

# *The Pitfalls of Democracy and Debate: Authority and Inequality in Classrooms in Southeast Spain*

**Maisa Taha**

*University of Arizona*

This article focuses on the role of teachers in shaping spoken interactions in civics education classrooms in southeast Spain. The main mode of instruction in such classes is what I call *dialogic debate*, a genre requiring agentive exchange among classroom participants and predicated upon the notion that competitive stancetaking yields salutary orientations toward contemporary life. Class discussions were to move youth toward critically reflexive and broadly humanist stances, but the oppositional exchanges that actually took place were at odds with the peaceful dispositions that the lessons were meant to inspire. I introduce the notion of *ontological status attribution*—a variant of stancetaking resources well documented in the linguistic anthropological literature—to show that, in their quest to socialize youth to civic ideals, teachers fomented face-threatening classroom atmospheres in which developmental and cultural differences constituted key indexes of students' perceived democratic fitness. *Keywords: civic education, debate, democracy, difference, immigration, Spain, stance*

## INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on spoken interactions in secondary school civics education classrooms in southeast Spain—political fields constituted as such by oppositional modes of communication and by institutional commitment to socializing young people for life in a socially and culturally diverse democracy. The main mode of instruction in such classes is what I call *dialogic debate*, a genre requiring agentive exchange among classroom participants and predicated upon the notion that competitive stancetaking yields collectively salutary orientations toward contemporary life. Class discussions were to move youth toward critically reflexive and broadly humanist stances that increased (a) their appreciation for democracy and human rights in a global context, (b) their respect for the social and cultural diversification of their communities, and (c) their investment in tolerance and respect as guidelines for everyday interaction. However, the oppositional, often antagonistic, exchanges that actually took place during these discussions were at odds with the peaceful dispositions they were meant to inspire.

The purpose of this article is to examine teachers' roles in shaping dialogic debates. I argue that strategies related to stancetaking, including what I term *ontological status attribution*, fomented a face-threatening atmosphere in which developmental and cultural differences constituted key indexes for students' perceived democratic fitness. Using evidence from transcriptions of classroom talk, I show that Moroccan immigrant students, in particular, were assigned deficient ontological statuses in discussions that promoted democracy and equality as culturally-embedded, developmentally-progressive orientations. After describing the theoretical framework and field site informing this article, I attend to the above issues by addressing (a) dialogic debate as a competitive interactional genre, (b) the structure and discursive functions of teachers' ontological status attributions, (c) the positioning of Moroccan culture and Moroccan students as anti-progressive, and (d) teachers' treatment of the present, and Spanish students within it, as hallmarks/agents of democratic progressivism.

### **STANCE AND THE POLITICAL: A CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Among the insights garnered by anthropological and sociolinguistic approaches to situated language use is an appreciation of how everyday conversation is bound up with the politics of social relationships and of interactional contexts. From children's disputes on the playground (Goodwin, 1998, 2006), to teens' style choices in language and bodily presentation (Mendoza-Denton, 2008), to the changing valuations of language varieties in historically stratified speech communities (Agha, 2006), linguistic and social interaction have been shown to be mutually constitutive endeavors that mobilize resources for power, competition, and distinction—making daily fare of the political in both micro-interactional and macro-ideological forms.

Insofar as stancetaking has been shown to be determinative of contextual social realities (e.g., Goodwin, 1998, 2006; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989; Ochs, 1999), it has been identified as a precondition of even relatively non-polemic communication (Scollon, 1998). Because it evokes speaker attitude, knowledge, disposition, and preference, however, stance is critical to conflictive or competitive interactions. Capitalizing upon indexically rich structures for interactant alignment, stancetaking motivates subjective experiences of emotional and epistemic investment in expressed propositions (Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009; Kockelman, 2004; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984,

1989; Ochs, 1993, 1996, 1999). As such, stance is the linguistic tool *par excellence* of “the political,” defined here as a field of social interaction involving participant investment in competing interests and in which the notions of justice, fairness, and right (morally justifiable) thought/action are paramount. Thus defined, the political represents a generalizable field of interaction relevant for understanding repertoires of stance-mediated exclusion in adolescent peer groups (Goodwin & Alim, 2010), of resistance and negotiation of parent-child directives in families (Goodwin, Cekaite, & Goodwin, 2012), and of pragmatic repertoires among formal political opponents (Blas-Arroyo, 2003; Duranti, 1994; Harris, 2001). I suggest that continued attention to variants and recastings of stance repertoires (examples of which I discuss below as *ontological status attributions*) provides ways of identifying how even broader political fields are apprehended and constituted through personal interaction.

Scholars of language in everyday use have revolutionized understandings of how language is both a direct and indirect agent of power (Hill, 1995; Silverstein, 1976; Woolard, 1998). But less has been written about how linguistic practices constitute the political in its more explicitly idealized and broadly philosophized, but locally impactful, modalities—the stuff of democracy, for instance, which finds itself continually framed as under threat from extremism and cultural diversity. Given the weight of such concerns in the U.S. and Europe, it is worth asking what it means to act and speak as a democratic subject. This question holds special relevance for public education in democratic regimes; it has proved central to theories of pedagogical reform tying universal instruction to social justice and diverse democratic systems (e.g., Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1993; Giroux, 2005; Krause, 1999). It has also shaped policy around notions of tolerant, multicultural sociality and national and pan-national solidarity in Europe (*Constitución Española*, 1978; European Parliament, 1997; European Council, 2008; European Parliament, Council and Commission, 2010). The Spanish secondary school courses that supplied the conversations analyzed in this article were implemented under just such policy (Junta de Andalucía, 2003; Jefatura del Estado, 2006). Because they were designed with democratic ends in mind—to sustain Spanish civic life by educating youth in self-awareness, a sense of equality, respect for diversity, and individual responsibility—the interactional-pedagogic means to those ends merit examination.

## DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN EUROPE'S SALAD BOWL

The municipality of El Ejido sits in the arid plain below the Sierra de Gádor and meets the Mediterranean coast to the south. While some of its constituent towns sit beachside, the bulk of its territory lies inland, with about 140km<sup>1</sup> of its total 226km<sup>2</sup> covered in white plastic—the material preferred by area farmers for the greenhouses that support an almost one-billion euro vegetable and fruit industry. Between 1995 and 2010, the municipality's population nearly doubled, from 45,354 to 85,389; a 24 percent increase from 2005 to 2010 alone was driven by foreign immigration (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, n.d.). As the greenhouses have yielded unprecedented wealth for a historically impoverished region, migrant workers from North Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa have satisfied local demand for labor in greenhouses and vegetable packing plants. At the three secondary schools where I conducted fieldwork from 2010 to 2011, between 12 and 36 percent of students came from immigrant families. The most diverse school at which I collected data had students of as many as 27 nationalities, not counting Spaniards, and the majority of immigrant students were Moroccan. Details are summarized in Table 1.

School	Enrollment 2010–2011	Students of Foreign Origin (% of total enrollment)	Top Represented Nationalities (by % of foreign enrollment)
A	559	35.6%	Morocco – 62.3% Romania – 23.6% Russia – 4.5% Bulgaria/Ecuador/Guinea-Bissau* – 1.5%
B	1,087	23.8%	Morocco – 42.9% Romania – 10.8% Russia – 10.4% Ecuador – 6.9%
C	1,372	11.8%	Morocco – 25.9% Romania – 17.3% Ecuador – 14.2% Argentina/Colombia/Russia* – 8.0%

*Table 1. Demographics of field site schools*

\*There were equal numbers of students of these nationalities enrolled.

El Ejido is an important site at which to examine the dynamics of civic education because challenges to democratic life there, within its rapidly changing socioeconomic context, have been particularly salient since at least 2000. In February of that year, a young Spanish

woman was fatally stabbed in her town's outdoor market by a mentally ill Moroccan man. Her death followed on the heels of two local farmers' deaths, also perpetrated by Moroccan immigrants, and in response to these events, groups of Spaniards launched a pogrom-style attack on Moroccan homes and businesses for several days, with the apparent blessing of the local government (see Checa, 2001; S.O.S. Racismo, 2001). The episode remains emblematic of local Spanish-Moroccan relations and of the municipality's long-suspect political leadership. The riots earned El Ejido a reputation for racism throughout Spain, though this is a reputation that native Ejidenes continue to resist. When I asked about the riots, for example, locals insisted that the region was misunderstood and had been made a convenient scapegoat for the rest of Spain and Europe. When *The Guardian* published an investigative report about African and North African migrants' unsafe living conditions in shacks out amidst the greenhouses (Lawrence, 2011), locals dismissed the piece as poorly researched and unrepresentative of farmers' overall concern for their workers. However, the less-commented-on division of urban space between Spanish and Moroccan residents—a phenomenon youth called *el troceado* ('the cutting up,' 'the carving up')<sup>2</sup>—pointed to structural inequalities that shaped everyday life in El Ejido.

In addition, the vulnerability of the agricultural industry, Spain's floundering economic and political systems, and a youth unemployment rate hovering around 50 percent tended to make students skeptical of lessons meant to foster democratic sensibilities and civic engagement. Moroccan students in particular complained that class activities addressing racism and anti-discrimination trained excessive attention on them as "different" and failed to stem Spanish critiques of Moroccans and Moroccan culture as strange, scary, or even repugnant. As one girl commented during an interview, 'They make you feel less-than sometimes. It just makes it worse to talk about it.' As far as teachers were concerned, I found that their critiques of Moroccanness emerged couched in the language of democratic advocacy. Specifically, certain teachers' use of ontological status attributions (which I define below) allowed for allegations of Moroccan anti-progressivism without explicitly naming it as such.

In the meantime, dialogue around racial and gender equality, and the suite of universal rights and responsibilities listed in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formed the cornerstones of contemporary Spanish civic education. Students in El Ejido received civic instruction through two sets of classes: one titled *Cambios Sociales y Nuevas*

*Relaciones de Género* ('Social Change and New Gender Relations,' CSG), which was implemented throughout the Autonomous Community of Andalusia in 2003 and promoted attitudes of gender equality and anti-sexism; and another titled *Educación para la Ciudadanía y los Derechos Humanos* ('Education for Citizenship and Human Rights,' EpC), which was nationally mandated in 2006 following a European Union initiative for increasing Europeans' democratic awareness and involvement. Since neither of these classes figured in the testing curricula for entrance to college prep or vocational training programs after secondary school (usually completed at age sixteen), teachers had considerable flexibility in how they taught them. In El Ejido, EpC was a mandatory course for third-year students, while CSG was an elective, variously arranged within school course schedules so that most students between their first and third years had to take it at least once. CSG lessons focused on gender issues, promoting an understanding of gender as a social construction; texts and classroom discussions addressed conventionally derived differences between girls' and boys' toys, clothing, and career choices, along with cultural traditions and expectations regarding domestic roles and, in some cases, the historic roots of such traditions. EpC lessons highlighted the elements necessary for a peacefully diverse democracy. Textbooks focused on the individual—getting to know oneself as a free, reflexive agent and learning to express emotions productively—and one's place in the family and in the wider society. They also described democratic systems, such as the Spanish government, the EU, and the UN, and addressed challenges to global development and equality, including sexism, racism, poverty, migration, environmental degradation, and terrorism. In actuality, lesson topics and discussions overlapped a great deal from one class to the other, with themes related to sexism and racism driving most debates.

### **DIALOGIC DEBATE: COMPETITION AMONG EQUALS?**

In theory and in practice, EpC and CSG courses prioritized "dialogue" as the best means to address the above topics and encourage students to adopt them as shared concerns. Legislation asserted participants' equality and the importance of promoting an ethos of equality by involving students in discussions around the recognition of rights regardless of differences. CSG was implemented under a policy that called for 'facilitat[ing] *dialogue among equals* and [...] endeavor[ing] to detect, critique, and reject sexist stereotypes and prejudices, positively valuing

social and/or personal changes *that favor equality among persons*' (Junta de Andalucía, 2003, p. 16133, emphasis added). The law that instated EpC specified that students would learn to 'practice tolerance, cooperation, and solidarity among persons and groups, *practice dialogue upholding human rights as common values in a plural society*, and prepare themselves for the exercise of democratic citizenship' (Jefatura del Estado, 2006, p. 17169, emphasis added). Teachers embraced this egalitarian communicative framing, which presupposed greater social unity and democratic awareness from the exercise of dialogue among participants in diverse classrooms. Many went to considerable trouble to foster discussion and sustain involvement from as many students as possible.

What became clear from my observations, however, was that "dialogue" itself was fraught with competition rather than collaboration and with face threats rather than expressions of mutual understanding. The viability of EpC and CSG discussions ultimately depended upon highlighting differences in the service of stancetaking, and participants availed themselves of salient social and cultural differences to pursue oppositional debate. Insofar as those debates treated notions of freedom, fairness, and justice in relation to gendered, racial-cultural, and sometimes sexual differences, they were unequivocally political. While students as well as teachers used these strategies, I focus on teachers in order to explain how, in their roles as institutional and age-privileged authorities, they engaged stancetaking repertoires that challenged notions of democratic equality.

I refer to dialogic debate as such because EpC and CSG class discussions were not formally structured verbal contests with designated speaker turns or time limits on access to the conversational floor. Instead, they were emergent competitions, loosely structured around topics that teachers proposed and students responded to or challenged. Participation itself was unscripted and ostensibly voluntary, motivated by the perceived importance of the topics and by participants' personal engagement with them. In sum, EpC and CSG discussions took place within interlocking conversational, or dialogic, and contestatory, or debate-oriented, frames.

Teachers focused on virtues attributed to liberal democratic subjectivity: autonomy, critical reflexivity, freedom from authoritarian systems of thought, and defense of peace, equality, and tolerance. They were concerned with students' subjective orientations to these notions, and stancetaking within dialogic debate provided opportunities for them to assess student uptake and progress in adopting these virtues as

their own. It is important to understand teachers' discursive practices in this context insofar as dialogic debate in civic education represented a particular way of socializing young people to democratic ways of thinking and speaking. EpC and CSG lessons were not simply about governmental structuring or the criteria and privileges of citizenship; they were about cultivating expressive repertoires in the service of democracy. But unlike other programs that have attempted to train young people in tolerant, respectful communication across differences (e.g., Arístegui et al., 2005; Biesta, 2007; Edwards, Munn, & Fogelman, 1994; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Jones, 1999; McKinney, 2005; Murti, 2013; Parker, 2010), EpC and CSG classes relied on a loosely structured interactional framework more typical of public conflict talk than of deliberative exchange. It is for this reason that class debates included many of the same face-threatening elements—such as interjections, interruptions, emotionally intensified stances, and epistemic challenges—that Alcaide Lara (2008) has identified in her study of host-guest interactions on Spanish television talk shows. It is in this way that the cultivation of student stances in defense of democracy also involved positioning students as communicative competitors.

Examining teachers' approaches to this task through stance repertoires helps explain the inherent limitations of this ideally egalitarian endeavor. In El Ejido schools, limitations fell along two major lines. First, teachers had more institutional power than students; the role-based disparities between them colored debates framed as egalitarian. Second, Moroccan students, more than others, were used as discursive foils for promoting Spanish democratic values; cultural and ideological sticking points between the Spanish and Moroccan communities further shaped how egalitarianism and democratic inclusion were evoked in teacher-student exchanges. I explore these issues below by detailing teachers' status attribution strategies.

## ONTOLOGICAL STATUS ATTRIBUTIONS

Taking a cue from Kockelman (2007), I suggest that the difference between teachers and students was not merely role based but socially ontological; teens were not yet considered "people" by institutionally sanctioned social and civic criteria. Mainly by virtue of age, but also by the nature of student contributions to class discussions, teachers positioned youth as less-than-complete social beings. I refer to the discursive instantiation of such youth deficit under the heading of *ontological status attribution* (OSA). Most broadly defined, OSAs



assign differential states of being to targets according to social and developmental criteria. While OSAs included stance attribution strategies like those documented by Coupland and Coupland (2009)—such as teachers “speaking for” students and assigning them epistemic or affective dispositions—a primary characteristic of teacher OSAs was to shuttle students from positions as potential dialogic stancetaking subjects into positions as evaluated objects.

For visual illustration, a modification of Du Bois’ (2007) classic stance triangle shows how teacher OSAs collapsed stancetaking’s three-part dynamic, privileging teachers’ evaluative power and momentarily obviating participant alignment. The asymmetric relationship between teacher and students is indicated by the downward sloping arrows in Figure 2. The two-headed arrow labeled “positions” indicates that OSAs follow a purely dyadic logic in which the Subject’s evaluation of the Object is the source of their mutual, asymmetric positioning.

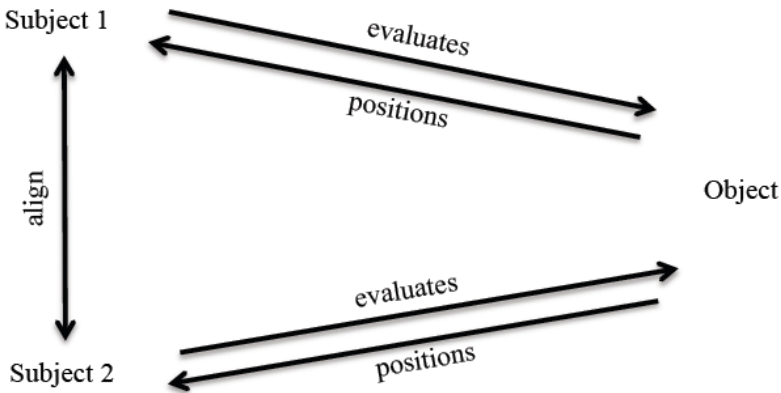


Figure 1. Reproduction of Du Bois’ (2007) stance triangle

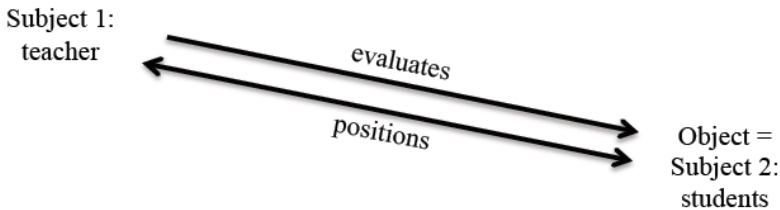


Figure 2. Modified stance triangle showing the dynamics of teachers’ ontological status attributions to students

Along with the asymmetric relationship between teachers and students and the polemical nature of most topics of discussion (e.g., use of religious symbols at school, gender equality, racial discrimination), OSAs represented an important element in the “dangerous face atmosphere” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 67) of EpC and CSG dialogic debate. What I aim to show here is that OSAs constituted a special class of stancetaking that may be particular to institutional contexts such as schools. OSAs were a set of attributive acts that said not only (epistemically) “You know that X,” or (affectively) “You should feel Y,” but primarily (ontologically) “You *are* Z.”

Teachers’ concern over students’ orientation to democratic values was channeled through affirmations about students’ current states of developmental being in relation to where they had been in the past and would be in the future. Where Ochs (1999) has noted that middle class White Americans routinely speculate on others’ inner states in the course of socializing interactions (p. 299), I suggest that Spanish (and likely most Western) educators make routine pronouncements about students’ social-ontological development. The socializing function of OSAs lay in their iconic-indexical relationship to the stepwise organization of public schooling. Use of simple present tense prevailed, in emphatic focus on the present as a definitive midpoint between past and future—much like students’ current grade level was a midpoint between lower and higher grade levels and adolescence was seen as a transitional step between childhood and adulthood. OSAs comprised single- as well as multiple-utterance constructions spotlighting verbs of being, which in Spanish included both *ser* and *estar* (‘to be’) as well as *tener* (‘to have’) in idiomatic age phrases (e.g., *tenéis esa edad*, ‘you all are of that age’). Discursive content further anchored OSAs to an explicit temporal framework within which students were positioned as figures-in-development. Adverbial phrases such as *ahora* (‘now’), *aún no* (‘not yet’), and *de tránsito a la vida adulta* (‘in transition to adult life’), in Example 1 below, served this function. In this example, Teacher 1 engages simple present tense of *estar* (twice in line 1; once in line 3) collaboratively with negative present perfect in line 3 to establish his students’ current state of ontological flux (see Appendix for transcription conventions).

(1)

- 1 T1: Estáis en una edad también (.) que estáis de tránsito a la vida a<sup>↑</sup>du<sup>↓</sup>ta,  
*You all are at an age also (.) that you are in transition to a<sup>↑</sup>du<sup>↓</sup>lfe,*
- 2 con lo cual muchas de las cosas que ahora <sup>↑</sup>pa<sup>↓</sup>san,  
*as a result many of the things that <sup>↑</sup>hap<sup>↓</sup>pen now,*

3      *estáis- se considera que aún no (.) os habéis llegado a esta- a ese final ↑¿no?*  
*you are- it is considered that you still have not (.) arrived at this- at that end ↑no?*

Following findings by Ochs (1993, 1996, 1999) and Ochs and Schieffelin (1984, 1989), structures indexing both epistemic and affective speaker stance are present in Example 1. Teacher 1's use of passive voice in line 3 ('it is considered') can be read as an index of epistemic authority. He need not name himself as the source of this knowledge because it is, through the use of passive voice, constituted as always-already known—as truth. This omniscient knowledge accrues to the teacher, who reports it and, in so doing, instantiates students' present realities. His use of passive voice is a resource for constructing that epistemic certainty. Rhythmic and prosodic features such as his pauses (lines 1 and 3), rising and falling intonation (lines 1–3), and emphasis (line 3) meanwhile evoke and intensify his affective investment in the status he attributes to his students. It is in this way that OSAs and stancetaking are colluding but not identical phenomena. OSAs present assessments of others' social personhood, while stancetaking resources are brought to the service of such assessments by construing them as authoritative and heartfelt, for example. (Of course, epistemic and affective indexes are not necessarily parceled among discrete structures. Teacher 1's emphasis on 'no' followed by a pointed pause in line 3 can be understood as a marker of both certainty and seriousness.) His OSAs are multiple and face threatening; they put students in their developmental place: 'You all are at an age [...] you are in transition [...] you still have not (.) arrived.' But, the 'no?' tagged at the end of line 3 offers affective mitigation—the reverse image of the prior emphatic 'no'—by inviting ostensible involvement and agreement from students.

Morphosyntactic features of *ser*, *estar*, and *tener* in OSAs evoke contrasts between teachers as evaluating subjects and students as evaluated objects. This is most commonly achieved in Ejidene classrooms through use of informal second-person plural forms. In Example 2, Teacher 2 intensifies this contrast with her explicit use of the pronouns *vosotros* ('you all') and *yo* ('I')—marked deictic usage in Spanish (a pro-drop language) evocative of affective distance and subjective difference. Alternatively, use of inclusive first-person plural forms, as in lines 1 and 2 below, is a well-known feature of teacher talk (Heath, 1978) that mitigates maximally face-threatening assessments about not wanting to decide (line 1), being immature (line 2), and not being

privity to adult knowledge and perspectives on how life progresses (line 3, ff.).

(2)

- 1 T2: ¿Y sabéis lo que significa cuando no queremos decidir? (1.22)  
*And do you all know what it means when we don't want to decide? (1.22)*
- 2 Que somos un poco inmaduros (.)↑¿vale? (.) Porque como más vamos cre↑ciendo (.)  
*That we are a bit immature (.)↑ok? (.) Because as we grow ↑up more (.)*
- 3 pues vosotros ahora mismo no tenéis la misma perspectiva que yo sí puedo te↑ner (.)  
*well you all right now do not have the same perspective that I indeed can ↑have (.)*
- 4 porque yo soy más ma↑yor (.) ↑¿vale? (.) y entonces, poco a PO↑co, poco a po↑co,  
*because I'm quite ol↑der (.)↑ok? (.) and so, little by LIT↑tle, little by lit↑tle,*
- 5 vais a tener que ir tomando decisiones en vuestra vi↑da, y en función de qué  
*you're going to have to go [about] making decisions in your ↑life, and according to what*
- 6 decisiones to↑méis, vuestra vida va a girar para un ↑lado o girar para ↑o↑tro=  
*decisions yo ↑make, your life will turn to one ↑side or turn to a↑no↓ther=*
- 7 Eso está ↓claro (1.13) ↑¿vale?  
*That is ↓clear. (1.13) ↑ok?*

In Example 3, Teacher 3 attributes a future epistemic stance to his students (line 2) based on his own past (described in line 1) as well as on a distinction between ‘real’ (adult) and less-real (adolescent) concerns.

(3)

- 1 T3: Yo cuan↑do: cuando estudiaba tam↑bién, no- no- nos flipábam con estas ↑co↓sas  
*I wh↑en: when I was studying too, w- w- we were crazy about these ↑thi↓ngs*
- ((...))
- 2 Cuando tengáis ya- (0.97) más años (.) os vais a dar cuenta de que (.) hay otras  
*When you all are- (0.97) older (.) you'll realize that (.) there are other*
- 3 preocupaciones importantes de verdad hay otras preocupaciones (.) mucho más (.)  
*concerns [that are] really important there other concerns [that are] (.) much more (.)*
- 4 // e:: re↑ales  
*// e:: rea↑l*

The OSA in this case is partly unspoken, imputed through an ontological parallel—indexed with the phrase ‘when I was studying too’ (line 1)—between Teacher 3’s former student-self and his current students. From his privileged position as an adult, he invokes students’ future experience: ‘you’ll realize....’

Teachers acted as dialogic time travelers in these ways, both recontextualizing the past and precontextualizing the future, as Ochs (1999) has written. Insofar as Ochs (1996) has identified temporal shifts in spoken discourse as a source of affective keying, there is an argument to be made that OSAs fall within the bounds of affective stance repertoires. I have already shown that OSAs are affect-heightening resources, for example. But, as Coupland and Coupland (2009) have argued in their analysis of doctors’ stance attributions to patients, attributive statements are constitutive of authority, a social predicate

of differential knowledge—making OSAs, in turn, resources for the instantiation of epistemic certainty. I posit that OSAs do both jobs concurrently: they expand the speaker’s power both affectively and epistemically. In the process, they diminish the target’s comparative existential cache. OSAs are therefore socially contrastive discursive mechanisms.

In Goodwin’s (2006) analysis of girls’ competitive playground games, indexing of targets’ ontological statuses are potentially identifiable in name calling sequences such as the following, in which one girl’s hopscotch move prompts another girl’s escalated response (line 2), which Goodwin terms a “pejorative categorization or negative person descriptor.”

(4) [reproduced from Goodwin 2006, p. 42]

- 1 Gloria: ((jumps from square two to one changing feet))  
 2 Carla: ¡NO CHIRIONA!  
           *No cheater!*  
 3           YA NO SE VALE ASÍ.  
           *That way is no longer valid.*

Name calling involves copular or, as in line 2, zero-copula constructions that carry attributive force: “You *are* a cheater!” Within the relevant scales of personhood organizing such micro-socializing interactions (see García-Sánchez [2012], for related analysis of Moroccan schoolchildren in Spanish elementary school classrooms), such status attributions demarcate the boundaries of acceptable behavior/being as defined by situationally powerful interactants. Note that in Goodwin’s example, too, the flow of time shapes powerful participants’ readings of targets’ ontological statuses; Gloria’s move is invalid, and she is a cheater, because the rules of the game changed and, in the present moment, both her behavior and her being are sanctionable.

EpC and CSG teachers used a similar logic but contextualized attributions within a much longer temporal frame (i.e., a lifetime) with overdetermined connections to a suite of virtues—such as self-awareness and attention to the vicissitudes of growing up—deemed crucial to full, mature personhood in Spanish society. Their practice squares with Coupland and Coupland’s (2009) suggestion that stance attribution may itself play a “key role in the dissemination of normative ideologies” (p. 247). EpC and CSG teachers were indeed heavily invested in their students’ uptake of democratic ideals and dispositions. Then again, OSAs should not be equated with stance attributions of the sort that Coupland and Coupland have studied because OSAs are attributive of a target’s personhood, not their knowledge or feelings alone. OSAs’

ready incorporation of stancetaking and stance attributive resources speaks to their flexibility as discursive and context-constructing tools, however. In other words, OSAs support teachers' communicative and role-based authority to assess students' current and future states of development (as seen in Examples 1–3) and lend emotional and epistemic weight to those assessments.

### DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES AND MOROCCAN ICONS OF “HEMISPHERIC LOCALISM”

Outside of taxonomic concerns, the critical points are that OSAs consecrate teacher authority and help socialize students to a stepwise logic of developmental maturity. While the intensifying function of OSAs lent seriousness and urgency to teacher talk, OSAs also presented discursive images of what it meant to be a child, an adolescent, and an adult. Analogically, movement through life stages (or through school) was laminated onto an evolutionary understanding of societal progress as well. Talk about movement towards mature self-awareness, responsibility, and respectful, tolerant dispositions supported talk about societies and peoples in different stages of democratic development. Mostly, these comparisons focused either on Spain's shift from a Catholic-fascist dictatorship to a secularized democracy (cast as collective liberation from tradition and authoritarianism) or on the contemporary differences between Moroccan and Spanish societies (cast as a difference between outmoded traditionalism and exuberant progressivism).

By way of example, Teacher 1 responds below to his students' discussion of an assault that reportedly took place recently after school. The perpetrator, as student Martín<sup>2</sup> alleges in line 1, was said to be a Spanish-born Moroccan. In lines 8–17, we see how the OSAs of this teacher (who was previously presented in Example 1) support parallels between students' and Moroccans' (*ellos*/'they', line 14) incomplete developmental states. His emphasis on the continued learning and change potentiated by life in a lawful, egalitarian society suggests that both students and immigrants have the capacity to grow to treat others with 'that respect' (line 9) that is appropriate to contemporary democratic society.

(5)

- 1 Martín: Dicen que se trata de un marroquí nacido aquí  
*They say it was a Moroccan born here*
- 2 T1: En la sociedad-  
*In [our] society-*

- 3 Sera: ¿Y eso cuándo estuvo?  
*And when was that?*
- 4 Martín: Al salir  
*After leaving*
- 5 Dris: Ayer  
*Yesterday*
- 6 Alex: Antes de ayer  
*Day before yesterday*
- 7 Sara: ((soft, sustained high pitch: scandal/shock)) ¡O:::!  
((soft, sustained high pitch: scandal/shock)) O:::!
- 8 T1: En la sociedad actual (.) YA (.) debe de quedar claro, que muchas  
*In [our] current society (.) ALREADY (.) it should be clear, though many*
- 9 veces yo lo dudo, porque ese respeto- Estáis en una edad tam<sup>↑</sup>bién (.)  
*times I doubt it, because that respect- You all are at an age <sup>↑</sup>also (.)*
- 10 que estáis de tránsito a la vida a<sup>↑</sup>du<sup>↓</sup>ta, con lo cual muchas de las cosas  
*that you are in transition to a <sup>↑</sup>du<sup>↓</sup>ta, as a result many of the things*
- 11 que ahora <sup>↑</sup>pa<sup>↓</sup>san, estáis- se considera que aún no (.)  
*that <sup>↑</sup>hap<sup>↓</sup>pen now, you are- it is considered that you still have no (.)*
- 12 os habéis llegado a esta- a ese final <sup>↑</sup>¿no? que nunca se llega,  
*arrived at this- at that end <sup>↑</sup>no? though one never arrives,*
- 13 siempre se está apren<sup>↑</sup>diendo, siempre está cambiando a lo mejor  
*one is always <sup>↑</sup>learning, always changing maybe*
- 14 la forma de pensar (.) Ahora ellos son de una <sup>↑</sup>for<sup>↓</sup>ma, pero sí que tenemos-  
*the way of thinking (.) Now they are <sup>↑</sup>one <sup>↓</sup>way, but we do have-*
- 15 hemos hemos (arreglado) una sociedad iguali<sup>↑</sup>taria <sup>↑</sup>¿no?  
*we have (arranged) an equali<sup>↑</sup>tarian society, <sup>↑</sup>no?*
- 16 en la cual le da- hay unas <sup>↑</sup>leyes- que la gente la cump<sup>↑</sup>la o <sup>↑</sup>no (.)  
*in which are given- there are laws- that people o<sup>↑</sup>bey them or <sup>↑</sup>not (.)*
- 17 es otra cosa-  
*is another thing-*

Developmentally or socio-evolutionarily framed comparisons between Moroccan and Spanish societies appeared also in teachers' prompting of Moroccan students to talk about their preferences for aspects of Moroccan or Spanish culture. In this way, individual Moroccan students got positioned as icons of a troublingly traditional society—an assessment that emerged indirectly as they responded to questions about religion, food, and gender roles, among other things. One common question that teachers posed to Moroccan students was whether they liked attending school in Morocco or Spain better. Moroccan youth generally claimed to favor Spanish education because they found it to be easier. Teachers would additionally point out to them that physical punishment was not allowed in Spanish schools though they believed it to “still” be in use in Moroccan schools—a claim that students variously confirmed or shrugged off.

Teachers' broadly framed understandings of the contrasts between Moroccan and Spanish realities played out in classroom exchanges that ultimately highlighted what Mendoza-Denton (2008) has called “hemispheric localism,” the notion that situated interactants draw upon constructions of vast geographic and ideological differences to sustain

local incompatibilities. In the course of promoting ideals of gender equality in particular, perceived differences between East and West came directly to bear on discursive treatments of Moroccan students' ontological "fitness" for democratic society.

In Example 6, Teacher 4 teases Moroccan student Nabil by comparing him to a Spanish *abuelo* ('grandfather') she saw looking for a new wife on a television talk show. Her class had been discussing domestic chores and who did more work at home, women or men. In his typically parodic fashion, Nabil claimed that men were best suited for eating and watching TV. Teacher 4's comparison between the *abuelo* and Nabil draws on stereotypes of traditional Spanish and Moroccan patriarchy and places Nabil outside the socio-ontological sphere of purportedly progressive gender relations in the West.

(6)

- 1 Nabil: El hombre sólo comer y ver tele  
*The man just eats and watches TV*
- ((laughter from the boys sitting near him))
- 2 T4: Na↑nabil, así es preferible novia no la echas tú, ↑¿eh?  
*Na↑nabil, like that it's better [that] you don't get a girlfriend. ↑eh?*
- 3 Nabil: ¿Cómo?  
*What?*
- 4 T4: Mira (.) recuerdo (.) vosotros no lo habéis visto ese programa pero  
*Look (.) I remember (.) you all haven't seen that program but*
- 5 *vuestros padres sí (.) los abuelos también=Había un programilla*  
*your parents have (.) your grandparents too=There was a little program*
- 6 *en que salía Juan y Medio, de abuelos, un programa de Canal Sur de la tarde*  
*with Juan y Medio, for grandparents, a Canal Sur program in the afternoon*
- 7 *donde salían abuelos y se habían quedado sin pareja-*  
*where grandparents appeared and they had been left without a spouse-*
- 8 *pues me acuerdo de Nabil (.) Salió un hombre mayor diciendo 'No,*  
*well it reminds me of Nabil (.) An old man appeared saying, 'No,*
- 9 *es que me he quedado-' O sea entró así diciendo 'Yo que ya me he*  
*it's that I've been left-' I mean he started like that saying 'I've now been*
- 10 *quedado sin mi mujer-' Se veía un semblante muy cariñoso*  
*left without my wife-' He had a very sweet face*
- 11 *un hombre muy hogareño y lo último que dijo fue 'No, es que yo*  
*a very warm man and the last thing he said was 'No, it's that I*
- 12 *quería una mujer para que me tenga planchado el traje para que*  
*wanted a wife so that she would iron my suit so that*
- 13 *me tenga puesta la comida para que-' Y yo dije ahora que-*  
*she would have food [on the table] for me so that-' And I said now that*
- 14 Heba: ((impatient tone)) Pues él no quería una mujer quería una sirvienta  
*((impatient tone)) Well he didn't want a wife he wanted a servant*
- 15 T4: No pero no es eso a lo que he dicho eso (.) yo que- **así Nabil cree-**  
*No but that's not why I said that (.) I- Nabil thinks like that-*
- 16 *así es preferible- porque las mujeres occidentales no, ¿eh? Eso es lo que*  
*so it's better- because Western women no, eh? That's what*
- 17 **le gustaría a lo mejor encontrarte una, ¿no?**  
***he would like maybe to find you one, no?***
- 18 Nabil: ¡Hombre!  
*[Sure!]*



- 19 Marta: Y a mí también  
*And me too*
- 20 T4: Y a mí también, ¿no? ((laughs))  
*And me too, no? ((laughs))*
- 21 Heba: ((still sounding impatient)) ¿A quién no le gusta que le hagan todas las  
((still sounding impatient)) *Who wouldn't like to have everything done*  
22 cosas? ¡A todo el mundo le gusta!  
*for them? Everyone likes that!*
- 23 T4: Bueno lo dejamos allí (.) los veinte minutos que quedan vais a  
*Ok we'll leave it there (.) the twenty minutes left you all are going to*  
24 terminar las fichas del otro día  
*finish the worksheets from the other day*

Teacher 4's OSA targeting Nabil proves an emergent, composite feature of this multi-turn exchange—a predicate of the temporal and hemispheric contrasts within the teacher's anecdote rather than of explicit naming of developmental stages. Indeed, one feature of EpC and CSG teacher talk was that developmental framing of both personal and societal evolution was a contextual constant and did not always have to be named. Therefore, Teacher 4's OSA of Nabil as an outdated sexist emerges over the course of the interaction and is supported not only by direct stance attributive constructions such as those bolded in lines 15–17 but also by personal epistemological declarations ('it reminds me of Nabil,' line 8) and authoritative appraisals ('it's better...' lines 2 and 16). Most of all, this image is supported by the depiction of the *abuelo* as a proxy for Nabil himself: someone who is stuck in old, patriarchal beliefs that presumably no Western woman would abide by today.

It is important to point out that while Teacher 4 makes plainly face-damaging assertions about Nabil's desirability as a mate (especially in lines 2 and 16), those assertions do not go entirely uncontested. In line 14, Heba (another Moroccan student) interjects, and though her words ratify the teacher's critique of the *abuelo*, it is their impatient delivery and the patent annoyance in her voice that prompts the teacher's defensive metacommentary (line 15) and her definitive closure of discussion (lines 23–24).

Heba's frustration likely arose from how the debate unfolded prior to the above excerpt. Throughout that discussion about domestic chores, the teacher made a series of comparisons between Spanish and Moroccan custom, using contrastive *nosotros* ('we') and *vosotros* ('you all') forms to refer to Spaniards and Moroccans, respectively. Such usage instantiated a discursive reality in which Moroccan and Spanish spheres were separate and incompatible and in which the teacher herself aligned by definition with her Spanish students against

her Moroccan students. This was perhaps particularly face threatening for Heba, who tried throughout the year to gain her teachers' favor and secure a reputation as a good student. She was also a frequent spokesperson for Moroccan culture during class, finding herself having to explain and defend cultural practices and beliefs. While her interventions in Example 6 display oppositional stancetaking appropriate to dialogic debate, she refuses to entertain the teacher's analogy between Nabil and the *abuelo* and its concomitant invocation of Moroccan culture as overly traditional and sexist. In so doing, Heba rejects the teacher's instantiation of a social-ontological scale that found Moroccans, and specific Moroccan students, lacking.

### **CONSTITUTING CONTEXT: IN DEFENSE OF THE PROGRESSIVE PRESENT**

As I have demonstrated, OSAs are key resources in EpC and CSG teachers' constructions of asymmetry between (a) themselves and their students and (b) Spaniards and Moroccans. Before suggesting in the conclusion that OSAs serve a distinct purpose within the genre of dialogic debate, I illustrate a final figurative-indexical use of OSAs in this brief section. This final use, much like those already mentioned, has to do with the maintenance of coherent contextual instantiations of democratic progress. As scholars of stance have shown, stance repertoires (and I include OSAs alongside/among these) not only reflect or signal participant dispositions and alignments but also constitute the very social reality and roles that make interaction meaningful. For EpC and CSG teachers, classroom interaction was fundamentally meaningful in relation to the instantiation of speech and behavior emblematic of contemporary democratic (read: tolerant and egalitarian) life. While students, and especially Moroccan students, were recurrently reminded of their deficits according to maturational or imputed hemispheric-evolutionary scales, inroads made by notions of tolerance and equality were held up as benchmarks of the present's triumph over the past.

That triumph was invoked through teacher talk not only by signaling how far students had yet to go but also by pointing out how far they had already come. By being members of a generation born and raised under democracy, students were credited with a foundation of *de facto* progressive ideals. In the following example, Teacher 4 conveys this message to one group of students.

(7)

- 1 T4: Vosotros no lo habéis vivido pero (.) m:: hace unos años sí que se veía  
*You all did not live it but (.) m:: some years ago indeed one saw*
- 2 una persona de color y:: (.) se trataba con cierta aleja-  
*a person of color an:::d (.) they were treated with a certain reser-*
- 3 con cierta dis<sup>↑</sup>tan<sup>↑</sup>cia (.) y a:m:::- había como más miedo, ¿vale?  
*with a certain dis<sup>↑</sup>tance (.) and a:m:::- there was like more fear, ok?*
- 4 Hoy por hoy no (.) Hoy por hoy vosotros sabéis si no lo decís que ya nos  
*Nowadays, no (.) Nowadays you all know even if you don't say it that we now*
- 5 relacionamos que no hay nada diferente que la diferencia  
*interact with one another that there's nothing different that difference*
- 6 ¿qué la marca? (1.0) Como <sup>↑</sup>sea la per<sup>↓</sup>sona  
*what is it marked by? (1.0) [By] <sup>↑</sup>how a person <sup>↓</sup>is*
- ((...))
- 7 Ya estáis más acostumbrados, ¿no? Ya estáis más habituados  
*Now you all are more accustomed, no? Now you all are more used to*
- 8 así a tener compañeros de (muchos países)  
*having classmates like this from (many countries)*

Teacher 4's direct OSAs occur in lines 7–8, in which she donates to students a 'more' progressive status than allegedly was possible in the past. These OSAs are supported by a sequence of contrasting temporal markers ('some years ago' [line 1] versus 'nowadays' [line 4]), contrasting moral markers ('they were treated [...] with a certain distance' [lines 2–3] versus 'we interact with one another [...] there's nothing different' [lines 4–5]), and an emphatic epistemological stance attribution in line 4 ('you all know [...]'). However, the construction of the progressive present is again scaffolded around an indexically specific *vosotros*. This 'you all' who is part and parcel of the country's democratic becoming, and who is 'more' used to having diverse classmates, interpellates Spanish students alone, attributing to them an effortless progressivism: a product of the passage of time and nothing more.

Such assertions of Spanish students' essentially tolerant dispositions were perhaps meant to calm the evidently tense atmosphere in Teacher 4's classroom, where peer-to-peer face threats, usually between Spaniards and Moroccan students, kept everyone on edge. An examination of these peer interactions must wait for a separate article, but the important point is that Spanish students were regular beneficiaries of teachers' attributive utterances insofar as they fell well within the boundaries of Western democratic progress as it was reiteratively constituted through teacher discourse.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Teachers' use of OSAs challenged democratic equality within the classroom in three ways: by instantiating asymmetric teacher-student

positioning, by claiming Spanish over Moroccan cultural superiority, and by constituting democracy as an exclusive or exclusionary Spanish/Western domain. In closing, I suggest, too, that the instantiation of such (social-ontological) inequality was in fact related to teachers' efforts at fomenting dialogic debate. Competitive stancetaking was a precondition of dialogic debate and depended heavily upon spotlighting differences (e.g., racial, gendered, cultural, developmental, communicative) through use of the myriad epistemic and affective features which stance scholars have found to be key in formulating evaluations and alignments in conversation. Through OSAs, teachers established "local models" (Wortham, 2005) of their own developmental and institutional authority, creating face threats for students and positioning them as conversationally obliged to respond.

Stance prompting was nonetheless an indirect function of OSAs. In over 150 total recorded hours of classroom discussions, students never responded to a teacher's assertion about adolescent ontology with a counter-OSA such as, "Well, teachers are too old to understand us!" or "I'm plenty old enough to know the difference between what's important and what's not!" Instead, OSAs played an indirect role in heightening the oppositional dynamics of dialogic debate by highlighting the distance and difference between two basic sets of participants: teachers and students.

On the other hand, OSAs highlighting distance and difference between Spaniards and Moroccans emerged from multi-utterance sequences like those presented in Examples 5 and 6, which allowed for allegations of Moroccan anti-progressivism without naming it as such. As Heba's turns in Example 6 indicate, Moroccan students ratified OSAs as oppositional prompts. This is not to say that teachers were aware of the intensifying and prompting effects of OSAs; given the ubiquity of OSAs across several different teachers' classroom discourse, they more than likely considered attributive statements unremarkable within their professional speech repertoire and appropriate to their work in socializing young people. Nonetheless, further attention to how Moroccan and other students respond to OSAs will go far in explaining, and perhaps redressing, the often face-threatening dynamics of dialogic debate in classes such as EpC and CSG.

In sum, I have presented multiple cross-sections of different classroom interactions in order to isolate shared communicative features characteristic of teachers' politicized socialization techniques. I identified the genre of dialogic debate as an ideal for democratic education

classes such as EpC and CSG, and I pointed out ways that the concomitant criterion of participant equality was contravened by teacher-student positioning. On the one hand, too much should not be made of these ironies. Teacher authority influences and compels student participation no matter what; classrooms are not traditionally democratic spaces. On the other hand, EpC and CSG lessons were explicitly designed to promote democratic modes of interaction and in El Ejido encountered grave obstacles due to participants' iteratively constructed differences, especially around Spanishness and Moroccanness. Difference, as any political theorist will attest, presents a challenge to equality and therefore remains a stumbling block for democratic systems.

I introduced the notion of *ontological status attribution* to describe teachers' stance-laden orientations to student deficits in maturity and social "personhood," and I argued that OSAs provided a template for attributing developmental or evolutionary deficit to entire societies and specifically to Moroccan society. In EpC and CSG classes, OSAs emerged within and across sequences of utterances, built first and foremost upon temporal contrasts, verbs of being, and use of recognizable indices of progress, such as respect for gender equality and overcoming racist attitudes. OSAs are therefore intersections between philosophical and interactional politics—doorways to understanding how the constituent attributes of democratic subjectivity (agency, freedom, equality, and maturity), and the heartfelt push for their realization, are brought to bear on moment-to-moment exchanges. Where other work on democratic education has extolled the virtues of systematic student training and practice in egalitarian dialogue and cross-community tolerance, this study approaches democracy-and-dialogue in unpolished forms, laden with preconceptions, role asymmetries, fears, and hopes. This examination of the political in its explicitly-idealized, broadly-philosophized, and locally-impactful modalities apprehends democracy as a lived, interactional phenomenon and suggests that recurrent instances of socialization to its contradictions and exclusions hold special seeds of frustration and resentment for minority youth.

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## NOTES

1. All translations from Spanish are my own; in-text translations will be indicated with single quotation marks.
2. All participant names are pseudonyms.

## APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Name:	speaker label
T#:	teacher; different teachers indicated with numbers 1–4
<i>italics</i>	English translation
,	audible phrasal/breath pause
¿? and ¡!	questions and exclamatory phrases
(.)	pause 0.25–0.95 seconds long (longer pauses marked in numerals)
=	no pause, contiguous utterances
:	extension of sound or syllable (by increments of 0.25 sec)
-	halting, abrupt cutoff
<u>underlining</u>	emphasis
CAPITALS	talk that is louder than surrounding speech
↑	rising intonation, placed immediately prior to prosody shift
↓	falling intonation, placed immediately prior to prosody shift
/ /	dental click
(( ))	description of paralinguistic and non-linguistic behavior
( )	transcriptionist doubt
((...))	omitted utterance(s)

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**Maisa Taha** is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Anthropology at the University of Arizona. Her research explores linguistic instantiations of democratic ideals in educational settings. Her dissertation focuses on the experiences and perceptions of immigrant and non-immigrant youth in democratic education classes in southeast Spain. She can be contacted at [mct@email.arizona.edu](mailto:mct@email.arizona.edu).