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The Connection Between Linguistic Insecurity and Cultural Identity
in Spanish Heritage Language Learners

Sara Nicole Gardner

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

The Connection Between Linguistic Insecurity and Cultural Identity in Spanish Heritage Language Learners

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The United States is a host to several ethnicities that bring both their own languages and their own culture to an already large mixing pot. The children of the immigrants who grow up learning both English and their families' heritage language are called heritage language learners (HLLs).

The first objective of the study was to find out whether foreign language anxiety had a relationship with reading and writing in Spanish for HLLs in high school. The second was to ascertain whether perception of ethnic identity also had a relationship with reading and writing in Spanish for heritage language learners in high school. Most studies have found that both foreign language anxiety and perception of ethnic identity has a connection with reading and writing in their heritage language (HL). A majority of the research, however, focuses on these students and their challenges while at the university level. As studies concerning high school students are rare, it is important to focus on a younger group of participants in order to understand their unique cultural and linguistic needs and implement strategies to help Spanish HLLs succeed.

For this particular set of students, it is possible that ethnic identity and writing have a positive relationship. However, ethnic identity did not have a strong relationship with reading. Foreign language anxiety did not have much of a connection between either reading or writing.

Keywords: heritage language learner, ethnic identity, foreign language anxiety, language proficiency

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd first like to thank my wonderful parents. They have been immensely supportive and have been there for me every step of the way. I know that without them, I would not have made it this far. I would like to also thank the rest of my family for being cheerleaders and for their encouragement.

Next, a special thanks goes to my chair Dr. Gregory L. Thompson, and my committee Dr. Nieves Knapp and Dr. Rob A. Martinsen. I'm eternally grateful for their knowledge, examples, and their teachings that they have shared with me. I will take what I've learned from them with me for the rest of my life.

Lastly, I'd like to give thanks for my friend and fellow member of my cohort, Breanna Jones. I know without her support and constant willingness to help me out, my experience in grad school would have been much more difficult and I am happy that we were able to experience this journey together.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Many consider the United States a monolingual region, but the reality is that the US is a very multilingual country. In fact, more than 60 million US residents (21.9%) have reported that they speak a language other than English at home (Zeigler & Camarota, 2019). According to the US census, more than 40 million residents, 18.9% of the population, (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021) speak Spanish and “there are now more people who speak Spanish at home in the United States than in any country in Latin America with the exception of Mexico, Colombia, and Argentina” (Zeigler & Camarota, 2019, p. 2). Many of those who speak Spanish in the United States are considered heritage speakers (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003).

A heritage language (HL) is a language other than the majority dialect of a community acquired in the home rather than in a foreign language classroom (Kondo-Brown, 2003). People who speak a HL are primarily called heritage speakers. One of the most common HLs in the United States is Spanish, as 41.5 million US residents speak it at home (Zeigler & Camarota, 2019). Those taking a Spanish class learning their HL, however, are called heritage language learners (HLLs). HLLs are defined as students who “may speak or merely understand the heritage language and be, to some degree, bilingual in English and the heritage language” (Valdés, 2005, p. 412).

Relevance and Importance

Much research has been done about students learning Spanish for the first time (L2) with foreign language anxiety (FLA) (Al-Shboul et al., 2013; Dolean, 2016; Horwitz, 2011; Torres & Turner, 2016), but few have delved into specifically looking at the factors that cause heritage language anxiety (HLA) (González Darriba et al., 2021; Prada et al., 2020; Tallon, 2011). While some HLLs’ proficiency in speaking and listening is high, many lack literacy skills due to having

no formal education in the language and may be especially anxious about their inability to read and write in their HL (Kagan & Dillon, 2008; Montrul, 2008; Prada et al., 2020; Tallon, 2009, 2011; Torres et al, 2018; Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003). Some research has also been done into the reasons behind this anxiety that HLLs have in regard to Spanish. First, Prada (2020) states that HLLs' anxiety is connected to their lack of proficiency in their HL. Furthermore, he plainly describes the main difference between the two types of anxiety (FLA and HLA) in the classroom, explaining that HLA incorporates "a history of instances of linguistic shaming, bullying, oppression and stigma" and therefore results from "internalized pressures [HLLs] are exposed to in their day-to-day experiences" (p. 96). They also feel that they are not fully accepted by the American culture nor by their families (Carreira & Chik, 2014). Expounding on this, Beaudrie (2009) states that "Spanish has been criminalized in the USA and continues to be associated with negative attributes by the population at large" (p. 158). Furthermore, many HLLs face "dialectal prejudices from other speakers of Spanish," which leads to "high levels of linguistic insecurity" (Beaudrie et al., 2009, p. 158), and so feel discrimination from both sides. Consequently, HLLs have different obstacles that cause their anxiety when using their HL and require different strategies to help support them in their journey to gaining proficiency in Spanish (Beaudrie, 2005; Carreira, 2004; Prada et al., 2020; Randolph, 2017; Shin, 2013).

Additionally, HLLs face many challenges within the public school system. Some students do not feel motivation to learn the language due to bad relationships with their instructors and that said instructors do not respect their culture as HLLs (Helmer, 2020; Lee & Oxelson, 2010; Park, 2013; Randolph, 2017; Shin, 2013). Teachers also lack the skillset to adequately meet HLLs' linguistic needs within the classroom and can sometimes foster negative attitudes towards helping HLLs' maintain their HL (Carreira, 2004; Randolph, 2017). There are also alarmingly

high rates of dropouts amongst this population; in fact, Goulette (2020) reveals that “although Latino youth dropout rates have declined considerably in recent years (from 21.0% in 2006 to 8.2% in 2017...) these rates are still disproportionately high when compared to other racial/ethnic groups” (p. 66). The reasons for the high dropout rates amongst this population can be attributed to this: “as school populations become increasingly linguistically diverse, refusing to acknowledge the language resources of students and their families limits the possibilities for their educational achievement” (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 240). Conversely, researchers have found that those who wanted to be connected to their HL and heritage culture succeeded more in academics than those who were not interested in doing the same (Carreira & Chik, 2014; Duran-Cérda, 2008; Lee & Oxelson; Oh & Au, 2005; Park, 2013). As a final note, more studies have focused on HLL students in their years during college (Gasca Jiménez & Adrada-Rafael, 2021; Kondo-Brown, 2003; Leeman et al., 2011; Oh & Au, 2008; Sánchez-Muñoz, 2013) rather than their formative years in high school (Helmer, 2020; Randolph, 2017). It is essential, then, that more research be done in this area so that teachers are equipped with the right tools to help HLLs succeed not only in developing better proficiency in their HL, but also in their education and future careers.

Research Questions

This present study investigates HLLs in high school and their proficiency in reading and writing in Spanish. The first objective of this study is to determine if FLA has a correlation with reading and writing scores in their HL. The second is to see if HLLs’ thoughts about their cultural identity have a relationship with reading and writing. Through my study, I plan to answer to the following questions:

1. What is the relationship, if any, between language proficiency in reading and writing and foreign language anxiety for HLL students in high school?
2. What is the relationship, if any, between ethnic identity and language proficiency in reading and writing for HLL students in high school?

Thesis Overview

Following this introduction of the thesis is my review of the literature in Chapter 2. Within this review, I will examine the role cultural identity plays in HLLs' journey to improving their linguistic competency, how HLA impacts HLLs specifically regarding reading and writing proficiency, as well as the current proficiency levels that the majority of HLLs possess at this time in high schools in the United States. In the last section of the review, I will discuss both HLLs' challenges with reading and writing in their HL and what studies have found to combat these difficulties. Chapter 3 presents the methodology for the study, which will include a brief description of the participants, an overview of the instruments to be used, the procedures to be implemented, as well as information on data analysis. Next, I will offer the results of the statistical analysis of the data, as well as the reports on the statistical significance in Chapter 4. In conclusion, the discussion of the results, the implications of the research, limitations, and suggestions for further research will be presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Cultural Identity

There are many factors that influence one's sense of self including but are not limited to different family circumstances, where one grows up, and what language is spoken in the home. Val and Vinogradova (2010) described identity as one's "relationship to the world, how this relationship is constructed in time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 1). To have an identity is to know who one is and to know who one can become, to know where one belongs (Torres & Turner, 2017). What, then, does having a sense of cultural identity have to do with HLLs?

Multiple studies have shown that the knowledge of one's cultural identity impacts one's way of life and the same holds true for HLLs (Carreira & Chik, 2014; Duran-Cérda, 2008; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Oh & Au, 2005).

It has been proven that students from first- and second-generation immigrant families who maintain their culture, language and ethnic identity demonstrate pride in their distinct heritage, foster good communication within their ethnic community and are more likely to thrive in mainstream school and society in the United States (Durán-Cerda, 2008, p. 42).

HLLs who engage in the HL at home, participate in cultural activities outside the classroom and work on maintaining their ethnic identity also tend to show higher Spanish-language proficiency within the classroom (Durán-Cerda, 2008; Oh & Au, 2005). Many researchers have found this to be the case, and there are three main reasons as to why HLLs want to study their HL. First, they wish to gain a better understanding of themselves through both their cultural and linguistic heritage. Second, they want to have conversations with their loved ones who also communicate

in that language. Third, in many cases HLLs need to take a language class to graduate (Carreira & Chik, 2014; Regulez & Montrul, 2023; Tallon, 2011). In this sense, understanding cultural identity is not important to just the instructor of these students, but also to the students themselves.

Numerous studies have shown how students' cultural identities can influence their motivation in the classroom. Helmer (2020) observed a group of Mexican HLLs studying in a HL classroom who exhibited little to no motivation to study Spanish within the course. The course was taught by a non-native speaker of Spanish, and because the students felt that their teacher was both insecure and did not respect their cultural identity, motivation was squandered, and they felt the class was a waste of time. In contrast, Reitz (2014) noted that the cultural identity of a group of people in New Zealand wanting to learn their HL impacted their motivation in a positive way. However, unlike the high school students mentioned in Helmer's study, the students attempting to learn their HL were adults, and therefore "did not have peer pressure, as well as the need to fit in with their peers like many adolescents and young adults that are college-aged do, which may have aided in their motivation" (Reitz, 2014, p. 14). Therefore, Reitz concluded that many factors influence motivation, including age and generation, how often they use the HL, and how HLLs "identify themselves within the heritage culture" (p. 14).

Another study mentioned the negative aspect of HLLs being stuck between two cultures. Carreira and Chik (2014) surveyed a student who stated that:

In school, I was labeled Mexican, but to the Mexicans, I am an American. I am part of each, but not fully accepted by either. In high school, I was considered Mexican because I spoke Spanish, but I was considered 'Pocho' by my Dad's family because my Spanish was not up to their standard" (para. 5).

Other studies have corroborated that Hispanic HLLs sometimes do not wish to use their HL because there is a “social stigma attached to their Spanish” and in turn deteriorates “their view of themselves as Spanish speakers” (Regulez & Montrul, 2023, p. 3). It can also be difficult for students to maintain the HL due to the desire of climbing up socially as they learn the majority language in the United States, English. Due to this, as well as facing criticism from native Spanish speakers about their language abilities, the level HL spoken becomes increasingly scarcer throughout each generation of the family (Ferreira et al., 2016; Krashen, 1998; Proctor et al., 2010). It is important to note as well that when immigrants move to another country with a differing dominant language than their own, the immigrants are expected to learn the target language of that particular country, which can lead to attrition of the HL (Ferreira et al., 2016).

Heritage Language Anxiety

In the past, FLA used to only be connected to fear of communication, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation; however, recent studies have shown that more factors come into play, such as individual differences and learner-external factors (Prada et al, 2020; Tallon, 2009, 2011). Some examples of individual differences include whether Spanish HLLs grew up speaking and/or listening to the HL in the home, when they first began learning the HL as well as the majority language, if they lived in a Spanish speaking country for part of their lives, and their socio-economic status (SES) (Paradis, 2023). Learner-external factors, on the other hand, would include differences found in the classroom, such as the foreign language (FL) teacher themselves, the amount of the FL used by the teacher, positive relationships with the instructor, time spent speaking the FL in the classroom, and their standing with their peers (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018). Many studies have looked at how FLA affects foreign language learners (Cubukcu, 2008; Kráľová & Sorádová, 2015; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009; Sellers, 2000) and

several have also delved into the topic of HLLs' language anxiety (Prada et al., 2020; Tallon, 2009; 2011; Torres et al., 2018; Torres & Turner, 2015).

Heritage language anxiety (HLA) could be defined as a “specific type of anxiety linked to the negative feelings of physical or emotional discomfort experienced in connection with using the HL” (Prada et al., 2020, p. 96). Some studies found that most HLLs did not feel nervous about their speaking and listening skills (Jensen & Llosa, 2007; Prada et al., 2020; Tallon, 2009, 2011), while others reported that HLLs felt inadequate in these areas (Krashen, 1998; Torres & Turner, 2017). One student wrote that:

My self-esteem reached an all-time low in college. Several of my peers made well-meaning, but harsh comments upon hearing my Spanish. This was the final blow. It was then I made the decision that I wouldn't speak unless I could speak fluently, grammatically correct, and with a proper native accent. I couldn't even feel comfortable describing myself as bilingual on my resume. I had to add “limited proficiency” in parentheses to ease my conscience...I was ashamed of being Puerto Rican and living in a bilingual home and never learning Spanish...the only conclusion I could come to was that it was somehow my fault... (Krashen, 1998, p. 43).

Even more common than anxiety concerning their speaking and listening abilities was a lack of confidence in writing and reading literacy. However, literacy is more than just being able to read and write. It is also “to use these skills in socially appropriate situations, within appropriate registers, and is acquired in the social situations in which the individual uses language” (Chevalier, 2005, p. 29). Because of this, many HLLs are aware of their own inadequacies in their HL and wish to improve their abilities in the language, especially in reading and writing (Jensen, 2007 & Llosa; Mrak 2020; Said-Mohand, 2011). Said-Mohand (2011) further

extrapolates on this topic by comparing the differences between their abilities to use academic English language in both written and oral avenues and their inability to do so in Spanish. The reason for this is that “their Spanish language repertoire has been acquired mainly through interaction with family and friends. Therefore, when HL students tend to write essays or deliver class presentations, their Spanish morphosyntactic, lexical, and semi-pragmatic choices are likely to echo their ‘informal’ register” (p. 95).

Torres (2018) looked specifically at college-level HLLs who struggled with their writing and reading skills, which in turn impacted their self-esteem concerning their cultural identity and linguistic skills overall. Their grammar in writing tended to reflect how they spoke but would not necessarily have been considered grammatically correct according to written norms. Thus, this lack of understanding of formal Spanish could be a high source of anxiety and could then impact their self-efficacy with regards to their writing skills. One student in her study noted that “sometimes I notice myself like stuttering and taking a little bit longer to say things especially in writing because it causes more anxiety than reading aloud” (p. 93). Because HLLs do not grow up learning how to write and read their HL like they do in English, it also further impairs them and makes them believe that they are not capable of succeeding in writing (Tallon, 2009; Torres, 2018; Torres & Turner, 2017).

Heritage Language Proficiency

The concept of language proficiency first began to be seriously considered in the 1970s, as researchers started to realize the importance of communication in the assessments of their students (Harsch, 2017). Following this, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) worked together to create proficiency guidelines in language classrooms across the United States. These proficiency guidelines (known as ACTFL Proficiency

Guidelines) are still used by language teachers today to assess their students in four categories: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Stansfield, 1992). The working definition of *language proficiency* that ACTFL used to base their guidelines off is that a student can apply their communicative abilities, knowledge systems and skills in real world situations (Harsch, 2017).

For many years, the research has focused solely on foreign language proficiency for L2s (East & Scott, 2011; Faez & Karas, 2017; Harsch, 2017; Jaekel et al., 2022; Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008). Though the term *heritage language* was first coined in Canada in 1977, “it was not until the late 1990s that American scholars began using the term in the context of language policy” (Cummins, 2005, p. 585). While unfortunate, it is also true that there have been challenges regarding HL education due to xenophobia and negative attitudes towards immigration and bilingual education, further hindering effective instruction of HLLs (Carreira, 2004; Cummins, 2005; Kung, 2013; Randolph Jr., 2017).

Most instructors have extensive knowledge on how to train L2s in a foreign language. However, HLLs are typically stuck in L2 classrooms with instructors who are not equipped with the tools to either teach to this specific group of students or to a mixed classroom of both L2s and HLLs (Burgo, 2018; Randolph Jr., 2017). Furthermore, this group of students is very heterogenous and each HLL is unique. The variability of language proficiency amongst this group comes from not only differing linguistic backgrounds, but also social and economic upbringings (Fairclough, 2012; Said-Mohand, 2011). Therefore, not only do teachers need to be able to have the ability to use different teaching methodologies within the same classroom, but also need to learn how to be accepting and flexible when it comes to teaching HLLs (Lee & Oxelson, 2010; Randolph Jr., 2017).

Regrettably, personal biases and negative attitudes towards HLLs have affected the instructors at times, where they take a prescriptive approach to teaching the HL to HLLs of various backgrounds and dialects. In doing this, they alienate HLLs who want to improve their proficiency in the HL (Lee & Oxelson, 2010; Randolph Jr., 2017). At times, “we are faced with the bizarre scenario of schools successfully transforming fluent speakers of foreign languages into monolingual English speakers, at the same time as they struggle, largely unsuccessfully, to transform English monolingual students into foreign language speakers” (Cummins, 2005, p. 586).

This is why it is so important for more research to be done in this area. Teachers have a huge influence on students’ motivation and achievement in school. When the students had ineffective teachers, their academic achievements are much lower than that of students who have highly effective instructors (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In much the same way, HL maintenance for HLLs can be heavily attributed to teachers (Corson, 2001)

The way to assess and improve HLLs’ language proficiency is different than an L2’s foreign language proficiency. Fairclough (2012) states that

the two groups differ in many aspects, including the pace of their grammatical development in the classroom, the domains in which they tend to make mistakes (i.e., oral versus written), the type of knowledge they tend to tap into when assigned a task (i.e., implicit versus metalinguistic knowledge), the type of classroom instruction that benefits them the most (i.e., explicit versus *input processing*), etc. (p. 122)

In spite of the challenges, most researchers agree that it is worth it to help HLLs to gain greater proficiency in their HL. In fact, they numerate several benefits for an HLL maintaining or learning their HL. These benefits can include the development of one’s ethnic identity, the

strengthening of family relationships, the ability for HLLs to become language translators for their parents, the capability to achieve higher academically, and being recognized in the global marketplace where bilingualism is an important skill to have (Jensen & Llosa, 2007; Lee & Oxelson, 2010; Park et al, 2012; Yu, 2015). Conversely, there are many negative consequences to when a HLL loses their HL. The loss of HL proficiency “not only diminishes the potential to experience and see the world from different perspectives, but also leads to breakdowns in communication with family members, alienation from ethnic community networks and lower self-esteem” (Lee & Oxelson, 2010, p. 455). It is also noteworthy that those who do not have the opportunity to develop in both their HL and the host language (for the US, English) tend to have higher dropout rates (Goulette, 2020; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Lee & Oxelson, 2010). Considering the evidence for the benefits of maintaining the HL language, it is therefore imperative to increase our knowledge concerning HLLs and how to help them improve proficiency in their HL.

HLLs in Literacy Skills

Learning to read in any language is a complex process and perhaps one of the most important skills to develop in order to succeed (Velásquez, 2016). In fact, developing a higher reading proficiency in the HL can also improve literacy in English, as they can apply reading strategies to both languages and help them see the nuances that connect both languages (Proctor et al., 2010). However, despite possible difficulties in literacy, HLLs come into classrooms with better speaking and listening skills and inferior literacy skills because of the lack of formal instruction in their HL (Regulez & Montrul, 2023; Velásquez, 2020).

The studies focusing on HLLs learning to read in their HL are scarce and there are more studies that tend to focus on students learning to read in Spanish as a foreign language (Markham

& Peter, 2003; Sellers, 2000; Sparks et al., 2018). However, the studies that have focused on HLLs and reading mention several challenges they face, as well as ways to overcome these difficulties. Velásquez (2016) notes that these particular factors are essential to HLLs in their pursuit of reading in their HL:

a) grammar knowledge, b) previous cultural as well as topic knowledge, c) the effective use of reading strategies such as the inference of meanings, d) personal skills to process information, e) personal motivation, and also f) the reader's ability to engage with the text, among others. However, while these factors are all very important in determining comprehension, it is the understanding of the vocabulary that has shown to have the greatest impact... (pp. 61-62)

At the conclusion of her study, Velásquez (2016) noted that if teachers focused on expanding students' vocabulary and their "acquisition of certain high-frequency words" (p. 70), their reading comprehension would improve drastically.

As said previously, the primary concern of HLLs with the language seems to be more about their literacy skills rather than their oral skills in the language (Burgo, 2020; Mrak, 2020; Tallon, 2009; Torres, 2018; Torres & Turner, 2017). Not only are students desiring to obtain these skills, but universities also wish to focus on helping HLLs develop their reading and writing in the HL so that these students can have better academic and economic opportunities in their future (Jensen & Llosa, 2007; Velásquez, 2020).

In her study, Jensen (2007) noted that in spite of students' high interest in learning to read texts at the college level, they do not read many materials in their HL. She mentioned that a possible reason for this phenomenon was that HLL perceived themselves as slow readers due to their lack of transference of literacy skills in English to their HL. When students feel that the

process of learning reading comprehension in the HL is slow or inefficient, their motivation to read decreases and, consequently, they do not practice reading and their reading fluency decreases. In contrast, if students successfully comprehend the texts, this creates a virtuous cycle that increases the students' motivation to read and improve their literacy skills in that area (Jensen & Llosa, 2007).

Another challenge that HLLs face is that of having a lower socioeconomic status (SES). Some of these students do not have as much access to printed materials, as their families may not be able to afford to buy books in the HL. This in turn affects their proficiency in reading, as they do not have instruction at home (Proctor et al., 2010). The circumstances at home for HLLs plays a big role in obtaining proficiency, as well as when they start learning the majority language (English in the United States). Hayakawa (2022) found that “children who acquire the majority language simultaneously or soon after the heritage language (e.g., before the age of 3) often score lower on tests of HL vocabulary relative to children who spent more time learning the heritage language before acquiring the majority language)” (p. 2). It is also interesting to note that while students do have a tougher time reading than they do writing or listening in Spanish, they tend to read better than they write in the HL (Hayakawa et al., 2022).

Writing can also be a powerful tool to be able to express one's identity and share one's voice with the world (Burgo, 2020). Because of the HLLs' unique situation in growing up, most tend to have better speaking and listening skills rather than writing (Mikulski & Elola, 2011; Mrak, 2020). Mikulski (2011) said that while the studies on HLLs' learning to write in Spanish are scarce, some have found that several problems need to be addressed, such as: “the lack of writing strategies, the tendency to focus primarily on surface editing, limited vocabulary, the tendency to paraphrase, and lack of confidence in linguistic abilities” (p. 718).

This does not mean that HLLs do not know how to write at all in Spanish. Indeed, it has been found that HLLs' writing tends to reflect how they speak in the home (Burgo, 2020; Elola, 2017). In spite of the fact that many HLLs do not feel confident in this ability, they do tend to perform better than L2 learners (learners who learn Spanish, or any other language, as a second language) in writing when instructed by teachers.

Interestingly, Burgo (2016) found through her studies that helping the students connect with their families and their stories about immigration facilitated the increase of their ability to analyze data, contextualize history, summarize information, and understand historical events better. Not only that, as the students were learning about these stories directly from their families, their motivation and excitement about the project increased.

In a similar vein, Mrak (2020) found that these students need a writing prompt that connects to their personal experiences growing up in the culture and speaking the minority language. This is because “they focus on their experiences and emotions work as a springboard to allow them to think about their language identity” (p. 85). She continued by saying that these students needed the ability to make choices about the language they use as they write, as well as using topics that interested them. Her suggestion to teachers was to create an environment where students are allowed to both make informed decisions and create their own choices. Ruiz (1997) put it this way: “teachers do not empower or disempower anyone, nor do schools. They merely create the conditions under which people can *empower themselves*, or not” (p. 323, emphasis in the original).

Conclusion

Many studies examined the challenges of motivation and engagement for HLLs (Flores-Whitinger, 2021; Helmer, 2020; Oh & Nash, 2014) while Torres (2018) looked at how anxiety

impeded the self-efficacy in the skill of writing in the target language. Tallon (2009, 2011) also examined the anxiety levels of HLLs, but also included scores in all parts of the language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Most researchers tend to agree that HLLs' oral and aural skills tend to be higher than their literacy skills (Camus & Adrada-Rafael, 2015; Jensen & Llosa, 2007; Tallon, 2009; Torres, 2018; Torres & Turner, 2017). Many studies concluded that high proficiency in the HL benefited HLLs in many ways; inversely, they also found that the loss of the HL had several negative consequences (Lee & Oxelson, 2010; Park et al., 2012; Yu, 2015).

A large portion of the studies focused heavily on cultural identity and its effects on HLLs in the HL classroom, as well as cultural instruction. Two studies examined in depth certain writing strategies that could be helpful for HLLs, which mainly included helping students connect both to their family and their culture (Burgo, 2016; Mrak 2020). However, much more research is still needed as this area of study is new and developing. HLLs are a unique group of learners who have a specific set of needs that are not being met at the current moment; therefore, studying the cultural identity of HLLs and how it impacts language proficiency is needed, as well as how foreign language anxiety impacts reading and writing ability in Spanish.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

Since my study focused on Spanish HLLs and whether foreign language anxiety and/or perception of cultural identity had a relationship with HLLs' language proficiency in high school, I looked for a high school Spanish classroom that contained a majority of students that either spoke Spanish as their first language or had family that spoke Spanish at home. I contacted an instructor at Springville High School to request permission to speak to his students. After he granted his consent, I spoke with the students about my study; however, only 5 students returned with permission slips signed by their parents. Following this, I then contacted a different instructor at Maple Mountain High School, who also gave me permission to talk with his students about my study. From his classes, I gained another 10 participants.

The participants were HLLs aged 15 to 18 years of age. I selected these participants based on their Hispanic ethnicity and the fact that they were in high school. There were originally 16 participants; however, one student's results had to be thrown out because they did not take the AAPPL reading and writing exams. Therefore, in total, there were 15 students who participated in the study, of which 10 were male and 5 were female. Furthermore, 10 of these students were from Maple Mountain High School and 5 of these students were from Springville High School. From Maple Mountain High School, four identified as Mexican. Three were Peruvians, one Chilean and one Venezuelan. One identified as both Mexican and Peruvian. From Springville High School, three identified as Mexican, one as Chilean and the other as Dominican.

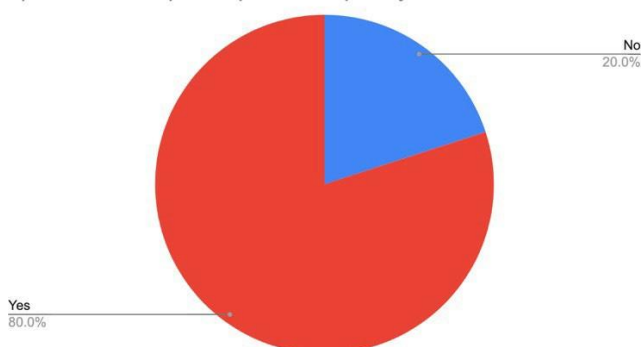
The following information comes from their answers to the survey, Survey of Language Usage (see Appendix B). Most students said that they spoke Spanish inside their homes (see

Figure 1). In fact, 13 of the 15 participants agreed that they spoke Spanish as a youth with their families. Almost all of the participants mentioned that they heard Spanish in the home as a child. Only one student out of 15 responded that they did not hear Spanish frequently in the home in their youth. Therefore, a large portion of these students were exposed to the HL at an early age.

Figure 1

Spanish Spoken in Home as a Child

1) As a child, I spoke Spanish frequently in the home

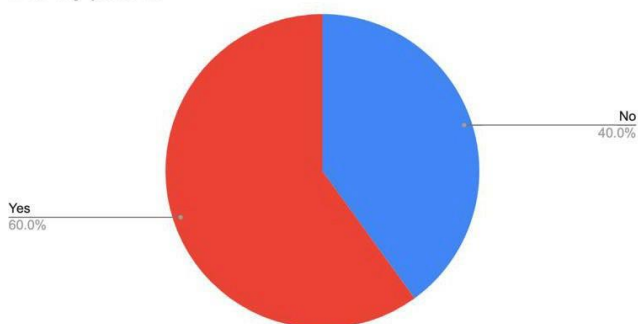


However, the number of students who currently speak Spanish in the home decreased from when they are a child. Indeed, 10 of the 15 students overall continue to communicate with their parents in Spanish or both Spanish and English (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Current Use of Spanish with Parents

5) I speak Spanish or both English and Spanish when speaking with my parents

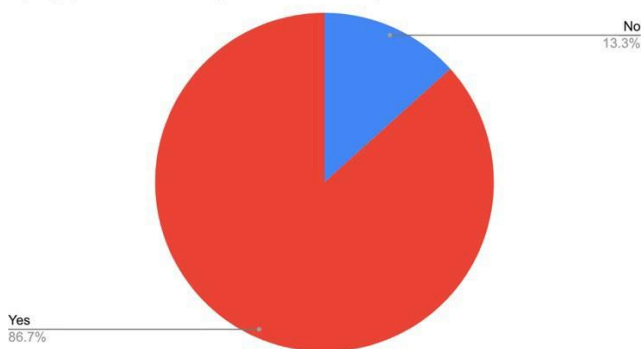


While 86.7% of the students' parents currently speak to them in Spanish (see Figure 3), all 15 students said that their grandparents spoke to them in Spanish. This shows that while fewer currently speak in the language, many of the students still receive input from their parents and grandparents at the present time.

Figure 3

Current Levels of Input of Spanish from Parents

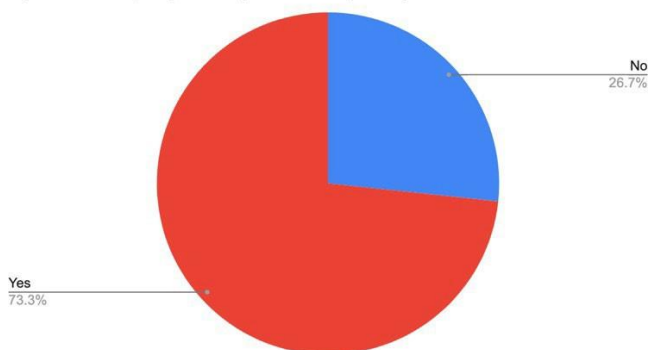
6) My parents often speak to me in Spanish



It is interesting to note that there are still more who speak and listen to Spanish in the home in spite of having to juggle learning both English and Spanish as HLLs growing up in the United States. Additionally, 73.3% of the students said that they spoke Spanish frequently outside the home as a child (see Figure 4).

Figure 4*Spoken Spanish Outside the Home as Children*

3) As a child, I spoke Spanish frequently outside the home

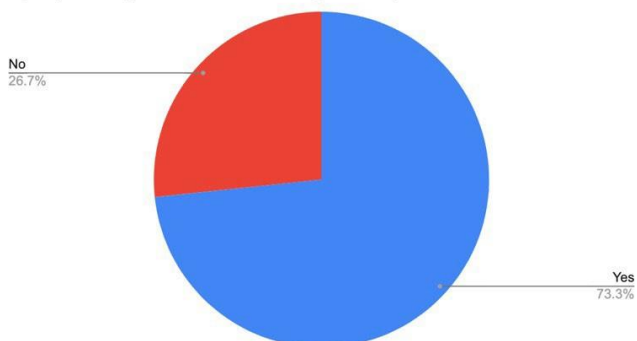


It was less common for them, however, to speak with neighbors or relatives besides their parents currently. Indeed, only 60% talk with anyone outside of their family or friends in Spanish, which is barely more than half.

However, more speak in Spanish with their friends presently. In fact, 73.3% of the students mentioned that they speak Spanish with their friends and 26.7% said that they did not speak with their friends in their HL (see Figure 5).

Figure 5*Spanish Spoken with Friends*

9) I speak Spanish when talking with my friends

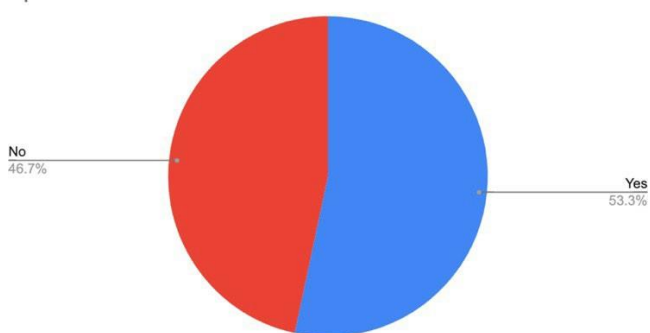


It also seemed less popular amongst the participants to listen to Spanish media, as only 9 of the 15 mentioned that at least 30% of their television viewing and/or radio listening is in Spanish (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Media listened to or watched in Spanish

10) At least 30% of my television viewing/radio listening is in Spanish

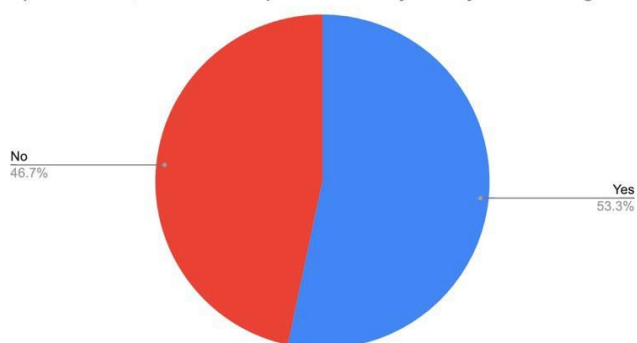


Interestingly, 8 said that they lived in a Spanish country for 2 years or longer. The other 7 said that they had not, meaning that they grew up here in the US (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Lived in a Spanish-Speaking Country

4) As a child, I lived in a Spanish country for 2 years or longer



Materials

There was a total of five instruments that I used to answer my research questions. The first three were surveys taken in a computer lab in the school. I used Google Forms to administer the surveys. The surveys were as follows:

- 1) Survey of Language Usage
- 2) Ethnic Identity Scale
- 3) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

The first survey, Survey of Language Usage (see Appendix B) had ten questions that the students answered. The reason for including this survey was to determine the level of Spanish use outside of the classroom. It allowed me to divide the HLLs in 3 different categories so as to eliminate the confounding variable of the level of Spanish they speak and listen to in the home.

The categories that I used to divide the HLLs were:

- 1) HLLs that spoke and listened to Spanish as a child (from 5 to 12 years of age)
- 2) HLLs that speak and listen to Spanish currently
- 3) HLLs that have lived in a Spanish speaking country for two years or more

The second survey, the Ethnic Identity Scale (see Appendix A) was a 4-point Likert scale that helped me to understand how HLLs identified their own culture as well as how they defined themselves in relation to the culture to which they belong. The points of this scale were *Does not describe me at all* (1), *Describes me a little* (2), *Describes me well* (3), and *Describes me very well* (4). This instrument was used because it helped me to see if there was a correlation between perception of cultural identity in HLL high school students and HLL language proficiency. There were three categories that the survey used to measure students' perception of cultural identity. First was affirmation, second was exploration and resolution was third. The survey examined

affirmation in questions 1, 8, 9, 11, and 12, where exploration was studied in 3, 5, 6, and 7. The questions that looked at resolution were 2, 4, 10 and 13. The lowest score one could get on this scale was a 12, which means that the student feels negatively about their cultural identity. The highest score one could get on this scale was a 48, which suggests that the student has a positive perception of their identity and culture.

The last survey, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C) was implemented to measure their language anxiety in a quantifiable manner. Similar to the Ethnic Identity Scale, this was essential in my understanding of the connection between the students' foreign language anxiety levels and their HLL proficiency in reading and writing. It was a 5-point Likert scale, with end points of *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The scale measured the students' anxiety when using their HL in the classroom. The questions that discussed negative evaluation were 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, and 27. Those that examined students' communicative apprehension were 1, 3, 4, 9, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 26, 28, 30, and 31. Lastly, the questions that looked at test anxiety were 8, 10, and 20. The lowest score one could get on this scale was 31, which means that the student is not nervous at all to use Spanish in a Spanish classroom. The highest score one could get on this scale was 155, which means that the student is highly anxious about using Spanish in their Spanish classroom.

The next two instruments were the Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL) tests for reading and writing. According to Learning Testing International (2023), the AAPPL test evaluates three modes of communication (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational), based on the Word-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. Furthermore, the test assesses both receptive skills (reading and listening) as well as productive skills (speaking and writing). The tests include a variety of tasks, such as composing an e-mail

message, chatting through video in Spanish, and these tasks focus on topics that are familiar to the students, like school and family. The AAPPL exam is proctored and is administered over the internet. The students are equipped with headphones with a microphone to be able to take the exam. Though the AAPPL tested all four language skills, (speaking, listening, reading and writing), I gathered data from their reading and writing exams so as to analyze the relationship between Spanish HLLs' literacy skills with their ethnic identity and FLA. These tests were administered in March of 2023.

The scoring for the AAPPL tests ranges from Novice Low to Advanced Low. Each score within itself contains a range of possible scores; for example, the score Novice ranges from Novice-1 to Novice-4, Intermediate-1 to Intermediate-5, while Advanced is merely A-1. According to ACTFL, receiving an Intermediate-1 (I-1) on the reading section means that the student can understand the main idea, but they will probably have to read the passage more than once and they will need the assistance of visual cues or other aids. On the other hand, Intermediate-5 (I-5) signifies that the student can understand the main ideas fully if they are familiar with the topic, while they can also understand complex passages even if the topic is unfamiliar to them. However, they will still need to read these complex passages more than once. The highest score one can possibly get is an Advanced-1, which signifies that the student can understand the narrative and descriptive texts in any time frame, though they may not understand every single word (ACTFL, 2015).

The writing scores have the same ranges and same names for them. If the student received an I-1, it means they can write about themselves and their lives, while doing so with simple sentences and coming across in a way that would be comprehensible to both teachers and those used to reading the writing of language learners. I-5, however, means that the student can

expand beyond themselves, as well as be able to tell stories in well-connected sentences and perhaps even in paragraphs. Most people who are not used to language learners will be able to understand the writing of these students. For those who score an Advanced-1 (A-1), it means the students can narrate and describe in every time frame and be able to summarize topics that are both familiar and unfamiliar to them (if it is of interest). They write in paragraphs and are understood by native speakers who do not read the writing of non-native speakers (ACTFL, 2015).

Procedures

I first went to Springville High School and spoke to the students about the study, explaining the procedures and all the steps they would need to do to participate. Following this, I stepped outside of the classroom and sat at a table with permission slips to hand out to the students who were interested in participating. Seventeen students approached me with interest where I waited with both English and Spanish versions of the parental permission slips to distribute. While a few of the students grabbed an English version of the parental permission slip, the majority grabbed the translated version.

However, at Springville High School I struggled to get sufficient participants for my study. I believe this was because I did not provide an incentive in the beginning, and I think that the students had a hard time remembering to get their parents to sign the permission forms. I later did give them an incentive (a \$10 gift card to Don Joaquin's Street Tacos), though only one or two more students decided to participate after that.

Therefore, I contacted a different instructor at a different high school to gather more participants. I went to Maple Mountain High School, discussed the study with the students, gave

them an incentive (a \$10 gift card to Chick Fil-A) and handed out the permission slips. Within a week, 10 students returned with their permission slips signed.

The first thing the participants did was take the Survey of Language Usage (see Appendix B). Following this, they took the Ethnic Identity Scale (see Appendix A). Lastly, they took the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C). All three surveys were taken inside of a computer lab at the high school. Most of the students took about 35 minutes to complete all of them. I received the data through Google Forms. All the students had already taken the AAPPL test before they took the surveys. I received permission from the students to use their scores to analyze the data for my study.

Data Analysis

The data that I collected in this study consisted of only quantitative data. To identify whether HLLs' perception of cultural identity or HLLs' FLA had the stronger relationship with HLLs' proficiency levels in reading and writing in Spanish, I used multiple regression analysis. This particular analysis helped me to compare the data and obtain some insight to my research questions:

- What is the relationship, if any, between language proficiency in reading and writing and foreign language anxiety for HLL students in high school?
- What is the relationship, if any, between ethnic identity and language proficiency in reading and writing for HLL students in high school?

To determine the strength of the relationship between language proficiency in reading and writing and FLA, I first calculated the total sum of their scores for each of the participants. This helped me to quantify their anxiety in the HL and input this data into the multiple regression

formula. Because there were both negative and positive questions, I reverse scored the *positive* questions (since this was a survey collecting data on their anxiety, a negative emotion).

Similarly to the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C), I used descriptive statistics to tally up the scores on the Ethnic Identity Scale (see Appendix A). The scale provided a specific way to score it, which is stated as follows: “the notation after each item indicates the relevant subscale (i.e., A= affirmation, E= exploration, and R= resolution); + indicates a positively worded item; - indicates a negatively worded item. Negatively worded items should be reverse scored so that higher scores indicate higher levels of affirmation, exploration, and resolution” (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015). Following this, I inputted the data into the multiple regression formula.

Finally, I put in the scores for both the reading scores and writing scores on the AAPPL test the students took. An important thing to be aware of is that the scores on the AAPPL test are ordinal in nature, meaning that the disparity between an I-1 and I-2 will differ from a score between an I-5 and A-1. However, to be able to analyze the data, I converted the scores into interval data. In other words, I had to change the scores from I-1 to A-1 to numerical scores. I-1 was “1,” I-2 was “2,” I-3 was “3,” and this pattern continued all the way up to A-1, which I numbered as “6.” Additionally, though there can be lower scores on the AAPPL writing and reading exams, (i.e., N-1 through N-4), the lowest score a student in this study received on the AAPPL reading and writing exams was an I-1. That is why I labeled I-1 is “1” instead of N-1.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to show the results of the data analysis performed. The questions that I aimed to answer were:

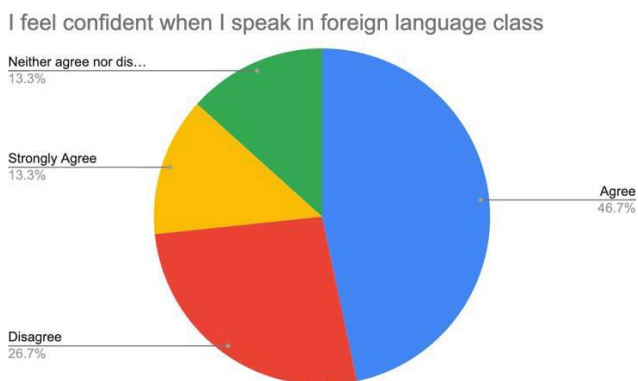
1. What is the relationship, if any, between language proficiency in reading and writing and foreign language anxiety for HLL students in high school?
2. What is the relationship, if any, between ethnic identity and language proficiency in reading and writing for HLL students in high school?

To that end, this section will begin with the results from the multiple regression analysis performed from the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale with their scores on their reading and writing exams. The last section will contain the results from the multiple regression analysis regarding the connection between the Ethnic Identity Scale and language proficiency in reading and writing.

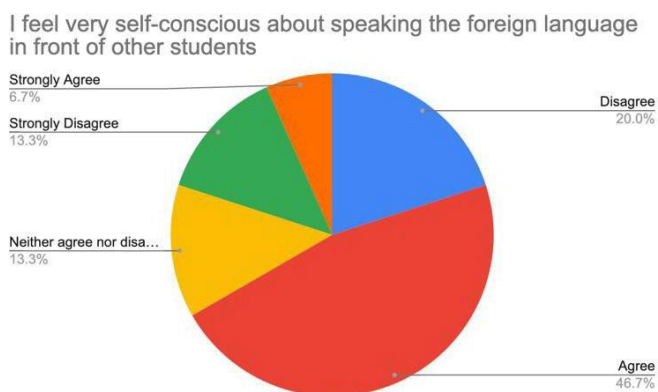
Foreign Language Anxiety of HLLs

In this section, I will answer this research question: What is the relationship, if any, between language proficiency in reading and writing and foreign language anxiety for HLL students in high school?

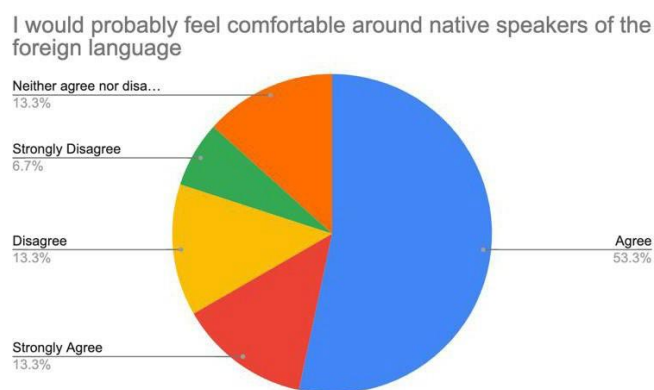
According to the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C), many participants also seemed to not be as anxious about speaking Spanish in their Spanish classes overall. For example, when answering the question *I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class* (see Figure 8), 60% of the students said they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 26.7% mentioned they disagreed with the statement and 13.3% did not agree or disagree.

Figure 8*Confidence in Speaking in Spanish Class*

Interestingly, in spite of the fact that many feel confident in speaking Spanish in their Spanish classes, half of the students said they felt self-conscious about speaking Spanish in front of other students (see Figure 9). In fact, 46.7% of the students agreed with this sentiment, indicating that even if they feel confident in their skills, high school students have an added stressor of peer pressure to handle as they speak their HL. However, 33.3% of the students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with feeling nervous speaking in front of others, and 13.3% neither agreed nor disagreed. It seems that HLLs in these two high schools are divided on this matter.

Figure 9*Discomfort in Speaking Spanish in Front of Other Students*

This number changes when the survey asks about how they feel speaking with native speakers. Indeed, 66.43% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that they would feel at ease in speaking with a native speaker of Spanish (see Figure 10).

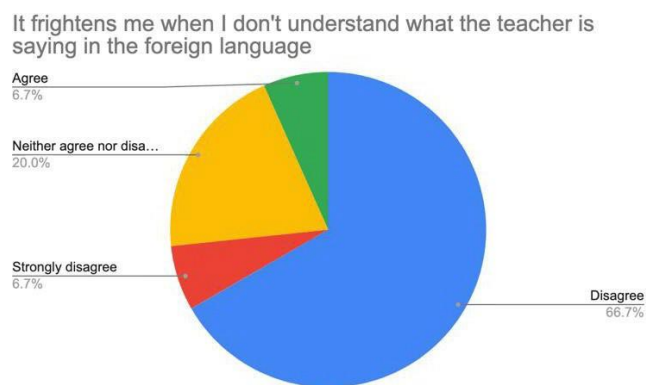
Figure 10*Comfort Level in Speaking with Native Speakers of Spanish*

While speaking in front of others may give some of the students pause, most of the participants did not seem to be nervous about understanding Spanish in their classes. As an example, it does not concern 73.4% of the students if they do not comprehend their instructor's

input (see Figure 11). Whether due to students being able to understand their instructors fully or whether they simply do not feel anxious when this situation occurs, it is hard to say.

Figure 11

Levels of Anxiety with Misunderstandings of Input from Spanish Instructor



All 15 students were in Spanish 3 classes at the high school. At this level, students receive comprehensible input through listening and reading to be able to produce the language through writing and speaking. On a proficiency scale, students are expected to reach an Intermediate Low on a proficiency scale. In other words, students should be able to speak in short sentences about topics with which they are familiar, such as self and family, daily activities, as well as perform acts such as ordering food or making simple purchases. Listening at this level would be described as students who can understand information at the sentence-level speech. Those who write at an Intermediate Low level can write regarding familiar material in a few simple sentences in the present tense. Finally, readers at this level can comprehend information contained in simple texts regarding a minimal number of personal and social needs (Swender et al., 2012).

Table 1*Foreign Language Anxiety Scores with Reading and Writing Exam Scores*

Student	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale Score	Reading Exam Score	Writing Exam Score	HLLs that spoke and listened to Spanish as a child (5-12 years of age)	HLLs that speak and listen to Spanish currently	HLLs that have lived in a Spanish-speaking country for 2 years or more
Matthew	102	4 (I-4)	4 (I-4)	Yes	Yes	No
Daisy	102	6 (A-1)	5 (I-5)	Yes	Yes	No
Adrian	101	2 (I-2)	4 (I-4)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aaron	90	5 (I-5)	6 (A-1)	No	Yes	No
Belinda	88	6 (A-1)	4 (I-4)	Yes	Yes	No
Isaac	78	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Felicity	76	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daniel	73	5 (I-5)	1 (I-1)	No	No	No
David	67	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alex	66	5 (I-5)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Juan	66	Did not take this portion of exam	1 (I-1)	Yes	Yes	No
Maria	66	6 (A-1)	Did not take this portion of exam	Yes	Yes	No
Tabitha	62	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kieran	61	5 (I-5)	5 (I-5)	No	No	Yes
Samuel	35	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: This scale is sorted from highest foreign language classroom anxiety score to the lowest score on the scale.

The average score for the students on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C) was 74.2. A score of 90 or above suggests the students has high levels of anxiety, where a score of 30 to 69 would indicate a low level of anxiety (see Table 1). Therefore,

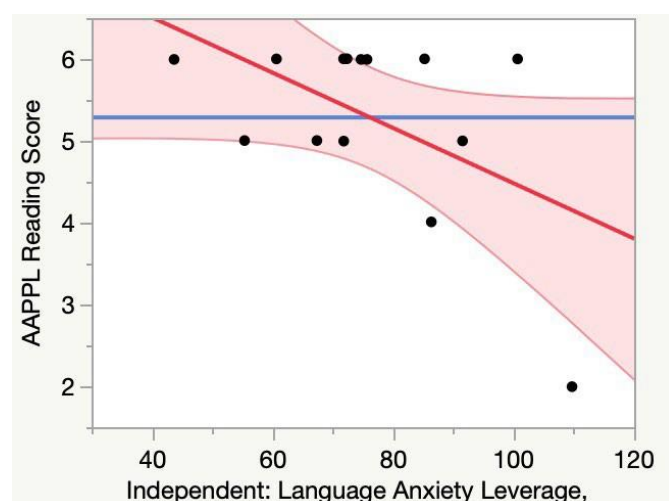
according to the students' responses on the scale, they seem to have on average a moderate level of anxiety of speaking Spanish in their Spanish class.

There does seem to be a relationship between reading and foreign language anxiety. The red line represents the slope of the regression line. According to Mindrila and Balentyne (2013), “a regression line is a straight line that describes how a response variable y changes as an explanatory variable x changes” (p. 4). The direction of the line shows whether the relationship is positive or negative. In this case, the slope is declining, which indicates that there is a *negative* relationship between these two particular variables (see Figure 12).

In Figure 12, the numbers on the y-axis depict their scores on the reading AAPPL exam, and the numbers on the x-axis depict their scores on the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C). The regression line demonstrates the strength of the relationship between foreign language anxiety and reading. Note that while there is a negative slope, it is not very steep. The dots are not clustered closely enough to the red line, either, which also signifies that the correlation is weak.

Figure 12

Foreign Language Anxiety and Reading



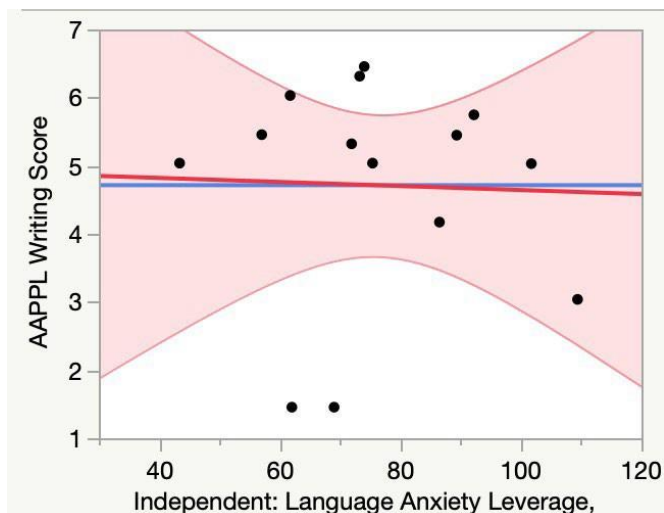
The parameter estimates show that for every point increase on their Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, their reading score decreases by .03. Therefore, from the lowest to the highest score on the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, their scores on the reading exam change by 1 category, such as from I-2 to I-1 since it is a negative slope. Even though these results are statistically insignificant, it is approaching statistical significance as the p value is .0677 (see Table 2).

Table 2

F, P and R values for Foreign Language Anxiety and Reading

Model	F	p value	R^2
<i>Foreign Language Anxiety and Reading</i>	4.10	.07	.27

Now, I will discuss the findings regarding the relationship between writing and foreign language anxiety and if there is a relationship between foreign language anxiety and writing. In Figure 13, the y-axis shows the students' scores on the writing exam while the x-axis shows the scores on the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C). The slope of this relationship is so gradual that there is minimal variation in writing leverage residual scores. In fact, the variation corresponds to only one category of performance on the AAPPL writing test (i.e., A-1, I-5).

Figure 13*Foreign Language Anxiety and Writing*

For writing, the parameter estimates show that for every point increase in their score on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C), their writing scores on the AAPPL test only decreases by .003. According to the multiple regression analysis, for all input scores of foreign language anxiety, the output scores of writing proficiency stay within the boundaries of one performance level (i.e., A-1, 1-5) on the AAPPL writing test. These results are not statistically significant, as the p value is .91 (see Table 3).

Table 3*F, P, and R values for Foreign Language Anxiety and Writing*

Model	F	p value	R^2
<i>Foreign Language Anxiety and Writing</i>	.01	.91	.16

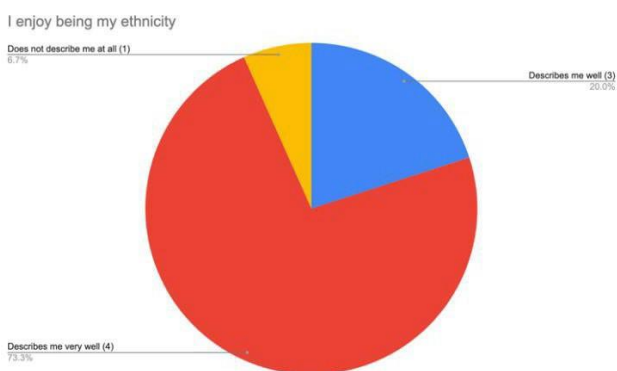
Ethnic Identity Scale

This section contains the answer to this research question: What is the relationship, if any, between ethnic identity and language proficiency in reading and writing for HLL students in high school?

According to their responses on the Ethnic Identity Scale (See Appendix A), a vast majority students enjoy being their ethnicity (see Figure 14). They feel positively about their own identity within the culture that they come from.

Figure 14

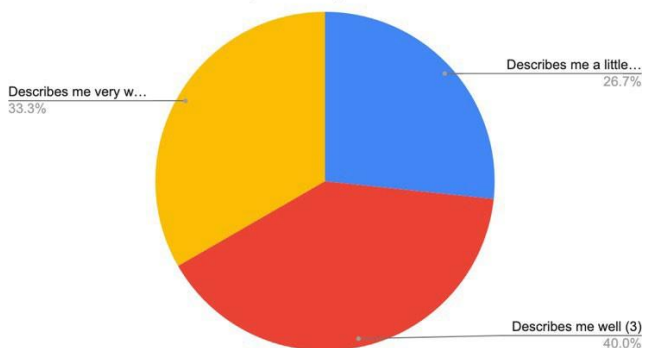
Positive Feelings About Ethnicity



Furthermore, most of the students seem to understand what their ethnicity means to them, although there are a few that are not so certain (see Figure 15). Indeed, 33.3% of the students state that this idea of understanding their cultural identity describes them well, while 40% say that it describes them well. On the other hand, 26.7% of the students seem to not be as certain, as they say this idea only describes them a little.

Figure 15*Understanding of Ethnic Identity*

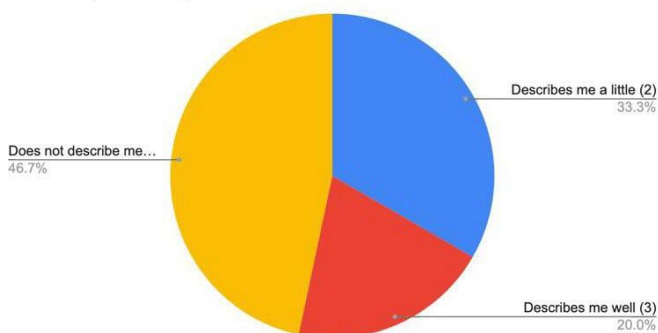
I am clear about what my ethnicity means to me



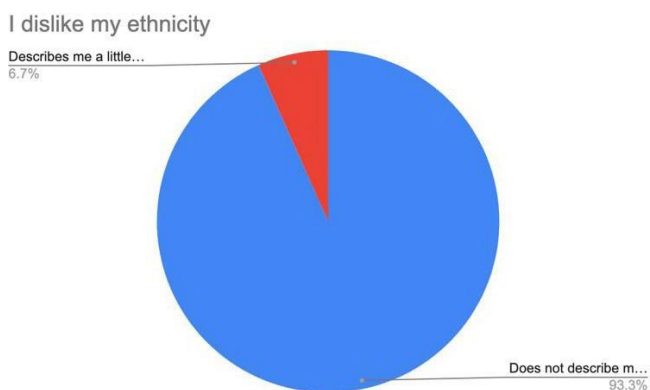
The students are more divided on whether they participate in activities or read materials that teach them about their culture (see Figure 16). For example, 20% of the students mention that not participating in cultural activities describes them well while 33.3% say that it describes them a little. The other 46.7% disagree with this notion.

Figure 16*Participation in Cultural Activities*

I have not participated in any activities that would teach me about my ethnicity



Interestingly, upon answering the question *I dislike my ethnicity*, 93.3% of the students strongly disagreed (See Figure 17). Only 1 of the 15 students said any differently, and their response was only that it described them a little.

Figure 17*Dislike of Ethnicity*

The average score on the Ethnic Identity Scale (see Appendix A) for the participants was 41.7. Additionally, the average score for the students' reading exam was 5.3, and the average score of the students' writing exam was 4.7. Of those who scored an I-5 or A-1 on one or both of their reading and writing exams, 7 of the students belonged to all 3 categories: HLLs that spoke and listened to Spanish as a child (5-12 years of age), HLLs that speak and listen to Spanish currently, and HLLs that have lived in a Spanish-speaking country for 2 years or more.

Table 4*Ethnic Identity Scale Scores with Reading and Writing Exam Scores*

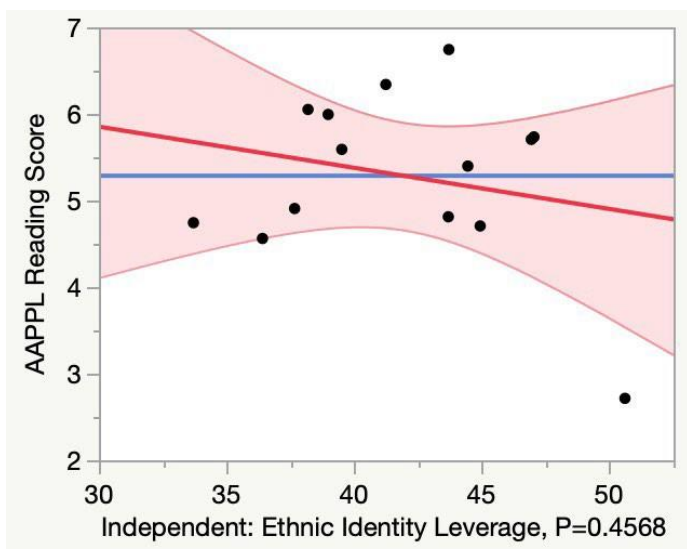
Student	Ethnic Identity Scale Score	Reading Exam Score	Writing Exam Score	HLLs that spoke and listened to Spanish as a child (5-12 years of age)	HLLs that speak and listen to Spanish currently	HLLs that have lived in a Spanish-speaking country for 2 years or more
Samuel	48	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adrian	48	2 (I-2)	4 (I-4)	Yes	Yes	Yes
David	48	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maria	48	6 (A-1)	Did not take this portion of exam	Yes	Yes	No
Alex	46	5 (I-5)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aaron	43	5 (I-5)	6 (A-1)	No	Yes	No
Daisy	41	6 (A-1)	5 (I-5)	Yes	Yes	No
Tabitha	41	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Belinda	40	6 (A-1)	4 (I-4)	Yes	Yes	No
Felicity	39	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kieran	38	5 (I-5)	6 (A-1)	No	No	Yes
Isaac	38	6 (A-1)	6 (A-1)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Daniel	38	5 (I-5)	1 (I-1)	No	No	No
Juan	38	Did not take this portion of exam	1 (I-1)	Yes	Yes	No
Matthew	31	4 (I-4)	4 (I-4)	Yes	Yes	No

Note: This table is sorted from the highest ethnic identity score to the lowest ethnic identity score.

First, the y-axis shows the scores of the reading exam on the AAPPL test for Figure 18. The x-axis depicts their scores on the Ethnic Identity Scale (see Appendix A). Starting with the correlation between reading and ethnic identity, Figure 18 shows that there is a negative relationship because the regression line is going down from left to right. Additionally, the line is not steep, suggesting that the connection between ethnic identity and reading is not strong. The dots are not clumped together either and instead are scattered across the graph, which shows that the relationship is weak.

Figure 18

Ethnic Identity and Reading



For every point increase in ethnic identity, the score on their reading decreases by .05. From the lowest score to the highest score on their Ethnic Identity Scale (see Appendix A), the corresponding reading scores only span 1.8 categories of performance levels on the AAPPL reading test. Again, these results are not statistically significant as the *p* value is 0.4568 (see Table 5).

Table 5

F, P and R values for Ethnic Identity and Reading

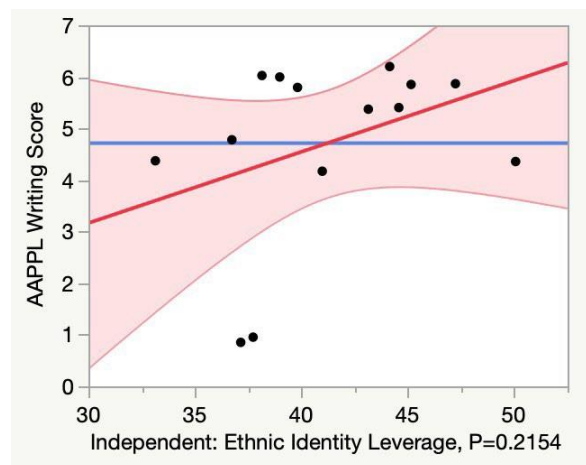
Model	F	<i>p</i> value	R ²
<i>Ethnic Identity and Reading</i>	.59	.46	.27

In Figure 19, the y-axis shows the scores on their writing exam on the AAPPL test while the x-axis shows the scores on the Ethnic Identity Scale (See Appendix A). This relationship is not statistically significant because the p value is .2154, as shown. However, there is practical significance demonstrated by both the graph and the parameter estimates.

The red line slants upward, signifying a positive relationship between writing and ethnic identity. As the slope is steep and the dots found in Figure 7 are somewhat clustered together in a pattern going upwards, it suggests that there is a possible relationship between these two variables.

Figure 19

Ethnic Identity and Writing



To further corroborate this possible relationship, the parameter estimates showed that the estimate for ethnic identity was 0.14 (rounded up). Therefore, for every point increase in ethnic identity, the score on their writing improves by .14. From the lowest score to the highest score on the Ethnic Identity Scale, the writing scores encompassed by the multiple regression analysis ranges 5 categories on the AAPPL writing exam.

This relationship is not statistically significant because the p value is .2154 (see Table 6).

Table 6*F, P and R values of Ethnic Identity and Writing*

Model	F	p value	R ²
<i>Ethnic Identity and Writing</i>	1.73	.2154	.16

Chapter 5: Discussion

Research Goals

I believe that my research goals have been achieved throughout this study, though it was in a way that was unexpected. I wanted to see what variable between foreign language anxiety and perception of ethnic identity had a bigger impact on reading and writing in their HL. Neither cultural identity nor foreign language anxiety had a statistical relationship with reading in Spanish. However, I was able to establish that a meaningful relationship existed between writing and ethnic identity, while the connection between ethnic identity and reading was small and the relationship between foreign language anxiety and literacy skills in their HL were almost nonexistent. Even though these results were not statistically significant, the relationship found between ethnic identity and writing seemed valuable enough to provide incentive for further research to determine whether this relationship could become statistically significant with a larger sample size.

What is the Relationship, if any, between Language Proficiency and Foreign Language Anxiety for HLL Students in High School?

The answer I got to this question was completely unexpected, especially since most of the studies mention that HLLs tend to be the most anxious about their literacy skills in Spanish (Burgo, 2020; Mrak, 2020; Tallon, 2009; Torres, 2018; Torres & Turner, 2017). One factor that might have influenced the data was the fact I had a rather small sample size. Even though I was able to work with sixteen participants in total, one of the students did not complete both of the AAPPL exams and therefore their answers to the surveys had to be thrown out. With more participants, the data analyzed might have looked different in regard to the relationship between language proficiency in reading and writing and the students' foreign language anxiety.

Furthermore, because of the low sample size, the p values remained high and therefore the results are not statistically significant. With more participants, these results could change.

Another reason for this unexpected result was that I was working with high school students. They might have misunderstood some of the questions, or perhaps they wished to get done with the survey as quickly as possible and so they did not read the questions thoroughly. This could have caused me to receive skewed data instead of honest answers from the students. Although I was there to administer the surveys, there were only one or two who asked me to clarify the meaning of the questions for them.

One reason that I believe that foreign language anxiety might not have had a strong relationship with reading and writing for these students was the fact that HLLs have various backgrounds, both culturally and linguistically (Fairclough, 2012; Said-Mohand, 2011). Though HLLs in other parts of the United States might have high levels of anxiety over using their HL in a Spanish classroom, I found that these most of these students were not anxious about speaking Spanish in class and, therefore, I could not see if there was a negative relationship between reading and writing scores. There were only three students who scored above 100 on the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, which signifies a high level of anxiety about using Spanish in class. One of the students who had a 101 on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (see Appendix C) scored an I-2 on their reading exam and an I-4 on their writing exam, where most of the students who scored more in the range of 35-88 on the survey scored either an I-5 and/or A-1 on their reading and writing exams, which are two of the highest scores one can get on the AAPPL tests. Additionally, these students were enrolled in a Spanish 3 classroom, meaning that they had three years of instruction in their HL and were more advanced than a Spanish 1 student would be. Furthermore, the participants appeared to be at a higher level in the HL, meaning that

students with lower proficiency in their HL could have more anxiety. As most of these students had high scores on both the writing and reading AAPPL tests, their oral skills (listening and speaking) could possibly be even higher than their literacy skills. Lastly, it could also be the personalities of the participants that influenced their answers on the scale. Therefore, due to the heterogenous nature of HLLs, it may just be that students in the Nebo School District are more confident in their language abilities.

What is the Relationship, if any, between Ethnic Identity and Language Proficiency in Reading and Writing for HLL Students in High School?

Pertaining to general proficiency overall in Spanish, studies have demonstrated that HLLs are more likely to do better in all four categories of the language if they are engaging in the HL at home, participating in cultural activities outside the classroom, as well as those who are maintaining their ethnic identity (Durán-Cerda, 2008; Oh & Au, 2005).

On the Survey of Language Usage (see Appendix B), all but one of the students mentioned that they were exposed to the language in the home at an early age. The responses indicate that 14 of 15 students who listened to Spanish in the home scored a 38 or above on the Ethnic Identity Scale (see Appendix A). This shows that the majority of the students felt positively about themselves and their ethnicity according to their responses since a 48 was the highest score one could get on this scale (see Appendix A). This could mean that listening to the HL in the home as a child could impact whether students have a positive cultural identity or not. It could also impact their desire to improve in reading and writing (Burgo, 2020; Jensen & Llosa, 2007; Mrak, 2020; Tallon, 2009; Torres, 2018; Torres & Turner, 2017)., which will in turn affect their cultural identity as they connect with their families through Spanish (Carreira & Chik,

2014; Regulez & Montrul, 2023; Tallon, 2011). Thus, it creates a positive cycle of learning the language and understanding one's own ethnic identity.

Reading

Perception of personal cultural identity and reading did not have a strong correlation. One possible explanation for this result is the ceiling effect. The ceiling effect states that because too many students score high on the exam, the measurement loses value. Some studies have suggested that HLLs tend to already have higher reading proficiency than writing proficiency (Hayakawa et al., 2022), and perhaps due to that their ethnic identity does not have as strong of an impact since they are already proficient in that area. Most of the students scored an I-5 or A-1 on the reading exam, which are the two highest scores that one can get on the AAPPL reading exam.

It could have to do with the variability of HLLs that I studied. It is well known that HLLs are not a homogenous group (Fairclough, 2012; Said-Mohand, 2011), and I did work with two different high schools. While I only worked with one classroom in Springville High School, I worked with three different classrooms at Maple Mountain High School. Perhaps there are minor differences within each classroom that attributed to the students' ability to succeed in reading or how they feel about their cultural identity. Even without adding that I worked with different high schools, each student is unique and has certain linguistic and cultural needs that need to be met in order to gain high proficiency in reading. One study also mentioned that due to low SES, some parents of HLLs do not have the financial means to provide their children with literature or instruction at home (Proctor et al., 2010). Conversely, if a city or town is wealthy, the students have more resources and therefore have opportunities to read in their HL. Maple Mountain High Scholl has only 7.5% of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch and Springville High

School has 17% of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. This could explain why the students' reading scores were so high. Contributing further to these differences are the different motivation levels to read in Spanish. Even if some students have a positive perception of their cultural identity, they may not enjoy reading in the HL due to feeling inadequate in the skill or perhaps they do not like the activity (Jensen & Llosa, 2007; Rich et al., 2022).

A final reason that ethnic identity did not have a large impact on reading could be that there are other factors that influence the ability to read more. Velásquez (2016) listed quite a few aspects of reading that did not include cultural identity, such as understanding vocabulary and grammar, effective reading strategies, and ability to both process information and engage the text. It is also possible that the vocabulary in teen literature in Spanish is more complicated. In this case, they can only read simplified texts and thus, they might not read as much in their HL. To exacerbate this issue, when HLLs feel that they are failing in reading the literature in their HL, it creates a vicious cycle in which their motivation to read decreases and due to their lack of practice, do not improve in reading fluency. Additionally, HLL students may perceive themselves to be poor readers because of the lack of transference of literacy skills from English to Spanish (Jensen & Llosa, 2007). In other words, there are many outside variables such as these that could provide the reason for low reading proficiency in Spanish.

Lastly, as mentioned before, the AAPPL reading and writing exam's highest score is an A-1. However, according to ACTFL (2023), there are 5 levels of proficiency: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior and Distinguished. Since the AAPPL test is designed for second language learners learning Spanish for the first time, it is possible that some of the HLLs' scores would have been higher than A1. The results could change if the test assessed higher

levels of students and perhaps one could see a more accurate view of these students' levels and if that strengthens the relationship between ethnic identity and reading or not.

Writing

In spite of the small sample size, it was interesting to note that there was a possible relationship between writing in the HL and their perception of their cultural identity. This finding proves to be congruent with previous studies conducted looking at HLLs' writing abilities in the HL and how to improve it. Both Mrak (2020) and Burgo (2016) studied how certain strategies to connect with their cultural identity to improve writing and they both found that they did.

Additionally, I believe there may have been a connection between where students grew up and their proficiency in writing. Of the 8 students that said they had lived in a Spanish country for two or more years, 7 scored either an I-5 or an I-6 on their writing exams, which are the two highest scores. Furthermore, all 8 of these students scored a 38 or higher on the Ethnic Identity Scale. That could mean there is a connection with students who grow up in a Spanish speaking country and their perception of their culture, which in turn affects their ability to write in the language.

Pedagogical Applications

Though this study did not focus on experimenting to see what strategy or pedagogical practice could help HLLs improve in reading and writing, there were things that I learned that could be beneficial for high school teachers or college professors teaching early Spanish classes. Since this study was conducted with high school students, Spanish teachers may want to consider that helping students feel connected to their culture could help with improvement of their writing skills.

Involve the Parents and/or Family in Writing Assignments

I believe that this could help immensely with both the motivation to write and the improvement of writing in Spanish (Burgo, 2016). In fact, most students in general tend to be more enthusiastic about writing when it is a topic with which they are familiar or about their culture or family. HLLs have a unique challenge in that they straddle two cultures and languages constantly while living in the United States (Carreira & Chik, 2014), and a lot of their incentive to take a language course is to strengthen their identity and their cultural heritage, as well as speak with their loved ones in the HL (Carreira & Chik, 2014; Regulez & Montrul, 2023; Tallon, 2011).

Create an Environment Where They Feel Safe to be Themselves

As said previously in the literature review, HLLs struggle to find a place where they belong. If students do not feel comfortable to be themselves, to express their voice about certain topics or they do not feel understood, then they are more likely not going to want to write or participate much in the classroom (Helmer, 2020). It is important to create an environment where students are free to be unapologetically themselves; otherwise, teachers will be fighting a losing battle to get them to want to write, let alone to write well.

Focus on Writing Prompts that Connect to Their Personal Experience Growing up in the Culture

Like most students, HLLs will thrive and succeed when they are given agency within the classroom. When teachers are able to give students writing prompts that are interesting and that they have personal experiences with, HLLs will respond with enthusiasm (Mrak 2020) and they will want to do well and to share their voice with both the teacher and others in the future. One example could be giving them a topic about immigration, since many of their families have

experienced that personally, or perhaps what it feels like to speak a minority language at home and have to speak a different language at school.

Limitations

The biggest limitation to this study was the small sample size. Even though sixteen students decided to participate, two of the students did not take the sections of the AAPPL exam that I was looking at (reading and writing). I had originally planned to administer the AAPPL exam and the BYU Proficiency Reading Test myself, but both of the teachers I worked with said that their students had already taken the AAPPL exams and that I did not need to administer them. However, both teachers did not require all of the students to take the exam, and therefore some of the data had to be thrown out since I could not analyze their answers on the surveys without scores on the AAPPL Writing and Reading exams. Of the 16 students total who took the surveys, 2 took either the reading exam or the writing exam, but not both. Another student did not take either the writing or reading portions of the exam, and their data unfortunately could not be used for the study. Because of this, I could only use the data from 15 students. The findings, therefore, are not generalizable and can only be applied to these students in the Nebo School District.

Future Studies

First, it would be interesting to see if perception of cultural identity for high school HLLs affects their writing in Spanish on a much larger scale. Since the results are not generalizable due to sample size, I cannot categorically say that positive feelings about one's culture does improve writing scores in Spanish; however, since I detected a practical significance in the data despite the limited number of participants, it could be fascinating to see if those results stay the same with bigger numbers of students who participated.

Secondly, determining if perception of cultural identity has a relationship with speaking the language would be fascinating as well. As writing is a productive skill, there could be a relationship between students who feel positively about their ethnic identity and their productive skills, mainly speaking and writing in the HL. There is such a variety of levels in speaking the language for HLLs and if there is a correlation between the two, a different approach could be taken to teaching HLLs in mixed Spanish classrooms.

It would be fascinating to study what would happen to the HLL students' writing proficiency if parents taught them that skill in the home. Many students do not have formal instruction at home due to various reasons; however, since many studies have already seen that a strong connection with their ethnic identity improves writing, one could take it a step further and see if home instruction improves it even more.

Conclusion

Overall, HLLs are a unique set of students, with strong ties to both their ethnic identity and the country in which they live. Reading and writing are difficult skills to master and take time and patience and good pedagogical practices; for HLLs, however, it does seem that having a strong, positive ethnic identity can help them to improve their ability to write. With the Spanish HLL population continuing to rise, it is important to find a way to meet their needs both culturally and linguistically. The better instructors understand what they need to succeed, the better prepared they can be to send HLLs into a future where their strengths and talents can be used for the betterment of the world.

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Appendix A

Ethnic Identity Scale

Adapted from Umaña-Taylor, A.J., Tazedijan, A. & Bámanca-Gómez, M.Y. (2004). Developing the Ethnic Identity Scale using Eriksonian and social identity perspectives. *Identity: An International Journey of Theory and Research*, (4), 9-38.

The U.S. is made up of people of various ethnicities. Ethnicity refers to how “people group themselves together based on certain things they have in common, such as ancestors, culture or experiences” (Berry, 2022, p. 53). Some examples of the ethnicities that people may identify with are Mexican, Cuban, Nicaraguan, Argentinian, Guatemalan, Bolivian, Chilean, Colombian Ecuadorian, Paraguayan, Peruvian, Uruguayan, Costa Rican, Salvadorian, Dominican, Honduran, Panamanian, Latino, US Latino, US Hispanic, and Chicano. In addition, some people may identify with more than one ethnicity. When you are answering the following questions, we would like you to think about what YOU consider your ethnicity to be.

Please circle ONE or MORE of the following that you feel defines your identity.

Mexican	Cuban	Nicaraguan	Argentinian	Guatemalan	Bolivian
Chilean	Colombian	Ecuadorian	Paraguayan	Peruvian	Uruguayan
Costa Rican	Salvadorian	Dominican	Honduran	Panamanian	US Latino
Latino	US Hispanic	Chicano	Puerto Rican	Spanish (from Spain)	

	Does not describe me at all	Describes me a little	Describes me well	Describes me very well
1. My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly positive.	1	2	3	4
2. I enjoy being my ethnicity	1	2	3	4
3. I have not participated in any activities that would teach me about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
4. I am clear about what my ethnicity means to me.	1	2	3	4
5. I have experienced things that reflect my ethnicity, such as eating food, listening to music, and watching movies.	1	2	3	4
6. I have attended events that have helped me learn more about my ethnicity	1	2	3	4
7. I have read books/magazines/newspapers or other materials that have taught me about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
8. I feel negatively about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
9. I wish I were of a different ethnicity	1	2	3	4
10. I understand how I feel about my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4

11. If I could choose, I would never change my ethnicity	1	2	3	4
12. I dislike my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4
13. I am not happy with my ethnicity	1	2	3	4

1. My feelings about my ethnicity are mostly positive (+A).
2. I enjoy being my ethnicity (+R)
3. I have not participated in any activities that would teach me about my ethnicity (-E).
4. I am clear about what my ethnicity means to me (+R).
5. I have experienced things that reflect my ethnicity, such as eating food, listening to music, and watching movies (+E).
6. I have attended events that have helped me learn more about my ethnicity (+E).
7. I have read books/magazines/newspapers or other materials that have taught me about my ethnicity (+E).
8. I feel negatively about my ethnicity (-A).
9. I wish I were of a different ethnicity (-A).
10. I understand how I feel about my ethnicity (+R).
11. If I could choose, I would prefer to be the same ethnicity (+A).
12. I dislike my ethnicity (-A).
13. I do not have a clear sense of what my ethnicity means to me (-R).

Note. Response options are:

Does not describe
me at all (1),
Describes me a
little (2), Describes
me well (3), and
Describes me very
well (4).

The notation after each item indicates the relevant subscale (i.e., A = affirmation, E = exploration, and R = resolution); + indicates a positively worded item; - indicates a negatively worded item. Negatively worded items should be reverse scored so that higher scores indicate higher levels of affirmation, exploration, and resolution.

Appendix B

Survey of Language Usage

Thompson, G. L. (2014). Understanding the heritage language student. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 14(1), 82-96.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192714551277>

Please indicate your previous experience with the Spanish language by answering the following questions.

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|----|
| 1) | As a child, I spoke Spanish frequently in the home: | Yes | No |
| 2) | As a child, I heard Spanish frequently in the home: | Yes | No |
| 3) | As a child, I spoke Spanish frequently outside the home: | Yes | No |
| 4) | As a child, I lived in a Spanish country for 2 years or longer: | Yes | No |
| 5) | I speak Spanish or both English and Spanish when speaking with my parents: | Yes | No |
| 6) | My parents often speak to me in Spanish: | Yes | No |
| 7) | My grandparents often speak to me in Spanish: | Yes | No |
| 8) | I speak Spanish when talking to my neighbors and/or relatives: | Yes | No |
| 9) | I speak Spanish when talking with my friends: | Yes | No |
| 10) | At least 30% of my television viewing/radio listening is in Spanish: | Yes | No |

Appendix C

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

Adapted from Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M.B., Cope, J., 1986. Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70 (2), 125-132

32 Items

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

8. I am usually at ease during my tests in my language class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

30. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

31. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

32. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advanced.

Strongly Agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree