The social meaning and the perception of intervocalic [z] in Spanish has been studied in a variety of contexts, including both monolingual (Chappell, 2016, 2017, 2021; Chappell et al., 2023; Chappell & García, 2017; García, 2015, 2019; Silverstein, 2003) and bilingual contexts (Davidson, 2014, 2015, 2019; Sinner, 2002), despite having been categorized as a low-salient variant (Chappell, 2017, 2021; Chappell et al., 2023; García, 2015)With respect to the former, it has been found that for listeners from San José, Costa Rica, the covert attitudes associated with intervocalic [z] vary significantly by speaker gender. Consequently, male speakers who use [z] tend to be positively evaluated, and generally perceived as nice, local, confident, and masculine. Conversely, female speakers who use [z] are only afforded negative associations of lower education and social class (Chappell, 2016; Chappell et al., 2023; Silverstein, 2003).

Similarly, García (2019) shows that, in Ecuador, intervocalic /s/ is evaluated differently in male and female speakers. Accordingly, women who produce intervocalic [z] are viewed as significantly lower status, less pleasant, and older. Contrary, men who produce intervocalic [z] do not receive these negative evaluations. Additionally, this variable has been found to serve as a marker of regional identity, with voicing being associated with neighboring Highland Ecuadorian dialects (Cuenca and Quito) that exhibit systematic voicing. García (2020) hypothesizes that young men are the leaders of this change, essentially due to the fact that they are in greater contact with these highland varieties. Interestingly, the mean voicing rates of females are roughly two age groups behind those of males. Consequently, it is believed that it is not necessarily the case that women in Ecuador are avoiding voicing like San José women due to its negative evaluations, but rather that they are further behind in the adoption of the incoming variant.

With respect to the social meaning and the perception of intervocalic [z] in bilingual contexts, this phenomenon has been mainly studied in Catalan-Spanish contact situations, given its robust usage by Catalan-Spanish bilinguals and, in particular, by those with greatest exposure to and usage of Catalan (Davidson, 2014, 2015). According to Sinner (2002), intervocalic [z] can be considered a possible linguistic marker of Catalonian Spanish, despite its relative lack of social awareness (Davidson, 2019; Sinner, 2002). In their study, Sinner (2002) interviewed 12 speakers of Barcelonan Spanish and monolingual Spanish-speakers from Madrid aged 27 to 41 regarding their awareness of linguistic features of Catalanized Spanish. Results showed that only select Barcelona speakers perceived intervocalic [z] as a linguistic marker of Catalonian Spanish, whereas monolingual Spanish-speakers from Madrid did not. Additionally, Davidson (2019) found that, in Barcelona, the indexical field of intervocalic [z] features exclusively positive associations with bilingualism and local solidarity, which warrants its gradual adoption in the speech community, unlike other phonetic markers of Catalonian Spanish that are the topic of overt social ridicule, such as lateral velarization. These results are in line with previous findings on intervocalic [z] in Catalonian Spanish. For instance, Silverstein (2003) found that intervocalic [z] indexes a local Barcelona identity, and the variant then acquires positive associations with bilingualism and cultural pride. Overall, these findings suggest that intervocalic [z] likely functions as a sociolinguistic indicator of Catalonian Spanish within the Catalonian speech community, indexing Catalan-Spanish bilingual membership while lacking any considerable degree of generalized conscious awareness (Davidson, 2019).