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Exploring language attitudes in ELF research: Contrasting approaches in conversation¹

Abstract

With reference to two recent doctoral research projects on ELF, the present article examines the characterisation of language attitudes as either stable or variable evaluative phenomena, and provides a detailed account of methodological practices that may be favoured from each ontological position. The durability of language attitudes is more specifically conceptualised as a stable (but not enduring) construct directed to a linguistic phenomenon in one thesis, and as variable and emergent forms of evaluative social practice around a language-related issue in the other. With these two different approaches in conversation, the authors consider the extent to which stability and variability of language attitudes may be two sides of the same coin, and question whether it is safe to assume *a priori* the inferability of stable language attitudes from the observation of evaluative practice. This article evidences the need for ELF researchers working in this area to contemplate what and how it is being researched in the name of language attitudes while having awareness of possible alternatives in any given study.

Keywords: language attitudes; durability; methodology; English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

摘要

ELFに関する最近の2つの博士研究に関連して、本論文は言語態度の特徴を安定的、または変動的評価現象として吟味し、それぞれの存在論的立場に適うような方法論の実際について詳述する。言語態度の持続性は、双方の論文においてそれぞれ、言語現象に向けられた安定的(かつ恒久的ではない)構成

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概念,そして言語の諸問題にまつわる不定で創発的な評価的社会実践として概念化されている。これら2つの異論の対話により,著者は言語態度の安定性と変動性がどの程度まで表裏一体であるかを考察するとともに,安定的言語態度を評価実践の観察から推察できるという想定に疑義を唱える。必要性が明確なのは,この分野に従事する ELF 研究者が,言語態度の名のもとに何がどのように調査されているかについて,常にとりうる代替案を認識しつつ考慮を重ねることである。

キーワード: 言語態度; 持続性; 方法論; 国際語としての英語(ELF)

Resumen

Haciendo referencia a dos tesis doctorales recientemente defendidas en el campo de ELF, este artículo examina la caracterización de la noción de actitudes lingüísticas como un fenómeno estable o variable, y da cuenta de las prácticas metodológicas que puedan ser preferidas por diferentes posiciones ontológicas. En concreto, la durabilidad de las actitudes lingüísticas es conceptualizada como un constructo estable (pero no permanente) que es dirigido hacia un fenómeno lingüístico en una tesis, y como una forma emergente y variable de práctica social evaluativa sobre un fenómeno lingüístico en la otra. Con estos dos enfoques en conversación, los autores consideran hasta qué punto la estabilidad y la variabilidad de las actitudes lingüísticas pueden ser dos caras de la misma moneda, e interrogan si es prudente asumir a priori la inferibilidad de actitudes lingüísticas estables a través de la observación de prácticas evaluativas. El artículo evidencia la necesidad que tienen investigadores en esta área de ELF de reflexionar sobre qué y cómo se investiga lo que llamamos actitudes lingüísticas.

Palabras clave: actitudes lingüísticas; metodología; Inglés como Lengua Franca (o ELF por sus siglas en inglés)

1 Introduction

There has been a large amount of work investigating language attitudes, whether in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) studies or other language-related fields. Attitude research in social psychology of language started as early as the 1930s (e.g., Pear 1931), and language attitudes have been a key concept in sociolinguistics since Labov's (1966) seminal work.² Despite such a long, intensive research tradition (e.g., Giles and Billings 2004; Garrett 2010), language attitudes seem to lack a widely agreed definition to this date. Indeed, Garrett et al. (2003), for example, indicate how difficult it is to define language attitudes, all the more so as the concept of attitudes

² Labov (1966) is currently available as Labov (2006).

has been used across disciplines. It may be fair to say that there is not even a clear consensus on whether having a 'core' definition is necessary or beneficial for researchers approaching the subject from different fields of study and with different objectives or emphasis in focus. The controversy or difficulty surrounding the characterisation of language attitudes is especially observable in two different ways of conceptualising their durability: (1) as a stable (but not enduring) construct directed to a linguistic phenomenon, and (2) as variable and emergent forms of evaluative social practice around a language-related issue.

The authors of this paper have engaged in the research field of ELF and explored people's perceptions of different aspects of English in different parts of the world, each being informed by a different take on the nature of attitudes (see Ishikawa 2016a for stability and Morán Panero 2016 for variability). With their contrastive ontological approaches in mind, the present article seeks to examine both these conceptualisations of language attitudes and associated practices in methodology. The article ends with consideration of the extent to which these approaches are two sides of the same coin.

2 Language attitudes as a stable construct

One way to conceptualise language attitudes is as a stable (but not enduring) construct directed to a linguistic phenomenon. Based on Ishikawa's (2016a) research, this section first seeks to conceptualise the stability of language attitudes. It then reviews possible approaches and methods in language-attitude research while critiquing them in relation to their applicability to the field of ELF. Indeed, some methods seem more appropriate than others to ELF research, whether the attitudes are conceptualised as stable or variable. The section also discusses analytical tools for language attitudes as a stable construct.

2.1 Conceptualising language attitudes as a stable construct

With reference to Sarnoff's (1966/1970) work, Garrett (2010) premises that language attitudes are evaluative dispositions to a language-related attitude object. This

premise well summarises three key commonalities in the definitions of attitudes thus far proposed mainly in social psychology. First, attitudes are essentially evaluative, that is, entailing a varying degree of favourableness or disfavourableness (e.g., Cohen 1964; Petty et al. 1997). Second, attitudes are directed to a psychological object (e.g., Thurstone 1931; Garret et al. 2003). In the case of language attitudes, these 'objects' include "spelling and punctuation, words, grammar, accent and pronunciation, dialects and languages" (Garrett 2010: 2) as well as "language topics in general" (Niedzielski and Preston 2009a: 146). Finally, attitudes cannot be directly observed but can be inferred from relevant behaviour (e.g., Oppenheim 1982; Perloff 2014) including verbal responses in research (e.g., Fazio 2007). This is because attitudes are dispositions, in other words, internal characteristics formed through experience (e.g., Allport 1935; Campbell 1963). As such, "the standard view of attitudes" (Banaji and Heiphetz 2010: 357) has long assumed that they are stable rather than emergent from scratch even if "more malleable than personality traits" (Ajzen 2005: 6).

While Garrett (2010) treats language attitudes equally with attitudes towards other psychological objects, Niedzielski and Preston's (e.g., 1999/2003, 2009b) sociolinguistic approach, called folk linguistics, provides a useful frame of reference for how language attitudes are understood in relation to a broader linguistic perspective.³ In response to Hoenigswald's (1966) call for heeding both people's reactions to and comments on language, Niedzielski and Preston (e.g., 1999/2003, 2009b) explain their position in a model centred around a triangle (see Figure 1). Simply put, language use or a language topic (a) can trigger some responses with varying consciousness (b_1 - b_n) which express language attitudes. On the one hand, regarded as linguistic competence (e.g., Chomsky 1965), the a' in the model represents what most linguistic studies are concerned with. On the other hand, the b' is what folk linguistics wishes to determine: "the underlying beliefs and belief systems" (e.g., Niedzielski and Preston 2009a: 147, 2009b: 357), or to put it another way "a reservoir of beliefs and concepts" (Preston 2010: 9). Certainly, the notion of a conceptual reservoir may be useful. However, it seems somewhat curious that the b' is assumed to be *beliefs* about

³ It should be emphasised that the term folk in folk linguistics has no disdainful connotation. Niedzielski and Preston (1999/2003) view everyone as a folk and attempt to include non-specialist views in research rather than compare and contrast them with 'specialist' views.

language. While identifying this reservoir with what Bassili and Brown (2005/2014) conceptualise as networks of evaluatively laden microconcepts (see also Bassili 2008: 253–255), Preston (2010) takes no notice of the fact that they identify these (micro)concepts themselves with attitudes, and do not regard beliefs as likely triggers for attitudinal responses. They take this position because beliefs are context-dependent and not distinct from attitudinal processing (cf. e.g., Fives and Buehl 2012). Thus, in line with Bassili and Brown (2005/2014) and without using the term beliefs, Preston’s (2010) reservoir may be better recast as a reservoir of evaluatively laden concepts which, in turn, represent attitudes.

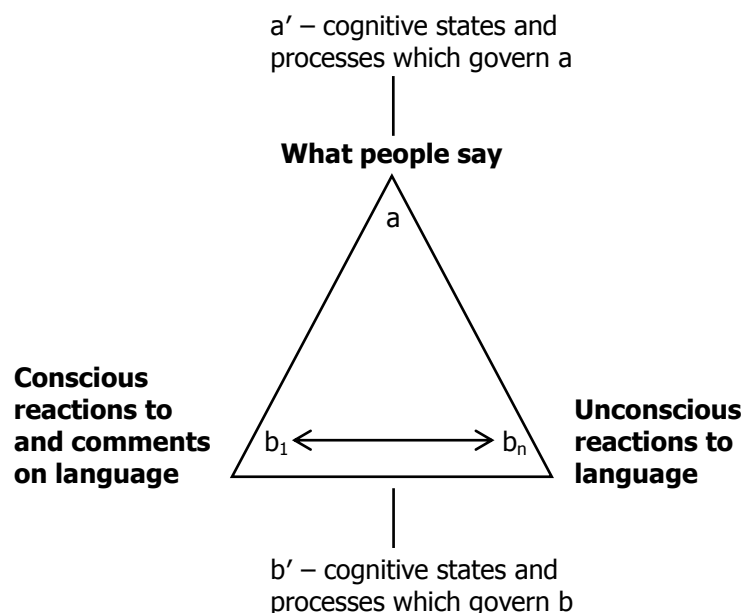


Figure 1: Folk linguistic model (Redrawn from Niedzielski and Preston 2009b: 357)

In agreement with Bassili and Brown (2005/2014), beliefs in attitude research have often been identified with cognitive responses triggered by attitudes rather than what constitutes attitudes themselves (e.g., Rosenberg and Hovland 1960; Ryan et al. 1982; Eagly and Chaiken 1993; see Oskamp and Schultz 2005/2014: 11–12). In this regard, from a neuroscience perspective, it is likely that cognitive processing is somewhat affectively laden, and never leads to purely cognitive responses (e.g., Cunningham and Zelazo 2007; Cunningham et al. 2007). To be specific, more affective states are likely to precede in a series of attitudinal mental (re)processing, and continually influence it while an increasingly higher level of cognitive subset processes are

recruited. It follows that 'cognitive' attitudinal responses, or beliefs, are affectively imbued, reflecting both more cognitive and affective processes underneath. Accordingly, it may not be plausible to demarcate beliefs as a separable entity from attitude responses as a totality.

Once the b' in question is construed as language attitudes rather than beliefs about language, as is in Ishikawa (2016a), the folk linguistic model (Figure 1) would become congruous with the aforementioned key commonalities. That is to say, while favourableness and unfavourableness may well be an essential element of language attitudes (b') which are directed to a linguistic phenomenon (a), the attitudes themselves are not directly observable as being internal characteristics, but inferable from language-attitude responses (b_1 - b_n). The model would also come to meet the call from Eagly and Chaiken (2007: 587) for a distinction between attitudinal responses and attitudes themselves, which "is fundamental to theory development". Eagly and Chaiken (2007) argue that although both are correlated, attitudinal responses are not attitudes *per se*, but flexible expressions of attitudes as being susceptible to various situational influences.

Based on the above examination of language attitudes, one way of (re)defining them is as being identified with a reservoir of stable (but not enduring) evaluative dispositional concepts, directed to a linguistic phenomenon, and underlying observable responses which are constructed situationally.

2.2 Methods to explore stable language attitudes and the field of ELF

Methods in language-attitude research may be grouped into three approaches: (1) societal treatment, (2) the indirect approach and (3) the direct approach (e.g., Garrett et al. 2003; Garrett 2010). As critiqued below, whether language attitudes are conceptualised as stable or variable, a number of particular research methods seem more contributive to enquiry within the field of ELF.

Societal treatment studies investigate how languages or language varieties and their users are viewed in a given society. Diverse studies can fall into this category, such as analysis of language policy documents, consumer advertisements (e.g. television commercials), and what is called linguistic landscape, which "refers to the visibility and

salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 23; emphasis removed). While useful for contextualising a given social sphere, societal treatment is obviously not necessarily synonymous with individuals’ attitudes. Other approaches should be combined together if the attitudes are the main target of research (whether within or outside the field of ELF).

The indirect approach of language-attitude studies refers to both the matched guise technique (MGT) and its modified version called the verbal guise technique (VGT). As indicated by Jenkins (2007), for example, this approach is indirect because respondents are typically made to believe that they are evaluating people who speak like an audio-recorded sample instead of a language variety.

Introduced by Lambert et al. (1960), the classic design of the MGT involves both presenting the same audio text in various languages or language varieties recorded by one or more speakers who produce plural versions under ‘guises’, and providing a questionnaire with rating scales. While the MGT is still being used (e.g., Dragojevic and Giles 2014; He 2015), it inevitably resorts to the stereotypes associated with linguistic cues and presumes that a speech sample represents the members of a certain speech community (e.g., Jenkins 2007; Ishikawa 2016a). Such an experimental nature does not seem to accord with ELF research which “targets, and seeks to comprehend *in situ*, English communication across geographical boundaries” (Ishikawa 2016b: 129).

The later version, the VGT, employs actual speakers of each language or language variety of a national or regional speech community (e.g., Gallois and Callan 1981; Chan 2016). Even if speech factors other than languages or language varieties, such as voice quality, are controlled carefully, again, the VGT does not match the nature of ELF communication as “dynamic, pluralistic manifestations of linguistic resources in an international setting” (Ishikawa 2015: 39), where there is no such thing as an ELF variety (e.g., Baker and Jenkins 2015).⁴

⁴ As with the MGT, the VGT may employ a reading text. It should be noted that the same speech content potentially connotes different meanings, according to a speaker’s perceived social profile, particularly age (Giles et al. 1990/2015; see Giles and Coupland 1991: 54–55).

Having probably been the most dominantly employed, the direct approach of language-attitude studies mainly refers to questionnaires and interviews, both of which involve “the asking of direct questions about language evaluation, preference etc.” (Garrett et al. 2003: 16). It may be true that “attitude-rating scales are an integral part” (Garrett et al. 2003: 26) in those questionnaires (e.g., Woolard and Gahng 1990; Coupland and Bishop 2007). However, with the rating scales being typical examples, closed-response items are likely to confine the scope of enquiry to predetermined evaluation categories. Such simplification or reification cannot be reconciled with heightened complexity and adaptability in lingua franca communication (e.g., Mauranen 2012; Mortensen 2013; Baird et al. 2014).

Unlike closed-response items, perceptual dialectology (e.g., Preston 1999; Long and Preston 2002) provides some openness as it is a map task rather than a questionnaire. In perceptual dialectology, “[r]espondents may be asked to label maps with where different dialects are spoken, or to rate various areas (e.g. each state in the US) on how ‘correct’ and ‘pleasant’ the language spoken there is” (Lindemann 2005: 189). However, such a portrait is inevitably no less stereotypical than the MGT. Also, the respondents are constrained to answer geographically. This is not entirely compatible with the linguistic phenomenon of ELF, which by definition transcends geographical boundaries.

Meanwhile, although Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), for example, doubt the efficacy of open-ended questions, a questionnaire may comprise open-ended items partly (e.g., Garrett et al. 2009; McKenzie and Gilmore 2017) or entirely in small numbers (e.g., Garrett et al. 2005; Evans and Imai 2011). In addition, Jenkins (2014) provides a precedent, demonstrating that a questionnaire consisting of multiple open-ended items may serve for profound exploration, so long as respondents have the capability to express themselves in written words and feel the theme to be very relevant to them. Her questionnaire was emailed through intermediaries to potential participants. It had ten items, each of which comprised one to four sentences (see Jenkins 2014: 214–215). While the efficacy of her questionnaire method is corroborated by Ishikawa (2016a), the main limitation of an open-ended email questionnaire is its likely low

response rate, all the more so as the response rate to an online questionnaire in general tends not to be high (e.g., Oppenheim 1992/2000; Robson and McCartan 2016).

Like an open-ended questionnaire, flexible, relatively (or totally) unstructured interviews would assist in heeding what may be the crux of ELF research, that is, “the importance of viewing language from multiple dimensions in which its contextual embodiment is crucial” (Baird et al. 2014: 181, 190). ELF researchers may even employ totally unstructured interviews, in other words, interactions without any pre-prepared questions or prompts. In line with Jenkins (2014), Ishikawa (2016a) conducted unstructured interviews as casual conversations, which form a contrast to pragmatic, business-like transactions in the following three respects (see Eggins and Slade 1997/2004: 19–20). First, the flow of any of his interviews was unpredictable and only vaguely around the research focus. Second, none of the interviews was without humour, and the interviewees easily initiated topics, overlapped or interrupted him, and often smiled or laughed. Finally, all the interviews were relatively long – in most cases, between 60 to 90 minutes.

Certainly, all kinds of research data, including even an anonymous questionnaire (Oppenheim 1992/2000), might be susceptible to what are commonly called social desirability and acquiescence biases. Garrett (2007: 117), for example, defines the former bias as “where people voice the attitudes they think they ought to have”, and the latter bias as “where people may give the responses they feel the researchers are looking for”. The research data might also be influenced either by an imagined person or organisation which respondents ‘project behind’ a questionnaire (Oppenheim 1992/2000) or by the perceived characteristics of an interviewer. In this regard, any interviewer, particularly in flexible interviews, “is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge” (Brinkmann and Kvale 2008: 268, 2015: 97), or rather for co-constructing knowledge (e.g., Talmy and Richards 2011; Holstein and Gubrium 2011). However, “[o]bjective reality can never be captured” (Denzin and Lincoln 2011: 5), whether there exists such a thing or not. At least, every researcher within and outside the field of ELF should employ plural methods, with every effort to maintain credibility and

integrity, in “an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (ibid.).

2.3 Analysing stable language attitudes in an ELF study

The previous section maintains the significance of an open-ended questionnaire and flexible interviews in language-attitude research within the field of ELF. What is called qualitative content analysis is suitable for analysing the content of such questionnaire and interview data. Dörnyei (2007) suggests that the term qualitative content analysis might embrace the type of analysis whose main purpose is to identify themes in the data. However, it would be more beneficial in advancing research to go beyond the enumeration of themes and make their interrelationships understandable.

Qualitative content analysis proceeds by coding the data, categorising the assigned codes, and interpreting the relationships between the developed categories. Practically, the first stage describes the meaning of topics (e.g., Richards and Morse 2013) in an embedding narrative flow (e.g., Bryman 2016). The next stage integrates the codes into main and subcategories (e.g., Miles et al. 2014) so that each main category should capture a unique aspect, and that each initial code can be assigned to at least one subcategory, but to one subcategory only, under the same main category (e.g., Schreier 2012, 2014). Finally, possible interrelationships are considered (e.g., Miles et al. 2014) among the subcategories under each main category, across subcategories under different main categories, and between main categories themselves (e.g., Ishikawa 2016a). In effect, through what Maxwell and Miller (2008) call categorising and connecting strategies, qualitative content analysis works towards capturing “the underlying deeper meaning of the data” (Dörnyei 2007: 246). Admittedly, the whole analytical procedure is inevitably influenced by research focus and interests (e.g., Schreier 2012; Miles et al. 2014), even when there is no predetermined code or category. Also, while the analysis may be accompanied by notes of any idea that springs to mind (e.g., Miles et al. 2014; Berg and Lune 2012) so as to bring creativity to supposedly more disciplined coding and categorising (e.g., Punch 2014), recording spur-of-the-moment interpretations and reflecting on them would lead to arbitrariness, thereby undermining rigour. Instead, it would be preferable to examine the original

data as many times as necessary.

Qualitative content analysis may accord with the conceptualisation of language attitudes as a stable construct. According to 2.1, people's accounts about language are created situationally on the basis of their reservoirs of evaluative dispositional concepts. Given that these conceptual reservoirs are identified as language attitudes, it is not surface-level accounts but the aforementioned deeper meaning level that analysis needs to reach. To this effect, by applying qualitative content analysis to the open-ended email questionnaire data obtained from Japanese students at Japanese universities, Ishikawa (2016a) identified two sets of negative language attitudes as underlying the respondents' discursive accounts of Japanese people's English including their own. These attitudes are: (1) a perceived poor communication ability, coupled with fear of using 'incorrect' English, and (2) a deficit view of Japanese-influenced English use, whether it is intelligible or not. Some of his respondents referred to the 'multifariousness' of Japanese people's English, but only in terms of how close it sounded to one or a couple of particular types of English as a Native Language (see Ishikawa forthcoming).

Meanwhile, the content of interview data stems from both the interviewer and an interviewee at least in relatively (or totally) unstructured interviews. It is thus necessary to consider how to concentrate on what an interviewee has to say. As far as casual conversational interviews are concerned, Eggins and Slade's (1997/2004) speech functions analysis framework facilitates the understanding of how interactional content is co-constructed (e.g., Leung 2012; Jenkins 2014).

Having developed Halliday's (1984, 1994) systemic functional interpretation of dialogue,⁵ Eggins and Slade's (1997/2004) speech functions analysis framework consists of three broad types of conversational moves: opening, continuing and reacting. Opening moves "function to initiate talk around a proposition" (ibid.: 194). Continuing and reacting moves are achieved, respectively, by the current or another

⁵ Just for reference, the most recent edition of Halliday (1994) is available as Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

speaker in interaction, both functioning to “keep negotiating the same proposition” (ibid.: 195). Reacting moves are further classified into responses and rejoinders, both of which are either supportive or confrontive. While responses “move the exchange towards completion”, rejoinders “in some way prolong the exchange” (ibid.: 200). Each of these opening moves, continuing moves, responses and rejoinders embraces multiple more specific conversational moves (see Eggins and Slade 1997/2004: 191–213). As a tool to analyse the functions of conversational moves, the framework seems applicable to both original and translated data.

Ishikawa (2016a) illustrates that Eggins and Slade’s (1997/2004) speech functions analysis framework not only provides assistance in understanding an interviewee’s utterances in an interactional context, but also lends itself well to identifying what deserves to be processed through qualitative content analysis. To be specific, all the codes in Ishikawa’s (2016a) analysis of transcribed conversational interviews with Japanese students at Japanese universities were derived from an interviewee’s conversational moves which in this framework seem to have represented his/her own stance and concerns. These conversational moves are initiating moves as opening moves, prolonging and appending moves as continuing moves, developing moves as supporting responses, confronting responses (composed of disengaging and replying moves), probing moves as supporting rejoinders, and confronting rejoinders (composed of detaching, rebounding and countering moves). Seeing that prolonging, appending, developing and probing moves all expand a prior move,⁶ it follows that what was extracted for qualitative content analysis was an interviewee’s initiating moves, variously occurring expansion, and confronting responses and rejoinders. Again, Ishikawa (2016a) identified the same aforementioned two sets of negative language attitudes as underlying the interviewees’ discursive accounts. His interview analysis also reveals that only the attitudes held without one’s own critical thinking may be malleable, however negative and stable the attitudes are, and that ELF awareness has a clear potential to bring Japanese university students more positive attitudes towards their English (see Ishikawa forthcoming).

⁶ Eggins and Slade (1997/2004) divide the ways to expand a prior move into elaboration, extension and enhancement, having derived these three from Halliday’s (1994) grammatical categories (see Eggins and Slade 1997/2004: 196–198).

3 Language attitudes as variable evaluative practice

Another way to treat language attitudes is as situationally variable social practice around a language-related issue. This section reviews how discursive and constructionist approaches understand the notion of attitudes and the variable evaluative behaviour that can be produced by an individual. Based on Morán Panero's (2016) research, the section also describes how a discursive approach to language attitudes can inform methodological and analytical choices, and provides specific examples from the author's investigation on perceptions towards the global spread and use of English as a lingua franca in the Spanish-speaking world.

3.1 Conceptualising the variability of language attitudes

Scholars working within discursive and constructivist approaches take issue with the stability that is usually attached to the notion of attitudes and with its exploration through explicit evaluative commentary. They perceive observable evaluations in attitudinal studies to be the result of intersubjective and contextual processes, and highlight that, due to this relational nature, evaluations of a single phenomenon can be produced variably by the same person (e.g., Potter and Wetherell 1987). Scholars informed by discursive and constructionist frameworks argue that evaluative commentary and its variability have been underexplored and under-theorised in traditional social psychological approaches. A clear example of this criticism is provided by Wiggins and Potter (2003). The authors indicate that, in the search for attitudes as "underlying mental constructs behind evaluations" (ibid: 513), attitudinal scholars have tended to assume that evaluations work "primarily as referents of internal states" (ibid: 514), thereby neglecting to explore how evaluations may be variably constructed to perform specific social actions in context.

In contrast, discursive and constructivist scholars avoid assuming that their participants will have stable evaluative predispositions to a particular topic from the onset. Since they problematise researchers' ability to infer the stability and/or existence of individual attitudinal predispositions from the analysis of evaluative commentary, their investigations tend to focus on the performative functions of evaluations. As Potter (2012: 438) explains, "[i]t is not that discursive psychologists do

not consider thinking, cognition, mind, feelings and so on, but this is not something they *start with* and they see as the causal underpinning of social behaviour". Rather than setting out to find mental attitudinal nuggets or to establish whether stable attitudes exist as such, they analyse the processes of evaluative construction and the social effects that may be achieved by variable metalinguistic and evaluative practices (e.g. what ideological positions may be reproduced, challenged or redefined or what acts of identity may be performed in specific evaluations).

While some discursive researchers seem to simply refrain from making claims about stable underlying attitudes, others question the existence of attitudes outside interaction as pre-formed, fixed and abstract mental units. The notion of attitude is then re-conceptualised as performed or of a discursive nature, constantly under construction and negotiation through people's interactions and therefore as variable and volatile, rather than static (e.g., Potter 1998; Puchta and Potter 2004). Similar theorisations can also be found in the work of some linguists. For instance, Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain (2009: 200) argue against seeing language attitudes as "pure abstraction", and suggest that these are instead constantly co-created in the "back-and-forth" of conversations with other people. Drawing from Vygotskian understandings, according to which everything that occurs in the mind is socially and interactionally developed, the authors claim that language attitudes too are created, and at later instances (re)negotiated through interaction. From this perspective, the nature of attitudes is explained in terms of emergence.

Discursive psychologists have also criticised traditional attitudinal research because of an apparent lack of theoretical and empirical engagement with the attitudinal objects that individuals are supposed to appraise. According to Potter (1996: 139), "if we want to understand why a person has offered a specific opinion,⁷ we need to understand *their social representation* of the object being considered" (emphasis added). The author characterises these social representations as a combination of shared ideas and often simplified images that people build dialogically and use to make sense of

⁷ The word "opinion" here is to be understood as equivalent with evaluative commentary or observable attitudinal *response*, but it is not meant to refer to the notion of 'attitude' as internal evaluative disposition.

new, unfamiliar or complex experiences, as well as to protect personal or institutional interests, desires, motives or alliances. As a result, different people can produce different conceptualisations of the same phenomena, and their sharedness cannot be assumed by researchers. Potter (1996) emphasises that social representations informing evaluations do not offer “a neutral picture” (ibid: 139), although they can be rhetorically managed to pass as unquestionable knowledge. These devices can therefore have important implications for how we construct social worlds and versions of (our)selves (e.g. reproduction of inequality and power struggles).

This perspective seems to be more in tune with folk linguistic theorisations of underlying beliefs or language ideology systems (b') as elements that inform evaluative practices (see Figure 1). However, drawing clear-cut boundaries between evaluative responses and language ideologies or ideology-mediated beliefs is not as straightforward as it may seem (for discussion, see Karakaş 2016; Woolard 1998). Although in practice these two notions are highly interwoven, it is possible to differentiate between them as analytical categories. For instance, Morán Panero (2016) treats language ideologies as the historical, situation-transcending and collectively shared ideas about language that inform the evaluative commentary constructed by individuals in situated contexts (cf. Kitazawa 2013; Kroskrity 2004). As the data in Morán Panero (2016) shows, multiple and opposing ideology-mediated conceptualisations of a linguistic phenomenon are sometimes simultaneously available for the same person. Thus, when discussing a particular linguistic phenomenon, an interviewee may construct one conceptualisation to produce a positive evaluation in one interactional moment, and an alternative understanding to produce the opposite evaluation in another.

A further element to take into account in the theorisation of evaluative behaviour is the nature of social meanings and how they become associated to particular ways of using language. As Coupland (2007) points out, attitudinal work in the speaker evaluation paradigm has helped to empirically establish that language use and perceived ways of speaking are indeed intrinsically intertwined with social meanings and personality and/or identity attributions (e.g. professionalism, friendliness, trustworthiness,

correctness). However, regarding indexicality, researchers in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics argue that the relationship between social meanings and language use is not a direct and fixed one (e.g., Eckert 2008, 2012). While some social meaning or indexical relations can appear to be 'common sense' and become shared at macro-levels, social meaning relations are "amenable to being discussed, argued over and renegotiated metalinguistically" (Coupland 2007: 23). Thus, the social meanings that people attach to particular linguistic use, and which thereby inform people's evaluative practices, are best conceptualised as intersubjectively and locally (re)created as well as multi-dimensional, variable, unstable and context-dependent (e.g., Blommaert 2015; Coupland 2007).

From these perspectives, it should be acknowledged that, if an attitude is "an evaluative orientation to a social object of some sort" (Garrett et al. 2003: 3; Garrett 2010: 20), the conceptualisation of that object may not only *not* be shared across individuals, but also that it is potentially variable and open to renegotiation from interaction to interaction. If the social representation of a particular way of using language cannot be defined by staticity, it is difficult to define evaluations towards it in terms of stability as well. While stability is clearly not positioned as the central defining characteristic of the nature of language conceptualisations and evaluations in discursive and constructivist approaches, it is not entirely dismissed either. The sense of fixity that tends to be recorded in quantitative work can also be explained as maintained or repeated practice. Constructivist and discursive approaches nevertheless help prevent the exclusion of volatile and contradictory evaluations of individuals as contaminated data, a 'risk' that could be easily faced if the data does not fit an analytic unit supposedly defined by stability.

3.2 Approaching attitudinal methods in ELF from a social practice perspective

Seeing that language conceptualisations (i.e. understandings of attitude objects) and evaluative practices (i.e. attitudinal expressions) are potentially variable from moment to moment, a major concern is to design methods for data collection that allow for variability to be captured. For scholars who see attitudes as an interactionally

co-created and variable social practice, attitudinal research needs to go beyond 'measuring' and quantifying positive or negative attitudes. They therefore encourage attitudinal research that compares how perceptions are constructed in different contexts and strives to identify the functions that evaluative practices may serve on each occasion (e.g., Hyrkstedt and Kalaja 1998).

Indirect and a-contextual methods such as the MGT or VGT do not seem appropriate for the examination of attitudes from a perspective of variability either. In addition to not being able to capture the fluid nature of language use in general (e.g. within so-called varieties), and of the use of English as a lingua franca in particular (see 2.2), these approaches also face a series of well-known analytical problems. These include, for example, the uncertainty as to whether listener-participants can perceive the variables that the researcher is attempting to investigate or whether the identification of the voice heard by the participants actually corresponds to the category established by the researcher in the first place (e.g. variety, type of speaker).

Another major problem associated to the MGT and VGT is an apparent intent to control for people's ideas about language and groups of speakers (for a critique on this point, see Coupland 2007; Kitazawa 2013). Aiming to leave these aspects 'out' of the evaluative situation seems to point to the underlying presumption that there is a pre-defined, a-contextual, direct and fixed link between linguistic features and social meanings – which contradicts the theorisations of social meaning-making introduced in 3.1 – as well as between perceived ways of speaking and the evaluative or attitudinal dispositions people may 'have' towards them. In other words, rather than exploring the constitutive role that people's ideas, beliefs or ideologies have in processes of language use and evaluative behaviour, these seem to be treated as 'external' elements that 'pollute' the extraction of evaluative dispositions. However, when seeing attitudes as emergent evaluative practice, all these elements and how they evolve in interaction are seen not only as unneutralisable, but as crucial constituting factors that must be explored.

Similarly to 2.2, non-experimental, direct methods which do not seek to isolate social

meanings from users' ideas and contextualised experiences provide a better option for the exploration of attitudinal responses as variable, emergent social practice too (e.g., Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain 2009). Nevertheless, the investigation of explicit evaluation through direct closed forms can still reproduce some key problems. For example, if a closed item in a questionnaire asks its participants to rank how 'correct' the English use of Latino speakers is, it assumes that the researcher and participants all understand the same by 'Latino speakers', 'English' or 'correctness'. Failing to capture the potential conceptual variability of a linguistic phenomenon would limit the possibilities of recording evaluative variability as well.

Instead, researchers need to understand the social representation of an evaluated object as it is constructed by a speaker in a particular point in time, and be prepared to examine its potential variability. For instance, if we want to understand how an English user evaluates perceivable linguistic differences between speakers of English as a global lingua franca, we need to pay attention to the social representation or array of potentially variable representations through which that user constructs what may or may not be 'English', as well as why and when the representations and resulting evaluations fluctuate. A method which does not assume that researchers and participants set boundaries between perceived languages, varieties, dialects and accents in the same way or that we all mean the same thing by certain language constructs, is map-labelling. However, in addition to the problems associated to exploring evaluations of the use of ELF through perceptual dialectology in 2.2, map-labelling does not allow room to explore evaluative behaviour on intra-speaker variability or styling practices.

What are called semi-structured or unstructured interviews and focus groups, on the other hand, allow participants to introduce, draw upon, redefine or even reject linguistic notions, ideas and experiences in their own ways during the formulation of situated evaluation. Accordingly, these methods allow space for variable conceptualisations and evaluations of the same linguistic phenomenon to emerge in the same interaction. Indeed, in her study targeting the Spanish-speaking world, Morán Panero (2016) observed that the interviewees often formulated opposing

conceptualisations of the same social construct (e.g. 'native-like' English use) and thereby produced variable evaluations on their own English use (e.g. being or not being 'native-like'). When multiple conceptualisations and evaluations are available to the same person, the aim is not to establish which of these seemingly conflictive responses is 'the real one', that is, the one from which we can infer a stable evaluative predisposition. Instead, the goal is to understand why a particular evaluation is formulated in a particular context.

Despite the advantages of direct methods, they are not without limitations. In addition to the possible shortcomings introduced in 2.2, some scholars question the explanatory reach of the evaluative data they produce (e.g., Park 2009; Potter 2012). In particular, the criticism suggests that attitudinal findings elicited through interviews and focus groups, for example, cannot shed direct light on people's evaluative practices in everyday, 'non-elicited' interactions. From this perspective, it would be preferable to observe attitudinal expressions as they occur 'naturally' in everyday interactions, texts and/or settings.⁸ As Park (2009: 21) puts it, what people say they believe does not necessarily represent "the entire range of their underlying beliefs about language". However, observing conceptualisations and evaluations produced by a language user in a single 'non-elicited' text or interaction, would not provide a complete picture either. In addition to complementing open-ended, elicited investigations with the study of 'naturalistic' evaluative practices, it is necessary to undertake longitudinal and ethnographic studies to understand how language users' beliefs and evaluations may be used, constructed and modified from interaction to interaction (e.g., Hynninen 2016).

While the above criticism raises a significant point on the interpretative limitations of elicited data, direct methods of enquiry are still highly useful to identify at least a partial set of various interpretative and evaluative repertoires in relation to participants' reported experiences (e.g., Hsu and Roth 2012). For instance, the range of conceptualisations and evaluations identified in semi- or unstructured interviews and

⁸ Thus, some forms of societal treatment approach (e.g. the study of metalanguage in press articles) would be seen as a valuable, non-intrusive methodological technique from this perspective (see Garrett 2010: 51).

focus groups can be compared with representations of English found in the ELT classroom, thereby helping to locate and address major representational mismatches (e.g., Morán Panero 2016). It is also not possible to refute the validity of direct methods on the grounds that elicited data is less 'real', 'natural' or 'valid' than non-elicited interactions. Since interactions in direct methods may be understood as social practices in their own right (e.g., Mann 2011; Talmy 2010), we may only be able to claim that each type of method produces a different kind of data, with a different explanatory scope.

In short, contextualised, direct, societal and ethnographic approaches seem more appropriate to explore the potential variability of evaluative practices in ELF studies.⁹ While all these different methods can contribute in different ways to a better understanding of social-meaning making and evaluative behaviour, special caution needs to be exercised when making conclusive claims and recommendations. As probably seen by now, discursive and constructionist scholars warn us in particular against making generalisations about the evaluative dispositions that our participants may 'have', whether at the time of data collection or in future evaluative situations.

3.3 Analysing variable language attitudes in an ELF study

Discursive and constructivist approaches to evaluative research also welcome the combination of analytic frameworks such as the ones discussed in 2.3. For instance, Liebscher and Daily-O'Cain (2009) not only see content, conversation and critical discourse analysis as compatible in one single study, but they actually consider each of these frameworks as a necessary analytic step. The authors therefore advocate a multi-layered analysis that addresses aspects of language representation, social meaning-making and evaluative behaviour at both macro and micro levels. Another example of this kind of multi-layer analysis can be found in Morán Panero's (2016) interview study of orientations to English as a global lingua franca in the Spanish-speaking world. Similarly to Ishikawa (2016a), Morán Panero (2016) drew

⁹ Baird et al. (2014: 187, 189) argue that "people always engage in communicative interactions with ideas of and positioning towards the language and behaviours of themselves and others", but that "the nature and extent of ... ideological values are ultimately dependent on how individuals interpret and make sense of them in context".

from qualitative content analysis as the first layer of systematic interrogation. However, the second layer of analysis was informed by a discourse-based analytic approach taken from studies in discursive psychology. Qualitative content analysis (see 2.3; e.g., Bryman 2016; Saldaña 2016) served as a means to organise and categorise the data, and to ensure that as much analytic attention was paid to language-related topics and constructs brought up by the participants (i.e. bottom-up), as to the ones introduced by the researcher (i.e. top-down). However, the participants' evaluations did not usually fall neatly in categorisations of favourable or unfavourable judgements to the same topic (e.g. the lingua franca function of English or linguistic variability produced by 'non-native' speakers). As indicated before, most participants evidenced variable evaluations on a number of areas throughout the interview interaction, which in turn pointed to variable conceptualisations or understandings of the different 'attitudinal objects' in question. The second layer of analysis, that is, the identification of interpretative repertoires (e.g., Edley 2001), was useful in dealing with this variability in a systematic and meticulous way.

Discursive psychologists see interpretative repertoires as relatively coherent ways of talking about a social object or process (Edley 2001), and define them more specifically as "a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events" (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 138). In addition to being the basis for launching descriptions, evaluations and justifications in a given context, interpretative repertoires are also a platform for performing and negotiating "locally managed positions" (Wetherell 1998: 401), and for the reproduction, challenge or negotiation of broader language ideologies. Identifying interpretative repertoires is therefore useful to engage with "the social and political consequences of discursive patterning" (ibid.: 405), and to analyse how macroscopic aspects of language representation are (re)produced in situational and dialogic interaction. Morán Panero (2016) used this analytic construct to identify students' conceptualisations of the spread of English and its lingua franca use, and to understand which conceptualisations and language ideologies were informing particular evaluations of the same social constructs throughout the interview interaction.

In practical terms, identifying recurrent metalinguistic comments that constitute an interpretative repertoire is an interpretative activity in itself (Edley 2001). To borrow Hynninen's (2013: 79) words, this activity involves locating "the employment of repeatedly occurring descriptions and expressions about the same topic" in the talk of participants. Hence, Morán Panero (2016) undertook repeated readings of the data in order to distinguish the particular linguistic resources, images and metaphors that characterised representational patterns in the talk of her participants, and the multiple sets of ideological beliefs that mediated such understandings. Among other findings, Morán Panero (2016) identified a variety of form- and function-oriented interpretative repertoires on how these participants conceptualised and evaluated their own and others' English use (e.g. 'English as native/standard or error', 'English as an identity performance tool' or 'English as intelligibility' among other). The analysis of how different repertoires informed interviewees' variable evaluations revealed that some participants could produce opposing evaluations of the same phenomenon at different points in the interview (e.g. the social construct of a 'Latino accent' in English use), by assembling differing conceptualisations of that specific phenomenon which were, in turn, informed by and reproducing various language ideologies and social meaning associations.

While interpretative repertoires can engage with the broader context and macrostructural issues surrounding participants' accounts (e.g. power and ideology), it is still necessary to pay attention to "the sequential embeddedness of talk" (Silverman 2014: 350). For discursive and constructivist psychologists, representational and evaluative practices must be analysed as collectively co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee (e.g., Hsu and Roth 2012). As with Ishikawa (2016a) and Jenkins (2014), Morán Panero (2016) was particularly concerned with how participants might be accepting, rejecting or transforming assumptions and categories or topics proposed by the interviewer.

4 Discussion and conclusion

To summarise, this final section outlines the main criticisms that have been provided for each of the approaches introduced so far and considers which elements seem to

bring both positions together and/or keep them apart. It also briefly recapitulates the extent to which having followed different ontological understandings of attitudes has resulted in methodological differences in each of the research projects discussed, and highlights why it is important for ELF researchers to carefully examine and explicitly discuss their ontological position on the notion of attitudes, when engaging with the study of linguistic evaluation.

As has been seen already, scholars working within a framework of variability for language attitudes, or attitudes more generally, have investigated the situatedness of evaluative practice. They illustrate how people's verbal processes of evaluation are inseparable from both ideological beliefs and indexical meanings surrounding a society. However, this body of work has been criticised from a social psychological perspective because of an apparent disregard of an individual's dispositional concepts on which his/her mental processing may be based (e.g., Hyrkstedt and Kalaja 1998; Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain 2009; Schwarz 2012) or an unbalanced focus on processing itself (e.g., Cargile et al. 1994; Conrey and Smith 2007; Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2011). Another point to consider is that, if the term evaluative practice is used to designate the notion of attitudes rather than attitudinal expressions, or even evaluative comments, such as opinions, it could give the impression that those scholars are conflating aspects of individual psychology with social behaviour. This is especially because from more traditional social psychological perspectives, opinions are understood to be in themselves discursive, verbalisable and socially constructed, but not necessarily reflecting any underlying language attitudes (e.g., Baker 1992; Papapavlou 1998; Garrett et al. 2003; Garrett 2010).

Scholars working within a framework of stability, on the other hand, may not have fully engaged with the complexity of language-attitude expressions, or attitudinal expressions more generally. As emphasised in 3.1, these expressions cannot be appropriately comprehended without regard to situated interpretations of the object or process being evaluated and of its social connotations or to how and why these interpretations may be constructed and evaluated differently from text to text or from interaction to interaction. More fundamentally, it is questionable how far attitudinal

stability is inferable as underlying observable discursive commentary. In particular, distinguishing between attitudinal responses and the expressions of opinions seems problematic in practice. Even if constructivist scholars were to accept that certain evaluations are non-attitudinal opinions, either because a stable attitude has not 'developed' as such or because its expression is 'restrained' by contextual factors, it is still not clear how researchers would ascertain which evaluative commentary 'truly' reflects attitudinal dispositions. This ambiguity is what leads discursive and constructionist scholars to restrict analytical claims to how particular evaluative comments function as social practice.

Despite the mutual critiques, there are some areas in which the two positions on language-attitude durability may not be as far from each other as it appears. Scholars on the variability side would not necessarily negate the existence of any individual psychological processing behind evaluative practices. Instead, these elements interact with those of other individuals as well as with varying contextualising factors, giving rise to situated and co-constructed evaluations. Consequently, these scholars problematise our ability to make claims about the stability of individual processes by analysing the result of that interaction. At the same time, scholars on the stability side would not assume a simple linear relation between individual psychology and observable expressions. They seek to identify whether some individual psychological processing manifests itself across his/her discursive accounts to the extent that it may be regarded as among dispositional concepts. On this account, like scholars on the variability side, they may analyse the process of discursively co-constructed data rather than the face value of what is expressed.

In addition, the stability of language attitudes has not always been treated in such fixed terms as presumed by constructivist scholars. As seen in 2.1, the distinction between attitudes as stable and attitudinal expressions "as temporarily constructed judgments" (Wilson and Hodges 1992: 38) acknowledges and deals with the variability evidenced in empirical investigations of evaluative practice. Indeed, Ishikawa (2016a) proposes that the stability and variability of language attitudes may represent two sides of the same coin, if one admits the possibility that even highly stable

dispositional concepts are processed and expressed in a relatively unstable manner. However, what remains irreconcilable is that constructivist scholars would not readily agree with the claim that, through the study of evaluative practices, we can establish the existence of stable dispositional concepts in the first place. Also, although both approaches recognise that an individual may produce variable linguistic evaluations of the same perceived language use, they still seem to explain evaluative variability somewhat differently. Whereas in the stability framework, a degree of variability is understood as the unsteady expression of attitudes, for social constructivists the variability signals a lack of evidence of the existence of a stable disposition in the mind and seems to indicate that 'attitudes' would be better theorised as situated discursive constructions.

At a methodological level, different conceptualisations of stability and variability in language attitudes did not translate into significantly different data collection and analysis techniques in Ishikawa's (2016a) and Morán Panero's (2016) ELF studies. Both researchers favoured the study of contextualised, non-experimental and elicited metalinguistic talk, and followed analytic approaches that dealt with the content of participants' accounts and with the way in which these accounts were expressed or constructed. At the same time, while Ishikawa's (2016a) data focused on the local introduction and management of topics and evaluations from ELF perspectives, Morán Panero's (2016) data targeted the global linguistic phenomenon of ELF and looked at how indexical and larger ideological practices were (re)constructed in participants' conceptualisations and evaluations, and with which particular effects. An area where some divergence may be observed is the way in which interpretations and conclusions are drawn in both studies. On the one hand, Ishikawa (2016a) identifies two sets of overarching, established evaluations as undergirding his participants' discursive accounts. He concludes that only these evaluations may be regarded as stable (but not necessarily enduring) dispositional concepts shared across the participants. On the other hand, Morán Panero (2016) identifies various and variable evaluative patterns created in a particular interview situation, and refrains from drawing conclusions about the existence of stable attitudinal dispositions in the mind of the participants. The data is said to have captured an interesting range of possible evaluative or discursive

practices, rather than a comprehensive representation of participants' mental constructs.

To conclude, the comparison undertaken in this paper seems to indicate that what Allport (1935: 798) observed more than 80 years ago could still be the case, whether referring to attitudes towards language or other psychological objects:

As might be expected of so abstract and serviceable a term, it has come to signify many things to many writers, with the inevitable result that its meaning is somewhat indefinite and its scientific status called into question.

This remark does not exempt any researchers from the remit of characterising language attitudes in their own studies. On the contrary, it advocates for scientific integrity. To this effect, it should be reminded that different ontological perspectives would lead to different reasons for the choice and/or practice of research methods and analytical frameworks. Ishikawa (2016a) and Morán Panero (2016) illustrate that there are considerably different conceptualisations of language attitudes even within the same research field of ELF. It is thus key for ELF researchers in this area to contemplate what and how it is being researched in the name of language attitudes as well as why possible alternatives are dispensable in any given study.

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