

‘*Sí, hablo dialecto*’: A Study to Identify the Presence of and Promote Pride for Indigenous Languages in Charleston, SC

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In Charleston, South Carolina, there is a tremendous presence of Spanish speakers, but there is also a significant lack of information about indigenous languages from Latin America spoken in Hispanic communities throughout the state and in the United States in general (“Detailed languages...” 2015, Zeigler & Camarota 2018). This study presents an investigation of the presence of indigenous languages spoken by Latin American immigrants in Charleston and analyzes the linguistic challenges that exist for the speakers of these languages. Additionally, this project describes the results of sociolinguistic interviews with Latin American immigrants who speak indigenous languages. In the investigation, 40 speakers of 14 distinct indigenous languages were identified, although undoubtedly many more still remain invisible to the public eye.

1. Introduction

1.1 Motives

Charleston is known as an international city for its reputation as the number one tourist destination in the world (“Charleston named top city...” 2015). Despite this global recognition, on the peninsula where the tourists typically visit, the most prevalent language is English. In fact, 94.7% of Charleston residents speak only English (“Charleston, South Carolina...” 2019). As such, Charleston’s linguistic and cultural diversity rests beyond the confines of downtown.

The U.S. census shows that 2% of the population of Charleston speaks Spanish, which represents more than 2,500 people (“Charleston, South Carolina...” 2019). The presence of Spanish speakers can especially be seen in the linguistic landscape of Midland Park, an area in North Charleston. Midland Park Elementary School is located in this predominantly Spanish-speaking neighborhood where, according to school faculty and staff, 70% of the students speak Spanish. This study was inspired by the

author's volunteer experience in this elementary school, where she learned that many of the inhabitants of the area do not speak English nor Spanish. Midland Park Elementary has many Spanish-speaking employees and teachers who can communicate with students and their families but lack the linguistic tools to communicate with the immigrant families from Latin America who speak indigenous languages. Even in the case that these speakers of indigenous languages have learned Spanish, they are not always literate in their second language, which creates a significant lack of communication between the school and the parents. The situation at Midland Park Elementary reflects the reality of hundreds of people who speak immigrant indigenous languages in South Carolina and many more thousands in the United States in general (Pentón Herrera 2018). The majority of the population is unaware of the presence of these indigenous languages in the country, and their speakers feel obligated to leave their native language behind in order to incorporate themselves into United States' society (Hornberger 1998, Pentón Herrera 2018).

The purpose of the present study is twofold. The first objective is to identify what indigenous languages are present in Charleston County, not only recognizing their use in the area but also exploring which languages are spoken and how they are used by speakers in the community. In order to collect data about the languages actively spoken in Charleston, the principal investigator created a questionnaire containing inquiries about language use and the linguistic attitudes of the speakers of indigenous languages. The second objective of the project is to contribute to the preservation of these indigenous languages utilizing the data from the questionnaire and encourage pride for these languages and their speakers in a city dominated by English.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to achieve the proposed goals discussed in the previous section, this study presents two basic research questions: i. What is the presence of indigenous languages in Hispanic communities in Charleston, SC?; and ii., What are the linguistic needs of indigenous language speakers in Charleston?

2. Context: The Hispanic Community in the United States and South Carolina

As of 2017, there were 66.6 million U.S. residents over the age of 5 who speak languages other than English at home (Zeigler & Camarota 2018). Such statistics as this one overgeneralize the numerous and distinct languages that comprise the category of “other than English.” Of these 66.6 million residents of the United States, an estimated 41 million specifically speak Spanish in their homes (“Hispanics in...” 2019, Zeigler & Camarota 2018). For this large population of Spanish-speakers in the country, the majority of the media, research and advocacy tends to concentrate on the hardships facing the Spanish-speaking, Latino community in the United States, especially in the midst of the tense relations on the U.S.-Mexico border (Mendoza-Denton & Gordon 2011, Porcel 2011). Even though Spanish speakers are fighting for their voice to be heard, representing the fourth language with the most speakers in the world, other languages have been consequently outspoken by sheer lack of numbers and representation (Kästle 2009).

One of the linguistic groups that is often underrepresented is that of the immigrant communities in the United States who speak indigenous languages. Nevertheless, a number of authors have recognized and studied diverse aspects involving the presence of these speakers in the United States, even though there is very little information on their presence in South Carolina (Pérez 2009, Hernández Morales & Velasco Ortiz 2015).

For this project, it is important to define what is meant exactly by the term “indigenous language” in relation to this research. By definition, an indigenous language is one which is “produced, growing, living or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment” (“Indigenous” 2019). It may seem contradictory to pair the term immigrant, which signifies something which comes from another place of origin, with indigenous, a term that describes something from a particular region. However, this combination serves to distinguish these Latin American immigrant indigenous languages from those that are native to the United States. Ultimately, this study utilizes the term indigenous to refer to those languages

that are native to particular regions of Latin America, excluding languages of European origin.

These individuals who speak indigenous languages and have immigrated to the United States must survive in a society that does not recognize the presence nor the use of their native languages. Additionally, members of this community that emigrate from Latin American countries are not always able to speak English nor Spanish upon their arrival to the United States. As a result, indigenous language speakers must overcome two language barriers, learning Spanish to incorporate themselves into Hispanic communities and English in order to acculturate to “American” society. Therefore, “immigrants who speak an indigenous language are a minority within a minority in the Latino community, both linguistically and racially,” creating issues of power struggle, cultural hierarchy and identity (Pérez-Frausto 2012:1).

Additionally, indigenous language speakers are losing their native languages, particularly due to their transition to the United States physically and culturally. In recent years, there are growing numbers of individuals immigrating to the United States from North and Central America, bringing with them their indigenous languages from southern Mexico, Guatemala and Belize (Garsd 2015). Despite the increase in indigenous language speakers to the United States, there has not been a similar increase in the number of translators of these languages. Of the limited universities in the United States that have language programs dedicated to the study of indigenous languages from Latin America, many lack the rigor of study required to ensure its students are truly fluent in the language by the finalization of their coursework (Garsd 2015). As a result, these indigenous language programs do not make a significant difference in the number of translators of Latin American languages that are available within the U.S. (Garsd 2015).

In terms of legislation, Spanish is an official language in almost every country in Latin America. Even though Argentina and Mexico are two exceptions, both of these countries still are internationally-recognized as Spanish-speaking countries with governments, people and businesses that primarily utilize Spanish, maintaining the language’s prestigious status even without official legislation. This dominance as well as high standing of Spanish in Latin America is

directly contrasted with that of indigenous languages. Latin American indigenous languages lack this official status in the majority of these countries with a handful that are co-official or official only within their territories (“Constituciones...” 2004). In many countries in the region, indigenous languages are associated with poverty, a lack of education and social marginalization; to speak an indigenous language implies that an individual does not know any other language, encouraging indigenous language speakers to remain silent (Garsd 2015). The lack of an official status for the majority of these languages in Latin America is a fundamental element of the negative stigma surrounding the use of indigenous languages throughout the Americas. As a result, the linguistic challenge facing these indigenous persons in the United States is more than a lack of translators but also includes the difficulty of preserving these indigenous languages and cultures, inciting questions of a linguistic hierarchy that exists in both Latin American and United States’ society (Garsd 2015).

This lack of prestige also may explain the lack of information surrounding the presence of indigenous languages in the United States. In 2015, the World Bank’s *Indigenous Latin America in the Twenty-First Century* report identified 560 indigenous languages from 16 Latin American nations, comprising 8% of Latin America’s population (Fleischner 2016). Of these hundreds of languages, the five most widely spoken indigenous languages include Quechua (8,500,000 speakers), Maya (6,000,000 speakers), Guaraní (4,600,000 speakers), Aymara (2,800,000 speakers) and Nahuatl (1,600,000 speakers) (Fleischner 2016). In addition, Mexico is one of the 9 most linguistically diverse countries in the world with 6 million Mexican residents actively speaking an indigenous language from 11 different language families (Nava 2010). As of 2017, 25.3% of immigrants to the U.S. were from Mexico (“Largest U.S. immigrant...” 2019). Considering 44% of U.S. immigrants report being of Latino origins, it follows that there would be a presence of indigenous languages in the United States (Zong, Batalova & Burrows 2019). The 2010 U.S. census supports this with its findings that there are 7,650 speakers of Mayan languages and 1,300 speakers of Quechua across the country, lacking data on other Latin American indigenous languages (“Detailed languages...” 2015). A

recent study conducted in California involving indigenous languages spoken by Mexican farmworkers identified 23 different immigrant indigenous languages as well as determined that more than 50% of these farmworkers speak Mixteco (“Indigenous Mexicans...” 2020). Nevertheless, it should be noted that Mixteco is from the Otomangean language family—a language family that was not recognized in the national census.

The increase in the presence of indigenous languages is significant across the country but especially in South Carolina, the 9th largest state in terms of speakers of foreign languages from 1980 to 2017 with an increase of 379% (Zeigler & Camarota 2018). However, when looking more specifically at a state such as that of South Carolina, the census only identifies 75 speakers of Mayan languages with no data on any other indigenous languages, demonstrating a lack of information about these communities (“Detailed languages...” 2015).

3. Methodology

This study presents a methodology that incorporates elements from the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model in order to give an active role to the speakers of these indigenous languages in the research project.

3.1 Participatory Action Research

The model of research known as Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adapted in this research project from that of Benedicto et al. (2007), a group of linguists investigating Mayagna—an indigenous language from Nicaragua. This innovative system of research has the goal of correcting the imbalance of power that exists between the research team and those that they are researching. This model of research is based on three basic principles: (1) empower the members of the language community with the ability to complete the research without the external research team, (2) develop a balanced relationship between the community members and the external investigators and (3) recognize the knowledge systems of equal value (Benedicto et al., 2007).

A common practice in studies involving indigenous communities in particular is Fly-In-Fly-Out Research or helicopter approaches to research in which an investigative team arrives in a community, takes data and leaves without the input of the members of that community (Spaaij et al., 2018). This kind of research maintains the power inequality between the research team and the language community (Spaaij et al., 2018). Typically, the principal investigator chooses the participants, decides how to perform the study and makes all of the decisions. In order to correct this power imbalance, Benedicto et al. (2007) highlights the importance of a training component for both the investigators and the participants. In this way, the research conducted acts as an exchange of information, recognizing that both groups have knowledge of equal prominence with the objective of creating useful materials for the community, training linguistic teams and creating a participatory dynamic in the research.

3.2 Materials

The materials utilized in this study included a questionnaire consisting of six different sections. The questionnaire is entirely anonymous and requires approximately thirty minutes to complete. Section I asks for personal information about the participant that does not reveal their identity; Section II focuses on the participant's educational history; Section III concentrates on the languages that the participant speaks, at what level they speak these languages and with what frequency; Section IV inquires about the use of these languages; Section V focuses on the participant's linguistic attitudes; and, finally, Section VI asks about the participant's needs as a speaker of an indigenous language. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix at the end of this article.

3.3 Procedures

Although translated for this article, the participants received the questionnaire verbally and solely in Spanish in order to connect with speakers of indigenous languages in Charleston, keeping in mind that many members of this community may be illiterate and had to

learn Spanish in order to participate in society in South Carolina. For their participation, each participant received a box of dry food and household items with a value of 10 dollars.

After collecting all of the data, and in accordance with the principles of the PAR model as previously indicated, the objective of the project is to create materials to support the preservation of the indigenous languages identified in this study; this has resulted in the creation of a children's book portraying some of the most widely spoken indigenous languages in the Hispanic community of Charleston. The book is a children's visual dictionary consisting of 8 different sections: colors, animals, family members, food, actions, body parts, numbers and nature. The main purpose is that these books will provide a resource for sharing these languages with the younger generation in the community of indigenous language speakers and that each participant will receive a copy of the book. In addition, each program, such as that of *Abrazos* or Our Lady of Mercy Outreach Services, will receive copies of the children's books in order to share them with other indigenous language speakers present in the community in Charleston. In this way, the children's books will help demonstrate to the larger community the presence of indigenous languages from Latin America in Charleston and support as well as promote the preservation of this great variety of indigenous languages.

It is worth noting that this study does not precisely follow the PAR model described in Benedicto et al. (2007); however, it incorporates elements of the PAR model in order to embrace the opinions and thoughts of the participants in the research project. The questionnaire is designed to give the members of the indigenous community the opportunity to explain the challenges they face as speakers of indigenous languages as well as to describe what kinds of linguistic materials would be useful in their everyday lives.

3.4 Participants

In accordance with the initial predictions of the study, the research has revealed the presence of a significant number of indigenous languages from Latin America in and around Charleston. All of the participants are adults being more than 18 years old and almost

every participant has children. Because the research was inspired by Midland Park, an area of Charleston known for its sizable Spanish-speaking population, the project began by finding indigenous language speakers in this part of the city.

The study focuses on adult participants, predominantly those who are parents, from the Charleston County School District's educational program called *Abrazoz*, which supports Hispanic mothers in learning English as a second language and provides access to health classes. The program is located behind Midland Park Primary in North Charleston, the very school that inspired the project. Additionally, another significant portion of the participants are immigrants from Latin America in Charleston who work in the agricultural sector. These agricultural workers were identified through the Migrant Education program in South Carolina—a national project with the purpose of supporting the children of migrant families as well as the workers themselves in the agricultural sector. The grand majority of the eligible families for this program are Hispanic; for instance, in the years 2001 and 2002, 89% of Migrant Education program participants throughout the United States were of Hispanic origin (“Migrant Education Program...” 2006).

Other participants were identified for the study through community organizations run by both local churches and the school district such as Our Lady of Mercy Outreach Services. Our Lady of Mercy Outreach Services is a nonprofit organization that supports residents of Charleston with a location in downtown Charleston and Johns Island; the organization has the objective of helping the people of Charleston, providing resources, language classes and health programs that serve many individuals from the Hispanic community in the area. The study identified more participants with the help of the network of educators in the Charleston County School District who, as adult educators and parent advocates for Spanish-speaking families, shared information about the study with their students and families.

Finally, some of the participants were contacted through social media channels, particularly Facebook. The principal investigator communicated with indigenous language speakers through a

Facebook group focused on the available resources for members of the Hispanic community in Charleston.

In total, 40 different Charleston residents were identified as speaking an indigenous language from Latin America. Of all of the identified indigenous language speakers, 15 completed the questionnaire described above in Section 3.2. The interviewees are between 26 and 47 years old with an average age of 35.8; of the total number of participants, 12 are women and 3 are men. As for their origins, 8 are from Oaxaca, 1 from Guerrero, 1 from Distrito Federal, 1 from Veracruz and 1 from Chiapas in Mexico. Additionally, 1 participant is from San Marcos and 2 are from Huehuetenango in Guatemala. Information about all of the participants who responded to the questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEES

| Participant Code | Sex | Origin | Native Language | Age |
|------------------|-----|---|-----------------|-----|
| R1 – P1 | F | La Laguna Concepción Tutuapa, San Marcos, Guatemala | Mam | 35 |
| R2 – P1 | F | San José Yatandoyo, Oaxaca, Mexico | Mixteco | 34 |
| R2 – P2 | F | Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, Mexico | Mixteco | 26 |
| R3 – P1 | M | San Andres Chichahuaxtla, Putla, Oaxaca, Mexico | Triqui (alta) | 40 |
| R4 – P1 | F | San Antonio Nduayaco, Oaxaca, Mexico | Mixteco (bajo) | 36 |
| R4 – P2 | F | Tlaltempanapa, Guerrero, Mexico | Nahuatl | 34 |
| R4 – P3 | F | Delegación Tlahuac, Distrito Federal, Mexico | Mixteco (alto) | 46 |

| | | | | |
|----------|---|--|-------------------|----|
| R5 -P1 | M | Congolica, Veracruz, Mexico | Nahuatl | 33 |
| R6 – P1 | F | San Rafael La Independencia, Huehuetanango, Guatemala | Q'anjob'al | 39 |
| R7 – P1 | F | Mazapa de Madero, Chiapas, Mexico | Kakchiquel | 40 |
| R7 – P2 | F | Jujlinha, Jacaltenango, Huehuetanango, Guatemala | Popti' | 36 |
| R8 -P1 | F | San Juan Quiahije, Juquila, Oaxaca, Mexico | Chatino | 31 |
| R9 – P1 | F | Meson de Guadalupe, Oaxaca, Mexico | Mixteco (bajo) | 47 |
| R10 – P1 | F | Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, Mexico | Mixteco (alta) | 30 |
| R10 – P2 | F | Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca, Mexico | Mixteco (alta) | 30 |

4. Results

This section presents both the quantitative and qualitative results of the research.

4.1 Quantitative Results

This study identified a total of 14 different indigenous languages. These 14 indigenous languages belong to 5 different language families with the majority pertaining to the Mayan and Oto-Manguean language families. The Mayan language family exists primarily in southern Mexico, Guatemala and Belize (Campbell 1997), and as a group of languages that has received a great deal of linguistic attention, these languages are, overall, well documented (Campbell 1997). The Oto-Manguean language family is located

from the northern border to the southern border of Mesoamerica or from the center of Mexico to northern Costa Rica (Campbell 1997).

The remainder of the participants speak indigenous languages from the Quechuan, Uto-Aztecan and Mixe-Zoque language families. Table 2 shows the distribution of the research participants according to their native languages.

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS' NATIVE LANGUAGES

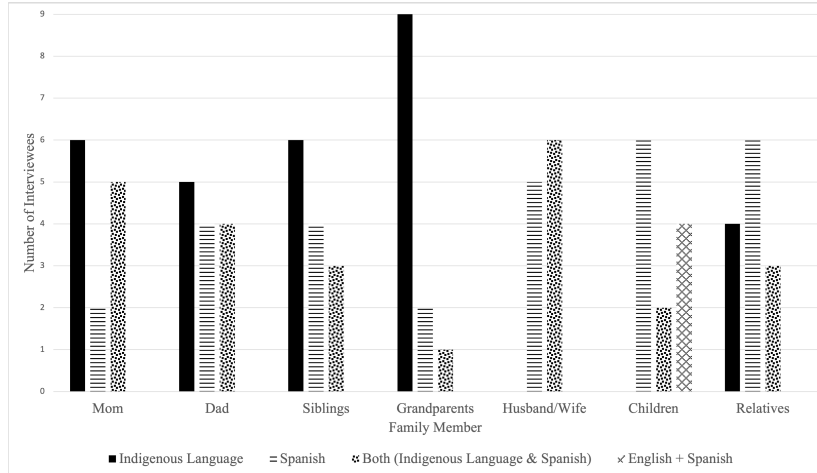
| Language | Family | Number of Participants |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| K'iche' | Mayan | 2 |
| Kakchiquel | Mayan | 2 |
| Mam | Mayan | 4 |
| Popti' | Mayan | 2 |
| Q'anjob'al | Mayan | 1 |
| Tzotzil | Mayan | 1 |
| Nonidentified Variant | Mayan | 1 |
| Mazateco | Oto-Manguean | 2 |
| Mixteco | Oto-Manguean | 15 |
| Triqui | Oto-Manguean | 3 |
| Chatino | Oto-Manguean | 1 |
| Nahuatl | Uto-Aztecan | 4 |
| Quechua | Quechuan | 1 |
| Olmeca | Mixe-Zoque | 1 |

As illustrated in Table 2, this study identified 40 participants who speak 14 distinct indigenous languages from 5 different language families. The majority of these languages are from the Mayan language family, and the majority of the participants speak Mixteco, a language from the Oto-Manguean language family.

Of the 15 interviewees, 100% know how to speak at least “a little” English, and 93% speak Spanish as their second language. Of all of the interviewees, 67% use their indigenous language, 100% use English and 100% use Spanish in Charleston. In total, 20% of the interviewees used little to no Spanish prior to their arrival in the United States.

Section IV of the questionnaire focuses on which language or languages the interviewees use with their family members. It is important to note that while the participants live in the United States, not all of their family members do; therefore, communicating with family members includes both in-person communication or through technology. Considering the language that each interviewee uses with their mother and father, the majority speak their indigenous language; 53% of the interviewees use their indigenous language, and 33% use both Spanish and their indigenous language with their mother. With their father, 43% use exclusively an indigenous language, and 29% use both Spanish and their indigenous language. When communicating with siblings, 47% of the interviewees use an indigenous language. An overwhelming majority (79%) of the interviewed participants use an indigenous language when speaking with their grandparents. None of the interviewees exclusively use an indigenous language with a spouse; instead, 46% speak purely Spanish, and 54% speak Spanish and an indigenous language with their partner. None of the interviewees solely use an indigenous language when speaking with their children. Alternatively, 50% of the interviewees speak only Spanish with their children, and 14% use a combination of Spanish and an indigenous language with their children. The majority of the interviewees speak Spanish with their relatives (40%), but 27% speak an indigenous language with these family members. Another 33% use both Spanish and their indigenous language when speaking with relatives. Graph 1 demonstrates all of the languages that each of the interviewees uses with different family members.

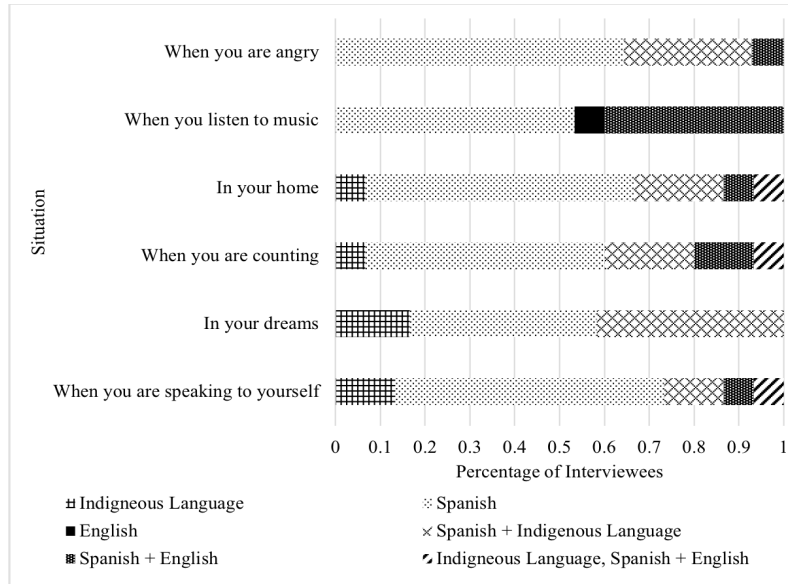
GRAPH 1. LANGUAGES SPOKEN WITH FAMILY MEMBERS



Graph 1 represents all of the languages that the interviewees speak with distinctive members of the family. As demonstrated above, there is a prevalence of indigenous language use with members of the immediate family such as with parents and siblings. There is little use of English except in the case of dual use of English and Spanish with the children of the interviewees.

Afterwards, interviewees identified the languages that they use in their internal thoughts or when speaking with themselves in Section IV questionnaire as well. When the interviewees are angry, the majority or 60% use Spanish to express this emotion. When listening to music, 53% of the interviewees listen to Spanish music, and 40% listen to music both in English and Spanish. While within their homes, 60% of the interviewees exclusively use Spanish in their inner thoughts or aloud to themselves. When they are counting, the majority (53%) of the interviewees use Spanish, and 20% use both Spanish and an indigenous language. While sleeping, 42% of the interviewees dream in Spanish, and another 42% dream in Spanish and their indigenous language. Altogether, when speaking with themselves whether within their thoughts or aloud to themselves, the majority or 60% of the interviewees use Spanish. Graph 2 represents all of the interviewees' responses regarding which language each person uses when speaking to themselves.

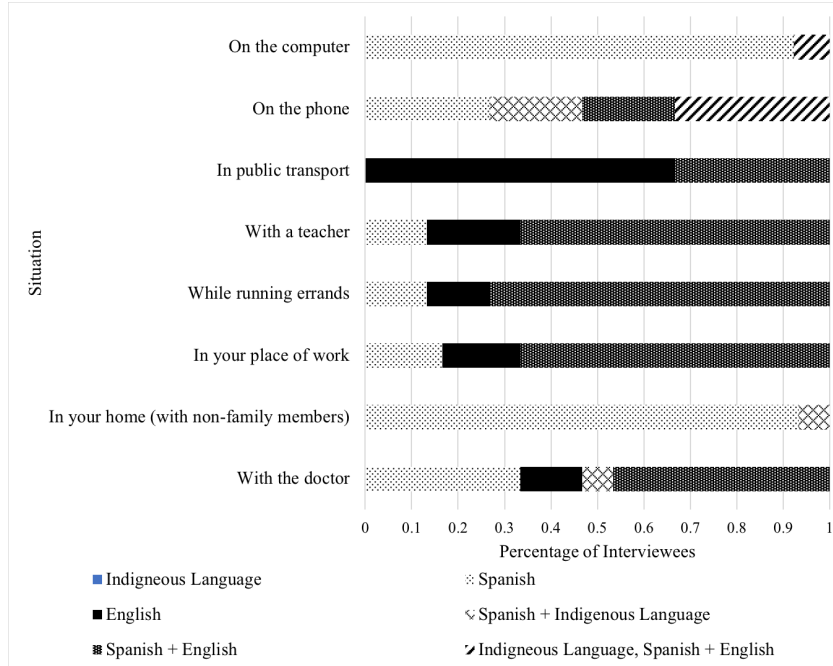
GRAPH 2. LANGUAGES SPOKEN WITH ONESELF



Graph 2 demonstrates the predominance of Spanish in all the above situations when the interviewees speak to themselves. Nevertheless, it is important to note that at least of some of the interviewees use only their indigenous language when in their home, counting, dreaming and speaking with themselves.

In the final portion of Section IV of the questionnaire, the interviewees discussed what language or languages they use in the community and with whom. When the interviewees see the doctor, 47% use a combination of Spanish and English. In their homes with individuals who are not family members, the majority (93%) of the interviewees speak only Spanish. Of those who work, 67% use both Spanish and English in their place of work. While running errands in Charleston, the majority of those interviewed (73%) use Spanish and English. When speaking with a teacher in the community, 67% use Spanish and English. In various forms of public transportation, 67% of the interviewees exclusively use English. When speaking on the phone, 33% use a combination of Spanish, English and their indigenous language, and 27% use only Spanish on the phone. All of the languages used by the interviewees when speaking with people in the community are represented in Graph 3.

GRAPH 3. LANGUAGE USE WITH PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY



Graph 3 represents a prevalence of Spanish use in the community as demonstrated by the dotted portion of the graph’s bars. Additionally, many of the interviewees use a combination of Spanish and English in Charleston as represented by the dark gray, crisscross pattern.

4.2 Qualitative Results

In Sections V and VI of the questionnaire, interviewees described their linguistic attitudes and needs. In Section V, the principal investigator presented each interviewee with a series of 7 statements involving linguistic attitudes, and each interviewee had the opportunity to respond with a number demonstrating their level of agreement utilizing a Likert scale. Number 5 on the scale signifies that the individual completely agrees with the statement, and number 1 represents that the person completely disagrees. The averages of the interviewees’ responses are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. INTERVIEWEE RESPONSES TO SENTENCES ABOUT LINGUISTIC ATTITUDES

| Statement | Mean |
|--|------|
| <i>It is important to me to know my parents' language(s).</i> | 5.0 |
| <i>It is important that I am able to speak the language that is spoken where I live.</i> | 5.0 |
| <i>I want my children to learn my first language.</i> | 4.7 |
| <i>To be successful in Charleston, I have to know Spanish.</i> | 4.1 |
| <i>To be successful in Charleston, I have to know English.</i> | 4.9 |
| <i>I have felt discriminated for using my native language.</i> | 2.0 |
| <i>I feel comfortable using my native language in public.</i> | 4.8 |

Table 3 demonstrates all of the interviewees are in agreement that it is important to know their parent's language and that they can speak the language of Charleston—English. Few felt discriminated against for their use of their indigenous language and feel comfortable using their native language in public.

In Section VI of the questionnaire, the interviewees were asked about their linguistic needs and the challenges they face as indigenous language speakers. The majority of the interviewees mentioned the difficulties associated with a lack of translators for their native languages. As a result, their children frequently translate on behalf of their parents in English and Spanish during doctor and dentist appointments as well as in parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, there is a lack of resources for indigenous language speakers to connect with one another and a similar lack of opportunities to express cultural traditions such as by wearing traditional clothing or recreating ceremonies from their places of origin. Furthermore, some of the interviewees who manifested a lower degree of fluency in English expressed the desire to take

classes in the language, but particularly due to insufficient public transport in Charleston, they are unable to do so. Without access to efficient and reliable public transportation, it is difficult for these individuals to take advantage of community resources in order to learn English or participate in local events without their own form of transportation.

5. Discussion

Section 1.4 presented two research questions. What is the presence of indigenous languages in Hispanic communities in Charleston, SC? Additionally, what are the linguistic needs of indigenous language speakers in Charleston?

In response to the first research question, this study identified a significant presence of indigenous languages in Charleston, South Carolina with 40 speakers of 14 different indigenous languages from 5 language families. As explained in Section 2, the census data from South Carolina in 2015 identified only 75 speakers of Mayan languages in the entire state with a margin of error of 87; nevertheless, the principal investigator encountered 13 speakers of indigenous languages from the Mayan language family, representing 7 different languages in the city of Charleston alone. The data from the present study provides sufficient data to suggest there are more speakers of immigrant indigenous languages not only in the state but in the whole country. The United States' census from 2010 only includes 7,650 speakers of indigenous languages from the Mayan language family, not particularly specifying which languages ("Detailed languages..." 2015). The identification of 7 distinct indigenous languages from this language family in the city of Charleston alone suggests there would be more speakers of Mayan languages present throughout the country. These data not only demonstrate the linguistic diversity that exists within this language family but also the reality of the lack of information about the presence of indigenous language speakers in the United States. Furthermore, the only other indigenous language family recognized by the 2010 national census was the Quechuan language family with 1,300 speakers of Quechua ("Detailed languages..." 2015). However, out of the 40 participants, the study encountered 26

speakers representing languages actively spoken from three other language families: Oto-Manguean, Mixe-Zoque and Uto-Aztecan. Neither the national census nor that of South Carolina identified the presence of indigenous languages from the Oto-Manguean language family—the language family with the largest number of speakers within the confines of this study. Out of the total, 21 participants speak a language from the Oto-Manguean language family, and 15 of those individuals are speakers of Mixteco. In accordance with the Californian farmworker study mentioned in Section 2, the majority of the participants in this study speak Mixteco. Both the study from California and this project demonstrate a prevalence of Mixteco, but neither the United States' census data nor that of South Carolina included Mixteco in its identified indigenous languages. The data display that there exists a lack of information involving the presence of immigrant indigenous languages in South Carolina and in the United States as a whole.

Additionally, the indigenous languages present in Charleston are actively spoken today. A total of 67% of the interviewees still use their indigenous language in Charleston. Nevertheless, these indigenous language speakers tend to use their native languages in private spaces like in the home and on social media platforms, particularly to stay in contact with members of the immediate and extended family. However, participants reported that in public spaces in Charleston, there is a complete lack of indigenous language use. Also, these speakers use their indigenous languages less than Spanish in Charleston with only 6 of the interviewees using their indigenous language every day.

In response to the second research question, 15 indigenous language speakers in Charleston described their linguistic needs through interviews. One interviewee expressed that “*A veces me siento sola*” (“Sometimes, I feel lonely,” my translation) because she has no one with whom she can practice her native language in Charleston. Many interviewees expressed the challenge of finding other speakers of their own indigenous language to practice with in the community, which results in the difficulty of preserving an essential part of their identity as an indigenous person from Latin America in the United States. Similarly, interviewees also mentioned the challenges associated with a lack of opportunities to

express their culture through clothes, traditions and common practices from their home communities in Charleston. For example, one interviewee explained that she often wears her *corte* and *huipil*, traditional clothing for indigenous women in Mexico and Guatemala, to church in Charleston, but the majority of the participants have not worn their traditional clothing since arriving in the United States.

Furthermore, the interviewees explain the difficulty of transporting themselves around Charleston due to the lack of reliable public transportation. A few of the interviewees expressed a desire to better their English and connect with local organizations for Hispanic communities in Charleston, but they do not have the ability to physically attend these classes nor these community events. However, the most urgent challenge for these individuals is the lack of translators. If access to a translator is not available, they must rely on their ability to speak English or on their children to translate their conversations in public spaces. Particularly with appointments with the doctor, the dentist and teachers, the interviewees expressed difficulties communicating across two language barriers.

One phenomenon regarding the interviewees' competence in Spanish at the time of migration to the U.S. deserves a special note. One fifth of the interviewees conveyed that they knew little to no Spanish in their country of origin, signifying that 20% of the 15 interviewees had to improve their Spanish significantly or learn the language from scratch upon their arrival to the United States. As such, at least a few of the indigenous language speakers in the United States face a double language barrier. These speakers must learn Spanish to integrate themselves into the Hispanic community and English to participate in United States' society.

The interviewees also explained the challenges associated with passing their native language on to their children. Yes, these speakers use their indigenous languages with members of the immediate and extended family such as with their parents and their siblings, but few use their native language with their own family such as with their children and spouse. Only one interviewee uses her indigenous language with her children in conjunction with Spanish and English. Many of the interviewees expressed the

difficulty of teaching their children their native language. The children are in school learning English, and many of them are losing their Spanish-speaking skills due to their use of English with their teachers, friends and others in the community. When the children are at home, many of these parents are trying to maintain their children's ability to speak Spanish so that they may be bilingual in the future. In this way, it is already a serious challenge to maintain their children's Spanish, and many believe that is much more useful for their children to speak both Spanish and English rather than their family's indigenous language. Additionally, nearly half of the interviewees do not speak their indigenous language with their spouse because their husband or wife either does not speak an indigenous language or speaks one different from their own. For this reason, it is incredibly difficult for these parents to teach their children an indigenous language if only the mother or the father speaks that particular language.

5.1 Language vs. Dialect

Throughout this study, the majority of the participants continually used the term *dialecto* or 'dialect' in reference to their own indigenous language. Due to a history of linguistic discrimination against Latin American indigenous languages, the term *dialecto* has transformed into the common term to reference these indigenous languages—separating them from Spanish and English in particular. Understanding that all of the languages identified in this study are languages in and of themselves but recognizing the terminology used by the participants themselves and respecting their languages, the term *dialecto* was used throughout the interviews and is even included in the title of the study.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

This study identified the presence of immigrant indigenous languages in the Hispanic communities in Charleston, South Carolina. A total of 40 Charleston residents were identified who

speak 14 different indigenous languages from 5 distinct language families from Latin America. The presence of these participants demonstrates the lack of information in terms of both the studies that exist as well as the census data surrounding the presence of indigenous languages in Charleston. One may assume that data gathered in this study serve to reflect a similar lack of information about indigenous languages throughout the United States.

In order to support these immigrant indigenous language speakers in preserving their languages despite the predominance of Spanish and English in Charleston, children's books have been designed using the input of the participants. To preserve a language is to ensure that the younger generations will continue to speak that language, and these books will act as a tool to share these indigenous languages with children. Additionally, the children's books will ideally help start a conversation about the child's family and culture so that they will not "*perder mis raíces*" ("lose my familial roots," my translation).

The reality of immigrant indigenous language speakers in the United States requires that they surpass two language barriers. On one hand, learning or improving their Spanish and, on the other, practicing English, which is essential in order to become an active member in the Charleston community. Moreover, participants noted a lack of translators for these indigenous languages in Charleston, SC, and as such, these individuals must navigate appointments with doctors, dentists and teachers with little English or by relying on their children as translators. Another challenge for speakers of these indigenous languages is finding other community members that speak their same language as well as spaces to exercise their traditions through traditional clothing and common practices. Some of the participants do not know a single person who speaks their own native language in the United States. A particularly difficult challenge is teaching their own indigenous language to their children; as the participants explained, it is already incredibly arduous to preserve their children's Spanish seeing that they are speaking mostly English in school. For this reason, it remains a challenge to pass their native language on to their children and continue to preserve their indigenous language in Charleston—a city dominated by Spanish and English.

In total, the majority of the participants use their indigenous languages in private spaces and with members of their own family. In the community of Charleston, these bilingual indigenous language speakers primarily use Spanish.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

One challenge in implementing this study is finding the participants who speak an immigrant indigenous language from Latin America and have an interest in the project. Due to discrimination and, possibly, the fear of deportation, some participants are fearful to reveal that they are from another country and speak an indigenous language. This study has required many hours dedicated to establishing contacts throughout the Charleston community; this primarily includes those who work with Hispanic populations and already have personal connections with families in the area, using this already established connection to demonstrate to the families that this study is without risk. Additionally, many participants were identified through the Migrant Education program in South Carolina; for this reason, many belong to families that work in the agricultural sector, creating difficulties with establishing interviews between the work schedules of the interviewees and the class schedule of the principal investigator. Furthermore, even though the project is concentrated in Charleston, the participants all live in diverse areas of the city, creating challenges in traveling to the participants' homes who lived very far from the principal investigator, which typically took place very late in the day. Finally, it is only a 9-month study, limiting the number of participants due to the time restriction.

6.3 Continuing the Project

Future research will be needed to further investigate the presence of immigrant indigenous languages spoken within the Spanish-speaking communities in Charleston and throughout the United States. There are more speakers of the 14 languages that were identified such as Popti', K'iche' and Quechua, for example; additionally, other Latin American immigrants are also present who

speak distinct indigenous languages not identified in the study. This research project is only the beginning of recognizing these individuals and their native languages from Latin America. More studies are required in order to identify the great variety of indigenous languages spoken by Spanish-speaking populations in the country, recognizing their presence in the United States. Additionally, more preservation strategies are needed to protect these indigenous languages present in a society that is dominated by English use with Spanish-speakers kept in the margins of communities across the nation.

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APPENDIX

Indigenous Language Use in Charleston Questionnaire
Research Study Consent Form for Participation
College of Charleston

You are invited to participate in a research study. This research is directed by Madison Crow, a student at the College of Charleston, and is under the supervision of Ricard Viñas-de-Puig, Assistant Professor in the Hispanic Studies Department at College of Charleston (Charleston, South Carolina). The objective of the study is to understand which indigenous languages exist in Charleston, their uses in the community and the challenges of being an indigenous language speaker in Charleston.

Participation in this research requires approximately 30 minutes of your time. As a participant, you will be asked to complete an oral questionnaire about the languages that you speak and how you use them in your daily life. The questionnaire will include basic personal information such as about your daily use of the language. The responses will then be noted.

This study is completely anonymous. You will not be asked for any information that can identify you personally.

You will receive an item, such as dry food or school supplies, of a ten dollar (\$10) value for your participation in the study. Also, it is expected that as a result of the study, materials will be created to support the preservation of indigenous languages in the area. These materials will include children's books which incorporate vocabulary from the indigenous languages that will comprise this study. If so desired, you will also receive a copy of these materials.

I know of no risk or discomfort associated with this research.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may discontinue participation at any time.

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact Madison Crow by email at crowmt@g.cofc.edu or Ricard

Viñas-de-Puig at +1-843-953-0263 or vinasdepui@cofc.edu. Also, you may contact Research Protections & Compliance on the Office of Research and Grants Administration, at +1-843-953-7421 or e-mail compliance@cofc.edu if you have questions or concerns about research review at the College of Charleston or your rights as a research participant.

You may keep a copy of this form.

This research study has been approved by College of Charleston Human Research Protection Program.

I have read this consent form, and I understand that by completing this interview, I am agreeing to participate in this research study.

I. Personal Information

Year of Birth

Where are you from?
(city, country)

What year did you first
arrive to the United States?

How long have you lived
in Charleston?

Where do you live now?

(For example: city, county)

Who did you live with as

a child?

 (For example: mother, father,
 sibling, friend)

Who do you live with now?

 (For example: mother, father,
 sibling, friend)

II. Educational Information

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Elementary School
 City: _____
- Middle School
 City: _____
- High School
 City: _____
- University
 City: _____

III. Information on the Languages You Speak

What is your native language? What other language(s) do you speak?

| | Language | How old were you when you started to learn this language? | Where did you learn this language? (in your house, school, the office, etc) |
|----------------|----------|---|---|
| First Language | | | |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| Second Language | | | |
| Other Language(s) | | | |

First language proficiency:

On a scale from one to five, how well can you speak and understand your first language?

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1: I can understand it, but I cannot speak it | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5: I can understand it and speak it without any difficulty |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|

How often do you use your first language in the community?

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Everyday | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times each month | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times throughout the year | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------------|

Second language proficiency:

On a scale from one to five, how well can you speak and understand your second language?

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1: I can understand it, but I cannot speak it | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5: I can understand it and speak it without any difficulty |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|

How often do you use your second language in the community?

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Everyday | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times each month | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times throughout the year | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------------|

Other language proficiency:

Which number best describes your ability to speak

_____?

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1: I can understand it, but I cannot speak it | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5: I can understand it and speak it without any difficulty |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|

How often do you use _____ in the community?

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Everyday | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times each month | <input type="checkbox"/> A few times throughout the year | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|--------------------------------|

IV. Language Use

Which language(s) do you use in the community here in Charleston? _____

Which language(s) did you use in your community of origin?

Which language(s) do you use with your family? (If it applies to you)

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| With your mother | | With your husband or wife | |
| With your father | | With your children | |
| With your siblings | | With your relatives (i.e. your uncle, cousin, etc) | |

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| With your grandparents | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|--|

Which language(s) do you use with yourself? (If it applies to you)

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| When you are angry | | In your house | |
| In your dreams | | When you are listening to music | |
| When you are singing | | When you are talking to yourself | |

Which language(s) do you use with other people? (If it applies to you)

| | | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|--|
| With the doctor | | With a teacher in a school | |
| In your house (with people who are not your family) | | On public transport | |
| In the workplace | | On your cellphone | |
| While running errands | | On the computer | |

V. Attitudes about Language

I completely agree

I completely disagree

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| It is important to me to know my parents' language(s). | | | | | |
| It is important that I am able to speak the | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| language that is spoken where I live. | | | | | |
| I want my children to learn my first language. | | | | | |
| To be successful in Charleston, I have to know Spanish. | | | | | |
| To be successful in Charleston, I have to know English. | | | | | |
| I have felt discriminated for using my native language. | | | | | |
| I feel comfortable using my native language in public. | | | | | |

VI. The Necessities of the Community

What are some of the challenges you face as an indigenous language speaker in Charleston?

(i.e. medical, social or economic difficulties...)

Do you think that there is a need to preserve your native language?
 Are you interested in preserving your native language? Do you have ideas for how you would like to preserve your native language?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Would you be interested in a children's book that contains vocabulary from your indigenous language as a way to share this language with young kids?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

VII. Do You Have Anything Else to Add?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

This questionnaire was completed...

| | | | |
|--------------|--|------------------|--|
| Date: | | Location: | |
|--------------|--|------------------|--|