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Discussion

## When cultures collide: the official language debate

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### 1. Introduction

The official language debate continues to be a divisive public issue in the United States. Historically, during periods of high immigration, there has been a concomitant drive to legislate language (Giles et al., 1995; Ricento, 1995). Since the 1965 immigration reform, the number of legal immigrants increased dramatically—especially non-European Americans and non-English speakers from Latin America, Mexico and Asia. Indeed, the second highest period of immigration in this century was the period from 1980 to 1991 (Ricento, 1995); thus, and not surprisingly, a heated language debate has resurfaced at both the state and federal level.

US English, a non-profit organization, is the driving force behind the movement to make English the official language of the US government. Founded in 1983 by John Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist with ties to anti-immigration groups, and joined by the late Senator Hayakawa from California as honorary chairman, the organization now boasts 1.3 million members (US English, 1998a). Through the years, the organization has made use of high profile Hispanics to further its agenda, mostly in response to accusations that it is a racist organization. The current president of US English is Mauro Mujica, a successful and prominent businessman originally from Chile.

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Over the last 20 years, several attempts have been made to pass English language legislation (hereafter ELL) at the federal level starting with Hayakawa's 1981 English Language Amendment; however, it is only at the state level where language laws have been successful (see Crawford, 1999a, for a review of legislation). US English, with a strong lobbying arm and substantial financial resources, is committed to supporting language restriction campaigns. However, language restriction intersects other issues as well, most notably immigration, minority rights, the place of cultural diversity in schools, and bilingual education (King, 1997). California has passed restrictive legislation that addresses some of these issues, for example, English language legislation, Proposition 63 (1986); immigrant rights restrictions, Proposition 187 (1994); the elimination of affirmative action, Proposition 209 (1996); and the elimination of bilingual education, Proposition 227 (1998).

Parallels can be drawn between California's 1998 successful drive to end bilingual education and its "English Only" initiative (Proposition 63) that was conducted there in the 1980s. In fact it was a mediocre report on the bilingual education program (Baker and deKanter, 1981) that sparked California Senator Hyakawa's campaign to make English the official language in California. California's Proposition 227, the "English for Children" initiative, employed English Only rhetoric in the drive to eliminate bilingual education, for example that it discouraged assimilation. The sponsor of the bill, Ron Unz, a wealthy California businessman, is currently fund raising and campaigning for an initiative to abolish bilingual education in Arizona (English for the Children of Arizona) with Colorado, New York, and Massachusetts targeted for possible future campaigning activities (McCloy, 1999). Interestingly, the Arizona Supreme Court recently (1998) declared the state's 1988 English Only amendment unconstitutional after opponents of the measure waged a 10-year battle against it. In January, 1999, the US Supreme Court refused to overturn the 1998 ruling by the Arizona Supreme Court.

We begin in 1999 with 22 states having passed various forms of ELL and more states considering it (Crawford, 1999b). Past research and polling data indicate that most Americans favor making English the official language of the US government. These studies also find that European-Americans are more likely to support English language legislation than are Hispanics (e.g. Citrin et al., 1990; O'Beirne, 1996; Ray and Tinsley, 1995; Schmid, 1992; Sears et al., 1994; Sullivan et al., 1995; Zentella, 1997). In addition to ethnicity, researchers have found other predictors of position on ELL. For example, Tatalovich (1995) found voting for Ronald Reagan in 1984 was the strongest predictor of support for ELL. In addition, Citrin et al.'s (1990) detailed analysis of survey data provides important evidence for the role of nationalism and symbolic politics in the language debate.

However, whereas previous research has investigated predictors of ELL attitudes, scant attention has been paid to asking people the *reasons* for their attitudes. Indeed, we are not aware of a single study that has allowed respondents to provide open-ended responses indicating *why* they favor or oppose ELL. This paucity of research is surprising given the number of books and articles that argue the merits of ELL and assess the motivations of ELL proponents. Thus, the primary concern of the

present research was to elicit respondents' reasons for their pro- or anti-ELL position in order to investigate empirically the "whys" that underlie the ELL debate.

### *1.1. Overview of the present research*

Two studies were conducted in Corpus Christi, Texas, (pop. approximately 330,000), a city in South Texas approximately 2 h north of the Mexico border and 2 h south of the Alamo, with Mexican-Americans making up slightly more than 50% of the population and European-Americans constituting approximately 43%. We pursued four major goals in our research: (a) to test whether ethnic differences in levels of support for ELL replicate findings of previous research, namely higher levels of support among European-Americans than among Hispanic-Americans, in this case Mexican-Americans; (b) to examine the contribution of other potentially relevant demographic variables such as language background to levels of support for ELL; (c) to elicit, examine, and categorize respondents' reasons for supporting or opposing ELL; and (d) to test whether the pro- and anti-ELL reasons differ as a function of respondents' ethnicity (Mexican-American vs European-American). The first three goals were pursued in Study 1; the fourth was pursued in Study 2.

## **2. Study 1**

### *2.1. Method*

#### *2.1.1. Respondents*

Three hundred students (189 females and 111 males) at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, a regional university in South Texas, completed a survey during a regular class period. One hundred and sixty-six (55.3%) identified themselves as European-American, 104 (34.7%) as Mexican-American, 16 (5.3%) as African-American, 9 (3%) as Asian-American, and 3 (1%) as "Other"; two respondents did not identify their ethnicity. One hundred and seventy-one (57%) claimed a monolingual English language background, 108 (36%) a bilingual English-Spanish background, and 21 (7%) "Other" (typically, some level of proficiency in a language besides Spanish). The mean age of this sample was 22.3 years old.

#### *2.1.2. Materials and procedure*

The survey, entitled "Language Attitude Survey," was printed double-sided on a single sheet of paper. At the top of the front page, respondents indicated whether or not they were "aware that there is currently legislation to make English the one official language of the United States". Respondents then indicated whether they were in favor of this legislation, opposed the legislation, or were unsure. After indicating their position, respondents were asked to "give the reasons" for their position. The reverse side of the survey contained the following demographic items: ethnicity, sex, age, education (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate), language background, and political ideology (very liberal, somewhat liberal, middle of

the road, somewhat conservative, very conservative) coded to range from 1 to 5, respectively.

## 2.2. Results

### 2.2.1. Awareness of and position on English language legislation

Over a third of the sample (36.3%) claimed not to be aware of ELL. This lack of awareness is notable given the implications of the legislation for an area like Corpus Christi that has a high concentration of Spanish speakers. As has been found in previous research, more respondents favored (42.7%) than opposed (29.7%) ELL; 27.3% were unsure (one respondent did not indicate his or her position).

### 2.2.2. Predictors of position on English language legislation

Chi-square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to examine differences in respondents' position on ELL as a function of the demographic variables included in the study. As expected, European-Americans were more likely to favor ELL (60.8% favor, 13.9% oppose, 25.5% unsure) than were Mexican-Americans (16.3% favor, 54.4% oppose, 28.8% unsure),  $\chi^2$  (d.f. = 2) = 65.46,  $p < 0.0001$ . In addition, monolingual respondents were more likely to favor ELL (54.4% favor, 17% oppose, 28.7% unsure) than were bilingual respondents (23.1% favor, 50.9% against, 25.9% unsure),  $\chi^2$  (d.f. = 2) = 40.82,  $p < 0.0001$ . Finally, those in favor of the legislation were more conservative ( $M = 3.58$ ) than were those opposed ( $M = 2.38$ ) or unsure ( $M = 2.77$ ),  $F(2,257) = 42.60$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ; scores for the latter two groups were significantly different from each other as well. No differences were found for respondents' sex, age, education level, or awareness of the legislation.<sup>1</sup>

Because a much higher percentage of Mexican-American than European-American respondents were bilingual (75.7% vs 16%), ethnicity and language background are highly confounded. In addition, monolingual speakers were significantly more conservative than bilingual speakers (respective  $M$ s = 3.01 and 2.76),  $t(271) = 2.28$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and European-Americans were marginally significantly more conservative than Mexican-Americans (respective  $M$ s = 2.99 and 2.76),  $t(265) = 1.89$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ; thus ethnicity and language background are both confounded with political ideology as well. To test for the unique contribution of each predictor to respondents' position on ELL, ethnicity, language background, and political ideology were entered simultaneously in a multiple regression equation predicting ELL position coded as a three-point variable (where 1 = favor, 2 = unsure and 3 = against). Both ethnicity ( $Beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and political ideology ( $Beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) emerged as significant predictors of ELL position; the contribution of language background was marginally significant ( $Beta = 0.12$ ,  $p < 0.08$ ),  $F(3,252) = 35.51$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , total adjusted  $R^2 = 0.29$ ). Thus, the results of the regression analysis indicate that European-Americans and more conservative

<sup>1</sup> All chi-squares remained highly significant when respondents who were unsure of their position were excluded from the analyses.

respondents were more likely to support ELL than were Mexican-Americans and more liberal respondents; in addition, there was a marginally significant tendency for monolingual speakers to be more in favor of ELL than bilingual speakers.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2.3. *Reasons for position on English language legislation*

Respondents' reasons for their position on ELL were then examined. For clarity, we restricted these analyses to the responses of the 217 respondents who indicated that they were either in favor of ELL (pro-ELL reasons) or opposed to ELL (anti-ELL reasons). The reasons provided by these respondents were typed verbatim or were modified slightly to increase readability. When a participant provided multiple reasons for his or her position, all reasons were recorded. The total number of responses was 361, an average of 1.66 reasons per participant.

Pro- and anti-ELL reasons were examined separately. The two researchers jointly sorted the reasons for each position into categories.<sup>3</sup> Eight categories of pro-ELL reasons (168 reasons in total) and seven categories of anti-ELL reasons (130 reasons in total) were generated; (63 or 17.5% of the responses could not be categorized.) Category titles, descriptions, and sample reasons are presented in Fig. 1.

A separate rater was then employed for interrater agreement. Again, pro-ELL and anti-ELL reasons were examined separately. The rater was provided with copies of the same printed responses used by the experimenters as well as a printed description of each category that contained the name and a brief explanation of the category. The rater's task was to put each reason under one of the category descriptions that were placed next to one another on a long table. After familiarizing the rater with the categories, the experimenters worked together with the rater using just under 25% of the responses (40 of 168 pro-ELL reasons; 30 of 130 anti-ELL reasons), explaining to the rater the rationale for selecting a particular category. The rater then coded the remaining reasons alone. Interrater agreement was calculated from these responses (128 pro-ELL reasons; 100 anti-ELL reasons). Ninety-two per cent agreement was obtained for each of the two sets of reasons. Differences were resolved through discussion.

2.2.3.1. *Pro-ELL categories.* Response frequencies and ranks were then computed separately for reasons in the eight pro-ELL categories and reasons in the seven anti-ELL categories. These data are presented in Table 1. As can be seen in top half of Table 1, the two most frequently elicited categories of pro-ELL reasons (*Communication* and *Majority Language* respectively) were that ELL would facilitate communication (e.g. "We need common grounds for communication". "It is necessary for a nation to function to be able to communicate with each other.") and that

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<sup>2</sup> The same pattern of results were found in a logistical regression predicting only the responses of those in favor or opposed to English-only legislation.

<sup>3</sup> After constructing the categories, the individual responses were checked against the corresponding participant number. When a participant provided multiple reasons that were included in the same category these reasons were considered redundant and only one of them was retained. All reasons provided by a single participant that were coded into different categories were retained.

## Pro-ELL Categories

**Majority Language:** Description--English is the primary language spoken in the US.  
This is the language we were taught all of our lives.  
If foreigners come to the US they should be willing to learn English which the majority speaks and writes.

**Communication:** Description--English will allow people to communicate better.  
Americans will understand each other and not run into any speaking problems  
It makes for better communication in the workplace and society.

**America=English:** Description--The English language is linked with being an American.  
...this is the US--America not Mexico  
This is America and all who come to America should be able to talk English.

**International Language:** Description--English is a world language.  
English is spoken world-wide--it's a universal language.  
Whether someone is Spanish Italian Anglo French or Oriental wherever they go English is spoken.

**National Unity:** Description--One language helps to unify a people.  
It will bring Americans closer together as a unit. One Nation, One Language.  
Why continue to keep our country divided?

**Expense/Logistics:** Description--Concern with the cost of and problems with maintaining bilingual forms/facilities.  
It will make education less expensive if everyone understands the same language.  
Too much time and money is spent on this issue.

**When in Rome...:** Description--Most other countries have their own language which should be learned if you want to live in or visit that country.  
Before I visited Mexico the first thing I did was learn Spanish. It only makes sense.  
This is America, we speak English just like France speaks French.

**Hostility to Foreign Influences:** Description--Overt expressions of enmity toward foreigners.  
No one should be able to come into our country and take our pride away from us.  
...if someone want to talk Spanish only, then they should go to Mexico.

## Anti-ELL Categories

**Freedom/Rights:** Description--An appeal to the American tradition of freedom of speech.  
...it infringes upon the rights of those who don't speak English and all other American who wish to have a choice.  
...it would preclude rights set forth in the Constitution.

**Melting Pot/Diversity:** Description--The US is made up of people from many different cultures.  
Why should English be what describes a country which houses a diverse population of cultures?  
To enact legislation would not allow for the cultural diversity that makes this country great.

**Disadvantage/Difficulty:** Description--People who do not speak English would be at an unfair disadvantage.  
Many people do not know English and they should not be at a disadvantage.  
To make English the one official language because it is spoken by many would be to exclude others.

**Cultural Preservation:** Description--Language is integral part of one's culture/heritage, without reference to US.  
Language is part of a person's culture which should not be denied.  
By basically eliminating other languages you are eliminating cultures and customs as well.

**Bilingualism is Important:** Description--Bilingualism should be seen as an asset for many reasons.  
Legislation will have a negative effect on international relationships due to the lack of bilingual education.  
More people should be bilingual so more people will be able to communicate better.

**Prejudice/Discrimination:** Description--This legislation would discriminate and alienate.  
It alienates a large portion of the American Republic.  
Any move toward possible bigotry should be curtailed.

**Unnecessary/Ineffective:** Description--Why bother?  
No matter the language of legislation, people will speak what they prefer to speak, it cannot be enforced and would not matter.  
It is unnecessary--English is the official language--everyone is well aware of this.

Fig. 1. Pro-ELL and anti-ELL categories and examples of reasons.

Table 1  
Pro- and anti-ELL categories

Category	Frequency	Rank
<i>Pro-ELL categories</i>		
Communication	30	1
Majority language	29	2
When in Rome	25	3
American = English	22	4
Hostility to foreign influences	18	5
National unity	14	6
Expense/logistics	12	7
International language	9	8
Total reasons	159	
<i>Anti-ELL categories</i>		
Freedom/rights	32	1
Melting pot/diversity	26	2
Disadvantage/difficulty	18	3
Bilingualism is important	13	4
Cultural preservation	12	5
Prejudice/discrimination	9	6
Unnecessary/ineffective	6	7
Total reasons	116	

English is already the predominant language used in the United States (e.g. “Because so many Americans already use and speak English.” “English is the language of the majority.”). Although the two categories are similar, only responses in the former make the explicit argument that ELL would make it easier for people to communicate.

Responses in the third most frequently elicited pro-ELL category (*When in Rome*) contend that most countries have a single national language and that it is expected that one speak that language; therefore, the United States should also have one national language (e.g. “If I were to move to France, I’d learn French. People moving here should learn English.” “Other countries have their own language, we should too.”). Responses in the next category (*American = English*) implicitly or explicitly equate United States with the English language. Some of these responses make the point that the country was “founded” in English (e.g., “This country was founded using the English language and it should be preserved.” “The constitution was written in English”); others make the tautological argument that English should be the official language of the United States because, as two respondents put it, “this is America” or in the words of another “English is the language of America...”

The fifth most frequently elicited category of pro-ELL reasons (*Hostility to Foreign Influences*) is composed of responses that express enmity toward foreigners, immigrants, and Spanish speakers (e.g. “If someone wants to talk Spanish only then they should go to Mexico.”), the belief that too many non-English speaking

foreigners and immigrants take advantage of the United States (e.g. “We have too many illegal aliens and immigrants who are receiving benefits while some people who speak English cannot.”), and an aversion to seeing or hearing Spanish (e.g. “I’m tired of driving down SPID [a main highway in Corpus Christi] and seeing billboard advertisements in Spanish.”). Sixth (*National Unity*) argues that the United States needs ELL to promote national unity (e.g. “It would help unite the United States.” “We need to have something to unify the country.”). Seventh (*Expense/Logistics*) contends that having multiple languages is expensive and logistically problematic (e.g. “The cost of printing material in more than one language is high.” “If you don’t have an official language, then you would end up having to provide documents in every language in order to represent everyone.”). Finally, responses in the last category of pro-ELL reasons (*International Language*) note that English is or will become an international language (e.g. “English is becoming the language of the world.” “Most people all over the world speak English...”).

2.2.3.2. *Anti-ELL categories.* Anti-ELL categories are presented in the bottom half of Table 1. As can be seen in the table, responses in the most frequently elicited category (*Freedom/Rights*) claim that ELL denies people the right to speak their own language and therefore contradicts the United States’ ethos of freedom (e.g. “People have the right to speak the language they favor.” “The US is a free country and freedom of language is an important part of our freedom.”). Responses constituting the second most popular category (*Melting Pot/Diversity*) argue that ELL is inimical to the United States’ heritage as a melting pot that houses a diverse, multicultural society (e.g. “This is a melting pot country and any language must be tolerated and accommodated as effective [sic] and as freely as possible.” “This country was founded and based on cultural diversity. This [ELL] would destroy the country’s heritage...”). It is interesting to note that the respondents who provided these responses seemed to use the melting pot metaphor as synonymous with, not antithetical to, “diversity” and “multiculturalism”.

Responses in the third most frequently elicited category of anti-ELL reasons (*Disadvantage/Difficulty*) contend that ELL would hinder those who do not speak or understand English (e.g. “Many people do not know English and they should not be at a disadvantage.” “There are lots of children who are not English-speaking. It is going to be hard for them to get a good education...”). Next (*Bilingualism is Important*) is the belief that bilingualism (or multilingualism) is an important ability that ELL would discourage (e.g. “We should be encouraged to know more than one language to understand other cultures,” “...it is important that students learn two languages not just English.”). Implicit in many of these responses is the (questionable) assumption that ELL would discourage if not disallow opportunities to learn multiple languages (e.g. “Why should America be limited to only one language or communication?”).

The fifth category (*Cultural Preservation*) consists of responses expressing concern that ELL would erode or erase non-European culture, ethnicity, or language. This category differs from *Melting Pot* in that the responses assert the importance of preserving and maintaining the distinct heritages of non-European or non-English

speaking people, not the ostensible multi-ethnic, melting pot heritage of the United States (e.g. “...making English official would discourage people from learning the language of their culture.” “...non-English speaking cultures will be encouraged to forget their language which will squelch their importance of heritage [sic].”). Responses in the next category (*Prejudice/Discrimination*) express concern that ELL would result in prejudice and discrimination against non-European or non-English speaking people (e.g. “...this legislation is racist. It will inevitably produce prejudices for those who do speak a second language.” “...it would be discrimination to people who speak another language.”). Finally, the last category of anti-ELL responses (*Unnecessary/Ineffective*) make the point that ELL is either unnecessary or would be ineffective (e.g. “There is no need—English is already the official language of the US” “No matter the language of legislation, people will speak what they prefer to speak, it can not be enforced and would not matter.”).

### 2.3. Discussion

As has been found in previous research, a majority of respondents supported ELL and substantially greater support was found among European-Americans than Mexican-Americans. In addition to ethnicity, political ideology and language background also predicted ELL position, with significantly greater support found for more conservative respondents and for respondents with a monolingual English background. Further, a regression analysis revealed that all three variables made independent contributions to respondents’ ELL attitudes, although the influence of language background was only marginally significant.

Respondents’ reasons for supporting or opposing ELL were elicited. These reasons were sorted into eight pro-ELL and seven anti-ELL categories. A high level of interrater agreement was obtained for both the pro-ELL and anti-ELL categories. These findings suggest that respondents’ reasons for supporting or opposing ELL fall into distinct and meaningful groupings.

Because the vast majority of European-Americans supported ELL and the vast majority of Mexican-Americans opposed it, few pro-ELL reasons were elicited from Mexican-Americans and few anti-ELL reasons were elicited from European-Americans. Therefore, pursuance of our fourth research goal examination of potential differences between Mexican-American and European-American respondents’ pro- and anti-ELL reasons necessitated eliciting additional Mexican-American pro-ELL reasons and European-American anti-ELL reasons. Thus, we conducted a second study in order to obtain these responses.

## 3. Study 2

### 3.1. Respondents and procedure

A separate sample of 436 students at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi completed the identical questionnaire used in Study 1. From this sample, 34 Mexican-Americans

who favored ELL and 41 European-Americans who opposed ELL were identified. Reasons for their position were recorded and sorted into the categories generated in Study 1. The 34 Mexican-Americans generated a total of 44 pro-ELL reasons, 41 of which could be categorized; the 41 European-Americans generated a total of 55 anti-ELL reasons, 52 of which could be categorized. The categorizable responses were added to those elicited from Mexican-Americans (14 pro-ELL reasons and 85 anti-ELL reasons) and European-Americans (145 pro-ELL reasons and 31 anti-ELL reasons) in Study 1. Because the purpose of Study 2 was to compare category frequencies for Mexican-American vs European-American respondents, only reasons generated by Mexican-Americans and European-Americans were examined. Thus, the data set for Study 2 consisted of 55 Mexican-American pro-ELL reasons, 145 European-American pro-ELL reasons, 83 Mexican-American anti-ELL reasons, and 85 European-American anti-ELL reasons.

### 3.2. Results

Frequencies and ranks were computed separately for the four groups of reasons listed above (Mexican-Americans' pro-ELL reasons, European-Americans' pro-ELL reasons, Mexican-Americans' anti-ELL reasons, and European-Americans' anti-ELL reasons). These data are presented in Table 2. In order to test whether the likelihood of eliciting responses of a particular pro- and anti-ELL reason category differed as a function of the writers' ethnicity (Mexican-American vs European-

Table 2  
Pro- and anti-ELL categories as a function of ethnic group membership

Category	Mexican-American		European-American	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
<i>Pro-ELL categories</i>				
Majority language	17	1	22	3
Communication	14	2	28	1
American = English	7	3	20	4
International language	6	4	8	8
National unity	6	4	13	6
Expense/logistics	3	5	12	7
When in Rome	2	6	24	2
Hostility to foreigners	0	7	18	5
<i>Anti-ELL categories</i>				
Freedom/rights	23	1	12	2
Melting pot/diversity	17	2	26	1
Disadvantage/difficulty	15	3	8	5
Cultural preservation	10	4	11	3
Bilingualism	9	5	5	6
Preduce/discrimination	7	6	11	3
Unnecessary/ineffective	4	7	10	4

American), separate Chi-square analyses were conducted for reasons in each of the eight pro-ELL categories and for each of the seven anti-ELL categories.<sup>4</sup> The analyses of pro-ELL reasons tested whether the percentage of pro-ELL reasons that comprised a particular pro-ELL category (i.e. the number of pro-ELL reasons in that category divided by the total number of pro-ELL respondents) differed as a function of the response writers' ethnicity. Similarly the analyses of anti-ELL reasons tested whether the percentage of anti-ELL reasons that comprised a particular anti-ELL category differed as a function of the response writers' ethnicity.

Three significant differences were found. For pro-ELL reasons, European-Americans' reasons were significantly more likely than Mexican-Americans' reasons to fall into the *When in Rome* category,  $\chi^2$  (d.f. = 7) = 9.21,  $p < 0.01$ , and *Hostility to Foreign Influences* category,  $\chi^2$  (d.f. = 7) = 10.14,  $p < 0.01$ . For anti-ELL reasons, Mexican-Americans' reasons were significantly more likely than European-Americans' reasons to fall into the *Freedom/Rights* category,  $\chi^2$  (d.f. = 6) = 5.77,  $p < 0.05$ . In addition, a marginally significant trend was found,  $\chi^2$  (d.f. = 6) = 3.12,  $p = 0.08$ , suggesting that Mexican-Americans' reasons were also more likely than European-Americans' reasons to fall into the *Disadvantage/Difficulty* category.

### 3.3. Discussion

European-Americans' pro-ELL reasons were significantly more likely than Mexican-Americans' pro-ELL reasons to fall into the *When in Rome* and *Hostility to Foreign Influences* categories. Many of the reasons in the *When in Rome* category, while not overt enough to be included in the *Hostility to Foreign Influences* category, also evidenced negative sentiments towards foreigners and immigrants, (e.g. "If I moved to another country, I would make every effort to learn their language to be a competent citizen."). These responses suggest that those who do not speak English are incompetent citizens and unwilling to do "what it takes" to become an American; or, as in the following example, suggest that immigrants are disrespectful to Americans, "If I were going to move to another country to live and especially if I was going to be a citizen, out of respect I would learn the official and native language to that country." Several *When in Rome* responses also suggest that immigrants are not only unwilling to learn English, but are unwilling to adjust to American culture, (e.g. "When I go another country, I am expected to know their language and adjust to their culture. Just the same, I expect those that come to this country to know our language and adjust to our culture, not us having to adjust to them.").

Two differences were found for the anti-ELL reasons: Mexican-Americans' reasons were significantly more likely than European-Americans' reasons to fall in the

<sup>4</sup> Chi-square analyses should only be conducted only when the expected frequency (i.e. the frequency of responses expected if the predictor variable has no effect) is at least five for each of the groups that is tested (Siegel, 1956). Because the expected frequency for one of the response groups in Table 2 (Mexican-American reasons in favor of ELL in the "When in Rome" category) was slightly less than five (4.93), Fisher's exact test (two-tailed) was used in lieu of a chi-square analysis to test for differences between Mexican-American and European-American response frequencies for this category.

*Freedom/Rights* category and marginally significantly more likely to fall in the *Disadvantaged/Difficulty* category. That the Mexican-Americans in South Texas would be more sensitive to the effects that ELL would have on Spanish language use and be more cognizant of the repercussions and difficulties of being a non-English speaker in the US is not surprising. The demographics and geographical location of Corpus Christi accounts for a large monolingual and bilingual Spanish speaking community, and most of the young Hispanics maintain their social ties to that community.

#### 4. General discussion

The responses elicited in the present research can be roughly divided into utilitarian and symbolic arguments (see Sears, 1988, for a more general discussion of utilitarian-vs symbolically-based political attitudes). Utilitarian arguments make claims concerning the concrete effects that ELL would have on the daily lives of American citizens and on the functioning of the United States as a social and political system. In contrast, symbolic arguments make claims concerning the ostensible psychological effects of ELL, especially on respondents' ingroup identities—most notably in our research, respondents' national, ethnic, and cultural identities—and on respondents' attitudes toward outgroups—most notably in our research, European-Americans' attitudes toward Mexican-Americans and other non-English speaking “foreigners” (see Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987; Hogg and Abrams, 1988, for discussions of group-based or “social” identities; see Giles et al., 1995, for an application of social identity to language issues and the ELL controversy).

ELL proponents such as US English typically advance utilitarian arguments for ELL, for example that one language is needed to facilitate communication among Americans from divergent language and cultural backgrounds and to reduce costs resulting from multilingualism such as bilingual education and multilanguage documents (Mujica, 1997; US English, 1998b). Moreover, ELL proponents often contend that their push for ELL is driven by a desire to advance the social and economic interests of non-English speakers via increased access to jobs and education. For example, an electronic US English document asserts that “Life without English proficiency in the United States is a life of low-skilled, low-paying jobs, without the ability to take part in democratic society. Knowledge of English leads to the realization of the American dream...” (US English, 1998b). In contrast, ELL opponents argue that symbolic concerns drive the push for ELL, especially nationalistic attitudes and prejudice against non-European immigrant groups and ethnic minorities (Padilla et al., 1991; King, 1997; Zentalla, 1997; Hornberger, 1998), a claim that is rejected by ELL advocates. (See Sears and Huddy, 1993 for a similar division of reasons [generated by the researchers] for opposing bilingual education.

Pro-ELL responses elicited in the present research provide some support for both positions, but on balance, seem to buttress the contentions of ELL opponents. In support of ELL proponents, pro-ELL respondents did advance utilitarian arguments, particularly responses in the *Communication* and *Expense/Logistics*

categories. However, there was clear evidence of symbolic concerns as well, especially responses in the *America=English* and *Hostility to Foreign Influences* categories. Many responses in the former category are decidedly nationalistic in tone (e.g. "...this is the US—American, not Mexico."). These sentiments were reported in a 1988 California poll which found that 94% of the respondents agreed that "speaking and writing English was important 'in making someone a true American'" (Citrin et al., 1990, p. 549). And, contrary to the claims of ELL proponents, responses in the latter category—all of which were written by European-Americans—are clearly prejudicial. Further, while some responses in the *Majority Language*, *National Unity*, *When in Rome*, and *International Language* categories appear to advance utilitarian concerns, others are of a symbolic nature. For example, many *National Unity* responses express nationalistic attitudes, such as desire for a more culturally homogeneous nation (e.g. "English as our main language would give us Americans some form of substance as an individual nation—no more melting pot—just Americans.") and concern about the spread of cultural heterogeneity should ELL not be implemented (e.g. "Throughout history examples of multiple language civilizations ended in disastrous wars over cultural and ethical [sic] differences."). Moreover, like responses in the *Hostility to Foreign Influences* and *When in Rome* categories, a number of these *National Unity* responses seemed driven by anti-foreigner sentiments (e.g. "People are coming into our country of their own free will, and they should adapt to us, not us to them."). In addition, some *International Language* responses attest to the power and dominance of English as a world language and, at least implicitly, to the United States as a world power (e.g. "English will be the business language of the future...English will be the common language of the future."). Notably, not one pro-ELL reason elicited in the study made the explicit argument advanced by ELL proponents (e.g. US English) that ELL legislation would advance the socio-economic interests of non-English speakers.

While the majority of anti-ELL responses do not speak directly to the underlying motivation of ELL advocates, they do illuminate people's concerns about the effects of ELL, many of which have been raised by ELL opponents (see, for example, Padillo et al., 1991; Dicker, 1995; Thomas, 1996; Zentella, 1997). As with the pro-ELL responses, these responses can be divided in utilitarian and symbolic arguments, perhaps more definitively than the pro-ELL responses. Utilitarian arguments are most clearly advanced by responses in the *Disadvantage/Difficulty* and *Bilingualism is Important* categories, as well as the majority of responses in the *Freedom/Rights* category which focus on America as a political system with certain legal rights (e.g. "The US is a free country and freedom of language is an important part of our freedom." "I feel it would preclude rights set forth in the Constitution."). In contrast, responses in the *Melting Pot/Diversity* and *Cultural Preservation* categories make explicit symbolic arguments that concern ingroup identity; the former national identity, the latter ethnic identity. Because responses in the *Prejudice/Discrimination* category express concern that ELL will promote racist attitudes, these responses are primarily symbolic as well. Responses in the *Unnecessary/Ineffective* category simply state that ELL is superfluous and, therefore, do not lend themselves to the utilitarian-symbolic distinction.

With regard to differences between European-American and Mexican-American respondents, European-Americans appeared more likely than Mexican-Americans to invoke symbolic reasons for favoring ELL (*Hostility to Foreign Influences* and *When in Rome*), whereas Mexican-Americans seemed more likely than European-Americans to invoke utilitarian reasons for opposing ELL (*Freedom/Rights* and *Disadvantage/Difficulty*). Still, no differences were found for 11 of 15 categories; thus, the similarities between the reasons given by these two groups of respondents are perhaps more notable than the differences. Clearly, the differences between Mexican-Americans and European-Americans in *why* they favor or oppose ELL pale in comparison to their divergent attitudes toward the legislation per se.

Finally, the present research highlights a number of provocative and unanswered questions. Huddy and Virtanen (1995) have demonstrated that members of Hispanic subgroups (Mexican-, Puerto Rican-, and Cuban-American) differ in their attitudes toward European-Americans and toward each other. Thus, it is possible that members of these subgroups might harbor different attitudes toward ELL, as well as different reasons for their attitudes. Further, as European-Americans' attitudes toward Hispanics also differ as a function of subgroup membership (Huddy and Virtanen, 1995), their ELL attitudes and reasons might also vary according to the particular Hispanic subgroup that is salient. A related question concerns potential variations in ELL attitudes and reasons among people residing in different regions of the United States that house varying percentages of Hispanics, Hispanic subgroups, and other non-English speakers. In addition, as the respondents in the present research were all college students and were predominately Mexican- and European-Americans, our research does not address whether participants' ELL responses differ as a function of their social-economic status or membership in predominately English-speaking minority groups such as African-Americans. Finally, although we identified both utilitarian and symbolic arguments for favoring or opposing ELL, the relative importance of these types of arguments is unclear. Thus, additional research is needed to more closely examine the influence of each on ELL attitudes.

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