On Attitudes, The Driving Force in EFL and EWL Studies

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This paper examines the significant role played by attitudes in two specific domains in which the English language stands out in supremacy: second language learning and international communication. Firstly, we offer a brief review of the literature in these two areas to prove the relevance attitudes have both for the development of the second language learning process, and for the acceptance of English as a world language. Finally, we focus on the situation of English in Spain, and put forward the incongruity between the efforts made by the Spanish educational system and the results achieved. The need to carry out further research on attitudes is also subsequently suggested.

1. Introduction

In their attempt to describe and explain human behaviors, social psychologists have acknowledged the relevance of attitudes in many studies which have also contributed to the difussion of both the term and the concept. Attitudes are generally defined as something that is closely «linked to a person's values and beliefs, and promotes or discourages the choices made in all realms of activity, whether academic or informal» (McGroarty, 1996:5).

As regards language attitudes, most scholars (Fishman and Agheyisi 1970; Cooper and Fishman 1974; Cooper and Fishman 1977; Gardner and Smythe 1977; Cargile et al. 1994) are concerned not only with the study of people's attitudes toward a particular variety of language; they also include the respondents' attitudes towards the speakers of that particular language or variety, and even their attitudes towards language maintenance and language planning policies (Fasold, 1993:148).

Research (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner and Smythe 1977; Gardner 1985) has proved that attitudes are closely linked to many social phenomena, but within the linguistic level, there are two main settings in which attitudes have their part to play: second or foreign language learning and multilingual situations. In this paper we make a brief review of the literature in both areas in an attempt to confirm how the study of attitudes is of paramount importance in these two contexts. Our specific aim is to show how the role played by English in different areas in today's world is closely

related to the diversity of feelings and responses developed by the enormous variety of speakers and cultures. This justifies the proposed need to conduct more studies on attitudes towards English, specifically at the Spanish stage.

2. The study of attitudes: Theoretical rationale

When dealing with attitudes, a first distinction must be drawn between the two opposite views of their nature: the mentalist and the behaviorist theory. The former conceives attitudes as «a state of readiness; an intervening variable between a stimulus affecting a person and that person's response»; whereas according to the latter, attitudes constitute a «behavioral response in themselves» (Fasold, 1993:147). Although a great majority of the works conducted have adopted this mentalist view, according to specialists it poses some research problems. As Fasold (1993:147) explains, the consideration of an attitude as «an internal state of readiness, rather than an observable response» involves methodological difficulties for scholars, who «must depend on the person's reports of what their attitudes are, or infer attitudes indirectly from behavior patterns.» Besides, considerable effort goes into the devising of ingenious experiments so that informants reveal their attitudes without being totally aware of the research process. In contrast, research is undertaken simply by behaviorists through careful observation and analysis of overt behavior, as they believe that people's responses to social situations clearly reveal their attitudes. A further point of disagreement between behaviorists and mentalists has to do with the former's conception of attitudes as single units, and the latter's identification of a number of subcomponents, namely cognitive, affective and conative (Fasold, 1993:148).

As mentioned above, we will focus our attention on each of the settings in which the study of attitudes has been acknowledged.

Second or foreign language settings

In second or foreign language situations, language attitude research aims at proving that attitudes have an influence on the process of second language learning. Two types of studies have been conducted: those which focus on the attitudes of teachers, and those which deal with the language attitudes of

learners. Research in the last three decades suggests (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) that among the many variables at work, affective factors play a substantial role in the language learning process. Broadly speaking, these affective variables have to do with the learner's motives, attitudes - towards the target language and its speakers -, and emotional states, including other personality factors such as self-esteem, confidence, or anxiety. Cultural and social factors (Brown, 1973; Titone, 1982) may also have an influence on the learner's establishing relationships with other individuals.

The study of attitudes has been closely linked to that of motivation, with the topic being approached mainly from the social-psychological side. Today there is little doubt that attitudes and motivation correlate positively with success in language learning. Attitudes are said to indicate the learner's beliefs and opinions about the target language and culture. As for motivation, it has generally been defined as «some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action» (Harmer, 1988:3). In particular, motivation to learn a language is considered to be «the incentive, the need, or the desire to achieve proficiency that the learner feels to learn the second language» (Dulay-Burt-Krashen, 1982:47). Traditionally, two basic and fundamentally different kinds of motivation have been identified, for which the labels *instrumental* and *integrative* are used. Finegan (1994:466) summarises them as follows:

> An instrumental motivation is one a learner has because knowledge of the target language will help achieve some other goal: reading scientific works, singing or understanding opera, graduation. For such uses, only a narrow range of registers (or even a single register) is necessary, and little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the language is desired. (...) When you take up residence in a community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation encourages you to learn the new language as a way to integrate yourself socially into the community and become one of its members. Integrative motivation typically underlies successful acquisition of a wide range of registers and a nativelike pronunciation, achievements that usually elude learners with instrumental motivation.

A third type of motivation which goes beyond integrative motivation has also been described in the research literature, namely, the *Social Group Identification.* Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982:50) define it as «the desire to acquire proficiency in a language or language variety spoken by a social group with which the learner identifies.» These authors stress the difference between the social group identification motive and the integrative motive: in both cases, the learners want to participate in the social or cultural life of the community of the target language speakers. However, learners with an integrative motive wish to retain their identification with their own native language group, whereas learners with a social group identification would like to become members of the group of speakers of the target language.

The notion of attitude was originally thought to be parallel to that of motivation. They were both regarded as a single factor among the many variables that affect the language learning process. Later on, however, each of these concepts was redefined, to the extent that today attitude is believed to be the factor that determines motivation, which, in turn, has a marked effect on second language development. Gardner's view of attitudes as a social and psychological basis for sustaining motivation led to the idea that «attitudes are indirectly related to second language behaviors whereas motivation is directly related to behaviors» (Oller, 1981:227). As van Els et al. (1984:117) put it,

> (...) motivation to learn a language is not only determined by attitudes, but also by other 'motivational props', such as the desire to please teachers and parents, promise of a reward, or experience of success, etc. Also, the relation of attitude to motivation is dependent on the type of motivation. An integrative motivation, for example, presupposes a positive attitude of the learner towards target language speakers and their culture, but a learner who is instrumentally motivated does not necessarily have a positive attitude towards the target language group. Other attitudes, which are relevant to L2 learning, such as attitudes towards the language, the teacher and the course, are probably related to both types of motivation.

When defining motivation, we must also bear in mind that two different approaches have been adopted by two different traditions: the behavioristic

and the cognitive one. Simplifying the issue a great deal, it can be said that while the former highlights the importance of rewards and reinforcement, the latter stresses the power of self-reward. A similar distinction can be drawn between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, the second being clearly favoured by most researchers. Extrinsically motivated learners anticipate «a reward from outside and beyond the self», whereas «intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself» (Deci, 1975: 23).

Admittedly, in certain contexts integrative motivation seems to produce better support in language learning than instrumental motivation. However, as suggested by Gardner and Lambert in 1972, even though a learner's instrumental motivation may be as high as another's integrative motivation, in the long run it seems that integrative motives lead to a greater mastery of the language.

The importance of motivational factors has also been acknowledged by other models of second language acquisition, such as that of Krashen's (1985), who includes them in what he called «affective filter», a sort of mental block. Similarly, Beebe and Giles (1984), with their accomodation theory, refer to factors like in-group identification and group boundaries (Schmid, 1992). These concepts have to do with the fact that when learning a second language, the student must face the task of «not simply learning new information ... but rather of *acquiring* symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community.» In fact, the student «is not being asked to learn about them; he is being asked to acquire them, to make them part of his linguistic reservoir. This involves imposing elements of another culture into one's own lifespace» (Finegan, 1994:469).

Closely related to these aspects are some of the troublesome issues that may arise in multilingual settings, the area to which we devote the following subsection.

Multilingual settings

Although bilingualism and multilingualism are quite normal phenomena in a large part of the world, it is also true that in many of our western

societies there is a long history of people actually «*looking down* on those who are bilingual». Indeed, only a few classical languages, like Latin and Greek, or some modern languages like English or French have been regarded as prestigious. In contrast, as noticed by Wardhaugh (1993:101), «you generally get little credit for speaking Swahili, and, until recently at least, not much more for speaking Russian, Japanese, Arabic or Chinese.»

The consideration of bilingualism as a social problem in many western societies has led to the identification of «knowledge of another language» with «inferiority», which results in the fact that the lowest positions are often occupied by bilinguals. In addition, many of these countries tend to adopt «the bizarre policy of doing just about everything they can to wipe out the languages that immigrants bring with them while at the same time trying to teach foreign languages in schools» (Wardhaugh, 1993:101). Bourhis (1997:306) illustrates this idea with references to the case of France, where the influence of «vigorous and sometimes brutal» language policies has provoked the emergence of a unilingual French state in this century.

Two of the effects that multilingual or bilingual societies can produce are language loss among the immigrats, and language diffusion, that is, the spreading of certain syntactic features from one language to the other. Besides, code choice, code-switching and code-mixing often occur in multilingual situations. All these phenomena serve subtle but strong functions, since by choosing, shifting or mixing two codes, speakers are able «to express fine gradations of feeling for others, involvement with the topic, politeness to strangers, and deference to officials» (Wardhaugh, 1993:109).

Likewise, the problem of educational failure among minority children is said to be caused by the conflict these children experience. As Romaine (1994:193) explains, schools measure success in terms of mastery of the standard variety of the language, and therefore «non-standard speech is seen as illogical, and bilingualism as a problem.» This same author notes how not too long ago, and in countries such as Australia, the United States, Britain or Sweden, minority children were severely punished whenever they spoke their native language. Neither working-class children belonging to the dominant group, nor children of ethnic minority groups have the kind of cultural and

linguistic background supported in the schools, which endorse «mainstream, and largely middle-class, values and language» (Romaine, 1994:191). Many studies have shown that these children tend to have the highest rate of failure, but they have also proved that «teachers already tend to have negative expectations of minority children.» In fact, when dealing with the factors which are responsible for the poor achievement of these schoolchildren, many linguists have highlighted the role played by the attitudes of the majority to the minority and vice versa. In addition to this, they have pointed out other factors such as lack of exposure to the school language or linguistic/cultural mismatch between home and school, among others. But on the whole, linguists have concluded that «negative attitudes towards non-standard speech and bilingualism are more decisive in determining school outcomes than actual linguistic differences themselves» (Romaine, 1994:194).

Nowadays, it is a fact that to a great extent the emergence of bilingual or multilingual situations has had much to do with the spreading of English throughout the globe. In the following section, we refer briefly to some of the effects that this expansion of English has provoked in many areas of the world. Not surprisingly, attitudes seem to have been a crucial factor for the widespread of this language.

3. Attitudes towards English as a world language

Beyond all doubt, the English language has become the international language par excellence. As Robert Phillipson (1992:5-6) suggests, «when the need for global communication set by language barriers came to be an immediate problem, the spread of English accelerated transforming the existing patterns of international communication». During the nineteenth century, these patterns were based on French, as the language of diplomacy and fashion, and German, as the language of science and scholarship (Berns, 1990:58). With the quick spread of English, the situation would become completely different. During the twentieth century, «the export of English has been so persuasive that this language has been equated with progress and prosperity" (Phillipson, 1992:8). However, we must mention other cultural

and political effects that the spread of English has produced in some languages and cultures. For example, its widespread use seems to have "threatened" other languages, since English has been attributed a great power and prestige in many countries: it is used in specific and particular domains, especially professional, and it is bound up with aspects of global relations, such as the spread of capitalism (Holmes, 1992: 13).

One factor of paramount importance for the widespread of a language like English to be successful in a specific context is people's *attitudes* towards that language. Since language attitudes are a very subjective personal matter, they are going to vary from one person to another, and, of course, from one linguistic community to another. In the following lines we offer a brief analysis of the kinds of attitudes - negative, positive, of acceptance or of resistance-, which have either contributed or tried to avoid such spread of English in daily life in general, making special emphasis on the educational realms.

Africa. The language situation in Sub-Saharan Africa is one of dense multilingualism, with a large number of indigenous languages, exogeneous languages and pidgin languages (Adegbija, 1994:15). Until recently, most indigenous languages in Africa were considered unworthy of use in official circles. They were regarded as lacking the capacity for expressing ideas in official domains (Adegbija, 1994:20). These beliefs have produced a series of consequences such as the emergence of *negative attitudes* towards these vernacular languages, which are refused for usage with any official purpose. Thus, in South Africa, for instance, this official role has to be fulfilled by another language, English. Though spoken by a small number of the population, English has become the only official language. Interestingly enough, English, "the language of the conqueror, is considered a language of power and prestige, the language of liberation in front of Afrikaan, the language of oppressors" (Adegbija, 1994:36). We can observe the importance of the speakers' attitudes when it comes to their choosing of one or another language for specific purposes.

As regards the influence of English in **education** we can give the meaningful example of Nigeria where in most primary and secondary schools, students are still penalised for speaking the vernacular, as their aim

is supposed to be to speak "English Only" (Adegbija, 1994:37). This creates in children a *negative attitude* towards their indigenous languages, and obviously, towards their own culture, whereas a *positive attitude* is developed towards the English language and culture, as the pattern to be followed. In many Sub-Saharan African countries, there is a general feeling that "without English, you cannot go anywhere" (Adegbija, 1994:70). The idea that European languages and cultures are inherently superior for education is very widespread among the African population, whereas African indigenous languages are inferior and less suitable. Such is the spread of English among Africans that many speakers are unaware of the foreign origin of some English words, which have been assimilated and nativised: e.g."*imoto*" *(motor)*, "*elétiriki*" *(electricity)*, "*igilasi*" *(glass)* (Adegbija, 1994:104-105). In sum, we must point out that these negative attitudes towards the native have prevented the creation of an African tradition in all domains (educational, political, judicial...) (Adegbija, 1994:98).

Asia. In this continent, we shall analyze the particular cases of English in Japan, and in Malaysia, with a special emphasis on the situation of English in India. To start with, it is worth mentioning that Japanese contact with English and other European languages reaches as far back as 500 years (Loveday, 1996:47). But English is the European language which has contributed most to the lexicon of contemporary Japanese. Evidence of close contacts between English and Japanese speakers is reflected in the appearance of pidginized English varieties in port communities such as Yokohama and Nagasaki (Loveday, 1996:9). Nowadays, English borrowings are "filtered" not only through the Japanese phonological system, but also through the orthographic medium of the angular syllabary, or *Katakana* (Loveday, 1996:115). Young people are the principal group who are more involved in this process of anglicization in all senses. We can observe this in the great amount of English loan-words that constitute part of the active vocabulary of most Japanese children, such as "*OK*", "*gu from guddo*" *(good)*, "*bai bai*" *(bye bye)* "*toire*" *(toilet)* (Loveday, 1996:157-8). This massive adoption of English terms reveals the presence of increasing *positive attitudes* among the Japanese people towards the English language.

As far as **education** is concerned, most Japanese students in higher education are required to study a foreign language in addition to English(Loveday, 1996:58). When the modern public education system was established in 1872, English became a compulsory subject for children between 6 and 11, and an optional one for those between 12 and 17. This made English take up one third of the middle school timetable, and among authorities a series of *negative attitudes* emerged towards the process of teaching English in such terms, for fear that Japan might turn into a sort of British colony. Nowadays, English is not a compulsory subject in any state school in Japan, although it is taught optionally in 99 per cent of them. This can be due to the fact that English is a required subject in University and Senior high school examinations (Loveday, 1996:96). However, despite the fact that English is so widely studied in Japan, Loveday (1996:153) points out that the Japanese generally show a low level of competence in this language. This negative learning situation may be produced by factors such as the existence of a basically instrumental motivation, the lack of a practical and active learning style and the lack of access to native second language models.

The British influence on Malaysia can be traced back towards the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Pennycook, 1994:80). English was the language of development, modernization, capitalism, science, technology and even democracy. Between 1957 and 1967, the Constitution enshrined Malay as the national language and English as the official language, in order to create a sense of national unity (Pennycook, 1994:187). In the specific case of India, English is considered a language of prestige, power and authority «from the period of colonial rule when English was formally established as the official and academic language» (Berns, 1990: 51). Even after the independence of India, English continues being a very important tool for Indians to improve their social status. Nowadays, English is an associate official language, therefore it is commonly used among Indians for communication; it is also used for legal purposes, and what is more important, "English serves as the primary unifying force in a country of more than 165 mother tongues and 15 languages recognized as major by the Constitution" as Berns (1990:52) explains.

As regards **education,** British policies in the last century have to be seen within the context of commercial needs of the colonial power. However, although education was controlled by the British, there was optional elementary education in the vernacular, and these vernacular schools were more spread out than the rest. Thus, the Anglicist side became less successful than expected, since it was basically reserved for the Malay aristocracy and for a small elite, which contributed to increasing class and ethnic divisions (Pennycook, 1994:82-99).

In the case of India, we will find that "English is the medium of instruction in the schools of 23 states and union territories, and holds a dominant position in 83 universities" (Berns, 1990:52-53). So, more time, weight and attention is given to English than to any other foreign language. Parents prefer to send their children to public schools, where they receive a British education rather than vernacular, which is considered inferior. They believe that educating their children in British schools represents an open door to get a better job, to climb in the social scale and to get prestige (Berns, 1990:51). However, from an educational point of view, English is basically associated with the upper classes, that is, with those who can afford paying for that kind of education, while the rest receives vernacular education. It should also be pointed out that the main tendency among Indians has been that of nativization of English words, creating their own Indian-English variety, which gives us an idea of the *positive attitudes* of Indians and Malayans, in general, towards the English language.

EUROPE. In Europe, there is a quite varied situation. English is undoubtedly the most prominent language in all European countries, however, we must make a distinction between northern and southern Europe. In northern countries, such as Sweden, Denmark, and The Netherlands, English has been widely accepted as the international language. It is seen as a language which most of the population has to speak, at least, for instrumental purposes. In fact, as you walk along the streets of any of these countries and ask some native for directions in English, he/she will surely answer you in English. This is a clear evidence of a *positive attitude* towards English, since it is seen as a way to encourage international communication, not as an invader language. As a consequence of this attitude of

acceptance, in relation to **education,** the level of English in these countries is very high. Children start learning English, as a compulsory subject, very early, and when they are adolescents they are able to hold a conversation about any topic in English. This reinforces the thesis that attitudes, and consequently motivation, are decisive for success or failure in the teaching / learning process.

In the southern European countries the situation seems to be another one. In countries such as Spain (next section), Italy, or West Germany, the amount of English borrowings that are introduced everyday is very high, maybe higher than what we think.

West Germany. Here we must point out again the replacement of French and German by British English that took place in science and scholarship, right after World War I. Furthermore, because of the American military presence in Germany during World War II, British English was also displaced by a different variety, American English. For this to happen, the Germans' *attitudes of openness* to the world played a decisive role, and made the acceptance of numerous English words very easy (Berns, 1990: 58-59).

As for **education,** in Germany there is a prominence of English in the school curriculum. English is the first foreign language in nearly all schools, although other languages are also offered. At University, English is also very used, especially in English Departments. There are quite a lot of reasons for students to choose English, rather than other foreign languages. Firstly, speaking English offers many opportunities to get a good job, and what it implies, getting a high salary and a prestige position. And secondly, English represents the language of fashion and modernity, which encourages young people to learn it. Within the teaching/learning process, the tendency in Germany has been the emergence of a German English Standard. The German teachers and the methods they use have contributed to the creation of their own variety of English within the classroom (Berns, 1990: 60-65). Definitely, in Germany, English is not restricted to any status or level of society in particular, but it is studied and learned by all social classes. Moreover, as we have seen, it can produce high social movility. Thus, contact with English and the prestige associated with it have had positive subsequent impact on language use and usage.

Italy. As regards the influence of English in Italy, Virginia Pulcini (1994: 49) tells us that the English language has been penetrating into the Italian language and society since the eighteenth century. The impact of Anglo-American culture after the First and especially after the Second World War has secured the primacy of English as the most widespread foreign language. As a consequence, Italian has borrowed and assimilated a large number of words, a phenomenon which has been intensified in the past 50 years. There are authors (Dardano 1986: 232; Pulcini 1997: 79) who, even, talk about a second Europeanization of Italian, the first being achieved with French in the eighteenth century. The spread use of English words in Italy is not only produced by its worldwide prestige, but also by "their structural features: their brevity, phonic effect, flexibility in word formation and similarity to some Italian words" (Pulcini, 1997: 79). These facts show evidence of the *positive attitudes* of Italians towards the assimilation of English words. Pulcini states that such is the openness of Italian towards the English language, that it has acquired the fame of "democratic" language, since it lacks any kind of language policy.

With regard to **education,** English is nowadays studied by 60 % of the school population, followed by other languages such as French (35 %), German (5 %) and Spanish (1 %). The Educational Curriculum encourages the study of different foreign languages, English being, however, the most chosen one. As Pulcini (1997: 82) argues, "the demand for English has been growing so much that it has been necessary to make the choice of French compulsory for many pupils in order to avoid a loss of teaching positions in this subject".

France. As a counterpoint, we must also analyze the peculiar case of France. As it is very well known, before the rise of English in this century, French was the world's most prestigious language (Berns, 1990:58). Ager (1990:13) explains that in the seventeenth century, France was recognized as «the principal European power, with a population of 20 million inhabitants contrasting with the 12 million of Great Britain, agricultural wealth, as well as an effective absolutist monarchy". The French have not found it easy to accept the present dominance of English. Appalled by the hundreds of

English words pouring into French every year, the French authorities have made determined and even desperate efforts to confront this "invasion" by creating "genuine" French replacements and encouraging French citizens to use only these "genuine" French words. For example, while the Germans, the Italians and the Japanese buy a *computer* with *software, a light pen* and a *floppy*, the French buy an *ordinateur* with *logiciel, a crayon optique* and a *disquette* (Trask, 1995:166). While bilingualism or multilingualism is the normal state for most of the world's inhabitants, France is unusual in having a mainly monolingual population, as stated above. Outside Europe, excepting Quebec, French in the world is normally the expression of an elite. There are few countries in which French is the native language of the masses. As Flaitz (1988: 109) suggests «French has no 'roots' abroad, as Portuguese in Brazil, Spanish in South America or English in the United States».

As for **education** in contemporary France, schooling develops in standard French. In France, French is the only accepted language for official purposes; the other languages or French dialects are expected to disappear (Ager, 1990:9). Therefore, the regional languages are less and less used by children. As regards the study of modern languages, the French Law (December 29, 1981) stipulates that all students, beginning in grade six, must receive three hours per week of instruction and one hour of reinforcement (conversation) in one of the following languages: German, English, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Portuguese, or Arabic. However, as most students choose English some have started arguing that English has become a "semi-compulsory" language to study in France. It is clear that English is far and away the number one in relation to all the other foreign languages studied in French schools (Flaitz, 1988:63). The advocates of French believe that the influence of English is corrupting a language heretofore admired for its consistency and purity (Flaitz, 1988:106). In an attempt to keep a standard genuine French, the Françoise *Académie* not only has a radical *negative attitude* to loan words from other languages, especially English, which is considered a threat; it also promotes the disappearance of French regional dialects. This clearly shows the purist attitude of the French, who feel proud of their language and of its symbolic value.

4. English in Spain

In our country, from World War II onwards, we can also observe an increasing influence of the Anglo-Saxon culture, especially of the American culture, in accordance with the political and economic supremacy of the USA over western European countries. The American way of life, as Pratt (1980:67-69) explains, seems to have pervaded all the areas of our daily life (fast-food, music, fashion, supermarkets, commercial television, skyscrapers...), which, somehow, has been received with openness, even admiration. 'A priori' this fact could be an evidence of a *positive attitude* towards this culture. In fact, and as a consequence, new anglicisms have filtered and go on filtering within Spanish mostly through technology, computers, and to a less extent through the other areas mentioned above such as music, food, fashion or television (especially in propagandas). The reasons are obvious, first the American way of life has become a model to be followed by Spain and all societies in general, so imitation as far as language is concerned is also necessary. Second, the English language is very rich in specialized vocabulary as regards scientific innovations, and it has certain "structural features" (as above mentioned) that make any language coming from Latin envy its brevity, accuracy, and phonic effect.

A reform in the **educational** system has taken place recently in Spain, around the beginning of the 1990s, by name LOGSE (Ley de Organización General del Sistema Educativo or *Law of General Organization of the Educational System*). However, we must point out that independently of the educational changes that are taking place in Spain nowadays, the school demand for the study of English has been increased, and is in fact increasing, considerably. English has surpassed clearly the study of other foreign languages, such as French (which was the most studied foreign language a couple of decades ago). In the same line, all autonomous . communities[1] are making incredible efforts to rise the standards to teach the English language.

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[1] The Spanish educational system allows some freedom to those autonomous communities which have adopted competences in educational matters, whereas others still depend completely on the central government.

In our country, English is neither regarded as a second language nor is it used as a language of instruction at school, but it is simply studied as a foreign language. However, the role played by English in many areas of daily life is decisive, even to get a specific job. English is the most studied foreign language in Spain both in Primary and Secondary education, even at the University level, followed by far by French and, besides, with all the possibilities to go on being the preferred language for a very long time. In Primary education, English is a compulsory subject which can be combined with other languages such as German or French. So all the students receive a basic formation in the English language that can be extended if they choose it at Secondary education. As regards Secondary education and University, English stops being a compulsory subject to become an optional one.

In his book *La Enseñanza del Inglés en España a Debate*, Palacios (1994) analyzes in depth all these aspects of the process of teaching/learning English in the Spanish educational system and offers some meaningful figures: in 1990, the number of pupils studying English at the University was around 84%, whereas those who chose French was around 15% (1994:23). For his research, Palacios passed a questionnaire to a total number of 920 students (360 of Secondary and 560 of University level), and 117 teachers (57 of Secondary and 60 of University level) in several cities of different autonomous communities (Andalusia, Asturias, Canary Islands, Catalonia, Galicia, Madrid). The questions dealt with various aspects such as motivation, attitudes, opinions related to textbooks and materials, tasks to promote the four skills, the new curriculum of foreign languages. Apart from this, 80 teachers (50 of Secondary and 30 of University level) were interviewed, as well as 25 students (10 of Secondary and 15 of University level). The interviews covered very similar aspects to those of the questionnaires, though a self-assessment of the level of proficiency was added here. The Secondary students interviewed by Palacios (1994: 82-83) offer different reasons why they choose English. First, they believe that studying English constitutes a basic part of the educational curriculum (i.e. it cannot be replaced by anything or any other language). Second, the fact that English is a compulsory subject in Primary education is a decisive factor for

students to choose this language in Secondary education. Third, many students find English more useful than French (Palacios 1993:158). Fourth, as regards factors related to cultural and historical aspects of British and American culture and history, the informants seem to show a high degree of indifference. Within this indifference, however, we can observe that a kind of "interest" is more clearly shown towards the British culture in comparison with the American. Therefore, in Gardner's (1977) terms, students of English in the Spanish Secondary education are more conditioned by *instrumental* reasons than by *integrative* ones. Attraction towards the target culture, or at least the mixture of personal likes with instrumental reasons, seems to encourage students to choose English. As regards their attitudes towards studying English, Palacios (1994:94) found that 70% of the students state that their attitude towards English is not different from the one they have towards other subjects in the school curriculum; around 18% adopt an indifferent position, they do not feel especially attracted to studying English, and just 12% show a completely negative attitude.

As regards the Secondary students' general level of proficiency, Palacios (1994: 90-93) took into account the four skills. Most pupils self-evaluate their proficiency in reading and writing more positively than in listening and speaking, and this evaluation is common to the three levels of the Secondary education. Probably, this fact can be due to the importance, and consequently, the number of hours that the teachers give to the written component, and their relegating the oral skills to a second place. As a logical consequence, Secondary students find it more difficult to listen and to speak in English than to write or to read it. Finally, in a comparative study (1994: 123-125) between teachers and students of Secondary education, Palacios found that among teachers there seemed to be an attitude of apathy, indifference, disillusion, even a very low degree of self-esteem at the professional level. They tend to adopt a passive position and show an attitude of refusal to any improvement in the present-day teaching of English process. Perhaps, this negative attitude can be produced by the feeling of uncertainty of many teachers because of the educational changes that are taking place with LOGSE.

As far as University education is concerned, English is again an optional subject in most cases, depending on the degree. However, let's focus on the situation among students of English Philology, for whom the English language is obviously a compulsory subject. And English is also used as the medium of instruction in many of the subjects. When analyzing the reasons or motivations that encouraged these University students to choose English Philology, Palacios (1994: 141-142) found that for 52% of the respondents the main one is their personal interest and wish to learn the English language. Around 3 or 4% decided to obtain this degree because of the good grades they achieved in English during Secondary education. Around 28% chose the degree because of a mixture of *integrative* and *instrumental* reasons (to get a good job, to follow relatives and friends' advice, this degree is easy when compared to others, to understand songs, to travel to England, or simply, because they had no other choice). Generally speaking, there seems to be a kind of integrative motivation, an interest for the English language and culture, which prevails over other instrumental reasons. We can make a clear contrast with the Secondary students, whose motivations to study English were basically instrumental rather than integrative. Palacios (1994: 144-145) analyzed the attitudes of these students of English Philology, and he found that 32% showed frustration, 19% confusion, 18% discouragement, 14% a mixture of surprise and uncertainty, while 17% show a positive and favourable attitude in spite of the limitations of the educational system. They like the English language very much, and they are really interested in achieving a high level of proficiency in this language. Nevertheless, these attitudes do not remain for a long time, but they tend to change throughout the four or five years they spend at University. According to respondents, everybody feels motivated at the beginning, but this interest decreases gradually, once they realize that classes are completely different from what they expected. The comparative study Palacios (1994:195-196) made between University teachers and students points out the critical attitude the latter have towards the general planning of this degree. They attribute more negative values than teachers to everything that is directly or

indirectly related to this planning. Teachers and students are very aware of the problems of the educational system, and they all agree that changes and modifications must be incorporated, such as the introduction of new subjects, and more optional subjects. The interviews reveal that the University teachers are very conscious of the needs of their students, and there is a better understanding between teachers and learners at the University than at Secondary school level.

Finally, as regards the general level of proficiency in English, it is interesting to note how results do not seem to correspond with the efforts made by the Spanish educational system. We wonder why after spending six or seven years, at least, studying English, the average Spaniard is not generally able to help a tourist when he/she asks for directions, for example. We may find the answer among all of us, the students, the teachers, the educational system, society. Castro Calvín (1991:20-21) suggests "the quick turnover of teachers as one of the thorny problems that pervades Spanish education. The continuous rotation of teachers make students feel like passengers on a ship crossing a stormy sea." Perhaps, teachers are not motivated because of job conditions, but what is obvious is that teachers have to be motivated for them to motivate their learners. Another possible explanation that comes to our mind is related to the traditionally "proud" attitude of Spaniards, whose language was once the language of an empire in which the sun never set. Maybe, unconsciously our minds refuse to accept that Spanish is not the world language, and since we do not accept this fact, we cannot teach/learn it successfully. Of course, these are but mere reflections that invite us to think the matter over.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn from what has been said so far is two-fold. On the one hand, and with a general perspective, it is evident that attitudes are a crucial factor in the two areas we have reviewed above. Language attitudes have fairly proved to be decisive for the second language learning process to be successful; as for those multilingual settings in which

the English language is involved, it is clear that positive attitudes have determined its spread and role as a language for global communication. On the other hand, and in view of the inadequacy of the educational policies pursued in the teaching of English in Spain, we feel that further research would be necessary to discover the possible connections between the disappointing results, and students' and teachers' real attitudes and motivations. In sum, attitudes reveal as a driving force in the complex interplay of social and linguistic factors, and certainly constitute an exciting field to study.

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