Sample abstract:

**How discussing bilingualism influences language perspectives: Measuring Spanish learners’ attitudes towards bilingualism in the Midwest**

This study investigates second language (L2) Spanish learners’ attitudes towards bilingualism and language learning. Attitudes play a significant role in student success (Cummins, 2000), and “negative attitudes…can reduce learners’ motivation and harm language learning, whereas positive attitudes can do the opposite,” (Merisuo-Storm, 2007, p. 228). Despite their importance, few studies explore how to improve language attitudes, in addition to measuring them. In response, this research aims to assess whether a brief classroom intervention involving a short lesson on bilingualism can improve language attitudes. The lesson covered topics such as definitions of bilingualism, characteristics of bilingual people, common myths and realities, opportunities for using languages other than English in the U.S., and more.

Participants consisted of 166 novice-intermediate L2 Spanish learners from multiple Midwestern universities in the U.S. Students were randomly divided into two groups: Group 1 received the lesson on bilingualism before taking a survey on language attitudes, while Group 2 took the survey before receiving the lesson. The online survey, adapted from the Language Attitudes Questionnaire (Cook, 2001), included quantitative questions that measured attitudes towards bilingualism and language learning. The total time for the lesson and survey was approximately 20 minutes.

Results indicated that students in Group 1 exhibited stronger and more consistently positive attitudes towards bilingualism and language learning as compared to Group 2. Additionally, the differences were larger among intermediate-level students as compared to novice-level students. These findings suggest that knowledge about bilingualism as a concept has a positive correlation with students’ language attitudes, particularly as they advance in proficiency. This study offers valuable insights for L2 educators and researchers as it presents a realistic approach to improving attitudes in the language classroom. Future research will investigate the long-term effects of the lesson and its influence on actual language proficiency.

***Keywords****: bilingualism, L2 learning, Spanish, attitudes*

**Research questions:**

1. Does learning explicitly about bilingualism impact novice-intermediate L2 learners’ attitudes towards bilingualism and language learning?
2. How do the attitudes towards bilingualism and language learning differ between students who have received explicit instruction about bilingualism and those who have not?
3. Does learning explicitly about bilingualism impact students differently based on proficiency level?

(Experiment) Group A: Students with last names A-M; Read through the lesson **before** taking the survey

(Control) Group B: Students with last names N-Z; Took the survey **before** reading the lesson

Participants: Students in novice-intermediate Spanish classes (levels 1-4) from multiple universities in the Midwest

We are first interested in the following 5 questions because they use a 5-point scale and we believe they are directly affected by the lesson:

1. How much do you like the idea of being/becoming bilingual?
2. Even if the other person knows both languages, how rude is it to switch between languages in a conversation? (reverse coded)
3. How important is Spanish in the United States?
4. How valuable is it to be bilingual?
5. How important is it to not have an accent when speaking a second language? (reverse code)

First goals: We’d first like to see if there is a statistical difference between the way Group A responds to these questions as compared to Group B. We hypothesize that Group A will more frequently pick more positive responses than Group B. We would also like to use the **Least Affected Questions** and the **Background Questions** to compare groups A and B. Since group A did not take a pretest of the survey, this will be the way we try to rule out pre-existing group differences. If possible, we’d also like to know if the differences between Group A and Group B are significant by proficiency level. This can be done by looking at the current class of the students or the years studying Spanish. Both could be interesting.

**All survey questions by grouping:**

| **Group 1 - Directly affected (**implicitly **/ explicitly)** | **Coded name for questions in excel** |
| --- | --- |
| Should all schools in the United States teach children to speak in more than one language? | schools\_teach |
| Is learning Spanish worth the effort it takes? | effort |
| Do you think you can become bilingual? | become\_bilingual |
| How important is Spanish in the United States? | important\_spanish |
| How much do you like the idea of being/becoming bilingual? | idea |
| Should people learn another language even if they don't plan on traveling abroad? | learn\_not\_abroad |
| **Is speaking or learning another language important to you because it will help you in your job or future career?** | **future\_career** |
| **Is speaking or learning another language important to you because it will help you connect with people who speak that language?** | **connect\_with\_people** |
| ***Even if the other person knows both languages, how rude is it to switch between languages in a conversation? (reverse coded)*** | ***codeswitch\_rude*** |
| **Are multilingual people an asset to the United States?** | **multilingualism\_asset** |
| **How valuable is it to be bilingual?** | **valuable** |
| ***How important is it to not have an accent when speaking a second language? (reverse code)*** | ***no\_accent*** |
| ***Is it acceptable for people to be monolingual in today's world? (reverse code)*** | ***acceptable\_monolingualism*** |
|  |  |
| **Group 2 - Semi-affected** |  |
| How much smarter does knowing two languages make a person? | smarter\_two\_languages |
| How much do you wish you started learning Spanish at a younger age? | started\_younger |
| How much do you admire people who speak multiple languages? | admire\_multilinguals |
| How much do you like learning languages? | like\_langauges |
| How much interest do you have in learning a language? | interest\_languages |
| How much do you like Spanish? | like\_spanish |
| How much do you like hearing Spanish? | like\_hearing\_spanish |
| How much do you like communicating with Spanish speakers? | communicating\_spanish\_speakers |
| Do people who speak more than one language have a wider world view than monolinguals? | worldview |
|  |  |
| **Group 3 - Least affected** |  |
| How often are you excited to go to Spanish class? | excited\_spanish\_class |
| How often do you seek out ways to engage with Spanish outside of Spanish class and homework? | outside\_engagement |
| How often is Spanish one of your favorite classes? | spanish\_favorite\_class |
| *How difficult is it to learn Spanish in a language classroom? (reverse coded)* | difficult\_classroom\_learning |
| *How boring are Spanish classes? (reverse coded)* | *boring\_spanish\_class* |
| How fun is studying languages? | fun\_studying\_languages |
| How interesting is studying languages? | interesting\_studying\_languages |
| How interesting do you find Spanish-speaking cultures? | interesting\_spanish\_cultures |
| How beautiful of a language is Spanish? | beautiful |
|  |  |
| **Background Questions** |  |
| Does anyone in your immediate family (parents/siblings) speak a language other than English? | family\_languages |
| Was English your first language? | english\_first\_language |
| How old are you? (Answer in years. Example: 23) | age |
| What gender do you best identify with? | gender |
| Without counting your current Spanish class, how many years have you studied Spanish in a classroom setting? | years\_studying\_spanish |
| What is the name of your current Spanish class? (Example: Spanish 101, HISP-S 105, etc.) | current\_class |
| What is the name of your current university? | university |
| Have you ever studied a language other than Spanish? If yes, What language(s) have you studied besides Spanish? | other\_language\_study |
| **Other languages in the results:** |  |
| Latin |  |
| Japanese |  |
| French |  |
| Chinese |  |
| German |  |
| Portuguese |  |
| Igbo |  |
| Hebrew |  |
| Italian |  |
| Turkish |  |
| English |  |
| American Sign Language |  |
| Greek |  |
| Tagalog |  |
| Korean |  |
| Telugu |  |
| Hindi |  |
| Polish |  |
| Norwegian |  |
| Bulgarian |  |
| Swedish |  |

Coding for the answers to the survey questions:

| Normal code |  |  | Reverse code |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Quantifiers** | **Scales 1-5** |  | **Quantifiers** | **Scales 1-5** |
| Extremely | 5 |  | Not at all | 5 |
| Very | 4 |  | Somewhat | 4 |
| Pretty | 3 |  | Pretty | 3 |
| Somewhat | 2 |  | Very | 2 |
| Not at all | 1 |  | Extremely | 1 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Normal code: |  |
| **Quantifiers** | **Scales 1-5** |  | Yes | 1 |
| Not at all | 1 |  | No | 2 |
| A little | 2 |  | It depends | 3 |
| Somewhat | 3 |  | I don't have an opinion | 4 |
| Quite a bit | 4 |  |  |  |
| A lot | 5 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Reverse code: |  |
| **Quantifiers** | **Scales 1-5** |  | Yes | 2 |
| None | 1 |  | No | 1 |
| A little | 2 |  | It depends | 3 |
| Some | 3 |  | I don't have an opinion | 4 |
| Quite a bit | 4 |  |  |  |
| A lot | 5 |  |  |  |
| **Adverbs of frequency** | **Scales 1-5** |  |  |  |
| Never | 1 |  |  |  |
| Rarely | 2 |  |  |  |
| sometimes | 3 |  |  |  |
| very often | 4 |  |  |  |
| Extremely often | 5 |  |  |  |