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Community-based initiatives and Spanish as a Heritage Language in Germany*

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Abstract: Migration from Spanish-speaking countries into Germany has increased during the last 30 years. Demographic studies indicate that a large proportion are young women migrating to marry German nationals and start families (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020). The study looks at what motivates these migrants to create initiatives to maintain Spanish as a heritage language. Using a narrative ethnographic approach (He 2021), I analyze interviews of founders of 6 community initiatives of Spanish as a heritage language in Germany to understand what their motivations are and what roles they play in their communities. I argue that the people who create these associations are engaging in a strategy of "commoning care work" (Dengler & Lang 2021) by taking the task of teaching the family language, understood to be invisible work (Okita 2002), outside the home domain.

Key words: community initiatives, Spanish as a heritage language, family language work

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1. Introduction

During the last 30 years there has been an increase in the amount of migration coming from Spanish-speaking countries to Germany. A significant part of this migration is, on average, younger, more female and intending to form a family (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020). The migrants that want to maintain Spanish as a family language are confronted with a country that, despite being home to many linguistic communities, sees itself as a (German) monolingual nation (Ellis et al. 2010) and has limited spaces where they and their children can speak Spanish. The exposure to Spanish is very limited in particular for children who come from mixed marriages (between a German national and a Spanish-speaker): their daily lives happen in German, and they only have one parent at home that can provide input of the minority language.

Despite these facts, there is a strong desire from migrants to transmit Spanish to the next generation because of an emotional attachment to their mother tongue (e.g. Little 2020), or because of an awareness of the cognitive benefits that an additional language can have for the children (e.g. Piller & Gerber 2021). The parents can find such spaces in bilingual schools, heritage language programs provided by the Governments of Spanish-speaking countries or by German states, or in community initiatives. Though there has been an increase in the interest of Spanish as a foreign language, which can be seen in the presence of Spanish in the German education system taught as a subject or as part of a bilingual program, spaces for heritage language learners are still scarce. The current offer of programs provided by foreign or national Governments is quite low, attending less than 5% of descendants of at least one Spanish-speaking parent (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020). This has left parents looking for spaces beyond the home and school where their children can be in touch with the language and culture of Spanish-speaking countries, which can be quantified by the more than 100 initiatives in Germany dedicated to the maintenance of Spanish as a heritage language (Loureda Lamas et al. 2022).

Since most of these community initiatives operate through voluntary work, I wanted to approach the subject by answering the following question:

Why do people create associations to maintain Spanish as a Heritage Language in Germany?

Throughout the study, I argue that the people who create these associations are taking the task of teaching the family language, understood to be invisible work (Okita 2002), outside the home domain and engaging in a strategy of "commoning care work" proposed by feminist scholars Dengler and Lang (2021). The focus on the people that do associative work is meant to highlight what motivates them to start an

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initiative and to identify what role(s) they play for the community.

Community initiatives have not received as much attention from heritage language scholarship as other domains as the home or education and yet they have been shown to be helpful for maintaining the language and cultural knowledge (see e.g. Lee & Wright 2014; Lee & Chen-Wu 2021). Moreover, because they are grassroots projects, they can direct the resources available to them towards the needs of the community, resulting in a broad range of initiatives. On the flip side, they are dependent on mostly voluntary work and can be vulnerable to external forces. It then requires a significant effort from the organizers to maintain the initiatives operating smoothly.

The structure of this work is as follows: the first section lays out the concepts that support the study: heritage language maintenance in the home and at school, care work as it relates to heritage language transmission and community initiatives as strategies for commoning care, followed by the context of Spanish as a heritage language in Germany. The next section describes the narrative ethnographic methodology followed and the process of data collection and analysis. The Analysis section showcases the results from the interviews along two themes: motivations and functions. The discussion section links the findings of the study with the literature of heritage language maintenance and commoning care work. Finally, the conclusions include summary findings and future avenues for research.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1 Heritage language maintenance

Throughout this study, I follow Montrul and Polinsky (2021) in their use of the following definition of heritage language (from hereon HL): "A language qualifies as a heritage language if it is a language spoken at home or otherwise readily available to young children, and crucially this language is not a dominant language of the larger (national) society" (Rothman 2009, p. 156 in 2021, p. 1). In this sense, Spanish can be considered an HL in Germany even if internationally it is a language spoken by millions of people, because it is not a dominant language. HL maintenance scholarship has focused on the different domains where the language is used: family or home, friendship, worship or religion, secular societies and clubs, work, and education (Pauwels 2016). Here I focus on the two most relevant domains for the transmission of an HL, namely, home and school.

Family

Whether an HL is passed on to the next generation is a question that all parents and speakers of an HL are faced with. Arguments against the transmission of a migratory language include language ideologies in the host country that favor monolingualism and a desire to fully assimilate into the receiving country (Moreno-Fernández 2009), or the parents' desire that the child is not left behind in school (e.g. Okita 2002). On the contrary, arguments for the transmission include "cognitive, cultural, and economic benefits" (Montrul & Polinsky 2021, p. 4), a high tolerance within the receiving country for multilingualism (Moreno-Fernández 2009), and close ties to the country of origin or its cultural identity (e.g. Guardado 2018), among others.

The use of the HL in the home domain has been consistently identified as essential for providing exposure and helping in the transmission to the next generation (Pauwels 2016), although not without its problems (see Guardado 2018). As Pauwels (2016) has noted, these efforts will vary depending on whether both parents speak the heritage language, one of them speaks the majority language, or both speak different minority languages and may have a limited competence in each other's language. In the first case, using the minority language at home is the most natural or obvious choice, but it is not so in the other cases. Little (2020) conceptualized a framework for HL identities along two axes: one axis has to do with the value assigned to the language and ranges from pragmatic or instrumental to emotional; the other maps the importance of a language from essential to peripheral. The essential/emotional quadrant may include someone who depends on their children to translate for them, while someone on the peripheral/pragmatic quadrant may see the language only as an added value for visiting relatives in the home country (2020). The parents' place within the framework may differ from that of their children, and even from each other, as she noted in her study: while several mothers were placed in the essential/emotional quadrant, that was not necessarily the case for spouses or children. Especially if one or both parents have a high knowledge of the majority language, the children will be less likely to attach an emotional value to the HL (Little 2020). It then falls on the parents to resist outside forces when they are surrounded by the dominant language and pressures to assimilate and create a favorable space for HL maintenance within the home (Guardado 2018; Little 2020).

When one parent is a speaker of the majority language, exposure to the minority language is very limited, as the child will be socialized in the majority language outside the home and will only have one parent inside providing input of the minority language (Pauwels 2016; Guardado 2018). In this case, families often rely on the extended family (like grandparents, who are less likely to speak the language of the host country) to increase the input of the language. Recently, this task has been made easier with the surge of video calling applications, but can be affected by differences in time zones or limited access to technology. As the children exposed to the HL grow up, they may accept or reject their parents' ideas about their HL; ultimately, the choice to maintain the minority language will depend on them.

Policies at home range from using only the HL to using only the majority language, with variance in between. A very popular method in highly educated families is the one-parent one-language strategy (one grandparent or child carer can also be the one responsible for a language) (see e.g. Hirsch & Kayam 2020; Piller & Gerber 2021), however, Pauwels (2016) has underscored, that it "may not be realistic or suited for the majority of families trying to keep a heritage or minority language going (p. 122). Another more relaxed approach is one where parents sometimes mix the languages (see e.g. Guardado's (2018) profiles of 6 families using diverse strategies to maintain Spanish as an HL in migrants living in Canada).

It should be noted that the literature generally assumes family to be a heteronormative couple and their children, and the typical constellations studied are nuclear or extended families, though Pauwels (2016) has called for problematizing this notion in favor of diverse family compositions (e.g. single parents, LGBTQ+ couples, blended families, transnational families, etc.).

Education

After the family domain, education is understood as the most important domain for ensuring that an HL is successfully transmitted (Pauwels 2016), and yet, there has been a historical tendency in education, at least in the United States, to categorize young learners from bilingual households in relation to their proficiency in the majority language, and thus to offer temporary programs for those still learning to transition onto exclusively majority language classes (Potowski 2021). However, the last twenty years have seen a change in this trend, with speakers of minority languages that wish to maintain their languages and to reinforce their literacy skills by receiving formal instruction (Montrul 2009). There is some difficulty in having standardized classes and goals for HL learners who all have different levels of proficiency than their peers, which is why HL programs are fundamentally different from a foreign language course (Montrul 2009).

A popular form of bilingual education aimed at both preserving the HL and developing the majority language literacy is the dual immersion program. This model uses the majority and minority language in equal parts and can accept both HL speakers and children without a migratory background that want to learn the language and is taught during kindergarten and elementary school (Potowski 2021). Potowski has reported that, contrary to popular belief, in bilingual programs of HL in the United States, and in particular dual immersion, the students who had more exposure to the HL performed better in English tests, for which she gave three possible explanations: a lower chance of falling behind in school if they learn in their L1 while they learn English, the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, and a positive regard of their linguistic knowledge (2021). Thus, not only do the HL learners not fall behind in learning the majority language, but they actually perform better if they are exposed to the two languages in a structured way (Potowski 2021). But HL speakers may not fully develop or maintain their home language if instruction is interrupted or if the domains for using the language are very limited (Montrul 2014).

2.2 Heritage language transmission as care work

Caring activities, both paid and unpaid, have been a focus of feminist scholarship for at least five decades (see England 2005 for a review of several frameworks used in the literature). They are defined by Nancy Fraser as activities that are mostly done by women and outside the productive sphere, namely, "the work of birthing and socializing the young [...], caring for the old, maintaining households, building communities, and sustaining the shared meanings, affective dispositions and horizons of value that underpin social cooperation" (2016, p. 101). These activities are essential to forming societies and social beings. Feminist economics scholars argue that they are also crucial for the current economic models to function (e.g. Jochimsen and Knobloch 1997). Nonetheless, they have historically been invisible, undervalued and seen as a given.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimates that 47% of women worldwide are active in the workforce and, at the same time, they are still disproportionately in charge of caring activities (2020). It should also be noted that, while in the developed nations the proportion women in the workforce is even higher (over 50% for Europe and North America, and over 60% for Australia and New Zealand), they have in turn hired other —poorer, racialized— women to fill in the gap left at home. This commodification has had a visible impact on migratory trends: according to a report from the International Migration Office, migration, specifically to perform domestic work, accounted for around 8.5 million female migrants (and 3 million men) mostly concentrated in high-income countries as of 2013 (ILO 2015), resulting in increasing global care chains (Amrith 2015; Hochschild 2000; Lutz 2017; 2018). Feminist scholarship has succeeded in 'making the invisible visible', nonetheless, care work is still very much a feminized domain and the expectation that mothers and women in general will perform caring activities persists.

Family language work

The link between care work and migration has been studied extensively in the context of domestic service[1]. A less studied link between care work and migration has to do with caring activities in relation to language, either in monolingual migrant families or in bilingual or mixed families. This issue was raised by Okita (2002) in her study of Japanese women married to English men and raising their

[1] see e.g. van Nederveen Meerkerk 2017 for a historical global overview on the topic.

children bilingually. She argued that language competence was "central to mothers' assigned childrearing work" and thus invisible (p. 12), particularly when the language of one (or both) of the parents is not the majority language in the country where they live. Moreover, whether the child successfully maintains the home language or not is usually attributed to the mothers' efforts (Okita 2002). The women who have migrated and live in these arrangements, she argued, feel additional anxiety when they become mothers that arise from childrearing in a foreign country, job-related difficulties, the language responsibility and a sense that it has to start as soon as possible, paired with the fact the the husbands are likely to have a role as providers (pp. 138-142). These issues were more salient in the younger mothers (whom she calls 'pro-activist'), which led the author to believe that mothering has become more intensive with time.

More recent studies indicate this is still the case, as argued by Torsh (2020; 2022), who highlighted the gendered nature of family language maintenance: in her interviews with linguistic intermarried families in Australia, she noticed that the mothers were frequently held responsible for raising their children bilingually, especially when they were the minority speakers, while at the same time they were pressured if the kids were perceived to fall behind in the majority language. At the same time, fathers seem to have a secondary role and are perceived as 'helpers' (Torsh 2020). Even when the mothers were not speakers of the HL, their interviews showed how they felt pressure to maintain the minority language in the house, encouraging the husband to speak the HL with their children, and designating time for her and her children to interact with audiovisual resources in the HL (Torsh 2022). Similarly, Piller and Gerber (2021) examined an online forum where Australian parents in mixed marriages discussed questions about raising bilingual children and found that there seems to be a consensus about using the one-parent one-language strategy in order to form two clear sets of languages. However, they concluded that the end result will be very different whether the mother is the speaker of the majority or minority language: as the parent expected to do the language work in the family, woman is more likely to be successful in maintaining the HL when she is the minority speaker, while being the majority speaker mother will reinforce the majority language, in this case English, in addition to the external input the children receive, while acting as a language 'manager' in the family (Piller & Gerber 2021).

Several studies have found that women show less language shift than men. This, Pauwels (2016) has argued, can be explained by gendered expectations of men and women in the migrant or host communities, making the former the expected breadwinners and the latter the "homemakers and caregivers for (young) children": "The home, seen as a woman's primary domain, is for many minority and immigrant communities the primary locus for the use of the heritage or minority language and for fostering the minority's cultural and other traditions" (p. 87). Moreover, this dynamic can lead to less exposure to the dominant language, creating more dependence on the migrant language and some degree of isolation from the community (Pauwels 2016; Torsh 2022). The gendered expectations are not exclusive to what can be perceived as more traditional migrant communities, as they are also present for professionally trained women from the so-called Global North, either if they remain working (e.g. academic mothers in Hirsch & Kayam 2020), or they abandon or are unable to access the workplace and dedicate themselves to child-rearing.

Commoning care

As care work is made more visible in some areas (but not so much in others, as is the case with language work), the scholarship has moved beyond making the work visible and proposing transformative ways to engage with it. Feminist scholars Dengler and Lang (2021), drawing from practices found throughout decolonial regions, have proposed a 'commoning of care' strategy as a way of recognizing the invisible labor of caring and moving away from the productive/reproductive labor dichotomy into a more solidary approach instead. They define it as "a communal, largely unpaid, yet socially recognized mode of reproduction [that] can be a fruitful way of envisioning (many but not all, mostly day-to-day) caring activities beyond the deep separation structure between a visible and valued "productive sphere" and an invisible and devalued "reproductive sphere" on which capitalist economies rely" (2021, p. 3). The caring commons, then, do not belong to either the private or the public, but a third sphere, and they take the caring activities from outside the home domain into the community.

In migratory groups, a manifestation of commoning the language work can be seen in the community initiatives aimed at maintaining the HL, be them informal play groups, Saturday schools, or culture clubs (Lee & Chen-Wu 2021). In diasporic contexts, migrant communities effectively function as extended families, as Guardado has argued, and are "a key means of helping families socialize their children into favourable linguistic ideologies and as a source of essential types of support to adults" (2018, p. 126). Within the Hispanic community initiatives in British Columbia, he identified three functions of these support types: creating language and cultural spaces, linguistic and cultural validation, and social relations. A similar claim can be seen in Utomo's (2014) autoethnographic study of a group of Indonesian women in Australia attending first a play group and later community language and culture clubs. She argued that they engaged in "migrant mothering in a collective setting" which helped to create a transnational identity in the children, even when the mothers' desires of language proficiency were not met (2014). The club also functioned as a place where children could meet and identify with others like them.

Community language education has been described as very diverse in size, aims, types of activities, and more (e.g. Lee & Wright

2014; Lee & Chen-Wu 2021). However, they share a flexibility in setting learning outcomes depending on the local conditions. In this sense, the migrant community, most usually parents, use the available resources to try to cover the needs of their children, effectively engaging in language planning at a micro-level (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech 2014).

2.3 Spanish as a Heritage Language in Germany

In 2019, there were 266,955 migrants from Spanish-speaking countries living in Germany[2], which accounted for 2.5% of the migrant population and 0.4% of the total population (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020). Broadly speaking, this group can be separated into migrants coming from Spain (65,9%) and from Spanish-speaking countries in America (44,1%), as these profiles are distinct in three demographic aspects, namely, age, year of migration, and gender: the Spanish population is relatively young compared to the national average but is more evenly distributed along the age pyramid, has a longer migratory tradition, and a larger proportion of men (51,9%); on the other hand, the Iberoamerican[3] migration is younger —mostly people aged between 25-45 years—, more recent, and has a higher proportion of women (57,9%) (2020, p. 57).

Of particular interest for this study is the gender difference within these populations, which differs from more male-prevalent patterns of migration from other regions like Northern Africa or Western Asia (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020). To shed light into the high percentage of women migrating from Iberoamerica the following data is relevant: first, more than half of the Iberoamerican migrants have stated family reunification or formation as the reason for migration, as opposed to a little over 40% of the Spanish population; second, the percentage of Iberoamerican migrants married to German citizens (72,8%) is significantly higher than that of the Spanish population (44,2%); third, from the nationalizations reported from the year 2000 to 2018, the amount of women from Spanish-speaking countries (63,9%) was almost double than their male counterparts (36,1%) —65,4% of Iberoamerican women and 55,8% of Spanish women, compared to 34,6% of men and 44,1% of Spanish men — and fourth, almost 60% of the nationalized Spanish speakers overall were aged between 25-45 (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020). All of these together suggest that a large amount of the Iberoamerican migration are women marrying, many of them German nationals, and creating families. Previous studies have also indicated that women may have more positive attitudes towards transmission of a migratory language, although there is variance across migrant groups (Alvarez Mella 2019; see Pauwels 2016 for a nuanced account on this topic). The higher proportion of male migration from Spain is in part rooted to historical waves of migration of guest workers during the 60s and 70s[4] and following the 2008 economic crisis in Spain (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020).

Loureda Lamas et al. (2022) estimated the number of descendants of Spanish-speakers living in Germany around 150,000. Only 6,865 of those children attended courses of Spanish as an HL offered by the Spanish consulate or by the German state (Mediendienst Integration 2022). The increase in the number of migrants coming from Latin America and their inability to access heritage language programs funded by the Spanish government such as the Spanish Language and Culture programs (ALCE), means that there is a shortage of available courses, leaving the families to look for alternatives that help them with the transmission of Spanish. The demand for such programs can be seen on one hand, on the amount of Spanish-German bilingual education programs in the country: in 2020 there were 70 preschools (Kitas) and 29 elementary schools (Schulen), totaling 99 programs and placing Spanish in fourth place, only behind English, French, and Danish. On the other hand, the demand can be seen in the number of programs that offer Spanish as an HL in Germany. In 2019 Loureda Lamas et al. (2020; 2022) identified 111 such programs (Figure 1): 25 from public German and Spanish entities, 59 from private education initiatives or community-based initiatives, and 27 from German or Spanish-German religious organizations.

3. Methodology

I follow He (2021) in using a narrative-ethnographic approach for HL research. This qualitative approach, she argues, is useful for looking at phenomena not as static events, but as dynamic and context-dependent, and it is especially relevant in HL research because it "highlights the fact that the heritage culture has a complex, developing, transnational, intercultural, cross-linguistic, and hybrid life" (He 2021, p. 506). Narratives can be used to look at the evolution of HL speakers across their lives, considering the aspects that affect or change decisions regarding the increase or decrease in using the HL. In that same line, it can map the trajectory of the people behind the

[2] Newer data from the Statistisches Bundesamt (2024) reports a higher number for 2023, 343,050 (including 130 people from Equatorial Guinea, not listed in the data from 2019). Nonetheless, the study will refer to the 2019 numbers, as Loureda Lamas et al. (2020; 2022) were the main sources consulted for this section and the proportion of the population remains virtually unchanged when considering the latest census.

[3] The authors use the term Iberoamerica to refer to the Americas excluding the United States and Canada, "that is, the one more directly or indirectly tied to historical processes that culturally link it with Spain and Portugal" (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020, p. 35).

[4] See Muñoz Sánchez (2012) for an account of the Spanish migration linked to the working program in Germany.

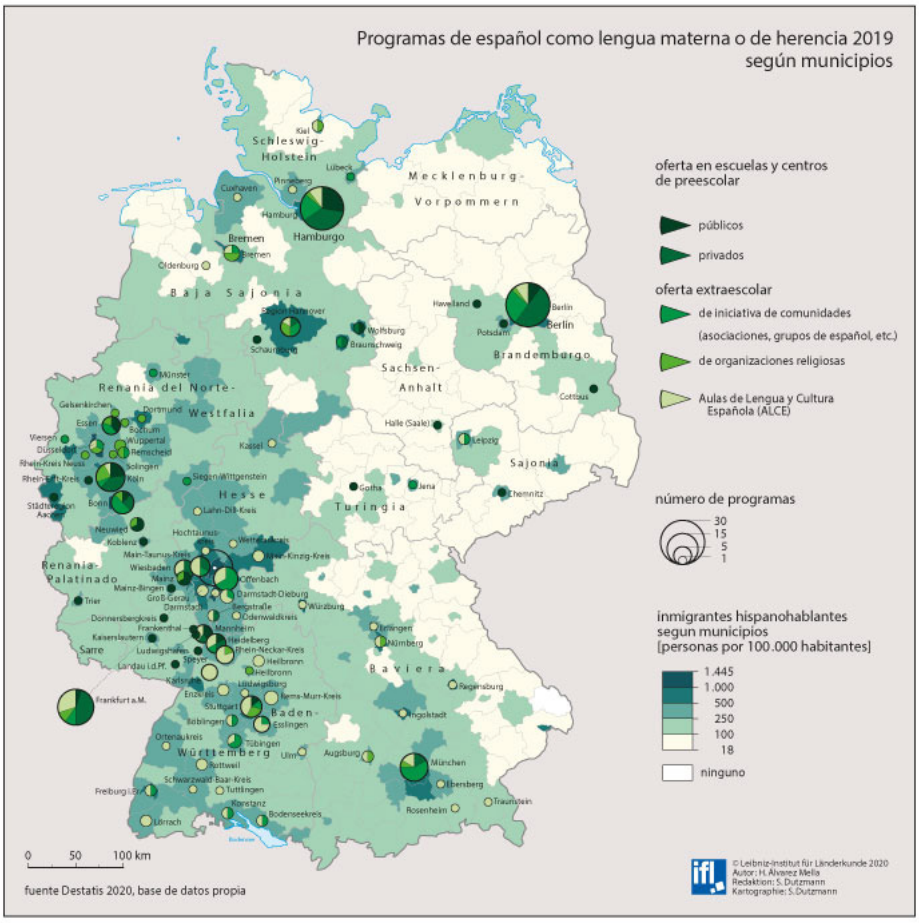

Figure 1: Spanish as a mother tongue or heritage language program (2019) (Loureda Lamas et al. 2022, p. 81) [5]

HL initiatives and shed light onto the personal reason they have for creating initiatives, how they understand the role they play within the community, and in what ways do the members of initiatives adapt to external influences, both from within and without the community. As such, this study is not meant to find qualities that apply to the totality of the group, but rather understand why the HL speakers interviewed took the road into community-based organization.

3.1 Data collection

During July 2024 I contacted 75 initiatives of community-organized programs of Spanish as a HL in Germany via email. The associations were identified through three methods: first, from a public listing of the bilingual Kindertagesstätte, or nurseries, colloquially known as Kitas, in Berlin (Berlin Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Familie 2024), I contacted 16 that were listed as Eltern-Initiativ-Kindertagesstätte (EKT), or parent initiatives, and had Spanish-German as a language pair (in some cases they also had a third language, either English or Portuguese); second, from a list of Spanish associations published by the Spanish Department of Labor, Migration, and Social Security in Germany (2024) I contacted 38 that mentioned the conservation of Spanish language on their online websites —within this group, five associations had previously collaborated in a different project; and third, the remaining 21 associations were identified via an online search looking for initiatives based in other federal regions or not listed. Out of all the contacted initiatives I received 11 replies and conducted 6 interviews online with a duration between 45 minutes and 1 hour. I transcribed the interviews in full with help from Microsoft Word's

[5] A digital version of this map can be accessed through the online version of the book (Loureda Lamas et al. 2022): https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/espanol_europa/espanol_alemania_precovid/cap5.htm

transcription tool. Afterwards, I corroborated the transcriptions' accuracy by listening to the recordings and making some corrections.

3.2 Data coding

The interviews followed a chronological axis, focusing on four main points in the history of the initiatives: the incubation period, the beginnings, the evolution, and the plans for the future. The through line was temporal and allowed me to look at the initiatives not as a fixed point but as a work in progress. At the same time, chronological narration highlighted the individual reasons that moved people to create these community spaces in relation to their own biographies. The obtained data was coded along three themes: motivations, functions, and evolution of the initiatives. This work analyzes the results of the first two themes.

3.3 Profile of the initiatives

The initiatives that participated in this research can be classified as three distinct types from the standpoint of their target groups and goals (see Table 1): the first one, associations for integration, is exemplified by CISNE Hannover e.V. and Aliadas, whose target group is the Spanish-speakers who have migrated to Germany, and the Deutsch-Spanische Freundschaft, which has the same target group plus other forcibly displaced migrant groups; the second type are educational initiatives aimed at the children of the Spanish-speaking migrations, which includes the two daycares Manuelita Kita and Pinta Caminos; the third one is a community initiative with the aim to be a cultural space and a meeting place for Spanish and Spanish-speaking migrants, with a historical link to the first wave of Spanish migration into Germany, as is the case of the Spanischsprachige Gemeinde Siegerland.

The participants were in most cases in a leadership position within the initiative, as founders, president, or members of the board, with one exception, the interviewee from CISNE, who had been a volunteer within the initiative for the last two years. One of the initiatives, Aliadas, was explicitly feminist and oriented to a female public, although it also received male migrants on occasion, and the others aimed at a general public. Nonetheless, six out of the seven people interviewed for this study were women, the only exception being the interviewee from the Spanischsprachige Gemeinde Siegerland. Almost all the participants were themselves migrants from Spanish-speaking countries: three from Spain, two from Chile, one from Argentina, the sole exception was one of the participants, who was a German native with a trajectory of working with bilingual education.

The participating initiatives mostly fall in line with trends within the Spanish-speaking population in Germany: most of the Spanish programs are located in Western Germany, and in particular in urban centers with a high concentration of Spanish-speaking migrants. With the exception of the Deutsch-Spanische Freundschaft located in Leipzig, all of the participating initiatives are located in urban centers in the West, three of them from the North Rhein-Westphalia state (two of those in Cologne and one in Siegen, not a particularly large urban center but a region with important Hispanic migration), one from Munich, the capital of Bavaria, and another from the Hannover region in Lower Saxony.

Initiative name	Initiative type	Target group(s)	Location
Aliadas	Association for integration	Spanish-speaking women and mother migrants	Cologne, NRW
CISNE Hannover e.V.	Association for integration	Spanish-speaking migrants	Hannover. Lower Saxony
Deutsch-Spanische Freundschaft	Association for integration	Spanish-speaking migrants and other forcibly displaced migrant groups	Leipzig, Saxony
Manuelita Kita	Education initiative	Children (6 months-6 years) of Spanish-speaking families	Munich, Bavaria
Pinta Caminos	Education initiative	Children (1-3 years) of Spanish-speaking families	Cologne, NRW
Spanischsprachige Gemeinde Siegerland	Community initiative	Spanish-speaking migrants	Siegen, NRW

Table 1: Initiatives participating in the research classified by type, target group(s), and location.

Figure 2: Location of the participating initiatives

4. Analysis

4.1 Motivations

Community building

The through line in all the interviews is the desire of the founders to create a sense of community, expressed as having a shared language and experiencing similar challenges as migrants in Germany. The narratives highlight that the people behind these initiatives want to help the community out, to repay the help they received from migrants already living in Germany, to create a space where people can talk in their mother tongue, and to strengthen the bonds that already exist within the community. The use of Spanish will be explored in this section in relation to a sense of community, and it will also be further developed in the next section linked to HL maintenance.

The interviews reflected that an important piece to build a sense of community was the shared language. The participants were aware of the diversity of nations and cultures that gather in the associations, but this was seen as cultural enrichment and it was understood that there was a higher unifying characteristic creating a sense of community that came from having Spanish as a mother tongue:

> In the end, it doesn't matter how well integrated you are in the country [Germany], you need that exchange with your language [Spanish], not even mentioning culture, because imagine how many Spanish-speaking countries there are and we are so

> many cultures. My husband, for example, is Peruvian and in many ways we were not educated the same way, we were not raised the same way. So imagine when in a group we have women from Mexico, Colombia, Spain, Chile, Argentina, or even inside Spain, it depends on the region. I mean, that is also, we also have to look at it from the cultural enrichment point of view. (Participant 3, 31.07, 2024)

The participant mentions different nationalities and even highlights the cultural differences between her (Spanish) upbringing and that of his Peruvian partner as an example, and yet they are all recognized as a single wider community, that of Spanish-speakers.

Spanish was not only seen as a convenient vehicle to communicate, but it was also characterized as a necessity: the use of the language was paired with the word 'need' and with possessives, 'your language', 'our mother tongue' repeatedly. The use of Spanish was not related to a lack of German proficiency, but rather to an emotional value assigned to the language, as it was paired with personal topics such as migratory grief, pregnancy, and motherhood:

> Now there is also a group of Aliadas in maternity, where the moms go and talk, they exchange, *that need of being able to ask in your language* [...] There are women in this group that are not yet pregnant, that are thinking of becoming pregnant, so... being able to ask questions and know that [the more experienced mothers] will answer and you will understand everything they say (Participant 3, 31.07, 2024, my emphasis)

The initiatives seem to act as a support system and their use of Spanish to create a connection between the participants, which is even more relevant if they have recently migrated and do not have a good understanding of the language, or just do not feel the same level of comfort in sharing intimate experiences in a foreign language. Sense of community is built upon the shared language which creates a safe space for the members to speak openly, understand, and feel understood.

The three interviewees from the initiatives aimed at integration, CISNE, the DSF, and Aliadas, mentioned that a reason why they were part of the association was solidarity, they wanted to repay the community for the help they received as newcomers. This suggests that even before the initiatives were established, there was a network of Spanish-speaking migrants that met more or less formally —in cultural centers or religious charities, for example— where the more established migrants helped the newcomers with questions of all sorts. The president of the DSF explained why she was interested in creating the initiative:

> Since I arrived here, I saw the possibility of helping other newcomers in the process of emigrating that I myself experienced, of learning the language, of not knowing where to go... I had the fortune of having Spanish-speaking people and people living in Leipzig for a long time by my side, who guided me. And then the association helped me to grow as a person (Participant 2, 23.07, 2024b)

The support she received motivated her to be that support for other newcomers, and it was one of the reasons why many people who benefitted from the association later stayed as volunteers themselves. The interview with a founder of Aliadas also mentioned that they wanted to create a space to help other women to deal with issues they had already faced on arrival. It then seems that in the community there is a solidarity chain of support that is highly valued.

Beside the work they do at the initiatives, it is also notable that four of the six participants mentioned being active in other associations in their cities, either within or even outside the Spanish-speaking community, before or during their involvement with the initiatives in the study. The president of the SGS recalled being a member of the Spanish parents' association, as well as president and vice president of two state departments dealing with foreigners and integration; the founder of the DSF was involved in a nationwide refugee program which allowed her to open a space for other migrant groups that arrived in the city; the interviewee from Aliadas had a long trajectory of working with new or struggling associations of Spanish parents to assist them with the legal procedures and bureaucracy required to function; and the founder of Manuelita-Kita worked for years in a Eltern-Initiative, a daycare founded by parents for Spanish-speaking children. The interviews suggest that the people behind the associations have a deep involvement with the Spanish-speaking community and beyond. The initiatives also worked alongside other community initiatives or state apparatus, suggesting that alliances and a network of associations is key to their survival.

Heritage language maintenance

A motivation that was highlighted particularly, but not only, by the education initiatives was the transmission of cultural and linguistic values of Spanish-speakers onto the next generation, echoing Guardado's (2018) notion that in the absence of an extended family in diaspora, "it takes a village to maintain a minority language" (p. 125). Listening to and learning Spanish was a high priority for most of the associations and linked to the emotional attachment of the parents with their mother tongue, a sense that the majority language will dominate the linguistic landscape, and a resistance to lose an important part of one's roots. The roots metaphor is commonly used by parents in the context of HL transmission (see e.g. Bürki 2023).

The participants understood that community initiatives were essential for helping the migrant parents with language transmission and identity formation. The founder of Pinta Caminos emphasized the parents' emotional attachment to the Spanish and how important they felt it was to maintain it:

> When I arrived in Germany, I realized that there was, there was a huge need among the families, especially the working mothers, that wished their children could continue learning or listening to Spanish, regardless of where they came from [...] that is how Pinta Caminos was founded, because of a need, as I mentioned before, *the need from the mothers or the wish of the mothers that those kids keep listening their mother tongue*. (Participant 1, 23.07, 2024a, my emphasis)

The perception of this need comes in part, from the knowledge that the HL is already limited in the life of the second generation: several participants recognized a pattern of Latin American mothers married to German spouses. In many cases, such as when the fathers did not know Spanish (this was mentioned by several participants, adding that sometimes these couples use English as a common language at home), this meant that mothers were the children's only source for learning and listening to Spanish if they did not attend a bilingual school. Children of the Spanish-speaking migrants are expected to be fully integrated in German society as they grow up. The founders behind the initiatives seem to share two notions regarding the second generation: first, that the majority language will be predominant in their lives, and second, that listening to Spanish at home is not enough for a successful HL maintenance. This first idea was also explored indirectly in the interview with the president of the SGS:

> And it is very important for me, precisely, to cultivate our own sources, our own culture and at the same time be open to other cultures. It is very important to me that Spaniards and the children of Spaniards do not forget their roots and continue to have the possibility of practicing the language, of having contact with Spaniards, and that is the reason why I am still implicated in this matter. (Participant 6, 06.08, 2024)

As a resident in Germany for almost 50 years and one continuously involved with Spanish-speaking initiatives, he is in a position to know many second-generation migrants (his son is the closest example). He frames Spanish, the language and by extension the identity, as in danger of being forgotten or lost if efforts are not made to maintain it and feels compelled to continue his efforts in this direction. His use of the 'roots' metaphor, echoes Burki's (2023) findings of participants linking language and identity.

There was some indication that not all migrants attach the same importance to Spanish and its transmission onto the next generation, and some may even forgo it completely to assure their child is fully integrated. The founders of Manuelita Kita, for example, noticed that some parents in their community were deciding not to speak Spanish with their children, instead using only German, in an attempt, she thought, to "over adapt". This phenomenon was brought up as one of the reasons that motivated the founders, both of whom are German-Spanish bilinguals and have had personal and professional experience regarding this topic, to open a bilingual school and create a space for bilingualism. Bilingualism in more general terms was also viewed as something desirable and even beneficial for the children; pragmatic arguments for raising bilingual children were paired with the more emotional ones attached to Spanish in particular.

Motherhood

The interviews suggest that motherhood was a driver for the creation of initiatives that centered around the specific conditions of being a migrant and a mother, as well as creating spaces to preserve Spanish as an HL, in line with observations from Okita (2002) and Torsh (2020; 2022), who have identified a discourse in 'linguistically intermarried families' about gendered expectations of mothers as guardians or keepers of the family language[6]. The DSF's president, for example, noted that when mothers joined the association there was a shift towards HL maintenance: "I don't have children, [...] but from the perspective of mothers with children, they start to worry about language acquisition of Spanish in the children's environment, so they created a parent play group" (Participant 2, 23.07, 2024b). Notably, she positions herself outside the 'mother' group during this time, indicating her limited involvement in the project. It is two mothers who eventually take the parent playgroup into a more structured direction, giving Spanish lessons for the children, using theater to make a fun learning environment and with aims to serve as a transition to the state's HL courses.

The group Aliadas was founded by migrant women, many of them mothers, who were already meeting for their kids to have playdates with other Spanish-speaking children and speaking about the difficulties they faced in Germany. Here the link to motherhood is intermingled with and a key aspect for creating the initiative. By focusing on this demographic, the association brings into the foreground the specific conditions that migrant women experience in the host country as spouses of German nationals and mothers. They are also the group of women that lead to the creation of Pinta Caminos, as the founder described in her interview. In this case, the mothers attending German courses at the local church where she met them are not able to create a play group because they have to work, yet they express their desire for a space for Spanish and motivate the founders to open their day care.

A theme that appeared in the same two interviews and motivation behind the initiatives was the isolation of migrant women. This was a key issue for the founding members of Aliadas, who experienced it firsthand and whose mission is precisely aimed towards the integration of these

[6] I have already stated the concept of family as a heteronormative couple should be problematized as per Pauwels (2016). Nonetheless, the data I collected from the interviews also replicates this traditional understanding of family, possibly because of the particular configuration of the population.

women in the German society and workforce. The isolation theme was linked particularly to women married with German nationals because of several reasons:

> I am aware of the number of women, especially Latin American, that arrive in Germany, that have an academic qualification and that 90% have come, let's say, because of love. [...] What happens? Those women, it's not that they're isolated, but they are in a... they have children, they are focused on maternity, they leave their careers aside, they come from having good jobs. So, there was also that need to focus on those women that were isolating, that were feeling less and less valued. And part of it is the topic of how to tell them, well, you have been a mother, you have children, but you can start by doing this, you can validate your university diploma, you can try the language, of course, the most important thing, and a little bit that they didn't feel only mothers, housewives, etc. (Participant 3, 31.07, 2024)

First, the participant identified these women as qualified and active in the workforce. With their arrival in Germany, they "leave their careers aside" and are unable to work until they meet certain bureaucratic —validating the university diploma— and linguistic —reaching a B2 level of German that is required for most jobs— criteria. Second, these barriers are paired with a focus on maternity and child rearing, which essentially confines them to the home domain and limits the time they can dedicate to other pursuits. This profile of women was so prevalent that most of the activities offered by the group are meant to avoid isolation, create spaces for interaction, and guide women into the steps needed to reenter the workforce. The founder described what they do as "preventive work" that saves the state money on psychologists and prescriptions, by supporting these women before they become depressed.

Even when migrant women manage to find work, this does not necessarily mean that they are working formally or legally, as was clear from the interview with Pinta Caminos. The founders narrate how they noticed a group of women (migrant, with a professional background at their home countries) working illegally and with a limited knowledge of the language, which motivated them to offer them a course for Tagespflegeperson, or child minders, in Spanish, so they could earn the qualification at the same time they worked toward the language certificate. Like in the interview with Aliadas, the founders identify women that are isolated, even when married and with children, and are struggling to integrate into the host society as a group in need. Both narratives included mentions of cultural differences that could worsen the feelings of isolation, such as the host community being more reserved, the difficulty in making friends, and even the weather being hard to bear.

This is not to say that migrant fathers were not involved when the projects were already in place, but in terms of the implementation, mothers and motherhood are specifically highlighted in the interviews. The interview with the president of the SGS was a notable exception, as he highlighted his involvement with the Spanish parents' association before this initiative and mentioned his son was part of the SGS for years. The absence of fatherhood narratives may stem, at least in part, from the demographic composition of the Iberoamerican migrants in Germany; there may simply be fewer Spanish-speaking fathers than mothers.

4.2 Functions

Anlaufstelle

Beyond the intended motivations of the people organizing to create associations for Spanish-speakers, these initiatives serve several functions for the community. The president of the DSF used the German word Anlaufstelle, to explain what they understood the association's role in the community to be. She sees the work of the initiative as an intermediary between the host community and the newcomers:

> The goal was to offer a space of orientation, as you say in German, Anlaufstelle, no? a place of beginning, for the people that just arrived, so also having a social function, etc. The cultural function, the children's language function, and the social function. [...] They wanted orientation and were mostly students from Spain or from Latin America, or people coming with their spouse or partner. (Participant 2, 23.07, 2024b)

New arrivals were identified as a group in need of guidance and, as the migratory profiles were diversified and more complex cases arrived, the project also changed the services it provided for them to better accommodate the community. Similarly, the group Aliadas offers guidance for women who have recently arrived in the country and do not know basic information about validating a university degree, enrolling kids into daycares and schools, and other essential topics.

The notion of a place to begin was also highlighted by the interviewee from CISNE. As previously mentioned, the initials of the name aim precisely at the new migrants (nuevos emigrantes), and their focus is on helping them understanding the city as well as meeting locals and practicing German: "A lot of people ask us, how can I meet Germans when I arrive in Germany? and we say, first of all, the Sprachtandem, there you will find German locals that have an open mind to meet people. I think that is a very important goal, being that place for people to meet" (Participant 4, 20.07, 2024). The association identifies one of its functions as a place to start, even if the execution is different than that of other initiatives that want to strengthen the Spanish-speaking community. They have a clear goal of helping Spanish speakers integrate into the host society, which is why they see the seasonal renewal of participants as a success, as they interpret the people that stop attending as being integrated.

Other activities such as Wanderungen, or hikes, visits to the important buildings in the city, and the German-Spanish tandem are also oriented to this end.

Linguistic and cultural validation

The interviewees reflected on what the roles of the initiatives were in the community, and they mentioned that one important role they played was to have a place where people could express themselves in their own language and understand everything. For newcomers, this was essential, as their knowledge of German language and system could be limited. The parents were also looking for a place where the kids could meet each other, normalizing and validating their experience as children of Spanish-speaker(s).

The participants from different initiatives argued about the importance of children meeting other peers with a similar experience to their own: "It's important that the children go to these mother tongue courses or private academies that offer classes for children or play groups because they also realize that they are not bichos raros (weirdos), that there are other children like them, that there are other mothers that also speak like their mother" (Participant 3, 31.07, 2024). The participant makes clear that the importance is less on the type of activity, but rather on the interaction with children itself. The adults seem to be aware that, beyond speaking the HL at home, it is important to have other spaces for socializing. In this sense, the initiatives function as a place to bring together the children of Spanish-speakers and normalize their languages and family composition.

Manuelita Kita and Pinta Caminos are official spaces for bilingual learning, and as such, they are fulfilling the demand the Spanish-speaking families have for HL education with clear pedagogical guidelines and structure. Both use a double immersion approach in which 50% of the time the children listen to Spanish and the other 50% they listen to German; in both cases the carers are required to be native speakers of the language to qualify. The other associations, by contrast, offered informal spaces for the children to meet, in which the focus was playfulness (e.g. the play groups organized by parents). The interviewees reflected on the fact that children attending these groups are doing so after going to school and need a different approach than a traditional language course where they sit down to read and write, which is why they emphasized the fun environment over the learning outcomes.

The education initiatives mentioned the importance of having a space for the cultural traditions of the families. The founder of Manuelita Kita explained how they organize events around special dates:

> We have a holiday calendar that mixes our holidays with the German ones, that is, we celebrate Saint Martin, we celebrate Nikolaus, but if a parent, for example, comes, I don't know, wants to celebrate, comes from Catalonia and wants to celebrate Sant Jordi, we make a space for that. Once a year we open the calendar and we ask, what holiday would you like to participate in? And the parents always bring little things, like: look, this is from my home town in Ecuador, this other thing from Guatemala, and there are always new things that the children can watch and experience; it is very very multicultural. (Participant 5, 05.08, 2024)

There seems to be an eagerness from both sides to make a space for cultural traditions: the organizers open the calendar and ask the parents what they would like to celebrate, and the families choose the important dates, but they also bring elements from their countries of origin and share their traditions with the community. Other associations, like the SGS, also emphasized the importance of creating and maintaining spaces for cultural traditions, in their case through flamenco dance, or were interested in showcasing the culture through "the language, the music, the food, and dance" (Participant 2, 23.07, 2024), as was the origin of the DSF.

Another form of linguistic validation provided by the initiatives had to do with creating spaces of understanding. Being able to speak in and listen to Spanish was mentioned, as was mentioned in the section on community building, as a need by several participants. Spanish seems to be linked with the identity of the migrants, which is why "it doesn't matter how well integrated you are" was used as a prelude to say that people still need to listen, to speak Spanish. Beyond a place to find answers, the initiatives were depicted as a sort of safe space to be oneself. This was particularly salient in the narrative from Aliadas:

> We also have spaces that are more informal, like Café con aroma de mujer, and there is that need of simply getting together, of talking, of exchanging. [...] It is important because when we speak of, for example, migratory grief, the woman will not open up the same. And when we talk about migratory grief, most women have been living in the country [Germany] for a short period, which means they only speak the language a little. (Participant 3, 31.07, 2024)

In the two scenarios presented, one of simply getting together in a relaxed environment and the other of speaking about personal issues, there is a comfort in being able to speak the mother tongue which, again, has to do with an emotional attachment to the language, but also to the naturalness of speaking without a linguistic barrier, or having to translate oneself. The interviewee implies a sense of familiarity, or being able to "open up", that comes only with the mother tongue.

Infrastructure

The participants' narrations coincided in understanding the role of each initiative in the community as infrastructure not found elsewhere. The founders and participants of

the associations went out of their ways to try to accommodate needs that were unmet by the cities, by taking on groups that were not initially their targets, or by becoming, for example, HL teachers when there were no groups their children could attend. The people making up the initiatives took a proactive role in approaching the needs of the community and tried to resolve the issues.

Through her interaction with the Spanish-speaking community, the founder of Pinta Caminos was made aware of a group of mothers that was unable to enter the legal workforce in Germany (already mentioned in the motherhood section). The two founders collaborated to translate the materials and teach the Tagespflegeperson course for these women:

> [Founder] asked me, why don't we teach them to work with children? and that it was the quickest way to enter the German workforce. So, she developed a concept, she spoke to the city of Cologne and we offered, after a huge fight, we offered a course for 13 women in Spanish about daycare. And after one year these girls received their certificates and were able to work. (Participant 1, 23.07, 2024a)

Both considered the operation to be successful, as all the women enrolled finished the course. Despite its positive result, this could not be replicated due to, they explained, the city's lack of infrastructure.

Another way that the initiatives took the role of infrastructure was by expanding their original target groups to accommodate the needs of the migrants. This was the case of the DSF, as its president recalled, when she perceived a strain in the community at large with the arrival of forcibly displaced migrants:

> 2015 marked another change in our association as well as in the infrastructure of Leipzig as a whole, which was the arrival of all the refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, there are also people from Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea. So, we also changed our statute, I mean, we didn't change, but rather we added the topic of help for refugees of any nationality. Because it was needed, there were so many people in the city. (Participant 2, 23.07, 2024b)

The association, regardless of its original intention of being more of a cultural group for people interested in Spanish and Latin American culture, decided to take on the people with more complicated cases, first from the same Spanish-speaking community, and eventually from other regions. This not only required more human resources, but on learning the laws and regulations in place to be able to properly help the community. The president also mentioned that a group of forcibly displaced migrants and in particular women from Syria, had a series of challenges to access even the most basic information because of a technological gap and cultural gap, so the DSF gave workshops to teach them how to open an email account, and set up a group of volunteers to accompany them to appointments and act as translators. Lastly, she indicated that the offices that normally take in the cases of refugees have been overloaded, the most recent income of people from Ukraine has strained the system even more, which is why associations like the DSF are taking in some of the load and helping the people have the aids that they need while they can find proper jobs and integrate.

5. Discussion

5.1 Commoning heritage language work

The narratives from four interviews suggest that motherhood was a driver for many women to look for and create spaces for HL maintenance. They are in line with findings by scholars studying migrant families, and particularly those where one partner (typically the husband) is the majority speaker, and the other the minority (typically the mother), which have shown that mothers with a migratory background will take the responsibility of transmitting the HL to their children (Okita 2002; Pauwels 2016; Winter & Pauwels 2015; Torsh 2020; 2022). Though at times (migrant) fathers were mentioned, or parents in general, the interviewees repeatedly emphasized that it was mothers who were looking for, creating, and participating in spaces for maintaining Spanish, even taking on the role of teachers when none were available. In addition, the narratives indicated two important aspects related to motherhood: one, that the mothers perceived in their family constellations a difficulty in successfully transmitting the HL to their children on their own, which could point to the fact that the German fathers are not able to support their spouses with the language work (their relative absence in the narratives makes it unclear to know what their actual role is in regard to the language work in general, but one can infer that it is limited to German with some exceptions); and two, that mothers were described as in danger of isolation, a byproduct of their status as migrant mothers (sometimes unable to work) relegated to the home domain. Both aspects could explain why they approached the language work in a community setting. By creating communal spaces for HL maintenance and developing playgroups where the parents become teachers, the mothers are engaging in a form of commonized care (Dengler & Lang 2021) of family language work.

The search for spaces for children to be exposed to Spanish as an HL that emerged from the narratives is consistent with Loureda Lamas et al. (2020; 2022) reporting on the number of community-based initiatives that exist in Germany. This suggests that the existing offer is not enough (consular courses and state offer attended 4% of the estimated number of second-generation migrants in 2022, from which around a third was only available to Spanish descendants) or available to most interested families (80% of the State offer available for any

nationals was concentrated in the NRW state) (Mediendienst Integration 2022).

Mothers also were characterized in the interviews as having a deep emotional attachment to the language and wanting to speak in their own language to their children, including mentions of speaking Spanish being a need, possibly emphasized by their spouse's inability to speak Spanish. In this sense they can be mapped in Little's (2020) conceptual framework of HL identities in the emotional/essential quadrant. They seem to interpret Spanish as part of their well-being and are eager to transmit that same emotional attachment onto their children. By contrast, the participants with a long trajectory living in Germany (the presidents of the SGS and the DSF and the founder of Aliadas) reflected on how the second-generation children may not be located in the same space as their parents, but more on a pragmatic/peripheral place: their daily lives occur in the majority language and Spanish is used only at home and in the communities if they are part of playgroups. This may not be the case if they are able to attend a bilingual daycare, which would expand the domain of the HL onto school as well.

The fact that mothers, both as organizers and as attendees of community groups aimed at HL maintenance, were highlighted in the narratives, correlates to the demography of Spanish-speaking migrants, and particularly those coming from Iberoamerica, in Germany. The higher proportion of women migrating to reunite with a family partner or start a family (more than half in the case of Iberoamerica), married to German citizens (72,8% of Iberoamerican women), and the percentage of mostly young women from Spanish-speaking countries gaining the German nationality (63,9% from 2000 to 2018) all point to a trend of women migrating to Germany for the purpose of creating a family (Loureda Lamas et al. 2020; 2022), a trend that, by the way, was noticed by the participants themselves. The only exception to this was the narrative from the president of the SGS, who also expressed his wish to preserve Spanish language and culture in the second generation.

5.2 An extended family

The initiatives appear to be constructed as spaces for what Martin Guardado (2018) calls linguistic and cultural validation for the Spanish-speakers (both actual and potential) living in Germany. The participants narrated that the initiatives were born with the intention to make Spanish and Iberoamerican migrants feel welcome, understood, and accompanied, especially those that are recent arrivals. Four of the six interviewees included in their accounts the fact that, when they themselves arrived in Germany, other more established migrants helped them to deal with the basic obstacles of understanding the system and settle, which in turn led them to repay the favor in a more substantive way, creating an association. This is not to say that migrants have no other way of receiving help on arrival, as the participants mentioned other State organizations and associations that provide this service to migrants in general. However, these could be dealing with more urgent cases of, for example, forcibly displaced people, a group that was even taken in by the DSF. Another aspect that could affect the migrants feeling welcome could have to do with cultural differences and a perceived coldness from the German personnel. On the flip side, associations like CISNE, that aim towards integration within German culture, also play a valuable role in preventing the newcomers from being isolated.

For the parents of young children, the associations were places to engage in commoning strategies (Dengler & Lang 2021) to transmit Spanish as an HL, applying their individual strengths and abilities to collectively address the needs of their young ones. Through playgroups or theater plays, taking turns to design a teaching strategy, creating conversation groups, or whatever means that were available the parents took a common approach to doing the family language work, typically reserved to the home domain, onto a third space. Thus, the community was functioning as an extended family (Guardado 2018) in the absence of aunts or uncles, grandparents, etc.

For the small children of these migrants, the associations and the education initiatives were also intended to validate their experience as bilinguals by meeting other kids whose parents also have a migratory background. Spanish language, but also cultural traditions such as important dates or dances from the Spanish-speaking countries, were maintained and uplifted, creating a sense of community that was meant to positively impact identity formation, in parallel with findings by Guardado (2018) and Utomo (2014) in migrant communities, and to create an emotional attachment with the Spanish language that could better its chances of survival.

5.3 Some constraints

Overall, the narratives highlight the positive aspects of community initiatives and the roles they play for the Spanish-speaking community. However, it is clear that there are also obstacles that limit them in some ways or prevent them from fulfilling their potential. Some associations had a low participation of volunteers and participants, limiting the number of activities they can do. While the HL community initiatives and more informal groups enjoyed some freedom to teach Spanish, this was not the case when the initiatives had (or wanted to have) a more formal approach. There was some anecdotal evidence of the education initiatives being constrained by the rigidity of the German system (both in superficial matters of bureaucracy, and more substantial ways, with doubts about the pedagogical approach to HL, and even mention of some hostility toward daycares in general). Overall, it seems like the initiatives would benefit from better communication between them and the relevant Government offices, but also from more support.

6. Conclusions

This study of 6 initiatives aimed at Spanish-speaking migrants living in Germany aimed to explore why people take the time to associate or participate in this kind of association. Using a narrative-ethnographic methodology (He 2021) to approach the participants, I gathered information in chronological order to understand their motivations and the roles the initiatives played in the community. The organizers were motivated by a desire to strengthen the community links by offering help they received from other migrants and working in collaboration with other associations, by a wish to maintain Spanish as an HL for the next generation, opening spaces for play and learning and speaking about the importance of bilingual upbringing, and in particular by mothers who were looking for spaces for their children and took an active role when such spaces were missing in their communities. The initiatives served the communities as a place to begin, where they could ask questions and connect with other Spanish speakers, as a place to build linguistic and cultural validation for Spanish-speaking migrants and their traditions, and as infrastructure when the cities were unable to attend to the specific needs of the community.

The present results are intended to be a small contribution to the demolinguistic study of Spanish as an HL. Drawing from scholars who have studied the language transmission as care work (e.g. Okita 2002) I argued that, in the context of the Spanish-speaking migration living in Germany, community-based initiatives are examples of commoning the care work (Dengler & Lang 2021) required to maintain an HL. By focusing on the third space of community-based initiatives, instead of the home or education domains, I follow the scholarship of Guardado (2018), Lee and Wright (2014), and Lee and Chen-Wu (2021), to name a few, who have highlighted the importance of these spaces in HL maintenance, but also on identity formation. In the study, I explored the motivations that lead people to associate, and I tried to give voice to their experiences.

The participating initiatives were identified as three distinct types (association for integration, education initiative, cultural association), and yet, similar to HL speakers, each community group has its own particular characteristics, even if they share some of their goals. Qualitative studies may be a more meaningful way to approach these organizations to understand the people that are behind them.

The results of this study open many avenues that could be pursued in future studies. The education initiatives stood out from the rest as they had a formal approach to HL, and although there were overlaps with the associations in terms of their aims and motivations, they are more likely to benefit from a separate study, in line with the HL education scholarship. A follow-up study could contrast the discourses of the founders with those of volunteers and why they join associations. Another road that could be taken is to do ethnographic observation in one of the initiatives (e.g. Guardado 2018 in Spanish-speaking associations in Canada; Bürki 2022 in the Latin American School in Switzerland) to understand the dynamic at play in the daily experiences of the associations, or to have a better understanding of the linguistic dynamics at play in small HL groups. The two initiatives located in Cologne emphasized some common actors like the Catholic mission, but overall presented different experiences; zoning in in one city and exploring the dynamics of one particular area could shed some light into how the region affects initiatives differently.

Community-based initiatives seem to provide support to migrant people and families and be overall beneficial, for both the larger German community and the members of the associations. These groups can provide support to the migrants unable to enter the workforce due to linguistic constraints and help them with the process. For parents, the HL groups are a way to approach the transmission of Spanish in a collective setting, at the same time creating community and distributing the workload. For children, attending HL classes and playgroups can help them develop a positive attachment to Spanish and have a bilingual upbringing that has benefits for their identity and for their cognitive development. Despite the benefits that these associations and initiatives bring to society, there are important obstacles preventing them from reaching their full potential, and while the German society at large is in favors their existence, there is still much understanding to be had by the authorities to ensure that the associations are allowed to do play their roles with less stops along the way.

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