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# Family expectations towards Spanish language maintenance and heritage language programs in Germany

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**Abstract:** Family and educational institutions are the main centers of socialization in heritage language. Beyond the communicative and learning dynamics that take place in both environments, linguistic socialization also depends to a large extent on the relationship of families with educational spaces. The aim of this paper is to discuss families' expectations regarding the intergenerational transmission of Spanish and to explore their attitudes towards heritage language and educational programs in Germany. For this purpose, the results of an exploratory study based on surveys will be presented to compare the main arguments justifying Spanish-speaking families' decision to include heritage language courses or bilingual education spaces in their family language management in the German context. The analysis of the perception of families and their attitudes shows that the positive valuation of the family and instrumental dimension of heritage language influence families to include bilingual programs or heritage language classes in their family language management.

**Keywords:** heritage languages; integration; linguistic socialization; migration; sociolinguistics

## 1 Introduction

In situations of cohabitation between the migrant language and the majority language of the host country, migrant families face the difficulties involved in

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reconciling linguistic integration in the host society, on the one hand, and the transmission of the heritage language at home, on the other (Chumak-Horbatsch 1999; Guardado 2006; Iqbal 2005; Muñiz 2009; Xie 2010). Parents make decisions regarding family language management that depend, to a large extent, on their linguistic attitudes and expectations towards the heritage language and its inter-generational transmission. This paper provides an analysis of the relationships between the attitudes of Spanish-speaking families towards the transmission of the heritage language in Germany, as well as their expectations towards educational programs for the language's maintenance and development.

Family language management involves the implicit/explicit and deliberate/non-deliberate strategies of parents to plan the conditions for language socialization and intervene in the linguistic development of offspring (Curdt-Christiansen and Silver 2012). In migratory contexts, strategies and decisions regarding language socialization are crucial given that the family is the main institution of socialization in the heritage language of future speakers. First, because the family is the first environment in which descendants come into contact with the migratory language(s); second, because, as a community of practice (Purkarthofer et al. 2022), it is the most immediate context of acculturation; and, third, because the family is a space that creates the conditions that allow activating the construction of multilingual repertoires.

However, the linguistic socialization of heritage speakers is not only reduced to the family space. It is a polycentric process (Blommaert and Backus 2013) in which educational institutions, the community of origin, and centers responsible for organizing activities in the heritage language are also involved, in addition to the home (Fishman 2001). In order to manage this complex ecosystem of language socialization through interaction or learning practices, parents of multilingual families make decisions and develop strategies (more or less deliberately) that can be focused on the home (internal practices) or the external spaces of language socialization, the heritage-language-speaking community or heritage language and bilingual education programs (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Interaction and language learning practices inside and outside the home.

	<b>Internal practices</b>	<b>External practices</b>
<b>Interaction</b>	General strategies of linguistic interaction in the family (e.g. one parent, one-language)	Relationship with the heritage-language-speaking community
<b>Learning</b>	Language development and learning practices/linguistic environment	Heritage language and bilingual education programs

Within transnational migrant households, families are confronted with questions such as whether the heritage language should be the language of socialization in the household, what skills should be transmitted in the heritage language, what space should be given to the language of the host country within the household to foster linguistic integration, how multilingual skills can be fostered, etc. Within the nuclear family, families often try to direct the linguistic socialization of descendants by means of general strategies aimed at coordinating linguistic interaction among members through *internal interaction practices* such as the “one parent, one language” (OPOL) strategy; one language according to the communicative situation; the exclusive use of the heritage language at home (hot-house approach); and the practice of “translanguaging” (De Houwer 2020b; Lanza 2007; Piller 2002; Schwartz and Verschik 2013). When families try to foster interaction with other members of the heritage language community external to the family, one can then speak of *external interaction practices*. These may take place through contact with friends and acquaintances, or through social, religious, or cultural activities organized within the heritage community that are conducted in the heritage language.

Family language policy also includes decisions and measures aimed at guiding the learning itself (Leseman et al. 2007; Scheele et al. 2010). Within families (home), parents can engage in *internal learning practices*, such as the use of literacy resources to foster literacy and the development of balanced bilingualism, the creation of home-based learning environments, or the use of home-country transnational media to teach historical, cultural, and linguistic knowledge (Kwon 2017). This support is determinant for the mother tongue development of bilingual immigrant children (Orellana 2016). It may happen, however, that parents do not always have enough time or resources to carry out these practices. In these cases, provided that there is an offer and migrant families can access them, there is the option of resorting to *external learning practices*, carried out by external language professionals and language learning institutions (Curdt-Christiansen and Silver 2012), such as heritage language and bilingual education programs.

Previous work on Spanish as a heritage language in Germany (Álvarez Mella 2020; García García 2019; García García and Reimann 2020; Loureda et al. 2020; Méndez-Sahlender 2018) has shown that Spanish-speaking families demand educational support in heritage language and even contribute to create educational spaces in Spanish. The present paper focuses especially on the expectations of Spanish-speaking families in Germany towards heritage language programs as an *external learning practice*. For this purpose, the results of an exploratory survey study ( $N = 50$ ) will be presented, which allows us to compare the main arguments justifying the decision of families to use or not to use heritage language courses available in Germany. These arguments are in many cases related to the families’ management of

the other types of practices described above (*internal learning practices* and *internal and external interaction practices*). The study aims to answer two research questions:

- (1) What attitudes towards the maintenance of Spanish predominate among Spanish-speaking families in Germany?
- (2) What kind of evaluations of Spanish on the part of these families are related to positive attitudes towards heritage language programs?

## 2 Expectations towards heritage language courses: a multidimensional approach

Spanish-speaking families with a migrant background residing in Germany support the integration of their descendants into the host society by learning German. At the same time, they may decide to invest to a greater or lesser extent in the transmission of Spanish. The decision to make this investment is influenced by two factors: available resources (time, educational offer, purchasing power) and expectations about the social, cultural, and educational effects of language development that generally translate into cultural capital and social power (Norton 1995, 2013).

Family expectations consist of a set of beliefs about languages (generally socially shared within a community), which are usually founded on facts, arguments, and shared knowledge and ideologies, such as the number of speakers of the language, the possibilities of exchange (cultural, economic, political) that they offer, or by their social prestige. Thus, a family's investment in acquiring or maintaining a language depends largely on whether they, or even their society, consider it necessary for their socioeconomic integration and part of the cultural capital that their family had previously accumulated (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970; Vigouroux and Mufwene 2020).

Moreover, family investment decisions are discursive in nature and based on different values that the maintenance of the heritage language acquires and that justify the investment in maintaining and learning it (Guardado 2018). Discourses on the maintenance of the heritage language revolve around several axes: instrumental aspects (usefulness of the language for the child's future success, social mobility, and access to more resources); family cohesion aspects (relating to the role of heritage language skills for family unity both at home and with external family in the host country and especially in the origin country); identity aspects related to the child's personal identity and cultural roots, or to a multilingual identity; affective aspects (emotional well-being of the child, self-esteem); aesthetic aspects (aesthetic appreciation of the language and its varieties); aspects linked to the recognition of the identity of the minority community, its culture (where it is also possible to find

discourse of opposition to ideologies contrary to Spanish); aspects of linguistic correctness; and aspects linked to cosmopolitanism (especially present in families with high levels of education).

Based on the above, this study proposes a multidimensional approach that encompasses the six dimensions according to which migrant families assign value to the heritage language and its intergenerational transmission.

- a) **Family dimension.** For parents, the maintenance of the heritage language(s) may have a value linked to the family itself. The family is understood here as an institution constituted by a set of internal and external relationships. We distinguish between a nuclear family composed of the relationship of cohabitation in the home, usually between father/mother and children, and the extended circle of other relatives with greater or lesser ties. Within the family nucleus, the issue of language is articulated around the language of the home, the weight of the heritage language in the communicative relations of the home. With respect to the external circle, the value of the heritage language is articulated around the maintenance of relationships between the children and the parts of the family that do not master the language of the country in which they reside, usually family in the country of origin or abroad (Guardado 2018).
- b) **Identity dimension.** Either language skills or their lack mark the identity of speakers, from their cognitive dimension to their affective-emotional dimension, and are related to the identification of the speaker with the culture or cultures with which that language is associated. Language and culture are interrelated: while the heritage language influences the development of a multicultural identity, the awareness of the own cultural identity conversely also influences the desire to maintain or develop competencies in the heritage language (Fishman 1999; Guardado 2018).
- c) **Communicative dimension.** The intergenerational transmission of heritage language has a communicative dimension linked to the formation of non-limited (Moreno-Fernández 2014) or non-truncated linguistic repertoires (Blommaert et al. 2005; Blommaert and Backus 2013). While speakers' linguistic competencies are always limited, we speak of limited or truncated multilingual repertoires on two levels. On the one hand, parents often desire their children to develop a balanced bilingualism in which the proficiency of the two languages is at the same level. On the other hand, there is an intention that the children develop a Spanish that conforms to the linguistic norm (and prestigious varieties) (Guardado 2018).
- d) **Multicultural dimension.** The intergenerational transmission of the heritage language is linked to a positive valuation of the intercultural competencies assumed of bilingual speakers in migratory contexts and to their bicultural identities. These are identities that are articulated at various levels or layers, in

individuals where locally defined ethnic or nation-state identities are combined with feelings of panethnicity and cosmopolitanism (Guardado 2018). This awareness of one's own bicultural identity and the critical appraisal towards the cultures of origin generates in heritage speakers a balanced bilingualism, as opposed to other attitudes that heritage speakers may present in which the unequal weight of one of the cultures that make up their identity against the other(s) manifests itself in an unbalanced bilingualism (Vilar Sánchez 2019).

- e) **Instrumental dimension.** Discourses on language learning have an obvious instrumental or utilitarian dimension. Indeed, the continuous internationalization in many social spheres (economic, cultural, political, etc.) has led to conceiving language as a cultural resource that can open up new possibilities for transnational interaction between individuals and societies. In his ethnographic work, Guardado (2002, 2011, 2018) identifies utilitarian arguments in the discourses of Spanish-speaking parents in migratory contexts that refer to the expected benefits of investing in their children's heritage language education in terms of social mobility: future economic benefits for their children through improved business and employment opportunities. Families construct the maintenance of Spanish through utilitarian discourses that refer to it as a tool for achieving better socioeconomic status (Norton 2000).
- f) **National dimension.** One of the ways in which heritage language skills are valued is that their mastery is linked to the family's place of origin. More than national or ethnic identification through language, this type of valuation refers to the fact that intercultural competencies in heritage language include the ability to interact with the linguistic, cultural, and social space of origin. This is even more evident in families with return expectations or in transnational families with a strong connection to the country of origin. Heritage programs can include content linked to the history and culture of the region of origin not only because of the link between language, culture, and origin, but also within the framework of a conception of the heritage language as an intercultural competence.

### 3 Methodology

The work presented here is a pilot study. Its design is based on the abductive method, i.e. based on the rigorous observation of small cases, the aim is to generate new hypotheses or adjust the formulation of theoretical models, assumptions, or subsequent research questions.

### 3.1 Data collection and sampling

The data collection tool for this study is an online questionnaire aimed, on the one hand, at finding out the reasons why parents decide to use or not to use heritage language programs and, on the other hand, at analyzing parents' attitudes towards Spanish and language maintenance.

The study sample consisted of 50 parents living in Germany with offspring who can be considered heritage speakers of Spanish, that is, bilingual users who know and use their parents' heritage language, regardless of their level of proficiency (Valdés 2005).

The participant pool was constructed from non-probability sampling. The questionnaire was disseminated through social networks used by potential participants (groups of Spanish speakers in Germany on Facebook, Instagram), posters in educational spaces with presence of Spanish heritage speakers (the Institute for Translation at the University of Heidelberg), and personal contacts. Participants could send the questionnaire to other potential participants among their acquaintances (a sampling procedure known as "snowball sampling"). As a result of this procedure, the group of families is mainly concentrated in the federal states of Hesse and Baden-Württemberg, and to a lesser extent in Lower Saxony and Bavaria.

The questionnaire was open for a period of 3 months (November 2019 to February 2020) in which a total of 50 families participated, 18 who did not send their children to bilingual or heritage language programs and 32 who sent or had sent them in the past. Whether the descendants attend Spanish classes and courses is an important variable for the study as it allows us to analyze which discursive factors (reasons and attitudes) are related to the families' decision.

The questionnaire included questions that allowed us to identify the socio-demographic profile of the parents and descendants as well as the linguistic uses of the family. Table 2 summarizes their main characteristics according to their participation in Spanish courses. It is noteworthy that two characteristics predominate in the three groups that define less favorable contexts for the intergenerational transmission of Spanish: they are mostly mixed families in which only one of the parents is a Spanish speaker and most of the descendants were born in Germany.

### 3.2 Variables and analysis procedure

The core of the questionnaire was made up of questions that make it possible, on the one hand, to find out the reasons why parents decide to use or not to use heritage language programs, and, on the other hand, to analyze the attitudes of parents with respect to Spanish and the maintenance of the language. Each of these two variables

**Table 2:** Sociodemographic and linguistic characteristics of the sample.

	Not participating	Participating	Had participated in the past
<b>Child's age</b>	9.8	8.9	27.6
<b>Child's sex</b>			
– Masculine	50%	69%	38%
– Feminine	50%	31%	63%
<b>Child's country of birth</b>			
– Germany	72%	81%	88%
– Spanish-speaking country	22%	13%	13%
– Non Spanish-speaking country	6%	6%	0%
<b>Mixed family composition</b>	83%	88%	81%
<b>Home languages</b>			
– At least one parent speaks only Spanish	83%	69%	56%
– Balanced	6%	0%	19%
– No or little presence of Spanish	11%	31%	25%
<b>Other members of the Spanish-speaking family residing in Germany</b>	78%	69%	86%
<b>Talk to Spanish-speaking family at home at least once a month</b>	59%	56%	81%
<b>Mother's university career</b>	67%	94%	56%
<b>Father's university career</b>	78%	94%	63%

(reasons and attitudes) had its own section in the questionnaire. These are summarized below.

**Reasons.** Reasons are discursive components that provide a direct justification for action. This justification does not necessarily have to be based on exclusive reasons, i.e., parents tend to send their children to Spanish as a heritage language courses for various reasons, although some have greater weight than others in their decision. In the section of the questionnaire dedicated to reasons, participants had to show their agreement or disagreement (10-point scale) with statements referring to the reasons why their offspring attend Spanish educational programs. Each of the statements corresponds to one of the dimensions of heritage language maintenance so that the structure of the questionnaire allows for comparison. Parents of children who did not attend Spanish programs were asked to rate the reasons for not attending from a list of four reasons (see Table 3).

**Attitudes.** Attitudes are evaluative tendencies towards an object or phenomenon relevant to a subject or community. In the case of the intergenerational transmission of Spanish in migratory contexts, the relevant attitudes for families are related to the valuation of Spanish with respect to the family itself or to the

**Table 3:** Reasons for parents to send or not to send their children to Spanish courses.

Reasons for parents to send their children to Spanish courses	Reasons for parents not to send their children to Spanish courses
My child learns to read and write in his/her heritage language.	My child learns to speak his/her heritage language at home.
My child should not forget his or her cultural ties.	I don't want him/her to have to attend any more classes other than regular school classes.
My son/daughter's bilingualism provides him/her with more educational and employment success in the future.	My child does not attend Spanish classes for economic reasons.
The classes promote multicultural values.	My son/daughter does not attend Spanish classes because other people have advised me against it.
The classes help my son/daughter discover his/her own identity.	–
Classes reinforce family bonding.	–

linguistic development of the child. The questionnaire includes 15 statements (see Table 4) on different ways of valuing Spanish and its maintenance in the family that parents had to agree or disagree with (10-point scale). As the table shows, the six dimensions of the maintenance of Spanish considered in this study are represented by two statements for each. Three more statements are added to these: one statement referring to the communitarian value of the heritage language and two statements on the comparative value of German and English with respect to Spanish. The section on attitudes allows us to describe the attitudinal context of the families in itself and in relation to the decision of whether or not to include courses on Spanish as a heritage language or bilingual education programs in their family language management.

The survey results were subjected to an exploratory analysis with two phases. First, the identification of the families with attitudes towards Spanish and its intergenerational transmission was described in terms of their decision to use or not to use educational programs in Spanish for their descendants. The description of the different attitudinal contexts made it possible to analyze which attitudes are correlated with the parents' decision. For this purpose, a logistic regression analysis was performed to select the attitudes with a significant effect on participation or non-participation. Secondly, the main reasons why parents include Spanish educational programs in their family language management and the reasons for not using them are described.

**Table 4:** Attitudes towards the heritage language and its intergenerational transmission.

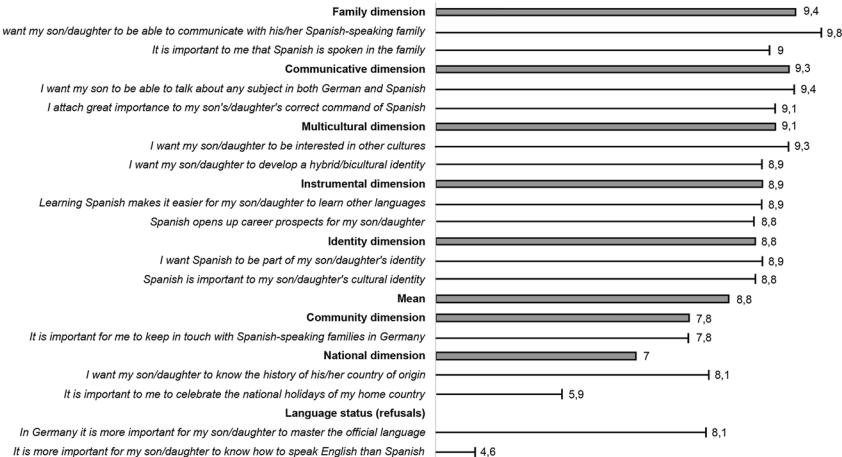
Attitudes
<b>Family dimension</b> I want my son/daughter to be able to communicate with his/her Spanish-speaking family. It is important to me that Spanish is spoken in the family.
<b>Communicative dimension</b> I want my child to be able to talk about any subject in both German and Spanish. I attach great importance to my son's/daughter's correct command of Spanish.
<b>Multicultural dimension</b> I want my son/daughter to be interested in other cultures. I want my son/daughter to develop a hybrid/bicultural identity.
<b>Instrumental dimension</b> Learning Spanish makes it easier for my son/daughter to learn other languages. Spanish opens up career prospects for my son/daughter.
<b>Identity dimension</b> I want Spanish to be part of my son/daughter's identity. Spanish is important to my son/daughter's cultural identity.
<b>Community dimension</b> It is important for me to keep in touch with other Spanish-speaking families in Germany.
<b>National dimension</b> I want my son/daughter to know the history of his/her country of origin. It is important to me to celebrate the national holidays of my home country.
<b>Language status (refusals)</b> In Germany it is more important for my son/daughter to master the official language. It is more important for my son/daughter to know how to speak English than Spanish.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Attitude analysis

#### 4.1.1 Global analysis of attitudes

The analysis of attitudes towards the heritage language and its intergenerational transmission allows us to identify which dimensions are most important to the families. As can be seen in Figure 1, the parents surveyed identify themselves to a greater extent with attitudes linked to the family dimension of Spanish as a heritage language, especially for communicating with the part of their family that speaks Spanish. Secondly, parents value very positively the communicative dimension of the learning of Spanish by their descendants, a learning more focused on developing linguistic competencies to participate in all communicative interactions.



**Figure 1:** Attitudes towards Spanish as a heritage language and its intergenerational transmission (average ratings).

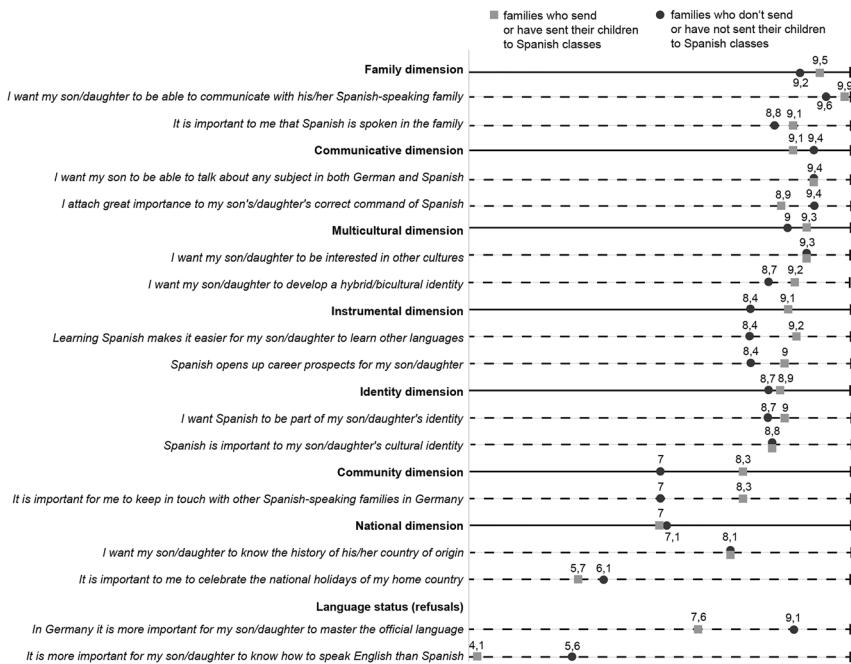
The multicultural, identity, and instrumental dimensions of maintaining the heritage language also receive high ratings, close to 9 points, especially the intention that the child be interested in other cultures (multicultural dimension) and the belief that learning Spanish facilitates learning other languages (instrumental dimension).

Looking at the dimensions with scores below the mean, it is possible to identify a number of attitudes with which families identify less. Apart from attitudes linked to the national dimension, parents identify less with community-type attitudes (“It is important for me to maintain contact with Spanish-speaking families in Germany”) and with those related to linguistic ideologies more favorable to German as the language of the country of residence and integration, and to English.

#### 4.1.2 How attitudes affect family decisions

This section compares the attitudes of families who send or have sent their children to Spanish classes with those of families who do not send their children to Spanish classes. In order to explain which attitudes affect the families’ decision, a two-stage analysis is offered: first, a descriptive analysis of the responses that allows us to observe the main differences; second, a logistic regression analysis that allows us to identify which attitudes influence the families’ decision and what is the direction and magnitude of their effects.

As shown in Figure 2, the largest differences (>1 point) between families are in the unfavorable attitudes toward Spanish. Families who do not send their children to



**Figure 2:** Attitudes towards Spanish as a heritage language and its intergenerational transmission according to the decision of the families to take or not to take Spanish courses (mean values).

Spanish education agree that it is more important for their children to learn German and have a more positive attitude toward English. On the other hand, for parents who do use Spanish education programs, it is more important to maintain contact with other Spanish-speaking families. Another relevant difference is that participating families identify more with instrumental attitudes, especially with the idea that learning Spanish makes it easier for their children to learn other languages.

If differences in the most shared attitudes are considered, different patterns are observed. Participating families assign greater importance to the family dimension, rated with an average of 9.5 points, while non-participating families identify more with attitudes related to the communicative dimensions. This difference is the result of two trends: a) That parents who send their children to Spanish as a heritage language classes show a high interest in the child being able to communicate with the Spanish-speaking part of the family and that parents who do not use Spanish as a heritage language programs value the use of Spanish in the family to a lesser extent. b) That parents who do not send their children to Spanish as a heritage language classes attribute higher value to the correct use of Spanish.

As for the instrumental value of maintaining the heritage language, it is more decisive in the first group (9.1 points) than in the second, and contrasts with the consideration by the second group of the multicultural dimension as the second most valued (9.3 points). No relevant differences are observed between the evaluations of the identity and national dimensions of the two groups. The latter dimension is the one to which less importance is attributed in all cases (around 7 points).

To analyze whether parental attitudes influence whether to send children to Spanish as a heritage language classes, a logistic regression analysis was performed. After adjusting the analysis model by eliminating attitudes that did not report statistically significant results (level  $<0.05$ ), only four attitudes combined explain parents' decision to include Spanish as a heritage language programs in their language management (see Table 5). The model shows a positive effect of the attitudes linked to the desire for the child to be able to communicate with their Spanish-speaking family and the positive effect of learning Spanish to facilitate learning more languages. The other two attitudes, the importance attributed by parents to the child having a correct command of Spanish and the greater importance attributed to mastering the official language (German), show a negative effect.

**Table 5:** Logistic regression analysis with the attitudes that influence the families' decision to take Spanish courses.

	Regression coefficient ( $B$ )	Exp ( $B$ )	p
I attach great importance to my son's/daughter's correct command of Spanish.	-1.421	0.242	0.049
I want my son/daughter to be able to communicate with his/her Spanish-speaking family.	1.666	5.291	0.045
Learning Spanish makes it easier for my son/daughter to learn other languages.	1.35	3.858	0.023
In Germany, it is more important for my son/daughter to master the official language.	-0.98	0.375	0.023
Constant	-6.021	0.002	0.234

## 4.2 Analysis of the reasons

### 4.2.1 Reasons for sending children to Spanish classes

When analyzing the parents' responses on the reasons for taking their children to Spanish as a heritage language programs, it is observed that all the reasons proposed

in the survey are relevant to them, since none of them acquires mean values lower than 5.

The main reason for their child to attend Spanish as a heritage language classes is to learn to read and write in Spanish (Table 6). This reason coincides with the main objective of Spanish as a heritage language programs, especially those aimed at 5- and 6-year-olds. This is a crucial age that coincides with schooling, usually in German, when the heritage language loses its place in the child's environment and has a negative impact on heritage language skills.

**Table 6:** Reasons for taking Spanish courses (average ratings).

Reasons	Both	Participating	Participated	Diff.
My child learns to read and write in his/her heritage language.	9.5	9.3	9.8	0.5
My child should not forget his/her cultural ties.	8.8	8.8	8.7	0.1
My son/daughter's bilingualism provides more educational and employment success in his/her future.	8.7	8.4	8.9	-0.5
The classes promote multicultural values.	8.1	7.9	8.4	-0.5
The classes help my son/daughter discover his/her own identity.	7.4	8.0	6.7	1.3
Classes reinforce family bonding.	7.3	8.6	5.9	2.7

The next most important reason for these parents is the maintenance of cultural ties linked to the heritage language, followed by the idea that supporting the child's bilingual development has positive effects on his or her future educational and occupational success. Among all the reasons proposed, families identify less with those related to the construction of the child's identity and family cohesion.

If we analyze separately the reasons of the families who currently send their children to Spanish classes and those who did so in the past, we observe two very marked trends: the former attribute greater value to Spanish programs for the construction of their child's identity and above all for family cohesion; on the other hand, the families who participated in the past attribute greater importance to the educational and employment success that their child's bilingual competence can provide for his or her future, and to the multicultural values that Spanish classes foster.

#### 4.2.2 Reasons for not participating

Families that do not include heritage language programs in their family language management were asked about the reasons for this decision. As can be seen in

Table 7, the main reason given by parents is that they consider the acquisition of Spanish language skills within the framework of family language socialization to be sufficient. The rest of the reasons proposed by the survey receive much lower ratings. It is worth noting, however, that among them, the reason with which families identify most is the fact that Spanish as a heritage language classes take place outside school hours, a time slot in which it “competes” with other activities.

**Table 7:** Reasons for not taking Spanish courses (average ratings).

Reasons	
My child learns to speak his/her heritage language at home.	8.2
I don't want him/her to have to attend any more classes other than regular school classes.	5.6
My child does not attend Spanish classes for economic reasons.	3.8
My son/daughter does not attend Spanish classes because other people have advised me against it.	1.9

## 5 Discussion

The previous section described the results of the analysis of the attitudes and reasons of Spanish-speaking families regarding the decision to send their children to bilingual or Spanish as a heritage language programs. The analyses conducted point to three aspects that deserve to be commented on in depth.

### 5.1 Family cohesion

The analysis of attitudes showed that family cohesion is the most valued dimension of heritage language among Spanish-speaking families. Parents particularly identify with the desire for their children to be able to communicate with their Spanish-speaking family. The importance of heritage speakers developing balanced bilingualism lies in the fact that limitations in the use of the heritage language hinder communication within and with the extended family, resulting in negative effects on their unity and well-being (De Houwer 2020a; Kouritzin 1999).

Other studies on the value of heritage language for Spanish-speaking families in other contexts have shown that family cohesion is the main motivation for parents to encourage descendants to acquire native proficiency in the heritage language (Guardado 2018). In the case of Spanish-speaking families in Germany, the relevance of family cohesion for the families in the study is related to their transnational profile manifested in a) their internal composition (in the majority, 84%, only one member comes from a Spanish-speaking country), and b) their ties with the Spanish-speaking

part of the family in the country of origin (all families maintain contact with that part of the family, 69% more than once a month).

The analysis of families' reasons for including bilingual and heritage language educational programs in family language management also points to the profile of transnational migration. For families with children in the early stages of primary education, family cohesion is a reason for resorting to bilingual or heritage language educational provision while for families whose children attended in the past and whose children are now adults, family cohesion was an irrelevant reason.

These results point to the need to understand family language management as a not merely private space where the value and role of the heritage language in family construction processes in contexts of hypermobility and hyperconnectivity (King and Lanza 2019) motivates families to invest in external educational resources for the construction of multilingual linguistic repertoires of their descendants. In this sense, it should be noted that the relationship between family cohesion and intergenerational transmission of the heritage language is a two-way relationship: indeed, the most cohesive transnational families tend to practice family management favorable to balanced linguistic socialization (Tannenbaum and Berkovich 2005; Tannenbaum and Howie 2002).

## 5.2 The instrumental dimension

The instrumental dimension of the intergenerational transmission of Spanish is often present among the discourses of migrant families in favor of the heritage language. As has been seen, the most common way of instrumentally valuing the development of a balanced multilingual repertoire is the increase of their future professional opportunities in terms of economic benefits (Guardado 2018).

Among the parents surveyed, the child's future educational and employment success is one of the most important reasons for including Spanish classes in their family language management, especially among families of heritage speakers who participated in the past. As the recent study by Ferre-Pérez et al. (2022) shows, utilitarian values also predominate in the perception of the descendants themselves: the majority of ALCE<sup>1</sup> students identify their main motivation in the instrumental dimension of the courses, namely to obtain a language certificate and, above all, to improve their future job opportunities (Ferre-Pérez et al. 2022).

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<sup>1</sup> As part of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, the ALCE program offers accredited Spanish language and culture courses (from level A1 to C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to children from 7 to 18 years old of Spanish nationality or Spanish parents.

The results of the current study contrast with trends observed among migrant families in Hamburg from countries whose languages do not have the status of Spanish either in the educational system or in the social perception of languages<sup>2</sup> (Lengyel and Neumann 2017). Parents in these families do not attach much importance to the utilitarian aspects derived from sending children to heritage language classes or their intergenerational transmission. The idea that the development of multilingual language skills is associated with increased language capital and future economic and occupational returns often leads parents to support language learning of family languages with higher perceived importance (see Ballweg 2019; Moreno-Fernández and Álvarez Mella 2022, for the concept of language importance). Indeed, the results of the presented study show that Spanish-speaking families who consider that German should have more weight in their children's linguistic repertoire are less likely to include Spanish programs in their family language management.

As it has been argued (see Section 2), the instrumental dimension of heritage languages also manifests itself in values more related to accessibility than to their socioeconomic utility. The analysis of attitudes showed that believing that learning Spanish makes it easier for one's child to learn more languages increases the likelihood that families will send their children to Spanish programs. This type of attitudes favorable to building multilingual repertoires is very frequent in migrant families, also from other backgrounds (Lengyel and Neumann 2017).

### 5.3 Heritage language programs versus home socialization

Parents' main reason for not sending their children to heritage language programs is that their children learn Spanish at home. This suggests that for these parents, the activities carried out at home or family interaction in Spanish is sufficient for the child's heritage language linguistic development. As it has been seen, parents develop a series of learning strategies within the family that are aimed at fostering the acquisition of Spanish skills. These may be purely communicative, but parents also develop literacy activities to foster the acquisition of skills. This could be the case among the parents surveyed, as they value very positively both the development of a high communicative ability of the child in Spanish and a correct use of the language. Moreover, as the regression analysis showed, that parents value their children's having a correct command of Spanish is highly associated with the decision not to resort to heritage programs.

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2 The languages of the families are Turkish, Russian, Polish, Dari/Farsi, Twi, Arabic, Serbo-Croatian, and Albanian.

The second relevant reason for not sending children to Spanish as a heritage language programs is the extra burden of the out-of-school activity (“I don’t want him/her to have to attend more classes apart from regular school classes”). Family logistics is a relevant factor for the parents’ decision, more so if one considers that in Germany. Schedule incompatibility and school workload are the most frequent reasons for dropping out of Spanish as a heritage language courses (Ferre-Pérez et al. 2022).

Some other studies have shown the relevance of the economic and educational situation of the family as an influential factor in the educational decisions and opportunities (Potowski and Rothman 2011). However, the sample of this study does not allow analysis of this factor, given that the families surveyed belonged to a similar socio-cultural level.

## 6 Conclusion

Throughout the sections of the article, the results of an exploratory study have been presented. The objective was to analyze the perception of families and their attitudes in order to understand the modes of linguistic management of Spanish-speaking families in migratory contexts and their relationship with educational spaces. The analysis of attitudes showed that the positive valuation of the family and instrumental dimensions of heritage language influence families to include bilingual programs or heritage language classes in their family language management.

The valuing of Spanish for family cohesion, especially for maintaining ties with Spanish-speaking family in the country of origin, is the most important attitudinal factor in parents’ decision to send their children to Spanish as a heritage language classes. The expectation of family cohesion through the use of Spanish also forms part of the set of reasons why parents make the decision to resort to outside classes or bilingual Spanish programs, an observation that underscores its weight. In this sense, the results point to the role of the heritage language in the construction of Spanish-speaking transnational families and to the need to consider this dimension both from the perspective of the study of family language policies and from educational approaches.

Regarding the instrumental dimension of the heritage languages, it should be considered that Spanish bilingual programs and heritage language courses usually underline the instrumental outcomes of acquiring bilingual competence, especially in terms of future educational and employment prospects. However, the results of this paper point to the advantages of balanced bilingualism for learning more languages as a relevant factor for parents investing in Spanish educational programs.

Another relevant aspect that emerges from the results of the study is that linguistic socialization practices within the family are a real alternative for Spanish-speaking families, even considering that these parents value their children's correct use of Spanish very highly. Indeed, we expected positive attitudes toward correct Spanish to be more related to the use of educational programs, especially because the main objective of Spanish courses (especially the more institutionalized ones) is to provide students with literacy skills and guarantee the development of a Spanish that conforms to the linguistic norm. The opposite finding suggests either the importance of literacy activities at home or families having a more communicative than formal understanding of correct Spanish usage.

The study is impacted by the limitations inherent to an exploratory analysis. Nonetheless, the results presented here point to thematic areas of research that allow for a better understanding of the relationships between the two most important spaces of linguistic socialization: family and education.

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