



# MOOC

## LINGUISTIC ASSERTIVENESS FOR MINORITIZED LANGUAGE SPEAKERS (ML)

### LESSON 1: LINGUISTIC ASSERTIVENESS. AN INTRODUCTION

#### What is and what is not linguistic assertiveness?

Before we explore the concept of linguistic assertiveness, we will need to understand the construct of assertiveness.

Assertiveness is a psychological construct which means standing up for your personal rights, as well as expressing your thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways. When we are assertive, we are forthrightly and positively expressing a will for the recognition of our **own rights**.

It is noteworthy to remark that by being assertive we are never aiming to be aggressive or confrontational. We are firmly expressing our opinion but understanding that other people also have the right to do so.

Opposed to assertiveness, we would have those attitudes that are characterized by imposing opinions and views in an aggressive and reckless way, as well as submissive positions in which one does not have enough confidence to share one's opinions for fear that it may offend or annoy others.

### Being assertive is:

- Being direct, honest and respectful (to others and to yourself).

### Being assertive is **not**:

- Being aggressive, threatening, attacking or manipulating.
- Being passive, submissive and renouncing your own goals for the benefit of others.

Applied to the languages' sphere, being linguistically assertive means **expressing yourself through your ML** in social situations, while feeling at ease and comfortable. Considering the specific nature of MLs, it involves learning to deal with common relatively adverse situations such as: someone questioning your right to speak your own language, an interlocutor expressing lack of understanding or being dismissive or disrespectful to you. To do so, several strategies will be presented in the following lessons of this MOOC.

### Being linguistically assertive is:

- Expressing yourself through ML in social situations, while feeling at ease and comfortable.

### Being linguistically assertive is **not**:

- Being aggressive or coercive when using the ML.
- Being submissive and avoiding the use of your ML for fear of offending or bothering others.

It should be stressed that linguistic assertiveness is a **non-ideological approach** to language choice. It has nothing to do with your political preferences.

People are free to adhere to whatever ideology they choose, but this fact should not affect their right or ability to speak through their language of choice.

In sum, linguistic assertiveness means expressing yourself in your language, respecting the interlocutors, without threats, coercion or manipulation, and feeling comfortable doing it.

In the case of ML speakers, assertive communication requires building up a positive image of your own ML. In other words, it means the use of ML can be approached as an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

## Why is it important to use your language?

When communicating through the DL, for fear of not being understood, we are perpetrating the situation of abnormality of the ML, since it is the DL that is more spoken. Then, we will feel that ML is little spoken and that it is unlikely that we will be understood. Consequently, we will probably choose not to use the ML, for fear of not being understood.

By gaining enough confidence to use the ML and becoming linguistically assertive, we are **breaking this cycle** and recovering the possibility of contributing to ML speakers being understood in a variety of contexts. But being linguistically assertive is not only beneficial for the collective of ML speakers as a group, as it improves the social situation of the language, but it also has individual advantages.

## Benefits of linguistic assertiveness

### Benefits of linguistic assertiveness: Individual benefits.

- Enables you to use the language in a fluid, practical, comfortable way, in any occasion and circumstance.
- Helps you resolve situations of linguistic disparity without hurting others or oneself.
- Increases your self-esteem because you feel able to ask for what you want and need.
  - Preserves relationships or even strengthens them.
    - Helps to identify other ML speakers.

## Benefits of linguistic assertiveness: Social and cultural benefits.

- Increases language use.
- Guarantees linguistic balance.
- Dignifies the position of the ML.

**Test  
yourself!**

[You can find the mid lesson-test for lesson 1 here](#)