Language Ideologies and Behavioral Attitudes Toward Ethnolinguistic Outgroups: Perceived Linguistic Competence and Intergroup Anxiety as Explanatory Variables

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Guided by language ideology research and the theoretical model of intergroup anxiety, the current study (*N* = 582) manipulated two ideological perspectives on language (i.e., L2 English as an *asset* vs. *deficit*) and tested the direct effects on U.S. American, L1 English users' perceptions of L2 English users' linguistic competence and the indirect effects of the same on intergroup anxiety and behavioral attitudes toward L2 English users. Results indicated that participants in the *asset* condition perceived L2 English users as more linguistically competent, leading to less intergroup anxiety and consequently more positive behavioral attitudes toward L2 English users than their counterparts in the *deficit* condition. Overall, this study suggests the positive intervening role of an inclusive, asset-based approach to language ideology (as compared with deficit and/or standard language approaches) in promoting intergroup attitudes through enhanced perceptions of linguistic competence and reduced anxiety toward ethnolinguistic outgroups.

Keywords: language ideology, linguistic competence, intergroup anxiety, behavioral attitudes

Throughout the United States, imperialism and institutional support have established English as the lingua franca, imbuing the English language with power, prestige, authority, and "correctness" (Dragojevic, Giles, & Watson, 2013; Imamura, Zhang, & Harwood, 2011). Furthermore, the Pew Research Center (Stokes, 2017) found that 70% of U.S. adults perceived the ability to speak the English language as an integral component of a so-called true American identity. Due to these assumptions regarding language use and the perceived American identity, research concludes that, in the United States, second language (L2, hereafter) English users report heightened feelings of stigma and prejudice based on their language use (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010a, 2010b).

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Date submitted: 2021-11-15

Due to increased migration and globalization, opportunities for contact among ethnolinguistic groups continue to increase, but scholars suggest that contact between native and L2 English users is infrequent and superficial (Imamura, Ruble, & Zhang, 2016). Perceived English competence of L2 English users (Kim & Harwood, 2020) and intergroup anxiety are possible explanations for this lack of frequent and/or quality contact (Montgomery & Zhang, 2018). Research has consistently linked intergroup biases to intergroup anxiety, which is an affective construct referring to feelings of discomfort, awkwardness, frustration, and/or stress during or in anticipating interactions with outgroup members (Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst, 1999), and identified major antecedents eliciting intergroup anxiety, including superficial cognitive processing and overreliance on stereotypes (Imamura et al., 2016). For the purposes of the current study, the term *intergroup* describes dynamics in which "people are relating to each other primarily based on their social category memberships rather than their personal characteristics" (Giles & Maass, 2016, p. 1). As argued by Dragojevic (2016), language attitudes are a product of social categorization and stereotyping, thus situating language attitudes firmly within the intergroup communication field. In other words, during interactions between standard and L2 English users, linguistic and paralinguistic features such as dialect and accent are potent social cues, which lead speakers to categorize one another according to their own existing cognitive schema and stereotypes. In the context of communication between ethnolinguistic groups, we argue that societal norms and ideologies, such as language ideologies, could serve as a facilitating or debilitating institutional force that influences intergroup perceptions and attitudes. As such, the goal of the current study is to integrate two complementary areas of research, language ideologies and intergroup anxiety, to examine the effects of ideological perspective (i.e., L2 English as *asset* or *deficit*) on dominant ethnolinguistic group members' (i.e., L1 English–using Americans in the United States) attitudes toward L2 English users.

Increasing theoretical and empirical attention has focused on the mutual constitution of language ideologies and language attitudes (Dragojevic et al., 2013; Lippi-Green, 2012). Language ideologies influence a society's attitudes toward different language varieties and these attitudes trickle down to micro-level interactions among speakers from different language groups (Dragojevic et al., 2013). Hence, our cognitive judgments of (e.g., perceptions of their linguistic competence and social attractiveness) and psychological responses to (e.g., anxiety), and intergroup attitudes toward L2 English users are influenced by the information we see, read, and hear about foreign languages and their associated ethnolinguistic and cultural groups (Montgomery & Zhang, 2018). Specifically, the current study features as the independent variable two language ideologies manipulated to represent a positive (i.e., L2 English as an *asset*) and a negative (i.e., L2 English as a *deficit*) condition to examine how language ideologies influence L1 English–using U.S. Americans' perceptions (i.e., linguistic competence) and feelings (i.e., intergroup anxiety) about L2 English speakers, which subsequently leads to a willingness to engage in contact with L2 English users. In other words, we examine the effects of language ideologies from concrete aspects of language attitudes (positive and negative conditions and a control condition) through L1 English users' judgments of L2 English users' linguistic competence and intergroup anxiety (sequentially) to attitudes toward L2 English users more broadly.

Language Ideologies and Perceived Linguistic Competence

Defined as "the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 35), language ideology is constituted by both micro-level experiences as well as larger socialization processes (Dragojevic et al., 2013; MacSwan, 2020). In the United States, standard language ideology, which considers Standard American and Academic varieties of English to be inherently more complex, sophisticated, and prestigious than other varieties, is deeply embedded in mainstream discourse and codified into the norms and practices of powerful institutions (Lippi-Green, 2012; MacSwan, 2020). Standard language ideology upholds and idealizes uniformity across grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation and thereby "attempts to create an artificially homogenous linguistic landscape" (Dragojevic et al., 2013, p. 8) by correcting or erasing "non-standard" language varieties, which deviate in some way from codified norms defining the correct spoken and written usage of a given language (Dragojevic, 2016). L2 English is marked by varied pronunciation as an outcome of language acquisition (Fuertes, Gottdeiner, Martin, Gilbert, & Giles, 2012). Under this definition, an L2 accent refers to phonemes (Fuertes et al., 2012; Giles, 1970) and/or suprasegmental elements (e.g., intonation, stress, speech rhythm; Kang, 2010) of a person's native language that are noticeable while speaking the acquired language.

Despite linguists' assertions that standardized language varieties are purely power-based ideologies and not rooted in linguistic fact (Dragojevic, 2016; Lippi-Green, 2012), standard language ideologies that denigrate L2 accents remain pervasive. In a recent review of the language teaching field study of language educators, MacSwan (2020) argues that educators' training and approach to language learning increasingly operates under a "language as deficit" ideology in which the student's heritage language was thought of as a hurdle to be managed and overcome. Similarly, Montgomery and Zhang (2018) found that, compared with a control condition that made no mention of language, participants who were primed to think about the negative characteristics of L2 English users (e.g., that they are difficult to understand) reported more negative intergroup orientations (i.e., decreased social attraction, increased anxiety, decreased willingness to communicate) toward both a specific target speaker and the speaker's ethnolinguistic group. Reflecting the findings of these studies, Dragojevic and colleagues (2013) argue that standard language ideology is largely taken for granted and accepted as common sense in the United States.

While this standard language ideology, which positions L2 English as a deficit, remains strongly rooted in U.S. culture, there is an increasing need to examine the effects of the positive attributions of speaking L2 English, which are often ignored or overlooked. Firstly, there has been a reversal in scientific and educational attitudes toward bilingualism, which was once considered to be a communicative disability (Lozano, 2018). In contemporary research, bilingualism is largely found to be beneficial, especially in infants and young children (Bialystok & Shapero, 2005). Increasing research demonstrates that bilingualism leads to increased cognitive and psychological fitness throughout the lifespan (Bialystok, 2011). Furthermore, ethnolinguistic minority groups increasingly assert that accent is a marker of cultural and linguistic identity, not a sign of decreased linguistic competence nor an impediment to communication effectiveness (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010b). This embrace of bilingualism and language variability by academic and scientific

communities, coupled with ethnolinguistic minorities' rejection of the stigma inflicted on their linguistic groups, signals that framing L2 English as an asset might improve dominant group members' perceptions of L2 English users.

As argued by Dragojevic and colleagues (2013) and Irvine and Gal (2000), individuals are socialized into the dominant language ideologies operating within a society, and these ideologies manifest in individual attitudes and behaviors toward linguistic diversity. As explained by Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) language ideologies create an "interpretive filter" (p. 62) through which people "view, explain, and understand the relationship between language and society" (Dragojevic et al., 2013, p. 3). In other words, individual language attitudes are intrinsically linked to and reflective of macro-level language ideologies. In this way, ideologies that position L2 English as a deficit will lead to individual attitudes that perceive L2 English as an undesirable trait and a potential hindrance to effective communication.

One persistent example of the deficit ideology is the general belief that L2 English indicates decreased linguistic competence (Lippi-Green, 2012). Linguistic competence, or a person's "perceived comfort in reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension" in a given language (Imamura et al., 2011, p. 109), is integral to the development of relationships across group and cultural contexts. The following hypothesis is proposed.

H1:   *Participants in the asset ideology condition will report the highest ratings of L2 English speakers' linguistic competence, followed by participants in the control condition, than participants in the deficit ideology condition.*

Intergroup Anxiety

Intergroup anxiety refers to a set of negative psychological and emotional outcomes such as feelings of frustration, awkwardness, discomfort, and so on During or in anticipating communication with outgroup members (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Prior research has linked intergroup anxiety to negative in-person (Islam & Hewstone, 1993) and hypothetical (Montgomery & Zhang, 2018) contact with members of a disliked, stigmatized, or threatening outgroup. Stephan (2014) proposes a theoretical model of intergroup anxiety, which explains the anticipated negative outcomes, antecedents, and consequences associated with intergroup anxiety. Relevant to the current study is the antecedent "attitudes and cognitions," which includes "knowledge of the outgroup, stereotypes, prejudice, expectations, and perceptions of dissimilarity" (Stephan & Stephan, 1985, p. 158), and the consequences such as intergroup anxiety and willingness to engage in future intergroup contact in various ways (Stephan, 2014; see Figure 1). Specifically, the willingness to engage in future contact with an outgroup is typically referred to as a behavioral indicator/dimension of intergroup attitudes or prejudice (Imamura et al., 2016; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). While language attitudes research has thoroughly documented L1 users' cognitive evaluations of L2 users (for review, see Dragojevic, Fasoli, Cramer, & Rakić, 2021), relatively fewer studies have explored psychological responses such as intergroup anxiety and behavioral attitudes (Dragojevic, 2016). The current study seeks to contribute to this area of research by featuring the effects of language ideologies on willingness to engage in future

contact with L2 English users as a linguistic outgroup in general through perceptions of linguistic competence and intergroup anxiety sequentially.
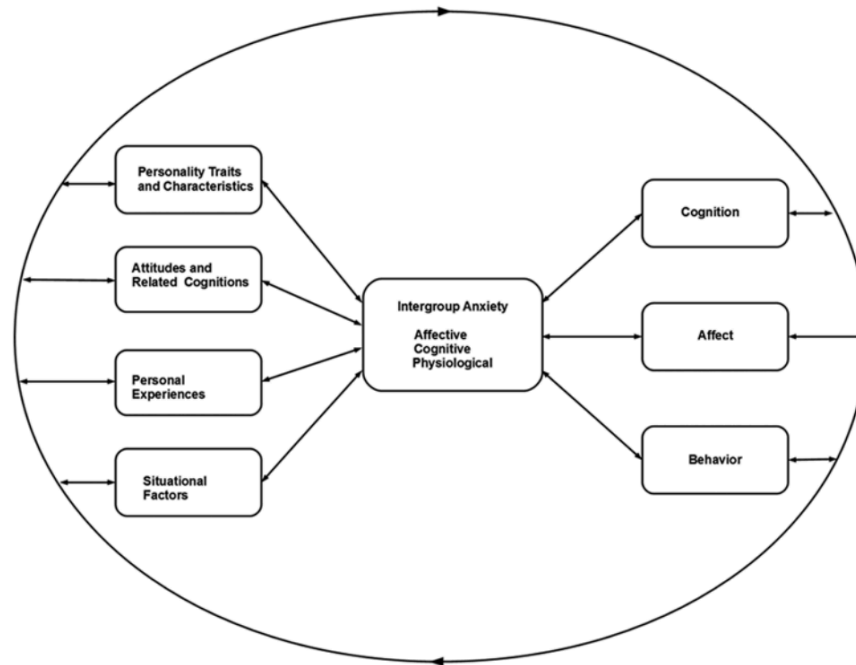
Figure 1. A theoretical model of intergroup anxiety, as shown in Stephan (2014).

Prior research argues declines in prejudicial attitudes are significantly explained by reduced intergroup anxiety as a result of quality contact among groups (Shim, Zhang, & Harwood, 2012; Voci & Hewstone, 2003; Zhang, Paik, Xing, & Harwood, 2018) in various intergroup contexts (e.g., cultural, ethnic, and age groups). A few studies focused on the associations between English proficiency or linguistic competence of L2 English users, an important indicator or proxy of intergroup contact, and willingness to engage in outgroup members directly or indirectly through intergroup anxiety (Imamura et al., 2016) or identification (Kim & Harwood, 2020). English proficiency was either self-reported (Imamura et al., 2016) or manipulated (Kim & Harwood, 2020).

Montgomery and Zhang (2018) found that negative language ideology or stereotyping of L2 English users increased L1 English users' intergroup anxiety toward the L2 English speaker, which subsequently led to decreased willingness to communicate with the target linguistic outgroup in general. Imamura and colleagues (2016) found that U.S. American college students' perceptions of Chinese international students' English language proficiency were negatively associated with intergroup anxiety, which was further associated with their cognitive (e.g., stereotypes), behavioral, and affective attitudes toward Chinese international students. Language attitudes research suggests that low English proficiency may accentuate cultural group boundaries, resulting in outgroup stereotyping, prejudice, and miscommunications (Dragojevic, 2016). Contrasting this view, findings from recent research indicated that high English

proficiency enhanced cultural identification, leading to "more desire for future interaction" with the target linguistic outgroup as a whole (Kim & Harwood, 2020, p. 160).

Together, these results suggest two important patterns. First, attributes about L2 English and perceived language competence influence intergroup anxiety, and second, intergroup anxiety is associated with intergroup attitudes. While the link between intergroup anxiety and intergroup attitudes is well established and theorized, research examining language ideologies, perceived linguistic competence, and intergroup anxiety is inadequate and has primarily focused on negative social attribution or stereotyping. We argue that examining this under-theorized link between language ideologies, perceived linguistic competence, and intergroup anxiety could provide additional explanations of inter-ethnolinguistic group communication.

In the current study, we position the language ideologies manipulated in the experimental conditions (i.e., L2 English as an asset or deficit) as antecedents of intergroup cognitions, anxiety, and attitudes. We predict that language ideology affects a person's evaluative and mental dispositions, such as perceptions of ethnolinguistic outgroups' linguistic competence, which in turn affect intergroup anxiety and attitudes toward ethnolinguistic groups. While prior literature has examined the link between negative social attribution of L2 English speakers and intergroup perceptions of L2 English speakers, the links between positive social attribution versus negative social attribution or control conditions have not been examined adequately. Hence, the current study seeks to address this gap in the literature by exploring the connection between the social attributions of L2 English speakers and U.S. participants' perceptions of their language competence and their intergroup anxiety and attitudes toward a particular ethnolinguistic group. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2:   *The language ideology conditions will have an indirect effect on intergroup anxiety through the perceived linguistic competence of L2 English users.*

H3:   *The language ideology conditions will have an indirect effect on behavioral attitudes toward L2 English users through linguistic competence and intergroup anxiety as serial mediators.*

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through CloudResearch, a crowd-sourcing research platform. Participants were paid $1.25 for their participation in the study. A total of 751 responses were collected for the study. Data cleaning resulted in 169 responses being excluded due to excessive missing data, serial responses, or otherwise incomplete submissions. The remaining 582 responses were inspected for quality and deemed usable for analysis.

All participants (N = 582; M_{age} = 49.37; SD = 16.25) self-identified as U.S.-born, monolingual (L1) English users who currently resided in the United States. Most participants identified as White (n = 497; 85.4%), while 50 (8.6%) identified as Black or African American; eight (1.4%) identified as Latino; six

(1.0%) as Asian; eight (1.4%) as American Indian, Native American, or Alaskan Native; and 13 (2.2%) identified as bi- or multiracial. Most participants identified as female (n = 399; 68.6%), while 182 (31.3%) identified as male, and one person (0.2%) identified as nonbinary. On average, participants had attained an associate degree or college sophomore level of education (M = 14.25 years; SD = 2.40).

Procedure

After completing a demographic questionnaire, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions. In total, 184 participants (31.6%) were randomly assigned to the asset ideology condition, 196 (33.7%) to the deficit ideology condition, and 202 (34.7%) to the control condition. The language ideology experimental manipulation, which served as the independent variable, appeared as a written passage on the participant's device. Participants were instructed to read the entire paragraph carefully. Screen-time settings were used so that the button to advance to the next survey section did not appear for two minutes. After reading the assigned paragraph, participants in the experimental conditions responded to a manipulation check item before proceeding to the major variable instruments. Those participants in the control condition did not complete the manipulation check; instead, they were directed to continue the survey after completing the demographic questionnaire. At the conclusion of the study, participants were debriefed and rerouted back to their CloudResearch account. The overall average amount of time taken to complete the survey was 26 minutes (SD = 68.12). Results of a one-way analysis of variance indicated no significant difference in the average amount of time spent completing the survey among the asset ideology condition (M = 23.16 minutes, SD = 26.41), deficit ideology condition (M = 28.82, SD = 81.51), or the control condition (M = 25.82, SD = 78.54), $F(2, 585)$ = .33, p = .72.

Materials

Two experimental manipulations were created for the study based on existing socio- and applied linguistics research and intergroup communication literature. The scripts representing the two dominant language ideologies were constructed in line with the theoretical delineations of the ideologies and to reflect realistic competing perceptions of L2 English users held by L1 speakers, as revealed in prior research in various settings (Dragojevic et al., 2013; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010a, 2010b; Montgomery & Zhang, 2018). Both the asset ideology and deficit ideology experimental conditions followed the same organization pattern: introduction of the topic, discussion of L2 English accents, a summary of L1 English users' general attitudes toward L2 English users, and a conclusion sentence stating whether L2 English is a positive or negative trait. Both the asset and deficit conditions were 175 words in length. In addition to these experimental conditions, a control condition was created in which participants were instructed to proceed with the study. In the next paragraph, the asset and deficit ideology conditions are explained in further detail.

The asset ideology condition discussed information about L2 English users, always framing the information in a positive light. The condition shared research (Lippi-Green, 2012) arguing that L2 English users have accents that are different from that of L1 English users as a natural outcome of using multiple languages. The paragraph then explained that L1 English users have reported enthusiasm about interacting with L2 English users given that speaking multiple languages enhances a person's capacity for intercultural communication competence (Arasaratnam-Smith, 2016) and that L2 English speakers have reported

eagerness to establish relationships with U.S. Americans (Gareis, Merkin, & Goldman, 2011). The asset ideology condition concluded by stating that speaking L2 English is advantageous.

The deficit ideology condition discussed information about L2 English users, always framing the information in negative terms. The condition presented the commonly held assumption (Dragojevic et al., 2013) that L2 English users' accents can make communication difficult given its variation from that of L1 English users (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). Next, the paragraph explained that L1 English users have reported frustration about interacting with L2 English users due to comprehension difficulties and misunderstandings (Gluszek, Newheiser, & Dovidio, 2011) and difficulty establishing relationships (Montgomery & Zhang, 2018). The deficit ideology condition concluded by stating that speaking L2 English is disadvantageous.

Major Variables

Mediator Variable: Perceived Linguistic Competence

Six 7-point Likert items (overall M = 4.06, SD = 1.08, α = .80) measured participants' perceptions about the linguistic competence of L2 English users, (e.g., *L2 English users' accents interfere with their ability to communicate effectively* [reverse coded]; from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Items were developed from relevant intergroup communication literature (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010a, 2010b; Imamura et al., 2016). Higher numbers indicated higher perceived linguistic competence of L2 English users.

Mediator Variable: Intergroup Anxiety

Six 7-point Likert items (overall M = 3.20, SD = 1.19, α = .88) measured participants' reported feelings (i.e., *anxious, worried, relaxed [reverse coded], comfortable [reverse coded], apprehensive, awkward*) in anticipation of communication with L2 English users, (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). One item (i.e., *confident [reverse coded]*) was dropped due to low reliability. Higher numbers indicated more anxiety.

Dependent Variable: Behavioral Attitudes

Eight 7-point Likert items measured participants' behavioral attitudes toward L2 English users as an ethnolinguistic group (overall M = 5.15, SD = 1.31; a = .92). Participants reported their willingness to engage in different behaviors (e.g., *"being close friends"* and *"working on the same team"*) with L2 English users if given the opportunity (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Seven items were adapted from Cooke (1978), and one item was adapted from Tropp's (2003) behavioral attitudes Likert scale. Higher numbers indicated more willingness to engage in the described behaviors.

Covariate Variables

Two participant characteristics were measured to explore and, if necessary, control as covariates. Prior research has demonstrated that political ideology and associated attitudes about immigration and acculturation can influence language attitudes (Montgomery, Zhang, & Imamura, 2021). A single-item semantic differential scale (1 = extremely conservative, 4 = moderate, 7 = extremely liberal) measured participants' political ideology, which was moderate among participants (overall M = 3.88, SD = 1.65). Additionally, participants

responded to a four-item, 7-point Likert scale measuring their assimilation attitudes toward immigrants (overall $M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.26$, $\alpha = .70$). These items, adapted from Montreuil, Bourhis, and Vanbeselaere's (2004) revised host community acculturation scale, measured participants' attitudes about how immigrants should be expected to assimilate (e.g., *"Immigrants should give up their culture of origin for the sake of adopting U.S. culture"*). Higher scores indicated a stronger preference that immigrants assimilate into U.S. American culture, and low scores suggested a strong orientation toward immigrant integration.

Results

Manipulation Check

To check the validity of the manipulation of L2 English as an asset or a deficit, participants in the two experimental conditions responded to one manipulation check item. The item measured (on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, and 7 = strongly agree) the extent to which participants agreed with the statement, "According to the previous paragraph, speaking English as a foreign language is generally regarded positively." Results of an independent-sample *t*-test indicated that participants in the asset ideology condition reported significantly more agreement that using L2 English was regarded positively ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.36$) than their counterparts in the deficit ideology condition ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.74$), $t(378) = 14.55$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.49$. Furthermore, one-sample *t*-tests indicated a statistically significant difference from the midpoint of the scale (i.e., 4) for both the asset condition mean, $t(183) = 14.56$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.07$, and the deficit condition mean, $t(195) = -7.09$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .51$. Based on these results, the manipulation of the asset and deficit ideology experimental conditions was successful.

Covariate Analysis

Before hypothesis testing, preliminary one-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) examined the degree to which, if at all, participants differed among the experimental and control groups on age, education, and measures of political ideology and assimilation attitudes. Results indicated no significant differences among participants' age (Asset: $M = 51.44$, $SD = 14.50$; Deficit: $M = 51.40$, $SD = 16.97$; Control: $M = 50.33$, $SD = 15.46$; $F[2, 581] = .32$, $p = .73$, $\eta^2 = .00$) or education (Asset: $M = 14.19$, $SD = 2.14$; Deficit: $M = 14.00$, $SD = 2.48$; Control: $M = 14.13$, $SD = 2.29$; $F[2, 581] = .34$, $p = .71$, $\eta^2 = .00$). However, participants differed significantly on political ideology, $F(2, 581) = 3.59$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$, and assimilation attitudes, $F(2, 581) = 3.28$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$.

Post hoc analysis using Fisher's least-significant difference test indicated the assimilation attitudes among participants in the asset condition ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.18$) were significantly lower than those of participants in the deficit condition ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.30$, $p < .05$). However, assimilation attitudes among those in the control condition ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.28$) did not differ significantly from those in the asset ($p = .15$) or deficit ($p = .25$) conditions. Additionally, the results indicated that political ideology among participants in the deficit condition was significantly more moderate ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.75$) than that among participants in the asset condition ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.51$, $p < .05$). However, political ideology among those in the control condition ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.66$) did not differ significantly from either the asset ($p = .36$) or deficit ($p = .08$) conditions. Hence, political ideology and assimilation attitudes were controlled as covariates in hypothesis testing.

Focal Analyses

Hypothesis 1 predicted the asset ideology condition would lead to the highest perceived linguistic competence of L2 English users, followed by the control group, then the deficit ideology condition. H1 was tested using an ANCOVA (covariates: political ideology, assimilation attitudes). After the effects of the covariates were controlled for, the analysis' results indicated a significant main effect of the experimental conditions on perceptions of L2 English users' linguistic competence, $F(2, 577) = 37.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$. Post hoc analysis probed the differences in linguistic competence across the experimental conditions. For all pairwise comparisons, Bonferroni adjustments were made to alphas to control for Type I errors (Green & Salkind, 2011). Results are displayed in Table 1. Results indicated that participants in the asset ideology condition reported higher perceived linguistic competence ($M = 4.49$, $SE = .08$) than the control group ($M = 3.89$, $SE = .06$), $F(1, 416) = 43.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$ and the deficit ideology condition ($M = 3.80$, $SE = .07$), $F(1, 426) = 46.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$. However, there was no significant difference in linguistic competence between the control condition and the deficit ideology condition, $F(1, 474) = 2.19$, $p = .14$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Hence, H1 was partially supported.

### Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations Across Independent Variable Conditions for the Dependent Variables.

	Conditions					
	Asset Ideology ($n = 184$)		Control ($n = 196$)		Deficit Ideology ($n = 202$)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Linguistic competence	4.41[a]	1.08	3.77[b]	1.08	3.81[b]	0.92
Intergroup anxiety	3.18[a]	1.01	3.17[a]	1.08	3.28	1.01
Behavioral attitudes	5.04[a]	1.21	5.06[a]	1.40	4.95[a]	1.29

Note. Means are adjusted for the covariance of attitudes toward acculturation and political ideology. Adjusted means with the different superscripts in rows are significantly different, *$p > .001$

Hypothesis 2 predicted a significant indirect effect of language ideology condition on intergroup anxiety through linguistic competence. Model 4 (with 10,000 bootstrap iterations) of Hayes' (2018) regression-based PROCESS macro for SPSS (version 3.5) tested H2. The PROCESS macro uses bootstrap analysis for additional statistical power while also systematically managing the multi-categorical predictor variable. Model 4 was used because it features the indirect effect of the focal predictor through one mediator (i.e., intergroup anxiety) while simultaneously controlling for the direct effect of the focal predictor (i.e., the language ideology conditions). Following Hayes and Preacher's (2014) procedures for testing the effects of a multi-categorical predictor, two dummy-coded variables were created to conduct pairwise comparisons between the conditions: one in which the asset ideology condition was the reference group and the other in which the deficit ideology condition was the reference group.

For each analysis, intergroup anxiety was entered as the outcome variable (Y), and linguistic competence was entered as the meditator (M). The respective dummy-coded variable for the targeted comparison was entered as the independent variable (X), while participants' political ideology and assimilation attitudes were entered as covariates. The indirect effects of the ideology conditions were tested for each pairwise comparison by examining the bootstrap results. Specifically, a significant indirect effect is observed when the bias-corrected and accelerated 95% confidence intervals (CIs) do not contain zero (Hayes, 2018).

After the effects of the covariates were controlled for, the analysis' results indicated that the model significantly predicted intergroup anxiety, R^2 = .18, $F(5, 576)$ = 26.12, p < .001. Results are illustrated in Figure 2, in which b represents the unstandardized regression coefficient, and dashed lines represent nonsignificant paths.
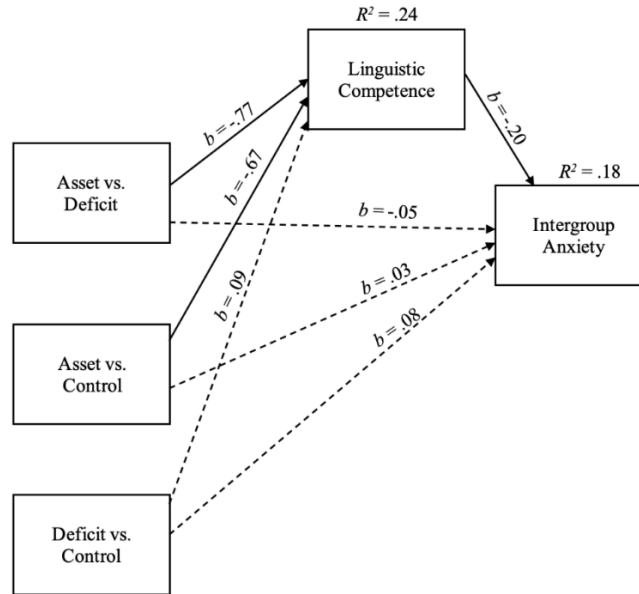
Figure 2. Results of Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4, version 3.5.2) testing H2.

The relative direct, indirect, and total effects of each pairwise comparison are displayed in Table 2. When comparing the asset and deficit ideology conditions (Est. = .16[9589i98% CI = .08; .24], SE = .04, p < .001) and the asset ideology condition and control group (Est. = .14[95% CI = .07; .22], SE = .04, p < .001), the relative indirect effect of ideology condition on intergroup anxiety through linguistic competence was significant. However, when comparing the deficit ideology condition and the control group, the relative indirect effect was nonsignificant (Est. = −.02[95% CI = −.06; .02], SE = .02, p = .21). Hence, H2 was partially supported.
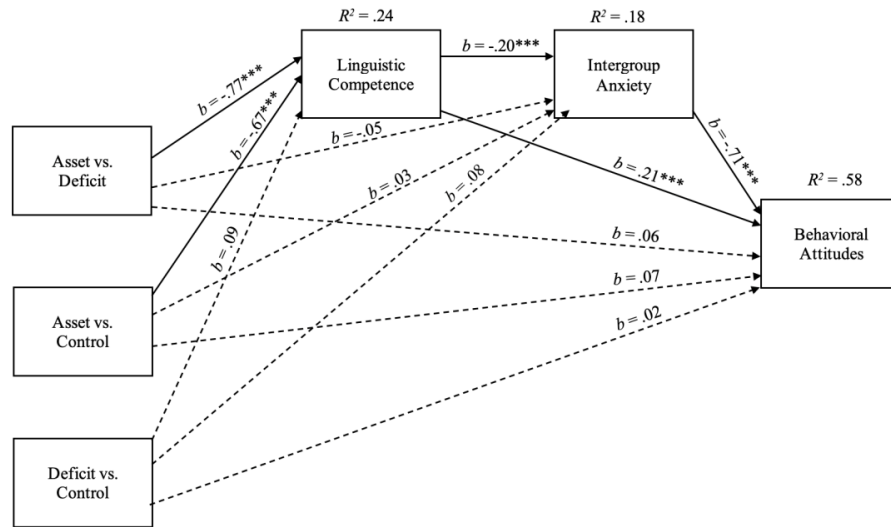
Table 2. Relative Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Language Ideology Experimental
Condition (X) on Intergroup Anxiety (Y) Through Linguistic Competence (M).

Pairwise Comparison	Relative Direct Effects			Relative Indirect Effects			Relative Total Effects		
	Effect	*SE*	*p*	*Effect*	*SE*	*p*	*Effect*	*SE*	*p*
1. Asset–deficit	−.05 [−.25, .15]	.10	.74	.16 [.08, .24]	.04	< .001	.11 [−.09, .30]	.10	.26
2. Asset–control	.03 [−.17, .22]	.10	.77	.14 [.07, .22]	.04	< .001	.16 [−.03, .36]	.10	.11
3. Deficit–control	.08 [−.11, .26]	.09	.51	−.02 [−.06, .02]	.02	.16	.06 [−.13, .25]	.10	.65

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown with 95% CIs in brackets.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a significant indirect effect of accent attribution condition on behavioral attitudes through linguistic competence and intergroup communication anxiety as serial mediators. Model 6 (with 10,000 bootstrap iterations) of Hayes' (2018) regression-based PROCESS macro for SPSS (version 3.5) was used to examine H3 as it features the indirect effect through perceived linguistic competence and intergroup anxiety as sequential mediators while simultaneously controlling for the direct and other indirect effects (e.g., through intergroup anxiety or perceived linguistic competence as a single mediator) of the focal predictor (i.e., the language ideology conditions). As with the analyses for H2, dummy-coded predictor variables facilitated pairwise comparisons of the experimental conditions. Behavioral attitudes toward L2 English users were entered as the outcome variable (*Y*), linguistic competence was entered as M_1, and intergroup anxiety was entered as M_2. The respective dummy-coded variable for the targeted comparison was entered as the independent variable (*X*), while participants' political ideology and assimilation attitudes were entered as covariates.

After the effects of the covariates were controlled for, the analysis' results indicated that the model significantly predicted participants' behavioral attitudes, R^2 = .58, $F(6, 575)$ = 134.29, $p < .001$. Results are illustrated in Figure 3, in which *b* represents the unstandardized regression coefficient, and dashed lines represent nonsignificant paths.

Figure 3. Results of Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 6, version 3.5.2) testing H3.

The relative direct, indirect, and total effects of each pairwise comparison are displayed in Table 3. Comparing the asset and deficit ideologies (Est. = $-.11_{[95\% \text{ CI} = -.17; -.06]}$, *SE* = .03, *p* < .001) and the asset ideology and control groups (Est. = $-.10_{[95\% \text{ CI} = -.15; -.05]}$, *SE* = .03, *p* < .001) revealed significant relative indirect effects. However, comparing the deficit ideology with the control condition yielded a nonsignificant indirect effect (Est. = $.02_{[95\% \text{ CI} = -.02; .06]}$, *SE* = .02, *p* = .22). Hence, H3 was partially supported.

Table 3. Relative Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Language Ideology Experimental Condition (X) on Behavioral Attitudes (Y) through Linguistic Competence (M₁) and Intergroup Anxiety (M₂) as Sequential Mediators.

Pairwise Comparison	Relative Direct Effects			Relative Indirect Effects			Relative Total Effects		
	Effect	*SE*	*p*	*Effect*	*SE*	*p*	*Effect*	*SE*	*p*
1. Asset–deficit	$.05_{[-.13, .23]}$	.09	.52	$-.11_{[-.17, .06]}$	.03	< .001	$-.18_{[-.41, .05]}$	.12	.13
2. Asset–control	$.07_{[-.11, .24]}$	.09	.46	$-.10_{[-.15, -.05]}$	.03	< .001	$-.19_{[-.41, .04]}$	.11	.11
3. Deficit–control	$.02_{[-.15, .18]}$	.09	.93	$.01_{[-.01, .04]}$	.01	.16	$-.01_{[-.23, .22]}$	.11	.97

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown with 95% CIs in brackets.

Discussion

Two complementary streams of research have developed alongside one another. First, language attitudes research has consistently demonstrated the stigmatized nature of L2 varieties of English in the

United States. Second, intergroup anxiety research demonstrates that attitudes and cognitions about an outgroup contribute to the anxiety a person experiences while interacting with an outgroup member. The current study sought to merge these two research fields by examining intergroup anxiety in an ethnolinguistic context. More specifically, the current experiment investigated the effects of language ideologies about L2 English (i.e., as an asset or a deficit) on L1 English, U.S. Americans' perceptions of L2 English users' linguistic competence, and intergroup anxiety and attitudes toward ethnolinguistic outgroups.

Summary of Findings

Results indicated the asset ideology condition enhanced participants' perceptions of L2 English users' linguistic competence compared with the deficit ideology and control conditions. In addition, language ideology had a significant indirect effect on intergroup anxiety through perceived linguistic competence, which was further associated with attitudes toward ethnolinguistic outgroups. Overall, this study suggests the potential role of positive language ideologies in enhancing intergroup attitudes and communicative dispositions toward L2 speakers. Additionally, these results affirm the relative prevalence of a standard language ideology within the United States as participants' ratings of L2 speakers' language capabilities did not significantly differ between the control and deficit ideology conditions. These findings are theoretically and practically meaningful.

Theoretical Implications

The current study indicates paths for theoretical development regarding language ideology and language attitudes. Previous research has focused extensively on the negative stereotypes and attributions associated with L2 English, but findings from the current study indicate the need for more research establishing and disseminating the positive attributes of L2 varieties of English. Despite the prevalence of the standard language and deficit ideologies, the positive attributes of bilingualism and L2 English users presented in the asset ideology experimental condition resonated with participants and led to favorable intergroup outcomes.

According to Lippi-Green (2012), standard language ideology is defined as "a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions" (p. 67). In the United States, English, particularly Standard American English, is the idealized variety upheld by the dominant group. Linguistic research consistently argues that a "standard" language variety is an ideological illusion, not a linguistic fact (Dragojevic, 2016; Lippi-Green, 2012), yet the standard language ideology remains prevalent. The fact that there was no difference in the perceived linguistic competence of L2 English speakers when comparing the deficit ideology and control conditions illustrates the widespread nature of the standard language ideology. Without any priming, participants in the control group reported equally low perceived linguistic competence as those participants who were exposed to negative social attributions of L2 speakers that positioned L2 English as a deficit to be overcome. These findings confirm prior language attitudes and intercultural communication research. Gluszek and Dovidio (2010a) found that L2 English users frequently perceived impatience and discriminatory behaviors from their L1 English–using counterparts. The disposition of L1 English users described by Gluszek and Dovidio (2010a) echoes the presumed authority and correctness associated with the English language and Standard

American English (SAE) argued by Imamura and colleagues (2011), Shim and colleagues (2012), and Zhang and Giles (2018).

However, shifting discourse away from the supposed deficits and difficulties associated with L2 English and toward its potential assets may help to reframe these paralinguistic features in a positive light. Prior research argues that many L2 English users experience stigma (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010a, 2010b) and stereotype threat (Kim, Roberson, Russo, & Briganti, 2019) while interacting with L1 English users. Stereotype threat, or the feeling that one is at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one's group (Steele & Aronson, 1995), is a particularly important concept. While discussing their experiences working with L1 English users in the United States, Kim and colleagues (2019) found that L2 English users were well aware of the stigma that U.S. Americans associate with L2 language varieties. Due to this awareness, L2 English–using employees felt anxious during encounters with their L1 English counterparts, expressing concern that they felt judged by their L1 English coworkers, that coworkers were skeptical of their ideas or explanations, and that L1 coworkers often asked other L1 English employees to clarify what they (the L2 English–using employee) had said. Due to these negative experiences, L2 English–using employees felt a sense of status loss and decreased competence in their organizational role (Kim et al., 2019). However, Kim and associates (2019) found that when L2 English–using employees held positive views about their language variety's attractiveness, pleasantness, and/or authenticity, it buffered the effects of stereotype threat and stigma. To identify other methods for counteracting language stigma and negative attributions, additional studies are needed regarding the positive self-talk in which L2 English users engage.

In addition to suggesting theoretical development of the positive attributions of L2 accents, the findings of the current study demonstrate that expectations about L2 English users' linguistic competence are a relevant component of intergroup anxiety. Research has shown that intergroup anxiety stems from a variety of factors, including "prior group cognitions" such as "knowledge of the outgroup, stereotypes, prejudice, expectations, and perceptions of dissimilarity" (Stephan & Stephan, 1985, p. 158). Results of the current study suggest that language ideologies are a relevant source of stereotypes and expectations about ethnolinguistic outgroup members. The link between intergroup anxiety and intergroup attitudes is well-documented (e.g., Imamura et al., 2016; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Stephan, 2014; Voci & Hewstone, 2003), and the results of the current study both support and extend prior literature.

A key finding from this study is the two-step serial mediation between language ideology and intergroup attitudes. Our data suggest the following pattern of generalization: from broader social attributions regarding L2 English users' language varieties to judgments about particular traits such as linguistic competence of the same group, to emotions such as intergroup anxiety toward the ethnolinguistic outgroup, then to intergroup attitudes toward the ethnolinguistic outgroup. Our sequential model illustrates the critical role played by positive language ideologies in enhancing judgments about L2 English users' linguistic competence, reducing intergroup anxiety, and improving attitudes toward ethnolinguistic outgroups.

Practical Implications

As globalization continues to increase, contact with and between ethnolinguistic outgroups will become more and more commonplace. Beyond being theoretically meaningful, the current study indicates avenues for practical applications for U.S. American L1 English users, as members of the dominant

ethnolinguistic group in the country, to cultivate more successful interactions and relationships with L2 English users and diasporic communities.

Language attitudes studies have concluded that as members of the ethnolinguistic majority that occupies a dominant position in society, L1 English users often place the communicative burden on their L2 English–using counterparts during interactions among linguistic groups. Put another way, the L1 English user's understanding and comprehension are seen as the L2 English user's responsibility (Lippi-Green, 2012). Consequently, miscommunications are attributed to the L2 user's (perceived) lack of linguistic competence rather than the L1 user's (potential) lack of attention, participation, or processing fluency. Shifting social attitudes and attributions of L2 English users and accents away from deficits and toward advantages may help in encouraging L1 English users to participate in interactions more fully and actively with L2 English users. Furthermore, more active participation coupled with more frequent exposure to L2 accents may improve processing fluency (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016), which means that over time and across interactions L1 English users will be able to process L2 speech more easily.

Additionally, as L1 English users become more familiar with and exposed to ethnolinguistic outgroup members, the quality of contact might also improve as an outcome of decreased intergroup anxiety. Here, mindfulness strategies theorized by Gudykunst and Kim (2003) within anxiety/uncertainty management theory may assist L1 English users in being more cognizant of their own communication behaviors and more present and engaged in the situation at hand rather than being preoccupied with potential negative outcomes. In particular, mindfulness improves contact between communicators by creating pathways for individuals to be open to new information and perspectives, which are key features of intercultural and intergroup communication. These new perspectives can decrease a person's reliance on negative stereotypes or social attributions, a common reaction to anxiety. Second, mindfulness can shift a person's focus away from the end goal of communication (e.g., being efficient, clear, easily understood) toward the communicative process (e.g., active listening, asking clarifying questions, turn taking, and reciprocity). This shift allows for anxiety to reduce and positive intergroup processes (e.g., social attraction) to improve.

Limitations and Future Directions

Future studies should continue to explore intergroup anxiety in ethnolinguistic contexts. In particular, the findings of the current study could be extended by incorporating an aural or listening component in the experimental design, which would give participants a specific individual target to consider when responding to the survey items. For the purposes of the current study, group-level considerations addressed general attitudes toward generalized ethnolinguistic outgroups, but these processes may function differently in one-on-one interactions. In-person interactions would also be able to test whether the intended effect of the ideology message could withstand interactions with a target outgroup member. Furthermore, to understand U.S. Americans' attitudes and behaviors toward particular language groups, more specific studies in applied settings are necessary.

Additionally, future research in language attitudes and language ideology should incorporate longitudinal designs to examine participants' true attitudinal and behavioral changes. Designs must ensure

that participants' responses to ideological messages indeed reflect their personally held attitudes and beliefs and are not an attempt to conform to social norms or meet research expectations.

Language features are a powerful social force, capable of creating a sense of similarity and shared goals or sowing distance, competition, and even animosity. In the United States, language attitudes research has established the stigmatized nature of L2 accents and the negative social attributions that are associated with L2 accents. To address the role of linguistic competence and intergroup anxiety in the language attitudes process, the current study compared the effects of positive and negative social attribution of accents on participants' intergroup attitudes. Results indicated that positive attribution led to the most positive intergroup outcomes, including increased perceived linguistic competence, decreased intergroup anxiety, and more favorable affective and behavioral attitudes. Overall, this study indicates the critical role of the positive social attribution of accents in promoting improved language attitudes toward L2 accents in the United States.

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