2021-12-13

Language Maintenance in Utah: Spanish Heritage Speakers' Attitudes and Language Use

Perla Y. Escobar Rodriguez
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Language Maintenance in Utah: Spanish Heritage Speakers’ Attitudes and Language Use

Perla Y. Escobar Rodriguez

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Language Maintenance in Utah: Spanish Heritage Speakers’ Attitudes and Language Use

Perla Y. Escobar Rodriguez
Department of Spanish and Portuguese, BYU
Master of Arts

The current study quantitatively and qualitatively investigated Spanish maintenance among 45 Spanish heritage language (SHL) speakers in Utah who completed a survey about their linguistic background, their attitudes toward Spanish, their self-rated Spanish proficiency, and their current Spanish usage. Nine participants were also interviewed to expound on their linguistic experience.

Previous studies on language maintenance (Alba et al., 2002; Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Lanier, 2014; Lynch, 2000; Mejías et al., 2002; Potowski, 2004; Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Zentella, 1997) have analyzed different sociolinguistics factors that relate to Spanish maintenance and usage in areas with high Hispanic populations. Nevertheless, little research has been done in locations with lower Hispanic concentrations such as in Indiana (Barbosa, 2015), Washington (Fernández-Mallat & Carey, 2017) and Kansas (Showstack & Guzman, 2020). Due to the limited research in these areas, the current study examined Spanish language maintenance of second-generation (G2) and generation 1.5 (G1.5) SHL speakers. Findings suggest that although participants have positive attitudes toward Spanish, they feel more confident communicating in English and have limited contact with the Spanish-speaking community and limited use of Spanish. However, results show that participants have a higher use of Spanish and greater connection with the Hispanic community due to their participation in Spanish-speaking religious congregations. Thus, the unique bilingual atmosphere that exists in Utah due to the cultural influence that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has and Utah’s government objective to bring about a multilingual workforce through bilingual education may aid in Spanish maintenance in this state among future SHL speakers.

Keywords: Spanish, language attitudes, heritage speakers, language shift
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Introduction

As the Hispanic population in the United States has increased to 62.08M, according to the 2020 U.S. Census, Spanish is reported to be spoken in 13.5% of all households (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). As a result, more questions have arisen regarding Spanish language use and Spanish linguistic features in the U.S., such as how these correlate with social factors. Many Americans count on immigrants learning English, whereas monolingual Spanish speakers expect Hispanics to speak “pure” Spanish (Casielles-Suárez, 2017). Due to this linguistic conflict that many Hispanics face, it is important to examine the components that relate to Spanish maintenance in the U.S. In this study, I analyze how Spanish maintenance in Utah relates to Spanish heritage language (SHL) speakers’ attitudes toward Spanish and English, to their self-perceived proficiency in Spanish, and to their use of Spanish in different settings. Because the Northwest region (Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington) of the United States is considered to be a newer Spanish-speaking area (Jenkins, 2018), little research has investigated the Spanish spoken in Utah. Thus, this study’s findings contribute an important piece to the existing research on Spanish maintenance across the U.S.

Review of the Literature

Heritage Languages

The term heritage language (HL) originated in Canada (Cummins, 2005) and refers to minority languages other than the majority language spoken in a country. Regarding the U.S., a heritage language is a language other than English (Fishman, 1991) that has a particular relevance to the learner (Fishman 2001). Defining an HL speaker or learner is more complex because it implies using one label that does not fit all linguistic categories (Wiley, 2001). This is due to the diverse linguistic background of HL speakers who may or may not be considered
completely fluent in that language based on their proficiency to perform in all settings in which native speakers normally function (Valdés, 1997). In this study, as described by Beaudrie and Fairclough (2012), an SHL speaker is defined as someone who has a personal or familial connection to a non majority language (Fishman, 2001).

**Language Maintenance and Shift**

Language maintenance refers to the generational transmission of a language (Martínez, 2006). Language shift is defined as the decreasing habitual use of one language by a community in favor of another (Weinreich, 1953). Multiple studies have investigated this phenomenon across the United States (Alba et al., 2002; Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Lanier, 2014; Potowski, 2004; Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Zentella, 1997). Other regions in the U.S. with a current increase in Hispanic population have followed with similar studies (Barbosa, 2015; Eaton, 2019; Fernández-Mallat & Carey, 2017; Showstack & Guzman, 2020).

Studies have examined language maintenance and shift by analyzing internal and external sociolinguistic factors that lead speakers to make certain linguistic choices. External factors include linguistic ideologies, language policies, institutional support, and resources available for language retention. Internal factors comprise identity, language attitudes, motivation, and level of integration into the predominant culture (Fairclough, 2015). Previous studies have shown variation in Spanish language maintenance and shift based on sociolinguistic factors in different communities. For instance, Mejías et al. (2002) found that in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas, Spanish was not only used among blue-collar workers, but also among highly educated professionals like lawyers and doctors. A study by Castellanos (1990) found evidence of a shift toward English among the children of immigrants (second generation). However, Lynch (2000) argues against this shift as he found a more stable bilingualism among the children and
grandchildren of Cubans in Miami. These vast differences in language maintenance and shift based on location and other features demonstrate the need to analyze various sociolinguistic factors when determining the language maintenance or shift of a particular speech community.

Factors Affecting Language Maintenance and Shift

**Generation**

According to Silva-Corvalán (1994), Spanish usage and maintenance continues at a social level; nonetheless, there is a great shift to English at the individual level, and this change usually increases with each generation. Silva-Corvalán categorized Spanish speakers in three groups based on how long the participants’ families had lived in the U.S. Group 1, or generation 1 (G1), refers to speakers born in a Spanish-speaking country who moved to the U.S. after age 12. The primary reason for establishing age 12 as the cut-off point is if one believes in Lenneberg’s (1967) critical period hypothesis that the critical age by which the native language of an individual is completely acquired is age 12. Spanish speakers who came to the U.S. between the ages six and twelve are known as Generation 1.5 (G 1.5). Generation 2 (G2) includes speakers born in the U.S. as well as those who immigrated to the country before the age of six. Generation 3 (G3) encompasses individuals who were born in the U.S. and have at least one G2 parent.

Heritage speakers’ generation is important because it partially accounts for their Spanish and English proficiency and use. Generally speaking, G1 speakers have a higher proficiency in Spanish than G2 speakers, and G2 speakers tend to be more fluent in their HL than G3 individuals who tend to shift to English at a higher rate (Escobar & Potowski, 2015).
**Diglossia**

Diglossia is a sociological construct in which two languages or two varieties of the same language are kept separate within distinct social settings, often by the same speakers (Ferguson, 1959). According to Fishman (1967), if diglossia prevails in a language community as the minority language is used in the family context, then the language continues to exist. Likewise, Weinreich (1953) explains the importance of this factor because analyzing language maintenance in terms of functions in a contact situation shows all the informal and formal settings where the minority language is spoken, and whether the shift is partial or total. Hence, the present study considered the domains where English and Spanish are used to analyze SHL speakers’ situation of diglossia.

**Language Attitudes**

According to Martínez (2006), language attitudes refer to a combination of beliefs, feelings, and actions that an individual may have toward a specific language. Escobar and Potowski (2015) have stated that the attitudes that speakers have towards their HL are important for the vitality of the language in the U.S. Thus, it is relevant to research linguistic backgrounds of SHL speakers because performing a linguistic autobiography of their bilingual experience will help reveal their attitudes (Aparicio, 2000; Ducar, 2012).

**Religion**

Unique cultural aspects exist in Utah that may influence language maintenance and shift, one of them being the influence of religion where members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints\(^1\) “account for 67.70% of its population” (Omondi, 2020). The high percentage

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\(^1\) In future references, the Church of Jesus Christ will be referred to as “the Church” because many of its members refer to it like this. Likewise, any social or cultural aspect addressed in this study that relates to the Church of Jesus Christ, will be described as “Latter-Day Saint” (LDS).
of members of the Church also contributes to the influence of its missionary program, in which thousands of missionaries each year learn a second language (L2) by being sent abroad or to other states. Many returned missionaries come to Utah for a college education, for work, and/or to be part of the social LDS life. Thus, it is common to find many L2 speakers who use the language they learned on their mission in different settings, such as among friends or in college language courses. In addition, many people from other countries who are members of the Church immigrate to Utah for the same reasons as returned missionaries. Many of these immigrants whose L1 is not English attend religious congregations in their native language, thus the religious services can provide an additional setting to use the native language.

Dual Immersion

The Church's missionary program also plays a key role in the multilingual atmosphere in Utah as many individuals who learned an L2 want their children to be bilingual. In 2008, the government of Utah ratified Senate Bill 41 creating funding for Utah schools to begin dual language immersion (DLI) programs in Chinese, French, and Spanish. Currently, Utah is the leading state in the U.S. with 240 DLI programs that now include other languages—German, Portuguese, and Russian (Johnson, 2020). According to the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), DLI is a form of bilingual education in which literacy and content instruction take place in two languages to achieve high proficiency in both languages and meet academic standards. Due to the availability of DLI programs throughout Utah, this educational opportunity may relate to language maintenance as Utah seeks to create a multilingual workforce:

For a state aiming to compete effectively in the global marketplace, the expansion was an ambitious but promising endeavor. Because second-language acquisition is accomplished
more efficiently at early ages, exposing students to dual-language instruction from elementary school suggests a more efficient approach to public education (Steele et al., 2019, p.2).

The factors mentioned previously have shown to relate to language maintenance and will be examined in the current investigation.

**Research Designs and Methods**

**Research Questions**

In this study I address the following questions:

1. In what familial, social, professional, personal, and educational contexts do young adult G2 and G1.5 SHL speakers in Utah use Spanish? And for what purposes do they use Spanish? What factors seem to be associated with their language choice?

2. How confident do participants rate themselves in Spanish? And how does their self-perception relate to their Spanish usage?

3. What are the participants’ feelings and attitudes about Spanish?
   a. How are those feelings and attitudes related to their linguistic experience growing up?
   b. How are those feelings and attitudes related to their current Spanish usage?
   c. What might their attitudes and usage mean for their future Spanish maintenance?

**Methodology**

To understand the complexity of Spanish maintenance in Utah, and to obtain a more detailed account of the participants’ language choice and bilingual experience, I used a quantitative and qualitative approach. I conducted this study in Utah, where according to the 2020 U.S. Census, the Hispanic population comprises 18.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).
participants grew up in the Wasatch Front region, which includes the counties of Salt Lake, Utah, and Weber. To participate, subjects needed to have at least one G1 parent who emigrated from a Spanish-speaking country after puberty. I recruited participants using snowball sampling through flyers shared with friends and posted on social media pages of multicultural groups at several Utah universities. The data collection process lasted from August to October 2020.

Seventy-one individuals participated in this study; however, 26 were excluded from the results because they were older than 12 when they arrived in the U.S. or because they did not complete all the questions in the survey. Consequently, there were ultimately 15 males and 30 females between the ages of 18 to 30 that were included in the final data set. Regarding the groups of interest for this study, 25 individuals were born in the U.S. and 20 immigrated to the U.S. as children. I categorized the 25 subjects born in the U.S. along with the 11 individuals who arrived in the U.S. at the age of 5 or younger as G2; I grouped the remaining 9 participants who arrived between the ages 6 and 12 as G1.5. Despite the categorization by generation, I did not find differences in the participants’ responses.

In regards to the participants’ demographics, this study is different from previous research due to the diversity of country of origin among those born outside the U.S. I did not intentionally recruit people from different countries of birth; therefore, the underlying diversity of participants is due to the availability of people from these countries who took the survey. Because there were not enough individuals from the different Spanish-speaking countries (see Figure 1), I found no major differences among the participants’ country of origin.

To collect the quantitative data, I created an eight-minute survey using Qualtrics. I chose the direct method established by Joshua Fishman et al. (1971), who used a questionnaire to approach language attitudes and language use of Puerto Ricans in New York. The survey had
three sections: (a) getting to know you (questions 1–11) to find out the demographic and linguistic background of the participants, (b) language attitudes and language usage (questions 12–16), and (c) Spanish proficiency self-rating (questions 17–18). Question 19 was the last question, and I used it to collect names and email addresses of those who chose to participate in the second phase. I designed the questionnaire based on a combination of surveys used in studies that researched language attitudes and language maintenance (Eaton, 2019; Lynch & Klee, 2005; Mejías et al., 2002; Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Truman, 2019). I analyzed the survey components using descriptive statistics to determine use of Spanish, percentage of participants who agreed/disagreed with the statements given, and elements applicable to them (e.g., reasons for speaking and not speaking Spanish, level of confidence in English and Spanish, etc.).

The qualitative analysis consisted of nine interviews. The interviewees were self-selected based on participants who provided their contact information in the survey and responded to the email to be interviewed. To protect the interviewees’ identity, I used pseudonyms for the results. Table 1 provides an introduction of each interviewee’s background.
The duration of the interviews varied as the shortest lasted 8 minutes and the longest lasted 30 minutes; the duration of the interviews was determined by how much information the participants chose to give. I performed the interviews in English, but participants were given the option to speak Spanish. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I met with the interviewees over Zoom. I used a list of questions to carry out semi-structured interviews that would address in more detail the participants' use of and attitudes toward Spanish (see Appendix B). However, participants were free to provide details about their experiences growing up bilingual. I then transcribed the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alejandra</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Moved to the U.S. at age 2 and her father’s L1 is English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Moved to the U.S. at age 8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Father’s L1 is English. Alejandra’s younger sibling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Parents didn’t speak English growing up but now speak it. Both parents are from Peru.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniela</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Did not specify the countries where her parents are from, but she mentioned her extended family lives in Latin America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Moved to the U.S. at age 11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Parents are from Mexico. Was taught how to read, write, and speak in Spanish before kindergarten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Moved to the U.S. at age 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Carlos’ older brother.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interviews based on themes found. Finally, I analyzed the results by identifying similarities in participants’ responses across surveys and interviews to address the research questions.

Results

The findings of this study support the results of previous studies done in other regions of the U.S.; most of the participants in this study use Spanish to some extent, are somewhat proficient in their HL, and report that Spanish is important to them. A close analysis of the participants’ responses sheds more light about how the main themes are connected.

Use of Spanish

Use of Spanish in Different Contexts

Altogether, all participants primarily use Spanish in familial settings—mostly with parents and grandparents—as an average, participants speak Spanish with them 70% of the time (see Figure 2). The other contexts where Spanish is highly used, whether productively or receptively, are social settings due to participation in Spanish religious congregations (61.00%) and individually for listening to Spanish music (51.60%). In regards to speaking Spanish with siblings and bilingual Hispanic friends, participants reported lower Spanish use, 34.50% and 36.90% respectively, when compared to the results of speaking Spanish with parents and grandparents. Thus, participants are less likely to speak Spanish with people their age or younger, which is also supported by the results (see Figure 3) to survey question 16, “If I came across a Hispanic-looking individual for the first time, I would speak to her/him in Spanish if the person were (select all that apply: someone wearing jeans and a t-shirt, someone wearing a suite, a teacher, an employee at a store/restaurant, older than me, a child, my age or younger, or would not speak Spanish to any stranger).” Participants are more likely to speak Spanish with a person who is older than them (60%, n = 27), such as an employee at a restaurant (44%, n = 20) or a
teacher (22%, \( n = 10 \)), than with younger peers (24%, \( n = 11 \)) or children (20%, \( n = 9 \)). When it comes to using Spanish personally, participants demonstrate even lower selection for watching media, reading, or thinking in Spanish. Listening to Spanish-language music is the only personal context with a higher frequency of Spanish selection, which may be due to its current popularity in the U.S.

With respect to the use of Spanish in educational settings, I did not include this context in Figure 2 because some participants graduated from college or are not currently enrolled. Therefore, to find out who studied or is studying Spanish in school, I asked participants in survey question seven if they studied Spanish in school, and if they did, they selected all the levels in which they did so (see Figure 4). Results show that for the most part, from the 45 participants, the following studied Spanish in middle school (33%, \( n = 15 \)), high school (42%, \( n = 19 \)), and college (29%, \( n = 13 \)). Regarding the study of Spanish at the college level, during the interviews, Melissa and Alejandra mentioned they majored in Spanish, and Sofia is currently studying Spanish translation.

Figure 2. Current Use of Spanish among Participants
On survey question seven, there was a discrepancy in how participants may have interpreted the educational-level option *elementary*. The number of participants who selected *elementary* is not clear because it could mean a U.S. elementary school where the participant was part of a DLI program, or the participants could have interpreted this option as attending an elementary school in a Spanish-speaking country. Because only three of the five participants who selected *elementary* provided their contact information, I found out that two of them studied at an elementary school in a Spanish-speaking country, and one survey participant was part of a DLI elementary program in the U.S. The other two survey participants who studied Spanish in
elementary may have studied in a Spanish-speaking country if their family moved abroad for a few years or if they were part of a DLI program.

**Purposes for Using Spanish**

Based on interview data \((n = 9)\), participants mostly use Spanish when 1) speaking with older family members who live in the U.S, Spain, and/or Latin America (100% of interviewees, \(n = 9\)), 2) worshipping (praying, reading sacred texts, and/or attending church) (67%, \(n = 6\)), and 3) working (67%, \(n = 6\)). Interview details show that participants use Spanish with family members, friends from church, and people at work due to the limited or complete lack of English proficiency that those individuals have. Another motivation mentioned by 44% of interviewees for using Spanish in religious settings is that they prefer practicing their religion in Spanish because of how they were raised; further details will be provided in the Feelings and Attitudes section about using Spanish in religious activities.

**Figure 4.** Educational Levels where Participants Studied Spanish

![Figure 4: Educational Levels where Participants Studied Spanish](image)

*Note: Participants selected all applicable levels in which Spanish was studied.*
Factors Associated with Language Choice

**Raised Speaking Spanish.** Survey participants were asked, “If you learned Spanish at home, briefly describe how.” Forty participants (89%) said their parents spoke Spanish to them, and only five respondents (11%) stated they did not learn Spanish at home. The responses illustrate a similar pattern: the parents spoke Spanish at home and had activities for their children to use Spanish through media or religious activities. The following survey responses summarize the most common experiences among the 40 participants who learned Spanish at home.

Elena: *My parents both spoke Spanish to me, and made me watch movies and TV shows in Spanish.*

Roberto: *I spoke Spanish at home with my parents, grandparents and cousins. We grew up speaking it every day. I learned through constant communication. I also read in Spanish with my family during scripture study.*

Santiago: *Both parents spoke/speak Spanish and insisted on minimal to no English speaking inside the home.*

**Parents’ Native Language.** Nine survey participants indicated that their father’s L1 is English. To find out if their use of Spanish was affected by this factor, I looked at the background questions about their parents’ ethnic origin and first language. Then, I measured their Spanish usage as the percentage of time that they use Spanish with their parents. To calculate the average use of Spanish of these nine participants with their Hispanic mother, I added the percentages of the nine participants and divided it by nine. I followed the same process to find the average use of Spanish with their father. I then compared those averages with the total averages of the percent of time that all the participants speak Spanish to their parents (see Figure 2). The results show that the reason that the total percentage of speaking Spanish with dad
(72.60%) is 6.2% lower than the percentage of time that participants spend speaking Spanish with mom (78.80%) is due to having a father whose L1 is English. Thus, the nine participants in this situation show a 48.9% decrease in using Spanish with their fathers and an 18.1% decrease when speaking to their mothers (see Table 2). Additionally, only one participant has a mother whose L1 is English while her dad is a native Spanish speaker. Although I did not consider this for comparison, she indicated using Spanish 100% of the time with her maternal grandparents, 48% with her dad, and 0% with her mom.

Table 2. Use of Spanish with Parents based on Parents’ Native Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Father’s L1 is English</th>
<th>Both Parents’ L1 is Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average use of Spanish with dad</td>
<td>29.90%</td>
<td>78.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average use of Spanish with mom</td>
<td>54.40%</td>
<td>72.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Religion.** Survey participants attend Spanish religious services 61% of the time, giving them the opportunity to hear Spanish at least once a week. Furthermore, based on interview data, six interviewees mentioned they speak Spanish in religious services. While not all interviewees mentioned exactly where and how much they use Spanish for religious purposes, six interviewees also indicated that because they grew up in a family that practiced religion in Spanish, and this habit has stayed with them. Carlos was the only interviewee who commented thoroughly how religion has had an impact in his knowledge and use of Spanish.

Carlos: *For me growing up, my main influence in Spanish outside of the home was going to church, and that’s still the case today, so if I didn’t necessarily have church in Spanish growing up, I probably wouldn’t speak Spanish that well.*
Based on what Carlos shared, besides familial settings, attending a Spanish congregation is probably the second greatest influence that connects him to the Spanish-speaking world.

**Linguistic experiences.** Participants were prompted to select on the survey as many applicable reasons that led them to use less Spanish. The following three factors decrease their use of Spanish: 1) have been corrected or told by native speakers that their Spanish is not good enough (44%, \( n = 20 \)), 2) feel more confident in English (42%, \( n = 19 \)), and 3) lack the opportunity to interact with the Spanish-speaking community (42%, \( n = 19 \)).

**Figure 5.** Participants' Reasons for Using Less Spanish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Proportion of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunity to interact with Spanish-speaking community</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel more confident in English</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Spanish ability</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some citizens have negative sentiments toward Spanish</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe Spanish to be inferior to English</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have been corrected or told by native speakers that their Spanish is not good enough</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Participants were able to select multiple responses.*

**Self-rated Spanish Ability**

**Level of Confidence**

To find out how participants felt about their Spanish ability, they answered a survey question that asked them to rate their level of confidence in Spanish by choosing one of five options ranging from “not at all confident” to “very confident” for each of the four categories that asked about their receptive and productive skills (see Figure 6). Data show that the majority of participants feel confident in their receptive skills: reading (88% of participants) and
understanding Spanish media (84%). Regarding their writing skills, 93% of participants feel confident writing a text message, but only 48% feel confident writing an essay, which can be interpreted as using informal and formal language respectively. Additionally, participants responded regarding whether as bilingual speakers they perceived themselves as equal in both languages, or more fluent in one (see Figure 7). Generally, 71% of participants ($n = 32$) view themselves as more fluent in English and 27% of respondents ($n = 12$) as equally bilingual. So, although many participants feel confident in their Spanish ability, they see themselves as being more fluent in English than in Spanish.

**Figure 6. Participants’ Spanish Confidence Level**

In an attempt to elicit participants' self-perceived bilingual ability, I included a survey question that read, “Concerning your present ability as a bilingual speaker do you consider yourself to be: much more fluent in English than Spanish; somewhat more fluent in English; about equal ability in Spanish and in English, somewhat more fluent in Spanish, or much more fluent in Spanish than English” (see Figure 7). However, participants could have interpreted the question in two ways: 1) the ability to speak Spanish and English or 2) the overall linguistic
ability they have as bilingual individuals to speak, write, read, and understand Spanish and English. Thus, their answer could vary depending on how balanced they feel they are in speaking the two languages compared to their perceived overall command of both languages. My intention was to ask about their speaking ability and not their overall Spanish ability, and that was the reason for not including speaking skills in question 17. Future studies can clarify this by adding “I can speak completely in Spanish” to question 17, and rewording question 18 as “Concerning your overall present ability as a bilingual person do you consider yourself to be (select option).”

**Figure 7.** Bilingual Speaking Ability According to Participants' Self-Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-rated Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Proportion of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much more fluent in English than Spanish</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat more fluent in English</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About equal ability in Spanish and in English</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat more fluent in Spanish</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much more fluent in Spanish than English</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-perception Related to Spanish Usage**

To determine how the participants’ self-perceived ability in Spanish relates to their use of Spanish, I analyzed the results from questions 14, “Within the last year to now, indicate what percentage (scale from 1-100) of the time you spend for the following activities,” and 17, “Select level of confidence in Spanish.” On question 17, participants selected one of five options, “not confident at all” to “very confident” in four categories that asked about their receptive and
productive skills (see Figure 6). Because questions 14 and 17 had different measurement scales to collect the participants’ use of and self-perceived ability in Spanish, the collected data was not directly comparable. Hence, I did a correlation analysis to find a rough estimate of the participants’ relationship between their Spanish usage and self-perceived Spanish ability. To find each participant’s level of confidence in Spanish, I assigned a number to each level: one to “not at all confident,” two to “not very confident,” three to “somewhat confident,” four to “confident,” and five to “very confident.” I added the total for all four categories (i.e., reading, understanding media, writing a text message, writing an essay), and divided the sum by four to get the average.

To determine the average of the respondents’ use of Spanish, I calculated four averages: the overall percentage of their Spanish usage in all 12 contexts, in familial settings, in social settings, and personal activities (see Figure 2). To get the overall percentage of each participant’s use of Spanish, I added the percentage given by the participant where Spanish could be used in 12 contexts: speak Spanish with (1) mom, (2) with dad, (3) with maternal grandparents, (4) with paternal grandparents, (5) with siblings, (6) with Hispanic friends who know both languages, (7) attend a Spanish congregation, (8) speak Spanish at work, (9) watch TV and/or movies in Spanish when consuming entertainment, (10) listen to music in Spanish (11) read Spanish publications, and (12) think in Spanish. I then divided the total by 12. Among participants who selected N/A because their grandparents or a parent had passed away, I also divided by 12, thus having one less context where they are able to use Spanish.

Subsequently, to know how Spanish usage differs based on context, I calculated averages for familial, social, and personal settings. To find the familial context average, I added the percentages of Spanish spoken with mother, father, maternal grandparents, paternal
grandparents, and siblings, and then divided by five. For social context, I added the percentage of speaking Spanish with Hispanic friends who speak both languages and attending a Spanish congregation, and divided by two. The sum for personal context included listening to music, watching TV and movies, reading, and thinking; this total was then divided by four.

Based on the analysis, the participants’ self-rated ability correlates to their current use of Spanish (see Table 3), but is not the only factor that accounts for it (as previously described in section *Use of Spanish*). The two contexts that correlate the most in the participants’ use of Spanish are familial (r=.58) and personal (r =.57) contexts, which means that there is a moderate correlation between those contexts and their self-perceived confidence in Spanish.

Respecting the choice to use Spanish in a given setting, I performed multiple Pearson correlations between participants’ self-reported confidence in Spanish (as an average of their reported confidence in reading, understanding media, writing a text message, writing an essay) and their use of Spanish in familial, social, personal, and professional settings, as well as the average of the previous four settings (i.e., “Overall”). The familial and personal settings had the highest weight: 34% of Spanish usage in familial settings can be explained by their confidence in Spanish, while 32% accounts for personal settings (see Table 3).

**Feelings and Attitudes**

I focused on a qualitative approach by using primarily interview data to address research questions 3, 3a, 3b, and 3c: “What are the participants' feelings and attitudes about Spanish?; How are those feelings and attitudes related to their linguistic experience growing up?; How are those feelings and attitudes related to their current Spanish usage?; and What might their attitudes and usage mean for their future Spanish maintenance?”
Table 3. Correlation between Self-reported Spanish Ability and Use of Spanish in Different Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>( r^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding feelings and attitudes toward Spanish, most survey respondents have positive attitudes toward Spanish. Figure 8 shows that survey participants agree that Spanish makes them feel good about themselves (91%, \( n = 41 \)) and that it is important to preserve it in the U.S. (96%, \( n = 43 \)). Also, 100% of survey participants disagree that it is a waste of time to keep up with Spanish as Hispanics learn English, and 22% said they do not need Spanish in their careers (see Figure 9). Although few survey respondents agree that they do not need Spanish to have success in their careers—because they do not need to speak it or do not have the opportunity to do so—the subsequent categories expound on the interviewees’ feelings toward Spanish use.
Feelings Toward Spanish

Connection to Family and Culture. To find out how Spanish is relevant to the interviewees, I asked them for what purposes Spanish is important in their lives and why. Six
Ricardo and Daniela’s accounts.

Ricardo: *Most of my family still lives in Peru [and] only speaks Spanish. So, if I want to have a relationship with [them], I need to speak Spanish. We grew up speaking Spanish and we learned it, and I want all my children to learn how to speak Spanish. I think it gives us a great advantage in the future.*

Daniela: *[Spanish] is important at work because it has helped me keep the position I have and be useful, but it’s more useful when I’m speaking to my family in Latin America. I wouldn’t be able to have as much of a relationship with them if I didn’t speak Spanish. Same thing goes with my grandparents who live here.*

Ricardo and Daniela alluded to the importance of Spanish for establishing and maintaining ties with their family. In addition, as Daniela stated, another reason that Spanish is important is because it is useful in the workplace.

**Useful at Work.** During the interviews, four participants, including Daniela, explicitly said that Spanish is relevant in the workplace because they can serve and work with Spanish speakers.

Stephanie: *Spanish is important in my life because I can communicate with my parents and a lot of my work surrounds Hispanic people. We do a lot of contracting work with Spanish-speaking people. My worth is almost doubled because I can communicate with both communities.*

Stephanie reinforced that knowing English and Spanish gives her the opportunity to help twice the amount of people, so for that reason, she views her bilingualism as a great asset in being able to reach two communities.
Helping Others. In a similar manner to Stephanie, Carlos shared how he is now serving his community through his bilingual skills.

Carlos: *Being able to speak Spanish and English well definitely enables you to reach out and help other people, which for me is huge. I’ve done a lot of translating, both in church and parent-teacher conferences. And I just think that’s a huge help that a lot of our community needs and doesn’t have often.*

As Carlos and Stephanie shared, being able to help the Spanish-speaking community is a great opportunity to speak their HL. Furthermore, Sofia and Melissa, who are studying to become an immigration lawyer and social worker respectively, said that one of the reasons for choosing to study Spanish in college is to help Hispanics through their careers.

The Need for Both Languages

Even though interviewees specifically expressed the reasons why Spanish is important to them, all said that both languages are equally important, as demonstrated by Mariana and Carlos.

Mariana: *I wouldn’t say that one is more important than the other because they both work equally in my life.*

Carlos: *I would say both about 50/50. On a cultural aspect, in getting to know my heritage, definitely Spanish is more important, but in a professional aspect, I wouldn’t have been able to succeed as much as I have so far without English. If I don’t speak English I can’t work, especially where I’m working right now.*

As shown in Carlos’ comments, it is necessary to mention that four other interviewees stated English to be equally important to them because English is the language they use to communicate in formal settings like work and school. For instance, Stephanie mentioned English as being essential in her business career.
Stephanie: *English is more important to me just because a lot of people in the world speak it and I feel like there’s an advantage to that, especially because I love business, and I think that it is one of the international languages.*

Two participants shared more details as they provided specific settings where English is relevant and where Spanish is meaningful.

Sofia: *So I guess English has that important connotation for me because it’s the language of the world I’m in. I go to school in English, I go to church in English, I speak to my friends in English, but then Spanish is also what I study in college. It’s what most of my college classes are in, it’s what my job is in. I want to go into immigration law and I’m getting a degree in Spanish specifically so that I can work with Hispanic immigrants, and Spanish is also the language of my family, and the language I pray in. I think both languages have a time and a place for me. They’ve got their own valid circles.*

Daniela: *Honestly I think English is more important just because I live in the U.S., just because I know more people who speak English, I go to school and speak English. My career will be in English, so English is more important in that sense, but I think in my personal life, they are both equally important.*

Sofia and Daniela have a clear separation of domains of where they use English and Spanish because they thoroughly narrated the context where they use each language. Overall, it seems that English is used in most educational settings and at work. This clear division of contexts where each language is used by both participants could mean that Spanish is maintained individually as they continue having opportunities to speak Spanish in specific situations.

Another two participants who expressed that English and Spanish are of equal importance shared similar feelings for cherishing Spanish.
Melissa: *I think it’s important because it’s my native language. I think it’s nice to be able to speak two languages and know two cultures. I would not give up one or the other.*

Manuel: *I definitely appreciate both languages. That first half of my life was just Spanish in Spain, and so that was the language I was raised in.*

As these participants described, a possible reason for positive feelings toward Spanish can be the personal connection that individuals have toward the first language learned because they recognize how it is or was part of their life.

**Feelings and Attitudes Related to Linguistic Experience**

**Childhood Spanish Attitudes**

Interviewees reported having positive feelings toward Spanish because it is important to communicate with family, to preserve their culture, and use it at work. Survey data also indicated that a possible reason for those current attitudes could be the way they were raised. Participants reported the beliefs they grew up with by selecting whether or not they were told by their parents to speak or not speak Spanish based on different factors. Figures 10 and 11 show that most participants did not grow up with negative attitudes that interfered with their use of Spanish due to discrimination. Therefore, it seems that the positive feelings the participants currently have for speaking Spanish were the same reasons they were told to speak it when they were younger.

**En Casa Se Habla Español**

Another factor that relates to the participants’ linguistic experience is the expectation to speak Spanish at home. As previously mentioned, 89% of survey participants commented that their parents spoke with them in Spanish growing up and many continue to do so. Interview data also indicate that speaking Spanish at home is a common expectation among the families of the nine interviewees.
Figure 10. Questionnaire Results related to Positive Attitudes

Figure 11. Questionnaire Results related to Negative Attitudes
Notwithstanding, three of them clearly expounded that it is not an obligation—they do not view it as such—and they speak Spanish due to the expectation to include parents in the conversation, as Stephanie recounts.

Stephanie: *At the dinner table, I’m expected to speak Spanish to make my parents feel included. At family gatherings, it is not a strict rule, but to not be rude, it’s expected to speak Spanish with older family members.*

Other interviewees mentioned what it was like being told or expected to only speak Spanish at home as described by Manuel: *I’m expected to speak Spanish at home. My parents don’t like it when I speak English around them. It’s a hard rule.* As Manuel shared, his parents did not want him to speak English with or around them. Another interviewee also seemed to have a similar experience of Spanish being strictly the only language at home.

Alejandra: *Growing up, it was always like “en casa se habla español.” My sister and I would play barbies in English ‘cause our barbies spoke English, and then my mom would walk into the room, and our barbies would code-switch haha and then go back to English.*

Alejandra’s story depicts that even if her parents insisted on Spanish being the language spoken at home, there were times as she was growing up where she and her sister communicated in English among themselves. I did not follow up with a question to find out how Alejandra felt about being expected to speak Spanish at home, but during our conversation, I observed that she did not feel negatively affected because she laughed while remembering her experience. When I interviewed Sofia, Alejandra’s sister, I collected more details about how she felt about only being allowed to use Spanish at home.
Sofia: *For the most part, it was my norm. It was what always happened, so I didn’t feel too bad about it, but there are definitely times, like if I were caught speaking English, it’s like, “Sofia, speak Spanish.” I’d feel kind of guilty or bad for doing something I shouldn’t, but [it] was a lot easier. So I don’t think it developed into having a negative connotation with speaking Spanish, but there are definitely times when I was just like “ugh can we just speak English, this would be so much easier.”* Interviewer: *Do you feel like you would have had the same opportunity to know the language as much as you know it now if you had not had that norm of speaking Spanish at home?* Sofia: *Oh I definitely wouldn’t speak the same Spanish I speak now. I was able to, coming to BYU, start with Spanish 321 and have it be a pretty easy class for me because I had already grown up speaking it, so I mean it helps that I grew up speaking Spanish.*

For Sofia, it was hard at times to keep up with the expectation to only speak Spanish at home; however, she acknowledges that this rule helped with her Spanish proficiency. The first Spanish course she took at Brigham Young University (BYU) was Spanish 321: a third-year grammar class that targets grammar, culture, and reading to communicate at the Advanced low sublevel based on guidelines from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Many students who take Spanish 321 are returned missionaries who lived in a Spanish-speaking country for 18 to 24 months. Therefore, excelling in this course requires considerable mastery of the Spanish language. Sofia’s experience, along with a survey participant’s response highlight that growing up with the expectation to speak Spanish turned out beneficial to their Spanish proficiency.
Miguel: *At the time, my parents did not speak any English. This forced me to learn Spanish at home and English in school. They would only speak to me in Spanish and I had to respond in Spanish. For this simple reason, I still speak Spanish fluently.*

**Challenges**

Besides the advantages, participants also shared the difficulties of growing up bilingual.

**Spanish Ability Perceived by Others.** One of the most common struggles shared by survey respondents was having been told that their Spanish was not good enough. Twenty survey participants (44%) responded to the question, “Has anything made you want to use Spanish less?” relating that they have been corrected or told by a native speaker that their Spanish is not good. For instance, one survey participant stated, *I feel like a fake when I speak Spanish.*

Strangely enough, *I feel more like a fish out of water when I speak Spanish to Spanish-speakers than when I speak English with them.* In the interview process, five participants (11%) spoke about this issue when asked if they ever feel uncomfortable or lack confidence in Spanish. Three examples provide more details:

Alejandra: *I’ve had people tell me negatively like “oh you speak with a weird accent” or “your Spanish isn’t that good,” and it’s just really tanked my confidence. So, I think mostly in situations with native Spanish speakers, especially Spaniards, I’ve always second guessed myself and feel a little more nervous, and I don’t feel as good expressing myself.*

Sofia: *I go to Spain regularly to visit my grandparents, about once a year. When I was younger, at church the kids would tell me that I had a missionary accent because I spoke Spanish like an American with an American accent. And I was really offended because I was like, “I’ve been speaking this language for nine years and they’ve been speaking it...*
for nine months.” I know my Spanish is better, but just kinda like that's always stayed with me, knowing that no matter how hard I try to learn the language, I will always be inferior to a native speaker. And so, I think I feel uncomfortable speaking Spanish around people that I know have a higher level of Spanish than me.

Stephanie: I do sometimes lack confidence. When I speak Spanish to people my age, especially native speakers who have just come to the U.S., I feel judged by them. They say that I have a white accent in Spanish, which is interesting because I speak it all the time with my parents. But I do think in English, so I think that's why.

According to Alejandra, Sofia, and Stephanie, native speakers’ perceptions have caused them to feel judged or inferior about their Spanish proficiency. Based on survey and interview data, the interviewees’ mental picture of being judged by native speakers has an impact on how they feel about their Spanish.

Furthermore, it is important to clarify that three out of the five interviewees who mentioned that native speakers judged or corrected their Spanish did not provide details if this happened with family members. Different opinions were expressed by two participants who specified in what contexts they feel less or more comfortable speaking Spanish.

Alejandra: If it’s someone I know pretty well, like if we become closer friends, I feel less uncomfortable. The more I know someone, the more comfortable I feel in Spanish. And then, other than that, just in situations where like if my students ask me a question about grammar, and I’m not sure, that makes me doubt my abilities, but normally it’s just with native speakers that I feel are judging me.
Daniela: When talking to family members who live in Latin America, I feel like they’re judging my Spanish. I’ve noticed it’s more like that when I know the person. If I don’t know the person, I don’t mind.

Although no generalizations can be made from Daniela and Alejandra’s accounts, it is important to note that overall, the attitudes expressed by native Spanish speakers toward SHL speakers’ Spanish, whether they are close or not to the speaker, can influence their confidence.

**Lexical Gaps.** Another common struggle faced by the interviewees is lack of vocabulary in certain contexts. Five participants mentioned that sometimes they lack confidence in Spanish or feel uncomfortable speaking it because they did not know some or all the terminology needed to speak about a specific topic. Mariana and Melissa’s experiences represent how this was and continues to be a linguistic challenge among the five interviewees who mentioned this.

Mariana: The one time I remember feeling a little bit more self-conscious about speaking Spanish was when I went to Mexico for the first time. I was a lot older so my vocabulary was pretty good. Even though my parents always taught us to speak Spanish at home, like English still gets in the way, so with a bilingual mind, you still have to translate back and forth from one to the other. But I think that when you’re in Mexico you just get that comment when they’re like “oh you sound so American” or “you don’t have the Mexican accent” or whatever, and yeah there’s a difference. That was when I was a little more self-conscious because I would get my tongue tied or I just wasn’t saying the right thing.

Melissa: The reason why I felt uncomfortable is because of a lack of knowledge and vocabulary, like if I’m not familiar with vocabulary, like where I work. I work at a mental health facility, so I don’t know those words in Spanish. So you know, I don’t feel comfortable saying them because I don’t know them or I don’t practice them enough.
**Feelings of Fear or Shame.** Four interviewees mentioned that one of the struggles of speaking Spanish is feeling uncomfortable in certain situations due to the attitudes that others have when hearing Spanish. Melissa’s experience is representative of what the four participants mentioned about using Spanish in public.

Melissa: *It doesn’t happen as much anymore, but there are situations where I don’t want other people to see me differently or to tell me things. So I try to speak English, but I feel that as I’ve grown older, I’m like whatever, if I want to speak Spanish, I’m gonna speak Spanish. But I feel like when I was younger, I was like “oh they’re gonna tell me something, so I should speak English.”*

Interviewer: *Was that mostly with people that you knew or in public?*

Melissa: *I think in public. People that I know, no. It was like when I went to the store and I was speaking Spanish with my mom. People would look at me, and I didn’t want them to say anything. But I mean of course I still spoke Spanish to my mom because she would speak Spanish, but it just made me feel self-conscious as to what are they going to say to me, and what are they going to do.*

According to Melissa, the attitudes that people have in the U.S. toward speaking Spanish brings feelings of uneasiness when using it in public, which causes lower use of Spanish in common spaces among the four interviewees.

Another reason for wanting to use less Spanish in public is to be inclusive, meaning to help non-Spanish speakers know what is being said around them.

Ricardo: *Oftentimes in different circumstances I speak English to not make people feel uncomfortable. I feel like sometimes I’m expected to speak English on random occasions where I’m sitting there, and I feel like people are uncomfortable with me speaking in*
Spanish. It’s more in public, usually more with strangers. It’s not even with people I know. It’s with people I don’t know, that I don’t want them to think that I’m speaking poorly or negatively about them. I think they’re looking at me because I’m speaking Spanish, and I want to make sure they know that I speak English too.

Ricardo mentioned that for him, it is important to speak English in public among people he does not know to make them aware that he is an English speaker. Hence, for Ricardo and Melissa, the discomfort of speaking Spanish in public is not only related to what others think about Spanish, but also how others perceive them as individuals.

**Societal Preference for the Majority Language.** One interviewee explained that although she is bilingual, it can be intimidating to navigate different settings because she feels more comfortable in Spanish when worshipping.

Mariana: *Because Utah is predominantly LDS, I think the language that most people think about first is English, so I think it makes every other language more submissive like you have to speak English first and really understand English to be able to feel comfortable living in Utah. I grew up Catholic, and we would always go to Spanish mass and that’s what I became familiar with. I remember that for one of my sacraments, they kind of told us “oh you guys have to go to English mass.” And I felt like it was a completely different religion, like I didn’t really understand it. And I didn’t understand the prayers we had to do. Like even though I am a bilingual person, I’ve grown up my whole life just knowing the Spanish version of things, and sometimes understanding the English is just a little bit harder, to like grasp or putting it into my life. So I feel like Utah is kind of like English is the first language you should use, and then, if you want to learn something else or if you know something else, that’s kind of where it trickles down.*
Mariana’s story shows that the linguistic ties that an individual has toward one aspect of life, religion in this case, can make it difficult to navigate the same settings in the other language. For example, even though an individual chooses to worship in the HL, for city or statewide religious congregation meetings at the societal level, the consensus is to use the majority language, English. Thus, language choice in specific contexts is linked to the bilingual speaker’s identity.

**Struggles with Identity.** Two interviewees mentioned that one of the challenges of being a bilingual speaker is not feeling Hispanic enough. Sofia and Alejandra were the only interviewees who said that growing up they did not feel as Hispanic because they did not look like the other Hispanics around them. Sofia and Alejandra are white Hispanic women because their father is from the U.S. and their mother is from northern Spain. As time has passed, Sofia’s view about this issue has turned positive.

*Sofia: As bilingual and bicultural people, we never fit into either category. It’s definitely been a challenge for me, in the last maybe three years, to really take on the label of Hispanic and say “I qualify, I’m good enough, and I’m hispanic because I choose to be.”*

**Current Spanish Usage: Attitudes and Linguistic Experiences**

**Being Understanding Toward Others**

Several interviewees discussed the relevance of Spanish as it currently plays an important role in their lives. One of the determining factors for using more or less Spanish among the interviewees is who they are speaking to. Besides speaking Spanish at work and with family members, two interviewees said they occasionally have opportunities to speak Spanish when addressing people who seem to not feel as comfortable speaking English or have limited English proficiency.
Alejandra: *I feel like if I’m talking to someone that is equally comfortable in both languages, we’ll go to English. But if, for example, I’m talking to someone like Natalia, we always speak in Spanish even when the other day she wanted us to speak English. We tried it, but it was super weird. So, we just switched back to Spanish. It’s weird to speak another language when you have already established one.*

In her experience, Alejandra builds an individual relationship with each person, and the language they speak is intertwined with their initial encounters. Likewise, Alejandra specified that she uses Spanish when speaking or writing to a person who she perceives may struggle to speak English. For the most part, when she chooses to switch to Spanish, the other person switches to Spanish, thus making the conversation smoother.

On the other hand, Melissa, Ricardo, and Manuel named a reason for using less Spanish: to help those around them feel included in the conversation by speaking English. All three individuals described that if they are in a setting where everyone speaks and prefers Spanish, they will also use Spanish. Nonetheless, if at least one person does not speak Spanish, they will use English, as Melissa expounds:

Melissa: *When I’m with my husband’s family, they only speak English, so I try not to speak too much Spanish with my husband because I don’t want to give them the wrong idea or make them think that I’m talking about them or being secretive. But I don’t wanna say I feel really obligated, and I do it more out of respect.*

Melissa is married to a native English speaker who served an LDS mission in McAllen, Texas speaking Spanish, but it seems from what she shared that her parents-in-law do not speak it.
Another factor that contributes to the reported current use of Spanish is religion. As mentioned before, four interviewees, Sofia, Melissa, Mariana, and Carlos shared that since they were young, they have attended a Spanish-speaking congregation. Therefore, religious contexts and interactions are partially or completely carried out in Spanish by these four individuals. Mariana and Carlos shared that they continue to attend Spanish-speaking congregations because that is how they were raised, and they feel more comfortable worshipping in Spanish. For Carlos, going to church in Spanish leads to higher use of Spanish and greater interaction with the Spanish-speaking community:

Carlos: During the week I mostly speak English, and then on the weekends, I speak more Spanish as I hang out with more people or because I go to church and I do attend my Sunday services in Spanish, so then I just use Spanish completely there.

In a similar manner, Melissa and Sofia talked about how praying in Spanish at home has stuck with them as they continue to pray individually in Spanish. This finding is surprising in Sofia, who did not grow up attending a Spanish congregation, except for the occasional times she went to Spain to visit her grandparents. Sofia shared that for her, praying in Spanish makes her feel closer to God because her faith developed in Spanish over the years as she prayed in Spanish at home. Sofia’s remarks differ from her sister Alejandra, who prays in English. For Alejandra, going to an English-speaking congregation means praying in English as is done at church. Now that Alejandra is married, she continues to pray in English with her husband who speaks little Spanish.

It is significant to note that the three interviewees who did not grow up going to a Spanish congregation, did not attend Spanish-speaking congregations at the time of the study.
Also, these three participants mentioned that growing up, they lacked the opportunity to interact with the Spanish-speaking community. This is different from the six interviewees who grew up going to church in Spanish, who also said that they often had many opportunities to connect with other Spanish speakers. Based on their experiences, attending a Spanish congregation increased participants’ use of the heritage language by using it personally for praying and/or reading religious texts and socially by speaking it at the place worship, which is similar to what Fishman (2006) found among Yiddish-speaking Hasidic Jews in New York and Dutch-speaking Amish in Pennsylvania.

**Raising Children**

Two participants mentioned during the interview that now that they are parents, they have noticed a change in their language choice. Although their personal stories are not representative of all the participants in this study, I found it important to include their narratives.

Ricardo is married to a G2 SHL speaker and together they have a two-year-old daughter. During the interview, when asked in what situations he currently uses Spanish, he mentioned that for the most part, he and his wife communicate with each other in English, but both speak to their daughter in Spanish.

Ricardo: *We speak Spanish only and always to Ema, our baby girl. We’re trying to make sure she learns Spanish first because we know we live in the United States, so she’s going to pick up English regardless of what we do[...] This country is a beautiful country because it’s a mix of both because everybody can keep their culture and still be proud of where they come from, but they can be American as well.*

Based on survey and interview data, Ricardo’s primary use of Spanish tends to be when speaking with older adults, especially those who are native Spanish speakers. Besides the four familial
contexts given in the survey (speaking Spanish with mom, dad, maternal grandparents, and paternal grandparents), Ricardo mentioned that he speaks Spanish in a different familial context that was not asked about in the survey: speaking Spanish with his daughter. In the interview, Ricardo mentioned that because he values his bicultural roots, teaching Spanish to his children is a means of keeping those cultural ties.

Alejandra’s case is different from Ricardo’s. At the time of the interview, Alejandra’s son was almost a year old. Alejandra explained that although Spanish is important in her life because it is part of how she was raised and who she is, her language choice leans toward English because most of her current environment is now the English-speaking world. Consequently, she portrays her challenges of wanting to raise her son bilingually:

Alejandra: When he was born, I tried speaking to him in Spanish, and it was just odd. When he came home, and I would try to speak to him in Spanish, it just felt like he was my brother and not my child. I had numerous breakdowns because Spanish, it’s so much part of my identity and part of who I am. But in that moment it felt so wrong, especially because my husband and I will sometimes speak Spanish together, but mostly it’s just English. And it’s kind of become the same thing with my son. I feel a little bit more comfortable speaking to him in Spanish now and reading in Spanish has helped us get more comfortable, but it’s still weird. But if I’m talking to my mom or family in Spanish it’s not weird for me to speak to him in Spanish. It’s just that when it’s the two of us, I just speak to him in English because it’s weird in Spanish. It was something that totally blindsided me. I did not expect that at all, but I think I just associated Spanish so much with growing up and my family growing up, that now that I am forming my own family, it was something that I guess didn’t make the cut as part of what I’m bringing to my family.
He definitely gets exposure to Spanish almost every day, but not to the point of being bilingual, like I only speak to him in Spanish and my husband only speaks to him in English, like it’s not that at all. If he’s not perfectly bilingual, it was an important decision I had to make within myself, of which is more important, a bilingual child or a child that has a good solid relationship with his mother, and in that case, it was a no brainer, and it wasn’t something worth beating myself up over. But it was so weird because I didn’t expect that. How many essays have I written about the importance of speaking your second language to help your child become a heritage speaker and blah blah blah. And then when I’m in the parent situation, I suddenly understood so much better why parents say this is so hard.

Alejandra shows how much she cares about raising a bilingual child in mentioning the many attempts to make it more natural to speak to her son in Spanish. It seems that when she is with her mother, it is more normal to speak Spanish because her mother is a native Spanish speaker who worked hard to raise bilingual children. Alejandra also explained why it is not as natural and easy to use Spanish with her husband and son: If I were a native speaker of Spanish of course that’s what I want to speak to my child, but, as much as I consider Spanish a very important part of me, English is my first language.

Attitudes and Usage Implications in Future Spanish Maintenance

Participants have their unique linguistic background and different opportunities to speak Spanish that impact their current Spanish use and future maintenance. Interviewees shared details about how they choose to use Spanish individually through one or a combination of the following activities: praying and studying sacred works in Spanish, attending Spanish-speaking religious services, speaking Spanish to bilingual Hispanic friends, and consuming Spanish
media, thus leading to more possibilities for preserving Spanish. On the contrary, other interviewees reflect a different situation that could lead to an English shift. For example, Alejandra prefers English and Manuel currently uses Spanish minimally.

Alejandra: *English is my first language. That’s the language I think in and that’s the language, if I had to speak one for the rest of my life, it would be English.*

Manuel: *Most of the time, I speak English. Maybe once or twice a week I speak Spanish with my wife or at least try to, it’s a goal that we have, but basically I speak English 95% of the time.*

Additionally, one key element to identify about the future of Spanish among participants is that the linguistic environment in Utah could provide more opportunities for Spanish to be used and maintained. First, the workplace may allow or encourage participants to speak Spanish as Ricardo describes: *Utah is a really good place for international companies to come recruit.* *There are just so many opportunities here in Utah because we speak a second language.* Second, religious services are essential settings for using Spanish outside the home and connecting with the Hispanic community. Carlos articulated how religion has had a great impact in his Spanish ability and provided more information on how it can bring about more bilingual interactions:

Carlos: *Another huge thing is the Church. It allows people to go on missions, and since they go all around the world, they bring back languages from all around the world. It’s not just necessarily Spanish. And I remember when I was going to school at BYU, like my first two or three weeks, I’d just hear some random languages on campus and I was like ‘wow, that’s really cool that there is just so much linguistic diversity.’ I don’t know if that’s unique to Utah because other places are definitely more ethnically diverse, but religion does play a huge part in why it’s diverse in Utah.*
Speaking in the L2 with peers who served a mission is not the only element that may contribute to the use and maintenance of Spanish. Spanish congregations have a constant influx of Church members from Latin America, so attending these Sunday services provides an additional context in which they can use Spanish and be in contact with native speakers. Thus, the cultural influence of the Church of Jesus Christ can aid in the preservation of Spanish in Utah. As summarized in Table 4, contact with the Hispanic community and past experiences impact current Spanish usage in two participants. Although this comparison is not meant to be generalized, it highlights the common theme found in the survey and interviews: Participants have more opportunities to use Spanish and greater connection with the Hispanic community due to their participation in Spanish-speaking religious congregations.

**Discussion and Implications**

This study analyzed SHL speakers’ use of Spanish in different domains, self-rated Spanish proficiency, and attitudes toward Spanish in the Wasatch Front region in Utah. I also considered how their experiences as bilinguals relate to the previous factors mentioned and their maintenance of Spanish. Concerning research question one about Utah SHL speakers’ use of Spanish, participants in this study reported to primarily use Spanish with older adults—especially with parents and grandparents—who have limited English proficiency. Among peers and family members their age or younger, there is lower Spanish use. It seems that this is not uncommon as a study in Chicago by Potowski (2004) found that participants use Spanish 45% of the time among same-age peers compared to speaking Spanish 75% of the time with parents and older adults in the family. Regarding the extent of their selection of Spanish, participants reported listening to Spanish-language music and attending Spanish-language religious congregations because it connects them to their culture.
Table 4. Comparison between Two Participants’ Background and Use of Spanish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alejandro</th>
<th>Ricardo</th>
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<tr>
<td>Born in Spain and moved at the age of two to the states. Her father’s L1 is English. Did not grow up going to a Spanish congregation. Did not really use Spanish with friends until she was in a high school Spanish class where she met some Hispanics.</td>
<td>Born in the U.S. from Peruvian parents. Grew up going to church in Spanish. Besides family, going to church in Spanish contributed to his current use of Spanish and interaction with the Latino community. Continues to go to Sunday services in Spanish.</td>
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<td>Did not really take the label “Hispanic” growing up because of how she looks and due to not having close contact with the Hispanic community.</td>
<td>Grew up interacting with the Hispanic community. Feels proud of his bicultural identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feels very confident in Spanish and teaches Spanish and Portuguese as a graduate student. What has made her use Spanish less is (1) having been corrected or told by native speakers that her Spanish is not good, (2) lacking the opportunity to interact with the Spanish-speaking community around her, and (3) feeling more confident in English.</td>
<td>Feels very confident in Spanish, and occasionally speaks it at work when he gets a call in Spanish. Nothing has made him speak less Spanish. The only thing he mentioned about his Spanish is that his family in Peru thinks that his accent is kind of Mexican, but no one in Utah has told him that.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses English in most settings, except when speaking to parents, maternal grandparents, and to students she teaches. Now that she is an adult, she is starting to use more English with her dad and siblings, especially because her dad uses English when speaking to and about his grandson.</td>
<td>Uses Spanglish among siblings and speaks Spanish with members in his Sunday congregation, older family members in Utah and extended family in Peru, and some Hispanic friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because she considers English her primary language, she rarely speaks Spanish to her son, but occasionally reads to him in Spanish. In the future, she hopes to find a dual immersion program so her son can learn Spanish in school.</td>
<td>He and his wife speak to his daughter only in Spanish to help her learn it and preserve their Hispanic culture.</td>
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</table>

On the other hand, participants shared several reasons for using less Spanish. The main factor for using less Spanish is the experience of having been corrected or told by native Spanish speakers that their Spanish is not good enough. These results are similar to Anzaldúa’s (2007)
account that SHL speakers do not feel comfortable when speaking Spanish or a Spanish variety as interlocutors often judge their way of speaking, or as Mariana and Sofia shared in their accounts about their accents, SHL speakers at times experience the lack of linguistic purity (Niño-Murcia, 2011). Furthermore, participants mentioned that feeling more confident in English also influences their choice to use Spanish, which is comparable to Lanier’s (2014) findings that participants in Miami chose to use less Spanish because they viewed themselves as less proficient in Spanish when compared to English. Another reason participants reported for using less Spanish is the lack of opportunity to interact with the Spanish-speaking community in Utah. Contrary to what Alba et al. (2002) and Lanier (2014) found that the circumstances exist in Miami to use Spanish seeing it is the language of business, culture, and everyday life because over half of the population is Spanish-speaking, Utah’s Hispanic population of 18.7% shows how a difference in demographics can relate to how much and where Spanish is used. Lastly, few participants expressed choosing to speak English due to negative sentiments toward Spanish or to help non-Spanish speakers around them feel included in the conversation.

In respect to participants’ self-rated Spanish proficiency, the majority of participants has some degree of confidence in their Spanish proficiency, but still perceive themselves as more fluent in English. Participants reported higher rates of confidence (somewhat confident, confident, or very confident) in understanding media, reading, and writing a text message. Nonetheless, survey responses disclosed a lower level of confidence in writing an essay, which could be interpreted as use of formal Spanish. Feeling less confidence in formal use of Spanish is similar to what Carreira and Kagan (2011) found among their participants who had relatively strong listening and oral skills in Spanish but limited literacy skills.
In regards to the relation that participants’ self-rated Spanish proficiency has with their use of Spanish, I concluded that although familial and personal domains have the highest correlation, there are other factors that account for their use of Spanish. The other factors found to contribute to the use of Spanish among participants are having been raised speaking Spanish, having a parent whose native language is English, worshipping in Spanish (praying, reading religious texts, and/or attending a Spanish-speaking congregation), and having the opportunity to speak Spanish at work.

Regarding research question three about the participants’ feelings and attitudes toward Spanish, their feelings toward Spanish are overall positive because (a) it connects them to their family and culture, (b) it is useful at work, and (c) it provides opportunities to serve their community. Claiming Spanish to be important because it helps them to communicate with their families has also been found to be relevant among SHL speakers in Arizona (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005), Texas (Mejías et al., 2003), and Indiana (Barbosa, 2015). Moreover, similar to what Carreira and Kagan (2011) concluded that 71.1% of Spanish speakers said they were studying their HL with a future career in mind, Melissa and Sofia mentioned studying Spanish in college as part of their career preparation to serve the Spanish-speaking community.

Essentially, these positive feelings toward Spanish account for the current use of Spanish among participants. Although most participants reported having positive attitudes toward Spanish because they believe it is important to preserve Spanish and Spanish makes them feel good, these perceptions do not align with a high use of Spanish across all domains (familial, social, professional, personal, and educational). As research has demonstrated (Kuncha & Bathula, 2004), having positive feelings toward the HL does not imply higher usage because many participants in this study only use Spanish in familial, professional, and/or worship
contexts with older adults. Findings reflect what has frequently been reported in other studies: SHL speakers tend to hold positive attitudes toward Spanish, but almost all of them shift to English by the third generation (e.g., Potowski, 2004; Rivera-Mills, 2001; Zentella, 1997).

Based on participants’ current use of Spanish, I inferred that some participants may maintain Spanish while others will shift to English. If the interviewees do not use Spanish in other settings outside of familial contexts, because they choose not to use it or do not have the opportunity to do so, their limited use of Spanish could mean a decrease or loss of Spanish 1) individually and 2) intergenerationally in the family. For example, from Ricardo and Alejandra’s stories, I concluded that raising children can possibly be an additional context for using Spanish, thus aiding in language maintenance individually and intergenerationally.

Spanish language maintenance depends on many factors (e.g., identity, experience growing up, family linguistic demographics, etc) that influence an SHL speaker’s language choice with others. As Jenkins (2018) declares, the domain and the prescribed interlocutor (with whom the language is used) are factors that may predict retention or loss of the HL. Therefore, participants who only or mostly speak Spanish in family-related domains will lose Spanish when parents and grandparents pass away. Nevertheless, participants who besides speaking Spanish with family also use it in other domains—like those who reported to use it at work, for practicing their religion, and for personal activities—may maintain Spanish as employment and religion are among the social aspects that Grosjean (1982) listed that contribute to maintenance.

Limitations and Directions for Future Studies

Some limitations in this study are the small sample size and the social homogeneity of participants in terms of occupation and age. Nonetheless, the study’s objective is not to be statistically representative of all G2 SHL speakers in Utah, but rather, to help establish research
in language maintenance in a state that has experienced a relative increase in its Hispanic population. A further limitation is that I asked specific questions in the interviews to address the topics I was examining, and this may have prevented interviewees from sharing more details important to their linguistic experience if those details went beyond the scope of my questions. A final limitation was that all the interviewees were to some extent proficient in Spanish because those who responded to participate in the interview process also happened to speak Spanish. Thus, including heritage speakers who have no Spanish proficiency can show how different or similar their bicultural experiences and language attitudes toward preserving Spanish and hearing Spanish around them are when compared to individuals who are more proficient in Spanish. Future studies in Utah may also want to recruit more participants and other generations to compare responses among generations. Lastly, because none of the interviewees participated in a DLI program, future research that examines language maintenance in Utah may consider this educational context to measure how it relates to Spanish proficiency, use, and attitudes.

Conclusion

This study adds to the field of language maintenance by highlighting some of the factors related to a reported avoidance of using Spanish: 1) native Spanish speakers’ comments that the Spanish of SHL speakers is not good enough or comments that correct their speech, 2) lack of connection with the Spanish-speaking community, and 3) feeling more confident in English. On the other hand, participants reported that contact with the Spanish-speaking community and participation in Spanish-speaking congregations increases use of Spanish and helps maintain Spanish by providing additional domains to use the language and be in contact with native Spanish speakers. Spanish-language preservation in Utah may benefit from the unique bilingual atmosphere that exists in the state due to the cultural influence that the Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints has in the acquisition and use of an L2 and the objective the state government has to bring about a multilingual workforce through DLI education. As further studies continue to examine Spanish use, attitudes, and other sociolinguistic components in newer U.S. areas such as the Northwest, research can shed light on the unique factors and complexities that attribute to Spanish language maintenance.


Appendix A
Language Attitudes and Language Usage Survey

1. Gender
   - Male
   - Female
   - Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?

3. Where were you born?
   Display This Question: If a Spanish-speaking country is selected
   Q3A How old were you when your family moved to the U.S.?

4. If you learned Spanish at home, briefly describe how (e.g., my mom spoke Spanish to me).

5. Have you formally studied Spanish in school?
   - Yes
   - No

Display This Question: If Q5 = Yes
   Q5A In which of the following settings have you studied Spanish? Check all those that apply.
   - School in a Spanish-speaking country
   - Elementary
   - Junior high/Middle school
   - High school
   - College
   - Study abroad program

6. What is your mother’s first language?
   - Spanish
   - English
   - Both English and Spanish

7. What is your mother’s ethnicity? Check all that apply.
   - Hispanic
   - Black/African
   - Caucasian
   - Asian
   - Native American
   - Pacific Islander

8. What is your father’s first language?
   - Spanish
   - English
   - Both English and Spanish
9. What is your father’s ethnicity? Check all that apply.
   - Hispanic
   - Black/African
   - Caucasian
   - Asian
   - Native American
   - Pacific Islander

10. Which language(s) did you understand first?
   - English
   - Spanish
   - Both English and Spanish at the same time

11. Which language(s) did you speak first?
   - English
   - Spanish
   - Both English and Spanish at the same time

### Question 12 - To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Very strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English is the language of educated people in the U.S.</td>
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<td>English should be the official language of the U.S.</td>
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<td>English proficiency is important to have success in this country.</td>
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<td>I feel more comfortable speaking English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t need to speak Spanish to have success in my career.</td>
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<td>Spanish makes me feel good about myself.</td>
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</table>
We should work hard to save the Spanish language.

As all Hispanics speak English, it is a waste of time to keep up with Spanish.

**Question 13 - Please share your experience by answering the questions below.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing up, I was told by my parents to speak Spanish to maintain my culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was told by my parents not to speak Spanish to avoid being seen as less educated.</td>
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<td>I was told by my parents not to speak Spanish to avoid racial discrimination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was told by my parents to speak Spanish to have a better job in the future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was told by my parents to only speak English to become successful in this country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing up, I spoke English at home because my parents wanted me to help them learn it.</td>
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**Question 14 - Within the last year to now, indicate what percentage (scale from 1-100) of the time you spend for the following activities.**

Select "Not Applicable" if your circumstances do not allow for certain activities. For example, if you don't speak Spanish to your grandparents because they passed away, select N/A.
I speak Spanish with my mom.
I speak Spanish with my dad.
I speak Spanish with my maternal grandparents.
I speak Spanish with my paternal grandparents.
I speak Spanish with my siblings.
When I watch TV and/or movies, I watch it in Spanish.
When I listen to music, I listen to it in Spanish.
I speak primarily Spanish to Hispanic friends who know both English and Spanish.
I attend a Spanish church service.
I speak Spanish at work.
When I read, I read Spanish publications (newspapers, books, magazines).
I think in Spanish this percent of the time.
I count in English.
I speak English to my parents when I want them to do me a favor.
I speak English to them when I want my grandparents to do me a favor.

15. Has anything made you want to use Spanish less? Select all that apply.
   ○ You have been corrected or told by native Spanish speakers that your Spanish is not good
   ○ You believe that Spanish is inferior to English
   ○ Some citizens in this country have expressed negative feelings toward the use of Spanish
   ○ You feel more confident speaking English
   ○ Low Spanish ability
   ○ Lack of opportunity to interact with the Spanish-speaking community around you
   ○ Other reason

16. If I came across a Hispanic-looking individual for the first time, I would speak to her/him in Spanish if the person were (select all that apply)
   18. My age or younger
   19. A child
   20. Older than me
   21. An employee at a store/restaurant
   22. A teacher
   23. Someone on the street wearing a suit
   24. Someone on the street wearing jeans and a T-shirt
   25. I would not speak to them in Spanish

Question 17 - Level of confidence in Spanish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all confident</th>
<th>Not very confident</th>
<th>Somewhat confident</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Very confident</th>
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<tr>
<td>I understand Spanish media (TV shows, movies, music, memes, social media posts, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can read in Spanish (The Bible, news, books, magazines, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can write a text message in Spanish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can write an essay in Spanish.</td>
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18. Concerning your present ability as a bilingual speaker do you consider yourself to be:
   - Much more fluent in English than Spanish.
   - Somewhat more fluent in English.
   - About equal ability in Spanish and in English.
   - Somewhat more fluent in Spanish.
   - Much more fluent in Spanish than English.

19. Would you like to be considered for a 30-minute interview to provide more detailed insights regarding Spanish usage and language attitudes in your family?
   Display This Question: If Q19 = Yes
      Q19A Please provide your name
      Q19B Please provide an email address
Appendix B
Interview Questions

1. In what situations during a weekday do you use Spanish? How about the weekend? Also, are there other less regular occasions where you use Spanish such as family gatherings and holidays?

2. Do you ever feel uncomfortable or lack confidence in your ability to speak Spanish? If you answer "Yes", please specify and explain why, when, where, and with whom.

3. Are there times when you are expected to speak only Spanish or only English? If you answered "Yes", please specify and explain why, when, where, and with whom.

4. For what purposes is Spanish important in your life and why? And for what purposes is one of the languages more important than the other to you?

5. How does religion make Utah a unique place for languages?

6. How does the growth of Utah’s Dual Language Immersion program contribute to this uniqueness?