The first difference is obvious. It’s in Spanish. But it’s when you listen more closely to Rickie Ricardo’s Yankees broadcasts that you begin to understand his objective.

In his second year calling games with Francisco Rivera on WADO 1280 AM, the Newark, New Jersey, native colors his play-by-play with more than the standard emotion common to Spanish-language broadcasts. He’s trying to toe the line between producing a broadcast similar to others — in any language — while also supporting young Latino players who struggle to have their stories told.

“I try to avoid being provincial,” says Ricardo, whose broadcast can also be heard on TV via the SAP function. “But we try to emphasize some of the guys that may fly under the radar to the mainstream. The 25th guy on the roster, who happens to be of Hispanic descent, we’ll play him up a little bit more than maybe the non-Hispanic broadcast will. And that’s just a pride thing. There are only 750 major league players at a time, so even if you’re player No. 750 on that list, if you happen to be from the Dominican or Venezuela, hey, more power to you.”

Ricardo incorporates the perspective that his upbringing offers into his coverage. In particular, when discussing Venezuela, he recalls a conversation he had recently with a young visiting player who hails from the country. The player is focused on trying to hold down a roster spot, like anyone else, only he also has to wage a constant battle over visas and family issues back home.

“He’s flying his parents in from Venezuela,” Ricardo explains, “and he intends to have them stay here, not go back to a country where there’s now a line forming to get a chicken. These are things that sometimes the mainstream media doesn’t touch on that I am directly hooked into and in touch with on a daily basis.”

The play-by-play announcer was born Rickie Santana to a family with Cuban roots, but an encounter with radio legend Frankie Crocker at age 18 created his broadcast persona. The program director at WBLS, Crocker told Ricardo that he’d be going on the air the next day — and that his name would be Rickie Ricardo. No one’s ever going to forget you, Crocker told him.

“It worked,” Ricardo says. “Especially down in spring training, where there are a lot of senior citizens, I get asked ‘Where’s Lucy?’ about six times a day at Steinbrenner Field. But that’s OK. It comes with the territory.”

Ricardo, in addition to a 30-plus-year career on the music side of the industry, also spent two years working Marlins games and seven with the Phillies. He still calls Philadelphia Eagles football games and hosts sports talk shows in both New York and Philadelphia. But the Yankees are his life, Yankee Stadium his church, his spot in the broadcast booth his pew.

He’s ecstatic with where life has taken him, and he just hopes that he can help bring some players without boldfaced names into the spotlight.

“The same way that I’m going to tell the story of a guy named Joe Smith, [the English-speaking media] should really have the same access and want to pass on the struggle of Latinos. We all know when [Orlando Hernandez] was here; we know what he went through, the struggle he had getting here. Like that story, and like the Mariano Riveras of the world, the majority of these guys have similar situations. And they’re in the big leagues.”

Follow the Yankees en español at yankeesbeisbol.com, at www.facebook.com/yankeesbeisbol and on Twitter at @Yankees_Beisbol.