, and guise 7; the voices representing the U.S. Spanish variety were guise 1, guise 3, guise 6, and guise 8. Additional measures such as inserting silence at the beginning and end of each of the audio files and having all the guises recorded

in the exact way were utilized (Fernández-Mallat and Carey 2017; Garrett 2010). Below are the passages that were read by the guise volunteers, a passage adapted from Roca (2012).

Monolingual Mexican Variety

Querida María Luisa:

¿Qué te cuento? Encontré un **departamento** cerca de la Universidad. Estoy sólo a unas seis **cuadras**. ¿Te imaginas lo conveniente que es vivir tan cerca y no tener que vivir en los dormitorios? Es ideal. Se me hace tan fácil caminar a la universidad para enseñar. Casi todos los **inquilinos** que viven en el **edificio** son estudiantes graduados como yo. Durante la semana de **inscripción** conocí a otro estudiante de posgrado de Mérida, su nombre es Pablo Reyes. Estudia ingeniería y maneja una **camioneta** del 56.

El sábado Pablo vino a ayudar a Felipe (el **gerente** del **edificio**) a cortar el pasto. Comenzamos a hablar y resulta que estamos en la misma clase de literatura —y ni nos habíamos visto. Para mí la literatura, es una de mis **clases** favoritas, pero para él no. Ya te contaré más detalles después que lo conozca mejor. Mañana vamos a **comer** y después (si conseguimos **boletos**), iremos a ver una actuación de Culture Clash. ¿Los has visto alguna vez? Bueno, te escribo más mañana o pasado mañana. **Hasta la próxima.**

U.S. Contact Variety

Querida María Luisa:

¿Qué te cuento? Encontré un **apartamento** cerca de la Universidad. Estoy a sólo unos seis **bloques**. ¿Te imaginas lo conveniente que es vivir tan cerca y no tener que vivir en los dormitorios? Es ideal. Se me hace tan fácil caminar a la universidad para enseñar. Casi todos los **tenientes** que viven en el **bilding** son estudiantes graduados como yo. Durante la semana de **registración** conocí a otro estudiante graduado de Mérida que se llama Pablo Reyes. Estudia ingeniería y maneja una **troca** del 56.

El sábado Pablo vino a ayudar a Felipe (el **manejador** del **bilding**) a cortar la **yarda**. Comenzamos a hablar y resulta que estamos en la misma clase de literatura —y ni nos habíamos visto. Para mi la literatura, es uno de mis **sujetos** favoritos, pero para él no. Ya te contaré más después

que lo conozca mejor. Mañana vamos a **comer lonche** juntos y después (si conseguimos **tiquets**) iremos a ver una actuación de *Culture Clash*. ¿Los has visto alguna vez? Bueno, te escribo más mañana o pasado. **Bye**.

The matched-guise test required the participants to rate the eight guises they heard. They were all provided with a survey per guise and each survey had a list of 14 polar adjectives with five empty slots in the middle, in order for the participants to be able to choose towards which side they gravitated. The complete list of adjectives and randomized positive poles were obtained from Duisberg (2001) and are provided below.

1. friendly	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	unfriendly
2. hard-working	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	lazy
3. cold	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	warm
4. unsuccessful	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	successful
5. independent	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	dependent
6. fake	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	sincere
7. wealthy	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	poor
8. talented	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	below average
9. a good friend	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	a poor friend
10. stupid	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	intelligent
11. selfish	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	generous
12. thoughtless	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	caring
13. strong	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	weak
14. boring	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	exciting

Using the survey, participants placed an 'X' where they saw fit. As the list shows, some items begin with the positive pole, while some begin with the negative pole. Depending on where the participant put the 'X' a number was assigned. In each pairing, the space closer to the negative adjective had a value of '1', while the space closer to the positive adjective had a value of '5'. Each voice could get as low as 14 points and as high as 70 points.

Additionally, the adjectives were divided into two semantic groups, the solidarity group (1, 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14) and the socio-intellectual prestige group (2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13) (Duisberg 2001). Following this distinction, each voice could get a minimum of 7 points and a maximum of 35 points for each semantic group, meaning that the solidarity group involving the seven items 1, 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14 could get as low as 7 points if all adjectives were scored towards the maximum negative pole and 35 points if all adjectives were scored towards the maximum positive pole. A representation of how the points were tabulated is presented below.

4. unsuccessful	1 2 3 4 5	successful
9. a good friend	5 4 3 2 1	a poor friend

The direct methods of the survey focused on asking the participants if they considered the oral passages to be "good" Spanish as well as if they were familiar with the Spanish they heard. No definition of what they should have considered "good" Spanish was given to them. Therefore, this was left to their interpretation. Below, I present the statements as the students saw them which were also adapted from Duisberg (2001).

1. The Spanish I just heard on this tape was "good" Spanish.
   Agree Disagree
2. I am familiar with the type of Spanish that was spoken on this tape.
   Agree Disagree

The values provided for each voice in each survey were summed up so that each voice had a total numerical value. The four voices that represented the monolingual variety were then added to obtain a numerical total for the monolingual score. The same was done with the voices that portrayed the contact variety. As mentioned above, each voice could get as low as 14 points and as high as 70 points per participant, if this is multiplied by the 14 participants, the total points a voice could obtain was 980 points. To determine the numerical totals regarding the two varieties and the two semantic categories, the values pertaining to the solidarity group were added separately from the values belonging to the prestige category. The questions where students had to agree or disagree were given 1 point for agreeing and 0 for disagreeing. Each variety could obtain a total of 56 points per question. Due to always differentiating the values totaled for the monolingual variety versus the contact variety, the scores were analyzed by means of a paired t-test to establish if statistical differences were present between the monolingual and contact Spanish voices.

Results

Table 1 and Table 2 present the matched-guise total scores pertaining to the adjectives rated by the participants. Table 1 shows the numerical total given to the monolingual variety voices. The sum calculated for all voices in the monolingual variety group was 70.7%. Similarly, Table 2 illustrates the total for all voices representing the U.S. Spanish variety, the total given by all participants was 69.6%. These results suggest that attitudes towards both the monolingual and contact varieties are relatively positive due to percentages being above 50%.

Additionally, the differences in the scores were not significant according to the paired t-test conducted.

Table 1. Combined participant ratings of monolingual variety voices

	Voice 2	**Voice 4**	**Voice 5**	**Voice 7**	**Total**
P1-P14	687/980	686/980	692/980	710/980	2775/3920
Total %					*70.7%*

Table 2. Combined participant ratings of U.S. contact variety voices

	Voice 1	**Voice 3**	**Voice 6**	**Voice 8**	**Total**
P1-P14	634/980	687/980	711/980	700/980	2732/3920
Total %					*69.6%*

The second set of results focus on how the participants rated the voices according to the semantic groups of the adjectives. The semantic groups were solidarity and prestige. As shown in Figure 1, participants gave a total rating of 70.3% to both the monolingual variety and the contact variety when assessing the adjectives in the solidarity group. However, when rating prestige-related adjectives, the participants' ratings indicated that 71.2% of respondents felt the monolingual variety was higher prestige than the contact variety (69%). Similar to the first set of results with all adjectives combined, the participants appear to give similar solidarity and prestige ratings towards both varieties presented to them. A paired t-test used on the ratings showed that the differences were not statistically significant.

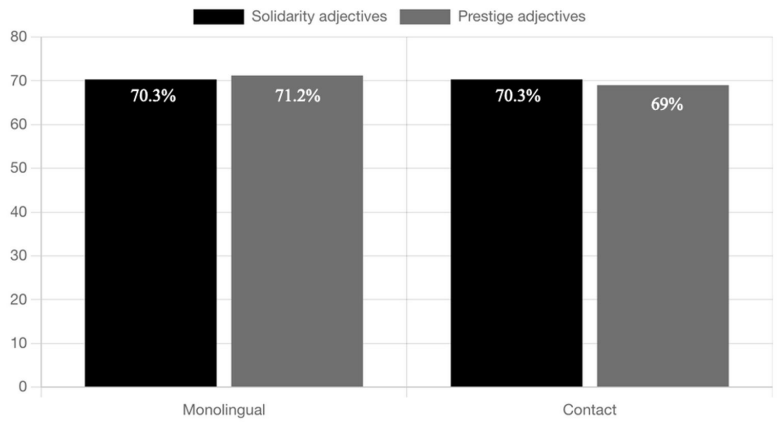

Fig. 1. Solidarity versus prestige ratings towards the monolingual and contact varieties

The third set of results focus on the direct method used to gather the SHLLs attitudes. As previously stated, the direct methods presented two statements where the students had to 'agree' or 'disagree'. Table 3 shows the ratings to the question "The Spanish I just heard on this tape was "good" Spanish." 87% of participants felt the monolingual Spanish variety represented "good" Spanish, while only 73% judged the contact variety was "good." Similar to what previous results showed via indirect methods, participants appear to have positive attitudes towards both varieties. However, in the agree vs disagree portion, participants' higher acceptance towards the monolingual variety surface. Additionally, the result of the paired t-test suggested the differences were significant with a p-value of p=.022.

Finally, Table 4 shows the results for the last statement the participants had to agree or disagree with, "I am familiar with the type of Spanish that was spoken on this tape." Results demonstrated that participants were familiar with both the monolingual and contact varieties and attributed very similar scores, 82%, and 80% respectively. These results were expected due to carefully selecting the volunteers to record the guises. Outcomes suggest that the participants rated their attitudes and perceptions according to varieties that were familiar to them. The paired t-test showed this difference was not significant.

Table 3. Combined participant ratings agreeing with the statement, "The Spanish I just heard on this tape was 'good' Spanish."

	Monolingual	**Contact**
P1-P14	49/56	41/56
Total %	87%	73%

Table 4. Combined participant ratings agreeing with the statement, "I am familiar with the type of Spanish that was spoken on this tape."

	Monolingual	**Contact**
P1-P14	46/56	45/56
Total %	82%	80%

Discussion

To gain a better understanding of the results, this section will answer this study's research questions and present how the outcomes of the present study can help with pedagogical implications. The first research question queried "What are the SHLLs attitudes towards a U.S. Spanish contact variety and a monolingual Mexican variety of Spanish?" The results suggest that the SHLLs enrolled in the first two sections of the HL program at this specific university do not have negative attitudes towards a U.S. contact variety of Spanish nor towards

a monolingual Mexican variety of Spanish. These results corroborate with previous literature showing SHHLs have positive attitudes towards their Spanish varieties (Alarcón 2010; Beaudrie and Ducar 2005; Beaudrie and Fairclough 2012; Carrasco and Riegelhaupt 2003). In addition, when the adjectives were divided by semantic groups (solidarity vs prestige), the results showed no significant difference was present and overall rated both Spanish varieties positively. The second research question asked, "How are these attitudes reflected through the indirect and direct methods?" When comparing the indirect versus direct methods, it appears that the indirect methodology did not reveal any significant difference as both varieties were rated positively and the paired t-tests between the ratings were not significant. While the direct methods by way of agree versus disagree questions also presented positive attitudes towards both varieties, the statement "The Spanish I just heard on this tape was "good" Spanish." caused the most dissimilitude between the students' answers. In fact, it was the only set of results where the differences resulted to be significant by way of the paired t-test. Although both varieties received positive feedback when students were asked if the Spanish was "good", the monolingual variety received more agreement that it was a "good" variety. On the other hand, the U.S. Spanish variety received less agreement but was still positive overall. This may suggest that students are more direct with their attitudes and perceptions when being asked specific questions about certain varieties. However, their answers to the direct questions could also be influenced by standard language ideologies.

Given the results of this study, pedagogical implications that can support instructors in the SHL classroom to guide students to appreciate all varieties of Spanish as equally "good" are needed. Keeping in mind that these are the first two SHL levels at this university, these will be salient spaces to expand these positive language attitudes which are not only one of the goals of SHL instruction but can also help retain students in future courses within the program. One recommendation is to continue the instruction of these courses through a critical language approach focusing on the principles of Critical Language Awareness (CLA). In their chapter about reimagining the HL goals through a CLA lens, Beaudrie and Wilson (2021) mention that one of the ways to create positive attitudes is to question negative societal attitudes towards their HL variety. They argue that when students are conscious of these topics and become part of the discussion, this can help students understand that the attitudes they uphold may have been shaped by greater societal forces. This can help students understand that every variety of Spanish is just as good and that there is no need to place one as better than another. Additionally, the instructors' CLA training must be efficient as the lack of efficient training can continue to upkeep negative attitudes.

Another helpful method to include in the classroom is the use of Community Service Learning (CSL). This methodology has been described as one that "goes

beyond the classroom and looks to the surrounding communities as cultural, social, and linguistic resources for academic and civic learning" (Lowther-Pereira 2016: 238). Having students interact with their communities and experience how valuable it is to speak the varieties they speak can help with motivation and develop more positive attitudes towards their varieties. Not many empirical studies exist that observe the effects of CSL on HL instruction. However, Pascual y Cabo, Prada, and Lowther Pereira (2017) conducted pre and post CSL surveys with 42 intermediate SHLLs and found that once the students completed the CSL experience, their involvement resulted in a positive experience that not only helped develop their linguistic abilities but also made then more comfortable with their Spanish variety and its use outside the classroom. Any activity that encourages the student to use Spanish in spaces they may not have in the past can help with this motivation and positive attitudes. For example, Amezcua (2019) showed that SHLLs expressed a higher motivation to maintain Spanish by doing community projects where they volunteered in an organization in the student's community and using Spanish.

Lastly, as instructors, we should help the students challenge these ideas of what is "good" Spanish. Instructors can help engage students in the conversation of what students consider "good" Spanish and help examine these thoughts by highlighting the realities of languages and their characteristics and changes. For example, if a student believes that a characteristic of a "good" variety of Spanish is one that does not involve characteristics of another language, instructors can demonstrate to students how all Spanish varieties have at the very least lexical borrowings or adaptations whether they come from English, an indigenous language or any other language that has been in contact with each variety of Spanish even the varieties spoken by monolingual speakers.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to add to the body of literature focused on understanding SHLLs attitudes and perceptions towards familiar varieties. The results suggested that the students who participated in this study, students in the two first sections of the SHL program at an institution in the Southwest generally have positive attitudes towards the presented U.S. contact variety as well as towards the Mexican monolingual variety. However, some students still believe that the monolingual variety is still better than the contact variety. Given the results, pedagogical implications were provided to aid the students to learn to create equal appreciation to their own varieties. These pedagogical implications highlight the importance of a CLA pedagogical approach, the utilization of CSL methods, and the importance of having students question societal lexical conventions.

Although the present study provided relevant insight and mostly positive results regarding the attitudes that these SHHLs uphold, the study had a few limitations. First, the study was conducted towards the end of the semester, results may show that the goal of instruction which is to develop positive attitudes in the students had been employed efficiently. Conducting pre and post studies in a semester could have helped to understand if the methods of instructions were a factor in creating positive attitudes. Additionally, this study would benefit from an increased number of participants, which will be applied in the future. Further research would also explore what the SHLLs are aware of regarding societal attitudes and ideologies, in order to make a better connection to the prejudices of society and the attitudes of the SHLLs.

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