# “UN PASO ATRÁS, DOS ADELANTE” (ONE STEP BACK, TWO STEPS FORWARD): REPORTING THE EXPERIENCES OF SPANISH-SPEAKING LATIN AMERICANS IN CANADIAN WORKPLACES

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**Abstract**

The linguistic landscape of Canadian workplaces is becoming more diverse as organizations employ individuals who come from various countries and speak different native languages. As language is an important marker of identity and group membership, language-based identities are powerful in shaping workplace experiences. Guided by both the ethnolinguistic identity theory (ELIT: Giles et al., 1977; Giles & Johnson, 1987) and communication accommodation theory (CAT: e.g., Dragojevic et al., 2016; Gallois et al., 2005; Giles & Ogay, 2006), this study explores the experiences of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans working in the Canadian National Capital Region in relation to their linguistic identities, coping strategies, and intergroup interactions. A thematic analysis of 24 semi-structured interviews shows that participants experience a dynamic shift in their identity in which they move between feelings of self-doubt and a sense of confidence and comfort in their workplaces. This shift occurs as they navigate the cognitive and emotional experiences of working in a nonnative language. Factors that influence this identity shift include social comparisons, positive implications associated with their native linguistic identity, negative evaluations, and empathy in the workplace. This study also provides a detailed description of the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and interactional coping strategies that participants enact to navigate their workplaces. In terms of intergroup interactions, the participant's experiences, their evaluations, and reactions to accommodative or nonaccommodative behaviours from native speaking peers in their workplaces are explored. The final pages of this study include some recommendations for human resource practitioners.

**Keywords:** Language diversity in the workplace, linguistic identity, phenomenological study, ethnolinguistic identity theory, communication accommodation theory, Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Canadian workplaces.

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I hope the following pages honor your

courage, resilience, and hard work**.**

"Mucha gente pequeña, en lugares pequeños,

haciendo cosas pequeñas, puede cambiar el mundo".

Eduardo Galeano

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# Chapter One: Introduction

> I have been a teacher all my life. I started teaching at the age of 16 and taught in schools and universities before I came [to Canada]. Thus, you know how to handle a difficult situation. But when it is in another language (...) you want to say many things, but the words do not come out, because it is not something natural for you (...) Because of my profession I had to plunge myself into this new language, and I found many difficulties and barriers, but I am always looking for ways to keep going.
>
> -Nelly Sánchez, Colombia, Math and Sciences Teacher.

## Background and Problem Statement

Nelly Sánchez currently lives and works in Canada, a country that has one of the largest immigrant populations in the world (Cheng et al., 2020). She is one out of the 7,540,830 immigrants who arrived in Canada before May 10, 2016, according to Statistics Canada (2017). Foreign born individuals represent 21.9 percent of the Canadian population, which means that one in five Canadians are originally from another country (Statistics Canada, 2017). Statistics Canada projects that by 2036, the proportion of Canada's foreign-born population will be between 24.5 and 30 percent of the total population (Yssaad & Fields, 2018).

The influx of immigrants from various countries translates into a diverse linguistic landscape in Canada (Chavez, 2019). In fact, Statistics Canada reports that roughly four in five recent immigrants[1] in 2016 had a mother tongue other than the English or French language (Chavez, 2019). The increase in human migration results in a rise in language and culture diversification in the workplace (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014; Lønsmann & Kraft, 2018; Teboul & Yoon, 2019; van der Worp et al., 2018). This linguistic diversity, defined as the presence of "speakers of different national languages in the same work group" (Lauring & Selmer, 2010, p.

[1] According to Statistics Canada, a recent immigrant is an individual who obtained his or her landed immigrant or permanent resident status between January 1, 2011, and May 10, 2016 (five years before the 2016 Census).

269), is common in current organizations (Lønsmann, 2014). In the Canadian workforce, one in four individuals were immigrants in 2017 (Yssaad & Fields, 2018).

Group diversity brings in multiple perspectives and different knowledge sources that can potentially enhance creativity and performance in organizations (e.g., Cronin & Weingart, 2007; Lauring & Selmer, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Phillips et al., 2004). Specifically, individuals from different linguistic backgrounds allow organizational interactions across national and linguistic boundaries, as well as providing appropriate and tailored solutions to a diverse clientele (e.g., Kulkarni, 2015; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999; Neeley & Kaplan, 2014).

Language diversity in the workplace also can result in communication breakdowns due to differences in language skills, and differences in the interpretations of communicative practices among language groups (Henderson, 2005). However, language diversity in the workplace is not only associated with these communication challenges (Lauring, 2007). Language has powerful implications for identity and group membership in organizations (Woo & Giles, 2017). In multilingual contexts, language and its markers (e.g., accent, word choice, pronunciation, grammar) are frequently considered the most relevant dimensions of personal and group identities facilitating social categorization (Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012; Dragojevic et al., 2013; Giles, 1977; Sachdev & Bourhis, 2001).

Language-based identities shape workplace experiences as they can be used to evaluate the "fit" of individuals for organizations (Aguirre, 2003; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014; Woo & Giles, 2017), create barriers to social interaction between employees as individuals cluster into language groups (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a; Tange & Lauring, 2009), and reduce feelings of power and status in an organization (Lønsmann & Kraft, 2018; Neeley, 2013; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). These dynamics can result in discrimination, exclusion, knowledge exchange difficulties, problems in assimilating, lack of organizational cohesion, and performance losses in organizations (Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Woo & Giles, 2017).

The workplace experience can be stressful for individuals whose identities are attached to groups that are negatively stereotyped or unfavorably compared to other groups (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). Speakers of nonstandard language varieties (e.g., those who deviate from the "correct" way in speaking or writing a language in terms of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary such as speakers with a foreign accent) are often evaluated as less competent than speakers of standard varieties (e.g., those who are considered to speak or write a language "correctly" such as speakers of Standard American English in the United States) (Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012; Dragojevic et al., 2013; Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Giles & Edwards, 2009). However, Lippi-Green (2012) notes that not all foreign language varieties generate negative reactions, "only accent[s] linked to skin that isn't white, or which signals a third-world homeland" (p. 253). For example, Hispanic-American immigrants who speak English with an accent are perceived as less competent than individuals with an American English accent (Hosoda et al., 2012), as well as evaluated as less correct in their use of English than Caucasian individuals from France and Germany (Lindemann, 2005).

The native language of Nelly, in the example above, is Spanish, and she is not alone in Canada. A total of 495,090 individuals reported Spanish as their mother tongue in the 2016 Canadian Population Census (Lepage, 2017). Spanish constitutes the fifth most spoken non-official mother tongue in Canada as this country has been steadily receiving increasing numbers of immigrants from Latin American countries and Spain since the late 1990s (Guardado, 2018). Colombia, Mexico, El Salvador, Peru and Chile are the most popular Latin American countries of origin for Spanish speakers in Canada (Armony, 2014). Eberhardt (2011) further indicates that the "Hispanic diaspora in Canada is said to make up one of the largest non-European ethnic groups in Canada" (p. 2).

For the purposes of this study, the terms "Spanish speakers" or "Latin Americans" will be used interchangeably to refer to Spanish-speaking immigrants from Latin American countries.

Latin American immigrants in Canada are an internally complex and diverse group due to their history of immigration, various countries of origin, class, ethnicity/race, and other factors (Veronis, 2007, 2010). However, the Spanish language is an element that results in a shared connection among members of this group (e.g., Basok et al., 2014; Bergman et al., 2008; Davis & Moore, 2014; Offermann et al., 2014). This is because "language becomes a source of collective identity that unifies and cross-cuts ethnic differentiations" (Davis & Moore, 2014, p. 693). Furthermore, in-group speech promotes feelings of solidarity amongst members and reminds them of their common ethnic background (Giles et al., 1977). Latin Americans living abroad highlight the social meaning of their Spanish language as an aspect that represents their identity and allows them to align with other Spanish speakers regardless of their national origin (e.g., Guardado, 2008; Showstack, 2018). Beyond allowing a construction of a broader identity, the Spanish language is also associated with a sense of self, pride in their culture, and a form of personal expression (Bergman et al., 2008; Davis & Moore, 2014; Evans, 1996).

Because Latin American immigrants are a 'rapidly growing population" in Canada (Armony, 2014, p. 7), the need to study this population and how they are adaptating to Canada and the Canadian workplace is relevant (e.g., Basok et al., 2014; Turchick Hakak et al., 2010; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). Current research has highlighted how language related issues can lead to Latin American individuals being underemployed (Lopez-Damian, 2008; Serrano, 2015; Turchick Hakak et al., 2010; Wilson-Forsberg, 2015), can result in differential treatment in their jobs (Lopez-Damian, 2008; Turchick Hakak et al., 2010) or lead to communication breakdowns (Viveros-Guzmán & Gertler, 2015). Even though language has emerged as a critical issue for Latin Americans in the workplace, none of these studies has primarily focused on language in their research (except for Viveros-Guzmán & Gertler, 2015 who specifically examined language barriers among Latino Farmworkers).

As migration and globalization are the prevailing realities, language diversity is persistent in organizations (Kim et al., 2019) and thus studying language issues in a multilingual workforce requires our attention (e.g., Hiss & Loppacher, 2021, Lauring, 2007, 2008; Lønsmann, 2014; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999b; Offermann et al., 2014; Teboul & Yoon, 2019; Woo & Giles, 2017). Further, it is important to broaden our understanding of the workplace experiences of nonnative speakers and their perceptions of interacting with native speakers (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2009b; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Huang et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2019; Montgomery & Zhang, 2018).

Advancing research in this area can inform human resource practitioners to develop more comprehensive and efficient practices or training to create an environment where nonnative speakers can showcase their potential, succeed, and thrive (Kim et al., 2019; Offermann et al., 2014; Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Sanden, 2018; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). In this way, organizations can fully benefit from a linguistically diverse workforce (Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). Equally, having knowledge of the experiences and perceptions of working in a nonnative language and interacting with native speakers can enhance empathy among multilingual work teams, stimulate native speakers to help their colleagues, and promote desirable behaviours when working together (Derwing & Munro, 2009a; Kim et al., 2019; Neeley, 2013). Having insights into how an individual navigates the workplace in a nonnative language can also have implications for programs and services that support these individuals such as foreign language instruction, and training for specific skills in the workplace (Cheng et al., 2020; Douglas et al., 2020).

In Canada, this knowledge is particularly important as successful integration of immigrants is tightly linked with the health of the general economy (Weiner, 2008). Immigrants arriving into the Canadian workforce possess valuable work experience and are "highly educated" (Lochhead & Mackenzie, 2005, p. 104); however, their language and communication

skills can be critical in their successful integration and adjustment into the workplace (e.g., Lai et al., 2017; Lochhead & Mackenzie, 2005; Weiner, 2008).

**Research Questions**

In this context, this qualitative study explores and documents the experiences of first-generation Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants in relation to their linguistic identities and their intergroup work relations in the Canadian National Capital Region. Located between Ontario and Quebec, this setting is unique as it features two different languages with English in Ottawa (ON) and French in Gatineau (QC) (Veronis, 2015). The following research questions were posed for this study:

RQ1-How do Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants negotiate their linguistic identities in their workplaces, and how do their social identities change as a result of their experiences?

RQ2-What are the coping strategies native Spanish speakers use to navigate the Canadian workplace as non-native speakers?

RQ3-What are the participants' perceptions and emotional responses to the communicative adjustments made by native born speakers in their interactions with them?

**Theoretical Framework**

Ethnolinguistic identity theory (ELIT: Giles et al., 1977; Giles & Johnson, 1987) provides a paradigm to study the social-psychological factors that impact the relationship between ethnic groups and their language use. ELIT is useful in examining how participants in this study perceive and negotiate their linguistic identities in the workplace, and the strategies they use to navigate their workplaces in a foreign language (RQ1 and RQ2). Communication accommodation theory (CAT: e.g., Dragojevic et al., 2016; Gallois et al., 2005; Giles & Ogay, 2006) provides a framework to explain the communicative adjustments that individuals make when interacting with others based on their perceived group memberships. CAT will help in

understanding the participants' perceptions and emotional responses to the communicative adjustments that native born speakers make in their interactions with them (RQ3).

**Methodology**

Drawing on these theories, this study takes a phenomenological approach by documenting the lived experiences of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants working in Canada (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). In this approach, in-depth semi-structured interviews allow thick descriptions of the participants' experiences using their own voices (Johnson, 2001; Kulkarni, 2015).

The findings presented in this study resulted from a six-phase approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012) of 24 semi-structured interviews conducted with 16 women and 8 men from 11 Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. At the time of the interviews, these participants had been working in either English or French between 1 and 26 years in the National Capital Region of Canada.

**Thesis Structure**

This thesis is composed of six chapters, including the introduction. The literature review sets up the theoretical elements to answer the research questions by exploring concepts from social identity, communication accommodation and linguistic identity theories. This second chapter will summarize relevant studies on navigating workplaces in a nonnative language, and then focus on research of nonnative speakers working in Canada, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants in this country. Chapter three explains the research methodology that answers the questions of this study. This chapter will outline the rationale for the choice of the phenomenological approach, provide an account of the researcher's role, and describe the data collection and analysis procedures. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations will also be included in this section. The fourth chapter presents the results from the interviews into five major themes using a thematic analysis approach. This chapter will

define each theme and its respective sub-themes and their indicators, and provide direct quotations from the participants that reflect their workplace related experiences to illustrate the findings. Chapter five answers the research questions by discussing the study's findings through the lens of the theoretical framework, and in the context of the existing literature. This thesis will conclude with a summary of the study's findings and potential implications for workplace practices, as well as provide limitations and future directions for research.

# Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework that will assist in analyzing the experiences of Spanish native speakers from Latin American countries in Canadian workplaces. It will also review existing research on the experiences of nonnative speakers in workplaces, and then focus on studies that took place in Canada with an emphasis on Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants working in this country.

## Intergroup Communication

Our social identities are central in intergroup communication. Gangi & Soliz (2016) explain that intergroup communication "is based on group-based perceptions (e.g., stereotypes, schemas) stemming from the salience of different social group identities of the individuals in the interaction" (p. 35). This form of communication takes place when participants define themselves or others in terms of social identity (e.g., membership to a social group) rather than with personal features (e.g., personality). Dragojevic & Giles (2014) claim that "most interactions traditionally considered interpersonal are actually intergroup in nature" (p. 29).

In intergroup communication, social identities are enacted and displayed in communication practices which are influenced by social identities in a dialogical relationship (Giles, 2011; Giles & Maass, 2016). In other words, social identities "shape and are shaped by communication" (Harwood et al., 2005, p. 2). For example, as social identities are enacted during communication practices, language is a salient means of social categorization in interactions between native and nonnative speakers (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Furthermore, as communication practices are influenced by social identities, sharing a social identity (e.g., being native speakers) influences the effort that individuals make in communicating with others (Greenaway et al., 2016). This is illustrated by native speakers putting less effort into understanding nonnative speakers (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Lindemann, 2002; Lippi-Green,

2012), which in turn decreases their perception of understanding nonnative speakers (Munro & Derwing, 1995).

**Social Identity Theory**

Intergroup communication is rooted in a socio-psychological tradition, particularly in the development of social identity theory (SIT) from the early 1970s (Giles, 2011; Giles & Maass, 2016). SIT explains that social categorizations are cognitive tools that allow individuals to organize the world, use these classifications to influence their behavior, and identify their own place in society (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity of an individual refers to "those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). Thus, social identity theory suggests that an individual's sense of self comes largely from their perceived membership in social groups and categories.

Social identities are emotionally significant for individuals as they are inclined to view their own social groups in a positive way (Giles & Maass, 2016; Tajfel, 1974). SIT also suggests that members favour members of the same social group (in-group) and display negative attitudes towards members of other social groups (out-group) (Tajfel, 1982).

According to SIT, individuals maintain or achieve a positive sense of their own social identity, which enhances their self-esteem by distinguishing themselves in a positive manner compared to members of other groups (Tajfel, 1974, 1982). Giles et al. (1977) explain that, according to this theory, members of groups that perceive their social identity as negative in comparison with other groups seek cognitive alternatives to achieve a positive social identity. In some cases, Tajfel & Turner (1979) propose that members of a group opt for social mobility by disidentifying with their own in-group and joining a high-status outgroup. "This might be achieved by modifying one's own cultural values, dress and speech styles so as to be more like that of the dominant group's" (Giles et al., 1977, p. 320). Tajfel & Turner (1979) also explain

that when group members have a strong sense of identification with their own group or find that it is impossible to shift to another group, they can seek positive identification with their own group by engaging in social competition with the out-group. They can also use social creativity by re-framing negative characteristics in a positive direction, using different attributes to positively compare themselves to the dominant out-group, or changing the reference group for comparison to another outgroup.

**Communication Accommodation Theory**

Communication accommodation theory (CAT), which builds on SIT, emerged in the 1970s to explain the role of social identities in communication processes (Gallois et al., 2005; Greenaway et al., 2016). Giles & Maass (2016) explain that this theory acknowledges the influence that group memberships have on how individuals communicate with others. CAT suggests that speakers "create, maintain, or decrease social distance in interactions" (Soliz & Giles, 2014, p. 107) by diverging, maintaining, or converging their communicative behaviors (Dragojevic et al., 2016; Palomares et al., 2016).

Divergence occurs when verbal and nonverbal differences are accentuated between interactants and one or both disengages from the communicative needs of the interaction (Gallois et al., 2005; Giles & Ogay, 2006; Palomares et al., 2016). Maintenance refers to the lack of any adjustment by speakers who keep their regular communication style in an interaction (Dragojevic et al., 2016; Giles & Ogay, 2006). Finally, convergence occurs when individuals adapt their communicative behaviours to the needs of others in order to reduce social differences and facilitate the interaction (Dragojevic et al., 2016; Gallois et al., 2005; Giles & Ogay, 2006).

Communicative adjustments are an omnipresent part of social interactions and can occur automatically (and often without one realizing or being aware of it), but also can be intentional and conscious (Dragojevic et al., 2016). CAT suggests that individuals can have affective motives which are related to social relationships and identity concerns (e.g., need to assimilate or

differentiate from others), and/or cognitive motives associated with communication efficiency (e.g., facilitating comprehension) (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Gallois et al. (2005) explain that in interactions, communicative behaviors lead individuals to have perceptions about the interlocutor and their motives. These perceptions inform the individual's desires to engage or disengage in future interactions with the interlocutor.

### *Listener-Focused Constructs of CAT*

CAT not only offers a framework to understand communicative behaviours that individuals use during interactions, but also helps to elucidate how interlocutors perceive and respond to these behaviours (Gasiorek, 2015). Gallois et al. (2016) highlight the comprehensive scope of this theory as it navigates both descriptions of behavioural changes in an objective manner and documents the subjective perceptions of participants in an interaction. Gasiorek (2013) states that "with CAT's shift to defining key constructs in subjective terms comes a need to better understand how individuals come to experience and evaluate interactions and speakers as they do" (p. 136). This present study attempts to address this need as one of the research questions focuses on the participants' perceptions (first generation Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants) of the communicative adjustments that native speakers make when interacting with them in Canadian workplaces.

CAT focuses on the dichotomy between accommodation and nonaccommodation. These constructs will be explored in this study to document the participants' perceptions of the behaviours of their native speaking peers during interactions. Accommodation "is generally defined by the perceived appropriateness of the communicative adjustments made by a speaker" (Gasiorek, 2015, p. 578). The appropriateness of an adjustment depends on each individual's standards of what they consider helpful to facilitate the conversation. Dragojevic et al. (2016) explain that individuals evaluate communicative adjustments from speakers based on what they believe are their motives and intentions. Perceptions of accommodation are influenced "by the

degree to which participants inferred for speakers had positive motives: the more positive the inferred motives, the more appropriately adjusted (the same) communication was perceived to be" (Gasiorek, 2015, p. 579).

On the other hand, nonaccommodation is enacted by "some element of disaffiliation, dissimilarity and/or disconfirmation" (Gasiorek, 2016, p. 85). Nonaccommodation can take two primary forms: under- or over-accommodation. Underaccommodation occurs more frequently (Gasiorek, 2013), and is defined as a "communication behavior perceived to undershoot the level of implementation desired for successful interaction" (Coupland et al. (1988) as cited in Gasiorek, 2016, p. 88). Underaccommodation can also be the complete omission of any adjustment. Examples includes speakers talking too fast or using jargon with a partner that is unable to understand the terms (Gasiorek, 2016). Conversely, overaccommodation is defined "as communication behavior perceived to overshoot or exceed the level of implementation necessary for a successful interaction" (Gasiorek, 2016, p. 88). Examples of this behaviour include the use of high volume, simple vocabulary and syntax, and slow speech rate (Gasiorek, 2016). Gallois et al. (2005) state that foreign talk (FT), a form of overaccommodation, occurs when native speakers address nonnative speakers with simplified words, a louder volume and exaggerated speech.

Reactions to nonaccommodation can take multiple different forms depending on the context. Gasiorek (2016) has pointed out that individuals can respond to instances of underaccommodation by direct (e.g., confronting the speaker, asking questions), indirect (e.g., changing the subject, an unwillingness to participate further in the conversation) and passive (e.g., ignoring) responses. In cases of overaccommodation such as patronizing talk, individuals can enact passive (e.g., ignoring the situation), assertive and appreciative (e.g., stating their competency in a positive way), aggressive, and humorous (e.g., making jokes) responses. When FT occurs, Zuengler (1991) explains that nonnative speakers may respond by avoiding

interactions with native speakers, having negative attitudes towards native speakers, and losing motivation in learning their nonnative language. This study will document the native Spanish speakers' responses to the perceived nonaccommodation from their native speaking peers.

**Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory**

Ethnolinguistic identity theory (ELIT) examines the factors that impact the relationship between ethnic groups and the way they use their language (Giles & Johnson, 1987). Cargile et al. (1995) explain that ELIT integrates concepts from SIT and CAT to understand how language articulates conflict, marks group boundaries, and negotiates group identities during interactions. In this present research study, these two latter elements are central in looking at how Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants negotiate their linguistic identity while working in Canada.

***Marking group boundaries***

ELIT highlights the importance of language for the categorization of ourselves and others (Giles & Johnson, 1987). Cargile et al. (1995) explain that in social categorization, "language is central here because it has the flexibility and overt physical presence to reference a range of social categories" (p. 192). For instance, in a study examining the relevance of language for social categorization, Rakić et al. (2011) found that participants relied on language markers rather than portraits of individuals to distinguish between Germans versus Italians.

Language is also a core component of an individual's identity (Giles et al., 1977; Woo & Giles, 2017), and is a way in which people can define themselves. Therefore, linguistic identity is an integral part of an individual's social identity (Giles, 1977). This dimension of self-concept results in an individual's membership of a linguistic group (e.g., I am a Hispanic because I am a native Spanish speaker) (Bordia & Bordia, 2015).

In-group speech promotes feelings of solidarity amongst members and reminds them of their common ethnic background (Giles et al., 1977). For example, Spanish speaking individuals living in a foreign country recognize their native language as a source of pride and a common

bond which unites them into a cohesive group regardless of different nationalities (Bergman et al., 2008). Woo & Giles (2017) argue that individuals tend to prefer those who speak the same language as they do and possess a similar accent (in-group) over others (out-group). Supporting this notion, in a study on the effects of language, accent and race in guiding social preferences, Kinzler et al. (2009) found that five-year-old children chose speakers of their native language as friends rather than speakers of a foreign language or those with a foreign accent. Furthermore, in experiments on language and social preferences, Kinzler et al. (2007) documented how five-to-six-month-old infants preferred speakers who spoke the same native language, and ten-month old infants selected toys offered by a native speaker rather than one offered by a foreign language speaker.

Language varieties and speech styles are salient during intergroup communications, and are powerful social forces that convey meanings related to a speaker's group membership as well as to their social and personal characteristics (Cargile & Giles, 1997; Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Giles et al., 1977; Riches & Foddy, 1989). From an early age, people are able to differentiate between native and foreign languages due to their unique sounds (Kinzler et al., 2007; Nazzi et al., 2000). These categorizations activate stereotypic associations (Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012) that shape the listener's responses to and evaluations of a speaker (Cargile & Giles, 1997; Fuertes et al., 2012; Riches & Foddy, 1989). For example, non-standard language varieties (e.g., regional, ethnic, nonnative) have been found to be often associated with evaluations of poor intelligence, status and competence (Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012); a lack of fluency despite the speaker being actually competent (Lindemann, 2002); as well as with difficulties in understanding them (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). Gluszek & Dovidio (2010) explained that this latter association (whether it is based on an individual's perceptions or the actual situation), "may influence how nonnatively accented speakers approach interactions with natively accented individuals and (a) shape their behavior during the interaction, (b) influence their interpretation

of the listener's behavior, and (c) determine the outcomes of the interaction" (p. 221). Stereotypic associations can lead to discriminatory treatment against nonnative speakers (Dragojevic et al., 2013; Munro, 2003; Ng, 2007).

When an individual has a negative sense of identity due to social comparisons with other groups, they will try to achieve a positive social identity which in turn improves their own self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

***Negotiating group identities***

Cargile et al. (1995) explain that to achieve a positive social identity, group members can either assimilate into the dominant group or distinguish themselves from others. When assimilating, individuals will converge their linguistic characteristics with the dominant group. Giles (2011) states that groups will "gravitate to or accommodate dominant groups' communicative habits" as "the communicative markers of dominant groups command social and political capital" (p. 5). For example, Banks (1987) documented that ethnolinguistic minorities such as Spanish speakers in English speaking workplaces reported the need to move towards non-marked speech in order to gain access to middle or upper level management positions.

CAT points out that although individuals can be motivated to adjust their communicative behaviours, their actual ability to do so can be limited due to their lack of a communicative repertoire (e.g., words, gestures), physiological limitations (e.g., difficulties producing sounds from their nonnative language) and the medium in which communication occurs (e.g., face-to-face vs. telephone) (Beebe & Giles, 1984).

In contrast, group members can positively differentiate themselves from out-group members through either social creativity or competition responses. Cargile et al. (1995) explain that in social creativity, in-groups use new characteristics to compare themselves with out-groups, or the previously negative characteristic can acquire a positive direction. For example, having an accent when speaking in a nonnative language can acquire a positive characteristic

when it is perceived to distinguish one from the general population, or provide a competitive advantage by being able to communicate with multiple groups (Bergman et al., 2008; Brewer, 1991; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Moyer, 2007). In competition responses, members of an in-group will "become more politically conscious and collectively mobilized into addressing the power imbalance and their social discontent" (Cargile et al., 1995, p. 197). Within both social creativity and competition responses, individuals accentuate their own in-group language markers (e.g., vocabulary, accent) and diverge from out-group members (Bourhis et al., 1979).

This current study shares the importance of language for social characterization and identity construction with ELIT. Initially, this study documents the ways in which participants identify with their native language, their experience working in a nonnative language and the strategies they employ to achieve a positive sense of social identity.

This section identified the theories that will assist in answering the research questions in this study. The following section will focus on reviewing existing research on the experiences of nonnative speakers in workplaces.

**Experiences of Nonnative Speakers in the Workplace**

Teboul & Yoon (2019) emphasize that negative responses towards other languages and accents are the root of many experiences that nonnative speakers face in the workplace. Nonnative speakers are aware of the negative stereotypes associated with them (e.g., Birney et al., 2020; Derwing, 2003; Kim et al., 2019; Paladino et al., 2009; Russo et al., 2017) so when they interact with others, they often experience pressure to *not* conform to these stereotypes.

This experience is considered a *stereotype threat*, defined as when one is "at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). The authors explain that the presence of this social-psychological predicament can affect the way in which individuals evaluate themselves, which in turn can hinder their performance. Being aware of negative stereotypes regarding their identity group and the

completion of a task can result in individuals confirming the stereotype that they initially wanted to avoid (Kray et al., 2001). In the workplace, the burden of experiencing stereotype threats results in employees having difficulties in showcasing their true capabilities, and can prevent managers from being able to evaluate the full range of abilities of these employees (Roberson & Kulik, 2007).

***Cognitive Experiences***

For nonnative speakers, Bergman et al. (2008) explain that because their own native linguistic identity is suppressed and performing in a second language requires more cognitive effort, communicating and working in a second language increases fatigue and stress. Kim et al. (2019) explain that an elevation in cognitive effort is required when requests need to be constantly repeated to make sure information is correctly understood, or planning of proper grammar and vocabulary is necessary before communicating. Nonnative speakers also experience fatigue when they constantly second-guess and monitor their own actions, as well as think about how others will react to and interpret their actions. A restriction in language ability when communicating can influence work routines. For example, in speaking with nonnative speakers from companies located in Germany, France, Japan and the United States that used English as their common language, Neeley et al. (2012) found that tasks that take thirty minutes in a speaker's native language took up to four hours when they are done in English. In sum, nonnative speakers are required to increase their effort to demonstrate professional competency, or to underscore other strengths (e.g., perseverance and hard work) in order to compensate for negative evaluations (Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Russo et al., 2017; Woo & Giles, 2017).

In a high-tech French company with English as the lingua franca and workers required to communicate with both native and non-native speakers of English, Neeley (2013) found by conducting in-depth interviews with a total of 41 employees that all nonnative speakers expressed a subjective feeling of diminution of their professional standing and perceived a loss in

their status. Participants in this study indicated that when they needed to communicate in detailed levels of conversation in their nonnative language to achieve work related goals, they experienced feelings of diminishment, devaluation and reduction. When comparing communicative performance and eloquence in their native language to their nonnative language, they experienced status diminuition. In short, nonnative speakers highlighted how not being able to convey thoughts in the organizational language has the potential to hurt their professional identities (Kulkarni, 2015).

Similarly, by using responses to in-depth semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions from 99 participants, Kim et al. (2019) documented how nonnative English speaking participants, with previous work experience in the United States, constantly found themselves in situations where they needed to repeatedly prove themselves as if they were just starting their professional careers. Participants reported feeling inferior in regards to their language and communication skills, and shared that they were often patronized and disrespected when native speakers used particular communication styles (e.g. speaking louder) in their interactions with them. Neeley (2013) demonstrated that participants who were uncomfortable and less confident speaking in a nonnative language manifested those concerns through fear of losing their jobs or having less opportunities for job advancement.

### ***Emotional Experiences***

Nonnative speakers frequently experience negative emotions such as fear of making mistakes in front of co-workers and confirming negative stereotypes about their group (Neeley et al., 2012; Russo et al., 2017). Kim et al. (2019) found that participants in their study expressed frustration when co-workers corrected their speech, and embarrassment when they were not able to express themselves clearly due to their lack of language skills. The authors explain that these negative feelings led to insecurity and decreased self-esteem as participants did not retain complete control over various situations.

Neeley (2013) discusses the concept of language performance anxiety to refer to fears associated with communicating in a nonnative language, and the possible negative evaluations and mistakes made while speaking. In her study, participants self assessed their language fluency as high, medium or low. Participants who felt comfortable using the nonnative language were classified as high level, people who were less confident were in the medium level, and people who were uncomfortable when speaking were in the low level. Participants with either high or low levels of self assessment fluency experienced less language performance anxiety, as the former accepted their language imperfections but were comfortable speaking in the nonnative language, while the latter group greatly restricted their use of the nonnative language in their interactions. Participants with a medium fluency reported higher levels of fear and elevated levels of self-consciousness about how they would be evaluated or criticized based on their language performance. Haley et al. (2015) further indicates that second language anxiety is related to self-consciousness and fear, and leads to a decrease in perceived levels of self-efficacy in those individuals.

### ***Behavioral Work-Related Experiences***

Feelings of anxiety, humiliation, and incompetence in nonnative languages leads to a constant linguistic insecurity that results in nonnative speakers remaining silent or avoiding potentially beneficial situations such as meetings with superiors or attending conferences that could improve their professional image or status within organizations (Deneire, 2008; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). Kim et al. (2019) explain how participants in their study engaged in avoidance behaviours as a coping mechanism to "escape undesirable outcomes" such as making mistakes or appearing professionally incompetent among their coworkers. Participants in the study by Kim et al. (2019) also mentioned withdrawing from interactions with native speakers. Neeley (2013) identifies this avoidance behaviour as inhibition, and found that it is common among nonnative speakers with low and medium self-perceived language fluency. Participants either remained

silent during discussions, or avoided interactions such as meetings or conference calls when they consider their input as non essential. On the contrary, the author found that participants who believed they have a high fluency in their nonnative language display a learning goal orientation and seek ways to increase their interactions with native speakers as a strategy to improve their vocabulary and grammar when speaking (Russo et al., 2017). In a case study about language use in two Danish companies, Lønsmann & Kraft (2018) found through 13 ethnographic interviews and 12 days of observation that nonnative workers relied heavily on routine, non-verbal communication, Google translate, and help from colleagues to navigate the workplace and when interacting with others.

Tange & Lauring (2009) identify the phenomenon of thin communication to describe how nonnative workers in an organization restrict their interactions to professional encounters due to their belief that exposing linguistic weakness through unnecessary interactions negatively affects their professional reputations. Lauring & Klitmøller (2015) explain that nonnative speakers prefer not participating in casual conversations as they feel they do not have the same language proficiency that a native speaker has in order to sustain deep conversations involving personal and complex issues that these kinds of communications entail. Woo & Giles (2017) state that "interpersonal similarities and cultural experiences" are important factors in promoting informal interactions between coworkers of different language backgrounds as they will positively impact group cohesion in workplaces.

Similarly, Lauring & Klitmøller (2015) identify various circumstances that lead to avoidance behaviours among nonnative speakers. In their multi-site ethnography composed of field observations and 146 semi-structured interviews with employees from three Danish multinational corporations, the authors identified mediated communication such as the telephone as being difficult and stressful due to the lack of non-verbal language cues, communication in large gatherings (five or more individuals) causing discomfort compared to one-on-one or

smaller group communications, and having interactions with managers or individuals with more power as stressful. However, having a long-lasting relationship with another party can promote contact as these members are able to adjust to one another's communication styles.

Unfortunately, this avoidance of informal communication by less proficient speakers can result in exclusion from information networks, knowledge transfer, and decision-making processes (Tange & Lauring, 2009). On the other hand, Woo & Giles (2017) explain that nonnative speakers try to assimilate their behaviours (e.g., improving their language skills outside of the workplace) to those of native speakers to increase their chances of being included in the organizational group.

In the Neeley et al. (2012) study, participants addressed concerns or sought help from fellow nonnative speakers even though they were less knowledgeable on a particular issue than native speakers. Similarly, Tange & Lauring (2009) found in semi-structured interviews with 82 managers and employees from 14 Danish organizations that participants sought comfort by primarily speaking their native language even when they were competent in the organizational one. They also primarily sought help from a member of their same linguistic group when a work-related challenge was encountered. These language clusters, as they are called, occur when speakers of the same language collaborate or interact with one another in informal gatherings while excluding people who belong to other linguistic groups (Ahmad & Widén, 2015; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a; Negretti & Garcia-Yeste, 2014; Tange & Lauring, 2009). Lauring & Selmer (2010) explain that these dynamics of inclusion and exclusion from informal connections often rest with language preferences and affinities. Woo & Giles (2017) state that limiting informal intergroup interactions can sustain prejudices and stereotypes about other groups, and even though it can strengthen relationships between in-group members, it also negatively impacts organizational cohesion through exclusion of out-group members.

The previous research documented the reactions and behaviours of individuals when working, interacting and communicating in the workplace. The next section of the literature review will focus specifically on studies of nonnative individuals in Canadian workplaces, with an emphasis on research of the Spanish speaking population in Canada.

**Experiences of Nonnative Speakers in Canadian Workplaces**

In 2017, one in four (26%) people who worked in Canada were immigrants (Yssaad & Fields, 2018). According to Statistics Canada (2017), 72.5% of immigrants were nonnative speakers of English or French in the 2016 Census. Weiner (2008) explains that the main barriers that immigrants face when integrating into the Canadian labour market are the lack of recognition of previous professional and academic qualifications, the requirement for Canadian work experience, instances of discrimination, and the lack of competency in the language and communication specific to the workplace (e.g., occupational jargon). Studies indicate that language and communication factors contribute to the high number of un- and under-employed immigrants in Canada (e.g., Hande et al., 2020; Sakamoto et al., 2010). For example, in a study that used qualitative secondary analysis methodology to examine the relationship between language and occupation in a sample of 10 immigrants from London, ON, Huot et al. (2020) found that even after learning the proper grammar and syntax of English; participants stated that their accents, not being able to speak as fast as their native speaking counterparts, or not knowing colloquialisms were ongoing barriers to finding employment.

Language is a critical factor in the integration and adjustment of immigrants to the Canadian workforce. In a qualitative study of 32 immigrant professionals in Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, Lai et al. (2017) found that language and communication skills were the greatest challenge in establishing workplace interactions. Participants identified using incorrect words to express ideas, a lack of knowledge of workplace terminology, pronunciation problems, accents, issues in understanding directions, and the inability to express appropriate responses as

the major difficulties in establishing interpersonal interactions and integrating in their workplaces. Wang (2006) also identified linguistic and cultural barriers as a challenge to integrate into the workplace. In semi-structured in-depth interviews with six professional immigrants in Winnipeg, Manitoba, he found these barriers inhibited participants' ability to demonstrate their actual professional capabilities.

Communication challenges that immigrants experience in their workplaces have also been explored in Canada by researchers who study language education. In a study of the experiences of four ESL engineering intern students who were periodically interviewed, Myles (2009) explained that their communication challenges in the workplace were caused by linguistic, cultural and strategic factors. Participants in this study expressed how demanding it was to understand colloquial language, process different accents, and generate appropriate responses, the need to rehearse and memorize presentations, their frustration at finding the correct words, and the challenge of not having the cultural knowledge to interact with native speakers in informal conversations.

External factors can also result in workplace communication challenges. Douglas et al. (2020) used semi-structured interviews to examine how the perceived behaviors of interlocutors impacted the experiences of a sample of six recent immigrants working in British Columbia. Immigrants in this study noted that breakdowns in workplace communications occurred when they sensed anger and annoyance in others; when interactions were not facilitated by native speakers due to speaking too quickly or using unfamiliar vocabulary; when native speakers expressed difficulties in understanding the accents and explanations of the immigrants; and when interlocutors had negative perceptions about the immigrant's identities which resulted in their feelings of otherness. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2020) studied language use, communication challenges and the ways in which 14 newcomers working in entry level positions in Kingston and Scarborough, Ontario dealt with these challenges. This qualitative study demonstrates that

communication challenges arise when workers are not familiar with the specific technical language of their jobs, and with informal conversation topics. Other challenges included poor vocabulary, difficulties understanding nonnative accents, their own pronunciation deficiencies, nervousness in interacting with others, and others speaking too fast. Participants in this study coped with these situations by asking for interlocutors to repeat what they said or slowing down their speech rate, by avoiding conversations, and by preferring face-to-face interactions over phone conversations Additionally, Tregunno et al. (2009) found that for 30 nurses working in Toronto, Ontario from 20 different countries, language was a predominant challenge. From semi-structured interviews, nurses in this study reported stress when communicating with others, fatigue as they needed to monitor their speech as well as extra attention in understanding the discourse of others, and embarrassment from language-related incidents. The strategies they used when facing these communication challenges were humor, asking for repetition and paraphrasing what others said.

The studies that inform this previous section of the literature review underscore the importance of studying the experience of immigrants due to increasing immigration and diversity in Canadian workplaces (e.g., Lai et al., 2017). These studies indicate the significant role that language plays in how immigrants can access (e.g., Huot et al., 2020), integrate (e.g., Wang, 2006), and navigate their workplaces (e.g., Cheng et al., 2020).

**Experiences of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants in Canadian Workplaces**

Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants have identified their lack of language skills as one of the major challenges in accessing and integrating into the Canadian workforce. For example, 30 Spanish-speaking Latino immigrants living in Toronto mentioned during in-depth interviews having to work in unskilled and low paying jobs as well as experiencing job insecurity due to their limited skills in English, despite possessing qualifications and relevant work-related experiences (Serrano, 2015). Similarly, five Latin American women living in

Lethbridge, Alberta who participated in a conversational approach study about their immigration experiences shared that their employment options were limited. They were only able to choose between "washing dishes, washing bathrooms and cleaning buildings" due to their lack of nonnative language fluency (Lopez-Damian, 2008, p. 103). Difficulties in entering the workforce were not only the result of a lack of fluency in a nonnative language, but also in having non-Canadian accents (Turchick Hakak et al., 2010).

Studies have shown that employment in a nonnative language can generate negative self-perceptions among individuals. In a study using in-depth interviews, Wilson-Forsberg (2015) observed that 24 Latin American immigrants in the cities of Brantford and Cambridge, Ontario had feelings of "losing their real selves" (p. 481) which affected their professional identities when they were unable to find a job that matched their fields. The author mentioned that although these immigrants had arrived in Canada with university degrees and professional experiences, their credentials were unrecognized, their lack of fluency in English was considered unsuitable, or they did not have the "Canadian experience" (p. 475). In another qualitative study, Turchick Hakak et al. (2010) reported that a sample of 20 Latin American professionals who obtained an MBA from Canadian universities expressed frustration as speaking in a nonnative language did not allow them to express their real personalities or project themselves accurately in job interviews and workplace interactions.

Research on language barriers and its effects on the occupational health and safety of 39 Latin migrant farmworkers who worked in Saskatchewan documented their strategies to communicate in the workplace in qualitative interviews (Viveros-Guzmán & Gertler, 2015). The authors explained that comprehending complex instructions and appropriate health precautions were problematic for these workers due to language barriers caused by their inability to learn a second language given their low education and other socio-economic circumstances. However, these workers employed strategies to overcome these barriers such as nonverbal communication,

use of mutually understood words in Spanish and English, reliance on co-workers, acquired experiences on the job, and their use of logic.

Research has also touched upon identity construction among Latino American populations working in Canada. For example, research into the auto parts industry in Southwestern Ontario examined the experiences of resistance or consent from 13 El Salvadorian workers to management directions. In this study, Manzano-Munguía (2003) expected that the Spanish language would act as a source of group identification for the El Salvadorians. However, the author found through open-ended semi-structured interviews and life stories that these companies strategically separated workers from the same background by placing them on different lines or shifts. The participants in this study developed their identities in the workplace not on the basis of their culture or language, but by being seen as a hard worker, which helped them maintain their jobs. In contrast, Basok et al. (2014) examined how a sample of 44 Latin American immigrant workers in Southwestern Ontario reported health hazards or injuries in their workplaces from in-depth interviews. The authors noted that the participants constructed their identities around their shared language, similar cultural background and their status as immigrants.

Canada's National Capital Region is "unique in that it is located on the most politically and symbolic charged interprovincial border within the country: between Ontario and Quebec" (Veronis, 2015, p. 45). In this region, research on immigrants including Latin Americans have shed light into their use of multicultural media in settling into Canadian society (Ahmed & Veronis, 2017), or their experiences with culture, belonging, identity and place (Veronis, 2015).

**Language and Accent Discrimination in the Canadian Context**

As explained previously, nonnative speakers can experience discrimination due to stereotypic asociations (Dragojevic et al., 2013; Ng, 2007). Several studies have documented this in Canada (e.g., Creese, 2010; Derwing, 2003; Munro, 2003). For instance, in a study

documenting the experiences of 100 immigrants with an intermediate level of English proficiency in Alberta, Derwing (2003) found that the majority of participants believed that native Canadian speakers would respect them more if they could pronounce English better. In interviews these participants stated that Canadians were patient; but also told of instances when they felt discriminated against. For example, some immigrants were ignored (e.g., “They don’t pay attention to you if your English isn’t good”), were subject to negative comments on their accent (e.g., “A clerk swore at me in a store; strangers are rude to me”), and felt that some Canadians did not make an effort to understand them (e.g., “Sometimes people choose not to understand”).

By analyzing human right cases involving language-related issues in Canada, Munro (2003) identified three types of discriminatory attitudes towards foreign accented individuals. The author found that pronunciation issues impacted hiring decisions even though language proficiency was not a prerequisite for the position, accent stereotyping resulted in denial of access to jobs or renting to those individuals, and accents resulted in ridiculing or harassing treatment.

Creese (2010) states that accent discrimination constitutes “a central feature” of immigrant life in Canada. For example, drawing on data from two focus groups with 12 African immigrant women in Vancouver, Creese & Kambere (2003) documented how having an African English accent affected their access to jobs or housing, as well as their sense of belonging in Canada. The participants recalled being ignored in conversations, were constantly corrected in their speech, and faced barriers to entering the labour market. The authors of this study explain that accents linked to racialized individuals influence the perceptions of their language competency, and was often a rationale to refuse them employment opportunities. Likewise, in a qualitative study involving 14 Turkish female and male immigrant youth, Kayaalp (2016)

highlighted how having an accent is a prevailing cause of marginalization resulting in participants perceiving a devaluation of their identity and language in Canadian society.

Studies have also documented how Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants perceived differential treatment as a consequence of their nonnative fluency. For example, Lopez-Damian (2008) highlighted a participant from Colombia educated in Canada who felt discriminated against for her English ability compared with native speakers when competing for a job as a teacher. Turchick Hakak et al. (2010) studied the factors for success and barriers confronted by 20 Latin American professionals in the Canadian job market. They identified that being a nonnative speaker and being compared to native speakers negatively affected the perception that others had of them in the workplace. Furthermore, participants perceived that having an accent was linked to assumptions of lower language skills and performance levels that led to differences in treatment.

In Canada's National Capital Region, seven immigrant South Asian women described the surprise and disbelief of customers who observed these women possessing an excellent command of the English language despite coming from the developing world (Jaya, 2019). The author highlighted that, in addition to barriers such as systemic racism and sexism, immigrant women have to overcome language barriers and discrimination based on their accents in order to integrate into Canadian society. Furthermore, through focus group interviews with 16 Latin Americans and 20 sub-Saharan Francophone immigrants, Veronis (2015) identified language proficiency as a significant factor in feelings of inclusion in a study of their experiences with culture, belonging, identity and place in the National Capital Region. In this study, Latin Americans who lived in Gatineau preferred to work with Anglophones because they perceived more overt discrimination while working in Quebec and more subtle forms in Ottawa.

To the best of our knowledge, language related issues among Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants working in Canada have not been the main focus of any research (with

exception of Viveros-Guzmán & Gertler, 2015 who specifically examined language barriers among Latino Farmworkers), but rather these results have emerged from research that has focused on other areas (e.g., factors that influence integration into the workplace). Woo & Giles (2017) emphasize the importance of examining the role of language and its implications on identity formation and group membership within organizations. Kim et al. (2019) especially recognize the relevance of reporting actual experiences of native and nonnative speakers in the workplace. This current research thus addresses this aim and will contribute to the study of employment experiences of Latin American immigrants in Canada. This study specifically focuses on their linguistic identity and workplace intergroup interactions in Canada's National Capital Region by drawing on ethnolinguistic identity and communication accommodation theories. The methodological approach to achieve this objective is described in the following chapter.

# Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter provides justification for the research approach to accomplish the aims of this study. As well, it provides an account of the researcher's role, a description of the data collection and analysis procedures, and trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

## Research Design

The overarching goal of this study was to document the experiences of first-generation immigrants from Spanish-speaking Latin American countries working in a nonnative language in Canada. This was accomplished through qualitative research which explores the meanings that individuals construct about their social and cultural situations, and takes into account the context in which specific realities are experienced (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research allows one to learn about the reality of participants' perspectives and to empower their voices to share their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

This research is motivated by questions that echo the researcher's personal interests and experiences in the Canadian workforce, which is a primary reason why qualitative research is often conducted (Moustakas, 1994). As mentioned previously, the researcher's interest gravitates towards examining the participants' experiences in the workplace in relation to their linguistic identity, their coping strategies as non-native speakers, and their intergroup interactions. By focusing on the examination of the lived experience, this research aim is appropriate for a phenomenological exploration (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956; van Manen, 2016). Lived experiences are the perceptions of an individual, and these perceptions are the prime source of knowledge in phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research uses these individual narratives to describe a common experience, or provides a composite description of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

## Role of the Researcher

All stages of a qualitative research endeavour, from the research questions to the data collection and analysis, are permeated with the researcher's story and personal experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These authors highlight the importance for researchers to position themselves in relation to their research by conveying their background, what motivates their interest about the topic, and what the researcher has to gain from the study.

Six years ago, my world was fully coloured due to the multiple possibilities that I could express and communicate in, using the only language that I spoke during the first 27 years of my life. Aside from being a pivotal point in the construction of my identity, the use of Spanish provided me with comfort, confidence and sophistication to navigate through the professional world in Hispano America. In Colombia, my language was my main asset in the workplace and, to be honest, I greatly enjoyed the privileged position of credibility and effectiveness that characterized my professional identity due to my facility using my native language.

This perception of myself took a turn for the worse once I become a first-generation Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrant when I arrive to Canada five years ago after learning English in the United States for just one year. I experienced first-hand communication challenges working in many different nonnative language settings. This position introduced new ways to do my tasks, questions about my role and identity, and challenges in my relationships with others. It also made me aware of social and communication dynamics that I was not aware of before.

As the phenomenological researcher Max van Manen asserts "To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being" (2016, p. 43). Part of my story and what I experienced working in Canada have made me question language-related experiences of other first-generation Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants in the Canadian workforce.

This study is motivated by my previous experiences in the Canadian workforce and these have the potential to become a possible drawback in this research. Creswell and Poth (2018) and van Manen (2016) state that previous experience and personal knowledge about a phenomenon we want to investigate can constitute a major problem in phenomenological research. The authors expand on this by stating that pre-understandings, suppositions and assumptions predispose us to have an understanding of a phenomenon even before we have interacted with the study's participants.

To mitigate this, van Manen (2016) suggests the practice of 'bracketing' as a mechanism to explicitly recognize the researcher's conceptions, prejudices, suppositions, and understandings. The author acknowledges that fully removing a researcher's personal experience to focus on a participant's experience is a difficult enterprise, so it is critical that the researcher acknowledge how their personal understandings will be noted in the study. Moustakas (1994) further proposes beginning a phenomenological study with a full description of the researcher's own experience. Based on these recommendations, I wrote a full account of my own experiences (Appendix 1) before starting the data collection in order to listen to the stories of the participants in this study with a fresh perspective. In sum, as a researcher I want to discover the stories of other Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants and to document their experiences, and in so doing contribute to the creation of awareness, empathy and support towards nonnative speakers who navigate the workplace with a foreign linguistic identity.

## Data Collection

### *Sampling and Recruitment*

As a phenomenological study, this research focuses not on a single individual but rather on the commonalities of the lived experiences of a group of people in relation to the same phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). Creswell (2014) indicates that a purposeful sampling is an appropriate practice that will help the researcher better understand an issue being explored

through her research questions. Hence, the eligible pool of interviewees was selected based on the following pre-determined criteria:

**Being a Spanish Native Speaker Living in Canada.** In the two American continents, there exist two primary languages: English with approximately 235 million native speakers, and Spanish with approximately 300 million native speakers (Giles & Watson, 2013). Spanish is the most common native language in the combined populations of North and South America.

In the 2016 Canadian Population Census 495,090 individuals reported Spanish as their mother tongue (Lepage, 2017). Guardado (2018) explains that since the late 1990s, Canada has been steadily receiving increasing numbers of immigrants from Latin American countries and Spain, so that Spanish constitutes the fifth largest non-official mother tongue in Canada. Eberhardt (2011) further indicates that the "Hispanic diaspora in Canada is said to make up one of the largest non-European ethnic groups in Canada" (p. 2). Because Hispanic immigrants are a rapidly growing population in Canada, the need to study how this population adapts to the Canadian workforce is relevant.

**Originally from a Spanish speaking Latin American Country rather than Spain.** Ardila (2020) states that Iberian Spanish and Latin American culture constitutes two distinct and different Hispanic subcultures. The author explains that despite the Spanish language unifying and characterizing both groups, the Hispano-American population differs from the Iberian Spanish population in that the former is the result of a mixture of European, indigenous, African and other groups (e.g., Arab) whereas the latter is composed mainly of Spaniards. One of the most important characteristics that distinguishes these two subcultures is the process of "conquest, colonization, resistance and accommodation" (Eakin, 2007, p. 2) that the Hispano-American population has endured. Anderson (1977) explains that the relationship between Iberian Spanish culture and Hispano-American culture lies in the antipathy between the latter conquered group and the conquerors that make up the former group.

Given that the most popular countries of origin for Spanish speaking immigrants to Canada are Colombia, Mexico, El Salvador, Peru and Chile (Armony, 2014), and the common history of colonization and the practice of "mestizaje" (the mixing of ethnic and cultural groups) in these countries as described above, Spanish-speaking Latin American individuals were invited to participate in this study.

**Currently Working in their Nonnative Language in the Canadian Capital Region.** In Canada, research of this specific group is an emergent area of study (e.g., Eberhardt, 2011; Manzano-Munguía, 2003; Turchick Hakak et al., 2010). Work related experiences from this population have been documented in a variety of studies including exploring the perceived barriers of Spanish speakers from Latin America with MBA degrees when entering the Canadian job market (Turchick Hakak et al., 2010), the identity construction of Latin American workers from El Salvador in an auto parts factory in Southwestern Ontario (Manzano-Munguía, 2003), and language barriers of Latino farmworkers in Saskatchewan (Viveros-Guzmán & Gertler, 2015).

However, to the best of our knowledge, there has not been an academic study that documents the experiences of native Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants related to their linguistic background in workplaces in the National Capital Region. There exists a need for this particular research project as Spanish was the third most common mother tongue other than English or French in the Ottawa-Gatineau region according to the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017).

**Is a First-Generation Immigrant that Arrived in Canada as an Adult.** Edmonston & Passel (1992) explain that first generation immigrants are characterized by speaking their native language and retaining many of the cultural values from their home country once arrived in their new country. As a study that seeks to explore the experiences of individuals working in a foreign language, this criterion that participants be first-generation immigrants is important as research

demonstrates that immigrants lose their native language within two to three generations of arriving in a host country (Veltman, 2000). The age of arrival is also a crucial factor in the integration of immigrants to a receiving country. Arriving to a new country at a young age is associated with less influence from their country of origin, and a greater tendency to identify with their new country (Berry, 1997; Edmonston & Passel, 1992).

**Having not Comprehensively Learned English or French as a Foreign Language Before High School.** Gluszek & Dovidio (2010) indicate that people who speak multiple languages often retain phonology from their native tongue leading to an accent in their other language. This inclination to generate speech with a "foreign accent" is the most thorough indicator of a second language user (Munro, 2003). Scovel (2000) explains that after puberty the brain loses some of its plasticity which reduces the likelihood of young adults and adult second language learners being able to acquire native-like pronunciation. In this research study, a foreign accent is classified as a significant social force that conveys meaning about an individual's group membership (Cargile & Giles, 1997).

**Having Previous Professional Working Experience Prior to their Arriving in Canada.** With the purpose of seeking a depth of understanding into the questions that motivate this research, this study required participants to compare their current working experience in their non-native language to previous working experiences in their native language. Moustakas (1994) explains that memories of past feelings, images and meanings are relevant to the way in which individuals view their current phenomenon.

To recruit participants, a flyer was created (Appendix 2) mentioning the purpose of this study, the selection criteria, the nature of the participation as well as the contact information of the researcher. Once the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity approved the ethics application for this study (Appendix 3), the flyer was posted in Spanish to the Facebook group "Latinos en Gatineau y Ottawa."

***Participants***

Creswell (1998) indicates that in phenomenological research, it is recommended to collect data from 5-25 participants who have experienced the phenomenon in question. This study documents the experiences of 24 participants. From this total, 15 were recruited through the Facebook post. The recruitment continued using a snowball sampling technique, whereby the initial contacts helped the researcher connect with 9 new participants (Johnson & Weller, 2001).

The 24 participants (see Table 1 for a participant profile summary) were comprised of 16 women and 8 men who came to Canada from 11 Spanish-speaking Latin American countries: Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela.

On average, the participants have resided in Canada as immigrants for 11.024 years (min = 1 year and 3 months; max = 32 years). Most of the participants have a college or bachelor's degree (*n* = 15, 62.50%), followed by those who have a master's degree (n = 5, 20.83%), or a postgraduate diploma (*n* = 4, 16.67%).

The participants have been working for an average of 9.9 years (min = 1 year; max = 26 years) in the National Capital Region of Canada in a variety of industries including: government and public administration (*n* = 6, 25%); development and humanitarian assistance (*n* = 3, 12.5%); health care and social assistance; primary and secondary (K-12) education; utilities; wholesales (each *n* = 2, 8.3%); beauty; college, university and adult education; construction; non-profit; other education industry (day-care); sales; and telecommunications (each *n* = 1, 4.1%).

The majority primarily use English in their workplace (*n* = 18, 75%) while the remaining use French (*n* = 6, 25%). On average, participants have been comprehensively learning these new languages for 15.58 years (min = 1 year; max = 37 years). Most do not use the language they use in their workplaces at home (*n* = 17, 70.8%), while 7 participants (29.17%) always or

sometimes use their non-native language at home. During the demographic survey, participants manifested their feelings of confidence and comfort using their non-native language in the workplace with respect to understanding, speaking, and writing on a 10-point Likert scale (1-not at all, 10-completely) (see Table 2 for a participant language usage profile).

In this study, the participant pool is a heterogeneous population of individuals with different national, gender, and professional identities; educational and work-related backgrounds; and migration and adaptation processes. However, they all share the common experience of navigating the workplace in a nonnative language. This diversity is highly valued as it allows this phenomenon to be studied from different angles and experiences (Arcand et al., 2020).

***Interview Procedures***

Documenting the lived experiences in phenomenology occurs by interviewing individuals who have personal experiences with this phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Johnson (2001) considers semi-structured interviews as a qualitative data collection method that offers the opportunity to explore and capture deep descriptions, explanations, and understandings of the participants' lived experiences and their contextual situations. To this end, a preliminary interview protocol was developed with instructions for standard procedures at the start of the interview, the primary questions, and a final statement thanking the participants for their time and stories (Creswell, 2014).

Based on recommendations from Turner (2010), a pilot field test was conducted using this preliminary interview protocol with 2 test participants (see Table 3 for a pilot participant profile summary and their language use profile). By simulating the real interview situation, the pilot field test enabled the researcher to refine the preliminary interview protocol into a new version (Appendix 4) with clearer language, improved opening and closing procedures, and additional questions that would contribute to the overarching goal of this study. The interview protocol was first generated in English and thereafter translated into Spanish by the researcher.

After approval by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, the interviews were conducted between the end of September and the first week of November in 2020. Due to the exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, participants had the option to undergo interviews through a virtual platform or phone, or in cases when public health guidelines allowed it, in face-to-face meetings. The latter option was available for the initial participant, but as cases associated with COVID-19 increased in the region, participants and researcher agreed to conduct the interviews though Google Meet or Microsoft Teams. From a total of 23 online interviews, 20 participants used their cameras during the conversation.

The data collection materials and interviews were available in both Spanish and English, and participants were encouraged to select their language of preference. It was important to offer both options, as Tsang (1998) explains that establishing communication in the participant's native language can be important in creating an atmosphere where participants fully express their ideas, convey genuine responses and are able to express deeper emotions. All 24 participants opted to use Spanish for their interviews.

Before conducting the interviews and after thanking them for being a part of the study, participants were given the necessary time to review the consent form (Appendix 5) and formulate any questions they had about it. For the 23 participants who had their interviews online, an electronic copy of the consent form was sent in the e-mail used to schedule the interview. After obtaining the participant's consent to record the conversation, the researcher started by explaining the purpose of the study and the way in which the interview was going to be conducted in order to keep the participants informed and to maintain a good rapport (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). During this part, the researcher recorded the audio of verbal consent to continue the interview from 21 participants. Three participants signed the consent form prior to the interview starting. The interviews started with a 5 to 7-minute demographic survey (Appendix 6) that allowed the researcher to have an overview of the participant's experience and allowed the

interviewee to feel at ease once the primary interview started. At the end of this step, the participant chose a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality.

After ensuring that the information about the study and the interview was made clear to the participants, the interview began with the participants asked about experiences involving their linguistic identity in Canadian organizations, the coping strategies they use to navigate the workplace as a non-native speaker, and their perceptions and emotional reactions to the communicative adjustments that native born speakers make in their interactions with them. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and invited them to add any information they believed was pertinent to the study. The shortest interview lasted 31 minutes, and the longest 1 hour and 49 minutes.

The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The audio was transcribed verbatim by the researcher (see Table 4 for interview and transcription times per participant).

**Data Analysis**

After transcribing the interviews verbatim, spelling, punctuation and repeated words were corrected by the researcher. The text was divided into paragraphs to facilitate the subsequent reading of the material. The transcript was then checked for accuracy by relistening to the recordings.

The files were imported into NVivo 12 software to be analyzed by the six-phase approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This method of data analysis "is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities" (p. 57), which is fundamental for phenomenological explorations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the data was analyzed as follows:

***Phase 1. Familiarization with the Data***

After transcribing and revising the interviews from the recordings, the data set was read multiples times and relevant excerpts to address each of the research questions were identified

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). These excerpts were then translated into English, relevant insights were noted, and a list of potential items of interest was created and shared with the supervisor.

***Phase 2. Generating Initial Codes***

In this step, a coding framework with definitions and examples of text was generated from Phase 1 and used as a guide (Appendix 7) (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Nowell et al., 2017). Relevant extracts of the data pertinent to the research questions were coded using this guide, with emphasis placed on conserving the context of their statements. Some extracts were classified with more than one code as this may reveal data patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

***Phase 3. Searching for Themes***

In order to identify a pattern in the data, codes that shared common features were combined into categories, which were then clustered into sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). The definitions from the coding framework guided the inclusion of the codes and categories into their respective sub-themes. An audit trail was maintained to demonstrate how the sub-themes were organized (Appendix 8) (Nowell et al., 2017).

***Phase 4. Reviewing Potential Themes***

The themes were reviewed to validate whether they meaningfully reflected both the codes and the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). Coded extracts of the data were then examined to confirm that they accurately reflected the overall theme they were placed in. Finally, all the interviews were re-visited to ensure that data extracts were properly coded (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The number of participants who mentioned a code that fit a theme was used to identify if that theme had enough data to support its inclusion and thus reflect the common experience of the group.

***Phase 5. Defining and Naming Themes***

The definition and title of each theme was refined in order to reflect the essence of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Also, meaningful extracts from the interviews were selected as examples in ***Phase 6. Producing the report*** (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

Braun & Clarke's (2006, 2012) method of thematic analysis allowed for flexibility in reflecting, revisiting, and refining the data set, codes, and themes in the analysis for this study.

## Trustworthiness in the Study

In contrast to the conventional criteria of validity, reliability and objectivity to measure the quality of a qualitative study, Lincoln & Guba (1985) introduced the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as a measure of trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the appropriate representation of the participants realities, transferability can occur when the researcher provides descriptive data for other researchers to potentially apply the findings into other sites, dependability is demonstrated by documenting the research process clearly, and confirmability is when the results and interpretations are solely based on the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tobin & Begley, 2004).

Creswell (2014) and Nowell et al. (2017) recommend having multiple strategies as a means of establishing trustworthiness. In this study, data engagement was extensive as the entire data set was reviewed multiple times, and the supervisor was debriefed through different phases of the study. The coding framework started an audit trail using NVivo12 qualitative analysis software to store and organize extracts of the data in nodes, and was continued with further tables on the development of categories, sub-themes and themes. Trustworthiness was also instituted by continually revisiting the raw data to ensure the associated codes were accurate, and providing a rich description by using of quotes from the participants.

## Ethical Considerations

Creswell & Poth (2018) state that ethical issues can arise at each stage of the research process, and suggest procedures to address these issues. They recommend steps such as

obtaining institutional approval for the study, informing participants of the general purpose of the study, clearly stating to participants that taking part in the study is voluntary, obtaining participants' consent, avoiding leading questions, storing data in secure locations for up to five years, and omitting information that can potentially lead to the identification of the participants are a few examples (pp. 55–56).

In this study, the recruitment pieces, data collection materials and consent form were all approved by the University of Ottawa Office of Research Ethics and Integrity before the data collection began. These documents were reviewed by the supervisor of the study who oversaw the entire process. For example, she confirmed that no leading questions were included in the questionnaire.

Once participants were informed of the general purpose of the study, they received a consent form containing information about their rights, measures to protect their confidentiality, and contact information of the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research at the University of Ottawa to report possible unethical behaviors on part of the researcher or to ask any questions. After receiving either written or verbal consent that participants were willing to take part in the study, the interviews were conducted. Pseudonyms were used in the study to hide the identity of the participants. However, participants were informed that their actual country of origin, current occupation, years living and working in Canada, age, direct quotes, and other demographic information would be used in the thesis. The names of organizations, workplaces, and other people mentioned by the participants during the interview were not disclosed in the thesis. Data related to the study has been stored in a secure manner and will be destroyed in 5 years.

# Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter describes the experiences of first-generation Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants in Canadian workplaces in relation to their linguistic identities and their intergroup interactions. It includes five major themes and 12 subthemes identified from the 24 interviews by using the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). This chapter will define each theme, provide coding indicators, and supply quotations from the participants to summarize their experiences. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for each participant. While qualitative research typically uses verbal quantitative claims (e.g., many, often, sometimes) to report prevalence, NVivo provided numerical data that allowed to quantify these verbal claims.

## Theme 1: Spanish and Identity

This theme describes the perceptions participants have towards the Spanish language, how their native linguistic identity is enacted in Canadian workplaces, and their feelings when their native linguistic identity is recognized in their workplaces. When participants made reference to their native language (e.g., "in Spanish I feel freer", "who would think that Spanish got me my residency in this country", "I feel proud and feel that they are privileged to have me as a Spanish teacher"), these references were coded as "Spanish and Identity."

### *Sub-Theme 1. Native Linguistic Identity and Self-Concept*

This section documents the way in which participants describe the connection between their identity and Spanish. This sub-theme contains instances where participants spoke of how the Spanish language may or may not define them (e.g., "Spanish identifies me as a Latin American", "more than the language, the most important thing that defines my identity is my cultural heritage").

Ninety six percent of the participants reported that the Spanish language meaningfully contributes to their identities. Participants spoke of how their native language is the vehicle to

truly express themselves. They used words such as free", "open", "myself", "sociable", "spontaneous" to express how they perceive themselves in their native language. For example, Patricia Velasquez mentioned that in Spanish she can express her personality, which is difficult for her to do in her nonnative language, and Rosa Rodríguez said that when she hears herself speaking in French "I feel like a fake person, like I'm not me. I definitely don't feel like myself."

Participants expressed an emotional connection to their native language, highlighting their affection towards Spanish. Steph Braun, who has been working in Canada for the past 12 years, explained: "My mother tongue is connected to my heart, and my brain always chooses my mother tongue as the primary form of communication." Nana Ortíz, a high school teacher, shared that: "When I teach Spanish, I teach it with enormous passion because I love my language, I identify 100% with Spanish."

Participants also linked Spanish to their membership with a Latino American identity. Alexis Arguello said: "I don't forget where I come from. My identity includes speaking English with an accent. My identity is my skin color and my language. And I am proud to be Latin American." Similarly, participants spoke about their Spanish language as providing them with a common bond to other Spanish-speaking Latin Americans regardless of national origin. Roberto Bolaño, who has worked in Canada for over a year, illustrates this connection:

> It is very nice to be somewhere and listen to someone speaking Spanish. It doesn't matter if they are Colombian or Nicaraguan, you feel as if we have a powerful affinity. I know they will understand me in not only how I express myself, but also with my spirit, my essence, my behavior, my aspirations, my hobbies.

Others echoed Roberto's sentiments by explaining that speaking in Spanish enables them to create a profound connection with other Spanish native speakers. Participants in this study commented how they meet with members of the same linguistic group to share socialization spaces at work (e.g., lunch), how they feel a sense of camaraderie when working with fellow

Spanish speakers, or how they feel proud when other Spanish-speaking Latin Americans have prestigious roles in their organizations.

Although the majority of the participants identified the Spanish language as a key element of their identity, four of them had alternative views. They expressed that Spanish either had a secondary role in defining them or did not identify at all with Spanish as English or French was their primary language of communication at home. Andy Prada, who has worked in Canada for more than 24 years, pointed out:

> I think that English is my first language now and Spanish is becoming my second one because it takes more effort. The other thing I find is that my Spanish, which is Chilean, is not the same Spanish that the rest of the people who live in Ottawa and Canada speak.

***Sub-Theme 2. Situations at Work that Reinforce Native Linguistic Identity***

This section reports on the participant's answers to the questions: "Tell me about any situations in which Spanish has represented an asset or strength for you in your current workplace?" and "How did it make you feel?*"*. In response, all participants stated that Spanish was an asset either professionally or informally at some point while working in Canada. Fifty percent said that they occasionally used Spanish in their workplaces, while 33% stated that Spanish was highly significant for their careers in Canada. Furthermore, 42% of the total participants said that Spanish enhanced informal interactions in the workplace.

Spanish has occasionally been advantageous for some participants. This includes instances when they helped clients or new peers who only spoke Spanish, facilitated links with organizations where the other contact was a Spanish speaker, and assisted in projects that required Spanish. For example, Ilya Giraldo needed to train new Spanish speaking workers, Lupe Gonzalez's interactions with an exclusive supplier was through a Spanish speaker, and Tomás Cruz assisted with logistics when his employers operated in a Spanish speaking country. Rosa

Rodríguez referred to these occasional circumstances as “life’s small gifts” in which “someone knew that I could be useful for what I am.”

Some participants work in fields that actively engage with Latin American countries (e.g., Development and Humanitarian Assistance, Telecommunications and Wholesales), or teach Spanish in Canada, so Spanish is a much more integral part of their employment. For example, Miguel Pérez, who works in the humanitarian assistance field, shared:

> The Spanish language opened doors for me and continues to open doors for me. During the pandemic, there have been cuts and I feel that because I speak Spanish, I have kept my job. Perhaps there may be people who are technically better than me, but those who are good and speak Spanish are difficult to find. In fact, it took months for my organization to find someone in finance who spoke Spanish.

Some participants explained that the combination of speaking Spanish and socio-cultural similarities with Latino America is an advantage in their workplace. Pedro Reyes, who has been working in wholesale in Canada said:

> A Latino likes to do business with Latinos. Even though a Canadian can speak Spanish, Latinos feel more secure doing business with their own culture. And that gave me a huge advantage. Even though there were a couple of Canadians who understood Spanish, no one understood the niceties that go into doing business in Latin America. The Canadian is more to the point while the Latino cares more about the relationship.

Participants were pleasantly surprised that Spanish could be a relevant asset in Canadian workplaces. Many of them felt satisfaction in being helpful, especially when they could help other native Spanish speakers who were customers or clients. Nazareth Recinos explained that while working for a non-profit:

> Many clients who spoke Spanish but not French came to us. Since I was the only person who spoke Spanish, I served as a translator. I loved that because it was a way of helping

our people. I remembered that when I first arrived, I wanted to do a thousand things, but I could not speak French and who could understand Spanish?

They also manifested a feeling of pride and uniqueness of being “in an environment where you are the only person who can help because you know the language.” Rosa Rodríguez said that it is gratifying when “people appreciate that one has value, which is the brilliance of a diamond in the rough.”

Participants also mentioned some benefits of knowing Spanish for informal interactions in the workplace. Occasionally, peers and clients expressed their interest towards the Spanish language and elements of Latin culture. Some of them asked to learn and practice Spanish with them. Patricia Velasquez who works in health care explained that: “There are many people who love Spanish, who learn it and as soon as they hear my accent or name, they want me to say words in Spanish.” Steph Braun stated that although Spanish has not been valuable for her professional development in Canada, “It has helped me to interact, to break down barriers, to have topics of conversation when people travel and when they ask me for help to learn some words in Spanish.” She further explained that these personal interactions were useful to get to know her coworkers better, and this allowed them to overcome assumptions about her as “you are no longer the lady with an accent who speaks different and strange, and someone who may not understand [the native speakers]."

**Theme 2: Projecting a Nonnative Linguistic Identity in the Workplace**

This theme describes the participants’ experience of working in a nonnative language. Participants outlined their perceptions about themselves, as well as the cognitive and emotional experiences they encountered during their career paths in Canada. The references coded in this theme are when participants spoke about the process of navigating their workplace in English or French (e.g., “when I started to work, I felt fear”, “The hardest thing is writing the reports”, “In English you are limited to a certain extent”).

***Sub-Theme 1. Nonnative Linguistic Identity and Self-Concept***

This section reports on how participants perceive themselves when working and communicating in English or French. This sub-theme includes statements about the participant's perceptions of their ability or capacity to perform in the workplace (e.g., "I can't quite express what I want to say", "You are limited to a certain extent in English" or "Because I am always comparing with how I was as a professional in my own language, it makes you doubt yourself now.")

Sixty-three percent of the participants contrasted their abilities in Spanish with their abilities in the nonnative language, while 33% compared themselves to their native speaking peers. They talked about how they possess an extensive capacity to express themselves in their native language and feeling "competent" and "solid" as their communications are persuasive and sophisticated, but pointed out that they feel "limited" in their nonnative language. Some participants compared themselves to the abilities of their native speaking peers, for example Fernanda Batz expressed "I wish I would speak or write like that".

Furthermore, 75% of the participants felt restricted in expressing their ideas, in demonstrating their knowledge or experience, and in being able to socialize with their peers. Patricia Velasquez recalled that during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, her patients were isolated and "they felt lonely and depressed. I was not able to express what I wanted to say to make them feel better. I lacked the necessary words." Participants widely shared Patricia's sentiments and explained that in their nonnative language they are not able to "express in abundance" what they are normally accustomed to. Nelly Sánchez said that there is a "lock" on the words that she wants to use, and she does not have the proper key to unlock these words, especially when she is trying to discipline a challenging group of students. Ross Vila mentioned the problems in trying to articulate her opinions as "the spark does not light" and she is unable to properly contribute her expertise in her job. Furthermore, participants highlighted the

relationship between language competency and the social and cultural dimensions of communication. They mentioned an awkwardness in participating in workplace humour, socializing with peers, or not sharing similar cultural codes.

Fifty-four percent of the participants also experience self-doubt and a reduced sense of confidence in daily situations when working in their nonnative language. Factors that reduce their confidence include feeling "limited" in their ability to communicate in their nonnative language, making comparisons to their own Spanish language abilities, as well as comparing themselves to their native speaking peers. But participants also reported external factors. For example, Lupe Gonzalez remembered how her confidence "has been damaged" as "people laughed at my accent and my pronunciation, people pronounced my name in a thousand different ways and made jokes about my first and last name." Mía Flores mentioned having decreased confidence when she perceived skepticism in her abilities to do her job. She went on to explain that "in the first few years you have to demonstrate that you can do the job; however, in Peru you don't have to demonstrate anything, you just do the job."

### *Sub-Theme 2. Cognitive Experiences*

Interviews revealed that participants undergo mental demands when communicating and carrying out work-related tasks in their nonnative language. "Cognitive Experiences" include codes that refer to intellectual or mental effort (e.g., "Since I am not in working in my native language, I have to do a lot more work to do a good job."), communication challenges (e.g., "When I interact with people in English, I don't understand them because they talk too fast."), and demanding tasks and situations (e.g., "With very technical work language, it costs a lot of work.").

**Intellectual or Mental Effort.** An increase of mental or intellectual effort was mentioned by 83% of the participants. They reported taking longer to "find the words" and

"organize the phrases in my brain". For example, Mia Flores, who has been working in Canada for the last 11 years, said that although she currently feels comfortable in her job:

> I realize that I want to participate in meetings and sometimes I fall short because while I am thinking about how to explain a technical situation in my second language, the others who are native speakers have already entered into the conversation while I am still processing the information. Whatever I was going to say they already said.

The participants often require extra time and effort when working in their nonnative language. They stated that in order to do a good job they work longer hours and harder than in their native language, as well as compared to their native speaking peers. Nelly Sánchez explained:

> Generally, the teacher must prepare thirty to forty minutes for every two hours of class. But when it's in another language you sometimes end up requiring three hours of your time because you have to verify everything: you have to verify how it is written, how to say words correctly, and you have to look for words that are easy to pronounce.

Participants make a cognitive effort when working in a nonnative language as they have to increase their attention and be more aware of how to articulate things, as well as what they and others say. Nana Ortíz said that even though she has been working in Canada as a teacher for over 16 years:

> When I am working with other people, I am thinking about how to communicate with them so that person understands me and how I am going to say something. That is the only thing I am thinking about at that moment.

As a result of monitoring their communicative behaviours in their nonnative language, some participants describe feeling fatigued and displaying physical stress reactions such as migraines and profuse sweating.

**Challenging Situations.** All the participants recalled challenges when communicating with others and navigating the workplace in their nonnative language. Communication challenges included problems in understanding co-workers and clients, struggling to explain ideas and concepts, and issues with co-workers and clients understanding them. They spoke about the necessity of adapting to the diversity of accents (native and nonnative) found in Canada, the complexity of instructions they receive, the rapid speech of native speakers, and difficulties in communicating by phone or video calls. Nazareth Recinos recalled her first weeks working with native speakers of French in Gatineau, Quebec: "I understood maybe 20% of what people were talking about. I tried to imagine what they were saying by what the other answered. It was difficult for me, but little by little I began to understand their accent." Further supporting these comments, participants explained that this communication challenge was greater in the first few months of their employment, but it continues to occur to a lesser degree. For example, Clara Cepeda, who has been working in Canada for 16 years, mentioned constant difficulties in understanding her boss during phone conversations.

Furthermore, participants also mentioned challenging situations in the workplace related to language issues. They identified that they lacked the technical and colloquial language during their working experience in Canada. For example, Tomás Cruz, an architect, mentioned a "dose of reality" when he realized he was "lost in terms of the technical language" of his profession. He has been "relearning everything. And after 15 years, there are still things that are difficult for me. If I see a term, I have to research it to be sure that I understand it." Participants also identified skepticism that some people can have regarding their professional competency and fit for the job. For example, Alexis Arguello mentioned how a manager read his e-mails and asked him multiple times if he wrote it without any help, while María Velázquez recalled that some clients would prefer to talk with somebody who speaks English. Phone or video calls, public speaking and writing reports were also identified as challenging tasks.

***Sub-Theme 3. Emotional Experiences***

Participants were asked to identify the emotions they have experienced while functioning in their nonnative language in Canadian workplaces. The data show that the participants experienced various negative emotions due to expecting and encountering communication challenges (92%), anticipating damaging professional and social consequences for having a nonnative competency (42%), perceiving differential treatment compared to their native speaking counterparts (29%), and painful situations (25%). In contrast, some participants (29%) highlighted positive emotions when working in their nonnative language when they felt included and valued.

**Emotions when Expecting and Encountering Communication Challenges.** Participants expressed fear, embarrassment, anxiety, stress and nervousness of communication challenges that could arise in their workplaces due to their nonnative speaking fluency. For example, Ross Vila mentioned feeling fear by simply anticipating working all day in English. Participants mentioned having a “knot in the throat” and a “shaking voice” when thinking that their peers and clients would have problems understanding their speech. José Fernández said that this problem is a predominant fear for all three years he has been working in Canada, even though his peers assured him that he has “good English”. Some participants also reported emotional responses when sensing annoyance and frustration by native speakers when interacting with them. Rosa Rodríguez said that occasionally her Francophone coworkers display exaggerated gesticulations when they do not understand her which “lowers my morale and disarms me completely.” Additionally, participants explained feeling apprehension when anticipating they would not be able to understand important information at work.

**Emotions when Anticipating Damaging Professional and Social Consequences for Having a Nonnative Competency.** Participants referred to being afraid of making grammatical errors in speaking or writing, having pronunciation and listening difficulties, or speaking with an

accent and the potential social and professional repercussions that arise from any of these actions. María Velázquez, who was having virtual meetings due to the Covid-19 pandemic, recounted her nervousness when “you have all eyes on you and every mispronounced word reverberates in everyone's ears with the microphone.” When facilitating a workshop in her current workplace, Fernanda Batz mentioned her “voice shaking and a knot in my stomach” as she feared potentially losing her job due to her nonnative fluency that was evident to everyone in the workshop. Fears that language skills can be perceived as a detriment to their workplace performance was a frequent concern among some participants. For example, Ilya Giraldo recalled a situation when he did not clearly understand instructions and he opted to figure out the situation on his own instead of asking his peers “I didn't want it to be evident that my lack of proficiency in the language was going to be a problem despite my ability to do the job.”

**Emotions when Perceiving Differential Treatment Compared to Native Speaking Counterparts.** Participants recalled situations where being a nonnative speaker provoked differences in the way they were treated, causing anger, disappointment and frustration. Carolina Palacios gave an example in her workplace where “if ten people worked on a document and there was an error, the error was Carolina's.” She explained how her writing is closely scrutinized and she said: “it makes you angry when they correct something you say. They would not correct a Canadian who made the same mistake.” In another example, Miguel Pérez said he was afraid of making mistakes: “An English speaker can make mistakes and people will not pay attention to it. But when you are a professional, you have to have better English than Canadians themselves.” Susana Espinoza remembered her frustration in a position after completing her Master´s degree in a Canadian University, when documents she wrote were returned to her full of stylistic corrections in red in what she termed a “hemorrhage”. She said: “It is sad when you make a great effort, and that effort is not valued. You feel diminished. I was asking myself “well, what am I doing here? Why am I imposing this level of suffering on myself?”

**Excessive Emotional Experiences.** Furthermore, participants also shared distressing emotional experiences that led to decreased confidence and self-esteem caused by their accents or lack of fluency in their nonnative language. For example, co-workers asked Steph Braun "if there were universities in my country and if I had studied and had a university degree because my pronunciation was not the best." She also recalled a time while selling clothes that the assistant manager told her she would be laid off because of her lower sales. To increase her sales:

> I remember that I decided to stand near the door but when people said 'good morning', no words came out from me. That's when I felt somebody push me around the waist and said 'speak'. This woman [assistant manager] pushed me. (…) That was very cruel and harsh.

Mia Flores's first job in Canada was in a customer service call center where "many times I went home crying". She explained that:

> My hands would sweat whenever a call came in, or when a customer yelled at me because they didn't like my accent. They told me: "I don't want to call Mexico, I want a Canadian to speak to me." I said, I don't come from Mexico and I'm in Canada.

Nelly Sánchez, the math and science teacher, said: "I have had students who have made fun of me to my face for my accent and that affected me a lot." She also added:

> There are days when you want to throw in the towel and say, 'no more', 'what am I doing here?' (…) But you build up your courage and keep going. So, with terrible days, there are also excellent days in which you leave with the satisfaction of accomplishing your duty.

**Positive Emotions.** Echoing Nelly's sentiments, some participants expressed satisfaction at being able to do a good job in their nonnative language, feeling included in their workplaces, and being valued. For example, Adolfo Galvis remembered the first months in his current position when his co-workers were pleasantly surprised by his English competency, and

Nazareth Recinos highlighted her happiness at being able to interact and work with people in her nonnative language.

## Theme 3: Shifting Linguistic Identity

This theme documents the participant's positive change in their self-perception after working in Canada in a nonnative language and what factors changed their perceptions. Participants were asked to describe changes in their identity and perceptions about themselves as a result of their workplace experiences. Answers to this question, as well as statements throughout the interview that connotate a transition of their self-perception from the past ("years after/over time") to the present ("now/today/recently"), were coded within this theme.

### *Sub-Theme 1. Identity Shifting and Self-Concept*

This sub-theme describes changes in participant's self-perceptions after working in their nonnative language. Examples of such statements include "I have changed in the sense that you do not believe that you are capable of doing things, until you do them", "This has been a very hard experience that helps you grow as a human being" or "My emotion has always been one of fear but recently I feel more confident."

As participants looked back on their experiences, 96% spoke about a change in their perception of themselves that included a sense of personal growth, a rise in confidence, and increased feelings of comfort when working in their nonnative language.

Participants remarked that working in their nonnative language gave them a chance to discover and challenge themselves. José Fernández, who has worked in Canada for 3 years, said:

> I faced many fears and insecurities and discovered many things about myself. The reality is that I am here [in Canada], there are things that I cannot change and I have to face these things every day. And instead of hiding, lamenting, or victimizing myself, which I did a lot in the first years here, I have to face these challenges and move forward. This has helped me a lot to improve and I am still in the process.

Steph Braun, who has worked in Canada for 12 years, highlighted her daily identity struggles: “You have to find a balance between who you are and what surrounds you. It's a terrible internal struggle. The results have been incredibly positive, but you still have to be aware of who you are.” Participants acknowledged that these experiences have resulted in a mostly positive personal transformation. Some of them talked about developing greater cultural awareness as they experienced first-hand the multiculturality and diversity in Canada. For example, Adolfo Galvis said, “speaking in a language that is not yours to another person who is not a native speaker is a culturally enriching experience.” Other participants spoke of personal growth as they had to overcome difficult emotional experiences in the workplace. For example, Andy Prada reflected that “when I worked in a place that treated me badly and made me feel like a crumb also made me grow as a person. You fall and you move on.”

Participants mentioned emerging from this experience with an increased confidence in themselves and their ability to function in their nonnative language. They mentioned that over time they changed their personal narratives from “I didn't know if I could do it” to “now I know I can do it.” Mia Flores illustrated this shift by saying: “It is a difficult process, but after many years I feel confident that I can do it, and when I don't know something, I can learn and search and at the end I can do it.” This increased confidence in themselves translates to greater feelings of comfort in their workplaces. As Fernanda Batz explained, “Now I feel much calmer. I no longer sweat when we have team meetings. Before I only spoke at the end of meetings when there was no more time and now it’s blah, blah, blah.” Some participants commented on how their increased comfort levels no longer require them to process information in Spanish in order to communicate in English or French.

However, participants indicated that their self-confidence gained over time could be negatively affected when faced with the emotional and cognitive challenges in working in a nonnative language. For example, Nana Ortíz noted that “after so many years and feeling

confident with the language, sometimes I feel shy and anxious when there is a group work." Mia Flores echoed Nana's experience by describing that:

> If I am with my team, I feel very comfortable and I will speak throughout the meeting, I no longer have any problems (…) But when we have a meeting that is at a higher level, I always have the tendency to say, "I only help behind the scenes." In this case, I always avoid being the one who is going to speak or explain things.

Nana and Mia illustrate the fluid and dynamic nature of their experiences. These experiences are explained by some participants as taking steps forwards and steps back, or riding a roller coaster with ups and downs. In words of Pedro Reyes:

> You feel sad, you are afraid, you feel angry, you have doubts, you question everything you have been doing. And then you have a breakthrough in your work, and you feel much better. One step back, two steps forward.

***Sub-Theme 2: Factors that Shift Self-Perception***

This section documents the factors that encouraged a positive shift in participant's self-perceptions. Examples of statements included "Now I am relaxed in the other [nonnative] language. I no longer care that sometimes I do not pronounce the words well. What matters is that people understand my message", "In my work environment there is a lot of acceptance of different accents, work styles, cultures (…) I feel comfortable where I work. There is not the problem I had when I started where I can't do the job because I have an accent" or "When you see that you produce results and your boss tells you that you are doing well, then at that moment, all the weight is lifted from you and you gain confidence."

Forty six percent of the participants mentioned an increase in confidence and comfort working in a nonnative language when they changed their attitudes towards aspects that identified them as nonnative speakers. Pedro Reyes spoke about how he started gaining confidence: "Once you accept that we will not sound like them [native speakers], that the accent

will always be there and it does not matter, and that the only thing that matters is the message." He added: "Understanding and accepting that was one of the biggest steps I took to fit in because you have to be who you are." Participants also mentioned accepting pronunciation errors and not being afraid of making mistakes as they prioritized their message being understood. Clara Cepeda shared that:

> Before, if we met for lunch I did not participate [in the conversations] as much because I was a bit embarrassed of having an accent, but now I feel that it is very normal because I work with people from many places who each have their own accent. And I was also afraid to make mistakes in front of a group of people, but now I don't feel that way. I am more confident that if I make a mistake it is minimal, or they will not notice it.

As Clara mentioned, participants indicated that overcoming negative self-perceptions was connected to the presence of diverse accents and languages in their workplaces. Statements such as "I don't feel embarrassed by my accent because half of the department where I work are from other places [besides Canada]" were offered by 38% of the participants. They pointed out that the presence of nonnative speaking co-workers facilitated their adaptation to the workplace, and positively contributed to their comfort at work. Fernanda Batz recalled:

> Hearing accents and grammatical mistakes by your peers made me feel quite comfortable communicating because it was like we were all learning, and we all make mistakes. And for this reason, natives who spoke perfectly were much more open and did not judge.

Sixty three percent of the participants emphasized the importance of the workplace in improving their nonnative language competency. Fernanda Batz provided an example of this when she said: "Work made me increase my vocabulary, my ability to communicate", and Patricia Velasquez stated "I really appreciate my workplace because it has given me the opportunity to improve my language skills."

When the participant's workplace competency was valued regardless of their language skills, 29% of the participants gained confidence. Carolina Palacios mentioned: "Now that the people who work with me know what my value is, I feel more confident. Even when they are strict in correcting my reports, I now say 'I'm not going to cry.'" She further explained that hearing her boss assure her that her professional contribution is more significant than her language skills allowed her to be more relaxed, although "you will never feel comfortable working in another language as you do in your own, even if you master it."

Being surrounded by a supportive environment where peers display signs of empathy such as making an effort to understand nonnative speakers, being patient, offering help, and suggesting ways to correct mistakes were reported as essential for a positive workplace experience by 67% of the participants. Lupe González, who is at the peak of her career in Canada, remembered her increasing confidence when she encountered people such as:

> …that boss who didn't laugh at my accent but learned to work with me and was patient. When I went to his office and said "I don't understand why this person laughed when I said Tomas instead of Thomas as they sounded the same to me." And he laughed and said, "I don't understand the difference either."

Furthermore, Susana Espinoza explained that having peers who told her "you do not have to do it alone, bring it [the work] and we will help you" facilitated her adaptation to the workplace so that after 26 years of working in Canada:

> I used to work to survive, but for the last 2 or 3 years I have felt more fulfilled in what I do. I feel like I no longer work to survive. I no longer have the anxiety that I had of "if I don't learn how to write quickly, they will fire me and prefer someone who has English or French as their mother tongue." I no longer have that anxiety because the experience and choices I have made in life have helped me to learn and adapt. Now there are colleagues who come to me and say "Susana, can you help me check this?"

Due to the supportive environment at her workplace, Susana achieved confidence and comfort working in her nonnative language; however, this was also achieved because she learned specific coping strategies during her career which will be further explored in the following theme.

## Theme 4: Coping Strategies

This theme describes the mechanisms that native Spanish speakers employ to navigate in Canadian workplaces and to manage the daily cognitive and emotional experiences that arise from functioning in a nonnative language. Participants mentioned a range of different coping behaviours in the workplace including those that are enacted by the participants on their own, involve direct contributions from co-workers and during interactions with others, as well as behaviours that take place outside the workplace.

### *Sub-Theme 1: Intrapersonal Strategies*

This section describes coping behaviours that participants enact on their own without the involvement of other individuals. These include instances where participants engage in preparation tactics (e.g., “For presentations, I prepare before by writing out what I will say.”), take advantage of technology (e.g., “Any words that I don't understand I type into Google.”) and use sources from the workplace (e.g., “Now I'm studying French at an intermediate level, which is paid for by my job.”).

**Engaging in Preparation Tactics.** The majority of participants (83%) identified mechanisms in order to prepare for presentations, phone calls, meetings and cases of writing so “nothing is a surprise” as Adolfo Galvis asserts. Participants spoke of knowing they “had a weakness” and they took measures such as rehearsing, practicing pronunciation, making visual aids, researching the topic in-depth, or creating templates to be more confident, calm themselves, ensure understanding and, in some cases, minimize the time it takes to complete tasks.

Participants explained that they anticipate having to present in front of their peers by practicing beforehand. For example, Fernanda Batz recalled when she had to facilitate a workshop for her peers. She mentioned spending two weekends rehearsing and repeating her presentation in front of the mirror and videotaping herself to gain confidence. On the day of the presentation, Fernanda gave herself a pep talk to gain greater poise (in a similar behaviour with other participants). Ross Vila stated that to present her reports, she prepares "from the day before or the week before." She added "I begin to think in English about how I am going to say it so that the message is understood."

Being understood is a concern shared by many of the participants who rehearse the pronunciation of challenging words and create notes of what they plan to say and the correct way to say it. Lupe González follows advice form one of her mentors who said "write what you want to say, do not jump into the meetings without having your pre-written text". Alexis Arguello said "I put keywords in a note. So, when I am talking, I look at the notes and I know, at least, how to pronounce that word, and not be ridiculed, and so people understand me". Participants also highlighted that notes help them keep structure when they participate in meetings. This is so they "don´t beat around the bush or say it wrong" as mentioned by Nazareth Recinos and Susana Espinoza. Clara Cepeda remembered placing notes next to her work phone, "with ways of answering, speaking, introducing myself". Visual aids such as checklists and possible answers to common questions assist participants when speaking by phone as they provide them a sense of control over the interaction.

Participants further explained preparing for meetings by familiarizing themselves with the topic as Nana Ortíz expressed:

> If you tell me that the meeting is going to be about this article or this new law that came out, I'm going to read the law or the article. This is so I am not taken by surprise, and to feel more prepared to understand what they are going to talk about.

Some participants raised the point that the act of preparation is time consuming and can take place outside of regular work hours. Mia Flores explained that "it takes more time and work, but I feel calmer that way. It's my way of preparing myself. Sometimes my colleagues laugh and say to me: 'Mia already prepared her notes'."

Although being ready is time consuming, crafting pre-written templates is a preparation tactic that many consider useful. Regarding this tactic, Claudia Pérez highlighted: "Preparing models saves me time because it is not that I can't write an email, but it takes me three times longer than a native speaker to write one relatively well." In cases when participants need to write documents, they describe reviewing them multiple times as a strategy to deal with the stress of making mistakes and jeopardizing the perception of their competency by peers.

Participants stated that preparation remains an applicable strategy even though they have been working in Canada for a number of years and their second language competency has improved considerably. For instance, Nana Ortíz, who has been a high school teacher for over 16 years in Canada, asserted that this strategy persists: "I did it before and I still do it today. It doesn't matter that my English is better, but I feel better prepared to face what happens at work."

**Taking Advantage of Technology.** Seventy-nine percent of the participants mentioned using technology as a coping strategy. Tomás Cruz said that although he has been working in Canada for the last 16 years, he hesitates with the meaning of some words he uses daily in his workplace. He said that he finds comfort knowing that the internet is easily available to him and often use this strategy to cope having learnt English as a second language later in life:

> How lucky I am because when they ask you to do something, you think "Oh my God, what do I do?" And what I instinctively do is go to the computer and see what they mean. And you see the image and you say, "oh well, that's it."

Echoing Tomás´ sentiment, participants use digital grammar checkers, specific web sites and translators to reduce the uncertainty of navigating in their workplace or to “get out of trouble” as María Velázquez stated.

Participants utilize digital grammar checkers to improve their written texts by eliminating grammatical errors. For example, Carolina Palacios mentioned using this tool on her document before sending them to her coworkers, María Velázquez highlighted the instant feedback that this kind of tool offers, and Fernanda Batz added that she learns from her mistakes while using it.

They also stated that in order to do a good job, they look at web pages to learn about specific topics, identify synonyms or the correct use of words, and obtain new vocabulary and their correct pronunciation. Nelly Sánchez, who was a University professor before moving to Canada, shared that: “When I have a class on a certain topic I go to YouTube. There are teachers that speak in French that I like, so I listen to their science classes and I say, 'I could use this, I could say this'.”

Multiple participants use a web-based translator to comprehend the meaning of new words, know their pronunciation or help them in writing their documents. However, some participants, such as Ilya Giraldo, touched on how, in a fast-paced environment taking the time to translate could only occur on rare occasions as it takes time and “coworkers do not always have the patience to wait for you to translate what they are saying”.

**Using Sources from the Workplace.** Another intrapersonal strategy was to use sources provided by the workplace such as manuals, brochures and training. Although this is not commonly used overall (33%), it is a highly popular strategy by those who work for the Government of Canada and in public administration roles (69%). Participants working for the government highlighted their access to language and communication workshops, mentorships and coaching services.

### *Sub-Theme 2: Interpersonal Strategies*

This section highlights the instances in which participants mention the involvement of others as part of the strategy. This includes asking for help (e.g., “I always arrange for a colleague who is a native speaker to correct and help me”) and learning from peers (e.g., “My colleagues give me the correct vocabulary.”).

**Asking Help from Peers**. Independent of the workplace environment and the length of time living in Canada, 79% of the participants stated that they use assistance from peers as a mechanism to cope with situations when “the heart races” as said by Susana Espinoza. They mentioned they choose specific peers to ask for help to ensure their written communication is correct, to facilitate their understanding of topics, and to accurately use their nonnative language.

In interviews, participants reported having identified peers who are helpful in challenging situations. They mentioned that similarities in linguistic identities, perceived disposition to help, and knowledge are some traits that participants use in selecting these peers. Some participants explained that they feel safe in asking for help from other Spanish speakers, as well as other first-generation immigrants as they perceived they have more empathy and identified with them better. They said that approaching Spanish speakers was effortless as María Velázquez explained that “I can ask someone a question in Spanish, so why do I suffer saying it in English?”. This participant also explained that when she needs assistance from a native speaker, she avoids peers with negative facial expressions and instead chooses peers who show a willingness to help.

However, most of the participants mentioned that native English or French speakers are better able to help them navigate through the intricacies of a language that is essential to accomplish their work. For example, Mía Flores asks for revisions of her written documents from native speakers “because there are always certain expressions in English that we, even though we have a good level of English, are never going to master as well as a person whose mother tongue is English.” She added that:

> It's not something that makes me feel bad. I simply accept that as a fact because I came here at 32 years old and I spoke Spanish all my life in Peru. And even though I have been working here for 11 years, there are things that you cannot correct even if you study. And it is not that you know less, it is simply a fact.

Also, participants often ask peers for clarification when a piece of information is not well understood. For instance, Nana Ortíz has two colleagues to whom she verifies she has correctly understood the contents of a meeting because “in the middle of the meeting you are not going to raise your hand if you do not understand”. Further, Patricia Velásquez pointed out “if I don't understand the patient very well, I call my colleague to see what they need because she can understand what they want or what I have not been able to understand.”

**Learning from Peers.** Many participants (50%) highlighted that native speaking peers are helpful in expanding the participant’s communicative repertoire by providing new vocabulary and correct English or French pronunciation. Miguel Pérez remembered learning expressions from his native speaking peers in his first workplace in Canada: “I had a hard time understanding some things, but I always asked a colleague: ‘what are you trying to say?’ and I learned new phrases or idioms.” In addition, participants referred to learning from native speakers by mirroring their communicative behaviours in the workplace. For example, Fernanda Batz recalled that in the first year of her job, she observed how her peers asked questions or structured their comments which she then used when she communicated in English. José Fernández said that “when I am with my coworkers, I listen to how they pronounce certain words and I try to repeat the pronunciation that they make”.

### *Sub-Theme 3: Interactional Strategies*

This section describes the strategies that participants use during interactions. Statements that referred to participants’ behaviours and attitudes when interacting with others in their nonnative language were coded in the categories of: behaviours to comprehend a message (e.g.,

“please clarify this for me?” or “Did you mean this?"), behaviours to convey a message (e.g., “If I can’t articulate something, I use signs.”), avoidance behaviours (e.g., “If I don't have to speak, I'd rather not speak.”), and proactive behaviours (e.g., “I keep control of the conversation by asking questions and this favors me because the information I receive is what I need.”)

**Comprehending a Message.** To ensure they understand something, 59% of the participants engage in the following three behaviours: they ask coworkers to repeat what they said, they repeat what coworkers said verbatim and ask if it is correct, or they use written or non-verbal communication mechanisms. Clara Cepeda mentioned that although she used these strategies a lot at the start of her professional career in Canada 16 years ago, she occasionally still asks for repetition when speaking on the phone with her supervisor. Steph Braun stated that repeating instructions from coworkers is her way to ensure she is “on the same page” as them as certain elements can be lost in translation. These strategies complement other behaviours such as guessing instructions based on common sense, and identifying the key point from an overwhelming set of verbal instructions.

Participants also rely on written and non-verbal over oral communication to facilitate interactions and avoid misunderstandings. For example, Pedro Reyes shared a situation in his workplace that was challenging for both parties, “I remember that to solve the problem we had to go to the computer and write the conversation in a chat room.” María Velázquez stated that using instant messaging apps on the computer is a way to avoid possible misunderstandings that can occur during calls with customers. She went on to explain “when it is difficult for me to understand telephone calls, it’s a lot of work. I always resort to asking, ‘Can I send you a message on WhatsApp?’ Then it is easier for me to know what their name or email is.”

**Conveying Information.** Participants (54%) also spoke about strategies to ensure their messages were efficiently conveyed in the workplace. Written communication was also highlighted as helpful in supporting oral communication in cases where complex subjects had to

be explained in their nonnative language. For example, Adolfo Galvis remembered printing cards to distribute to his clients containing key information about a system of awards implemented in his workplace “because I felt that when I spoke, I was not explaining myself well.”

Participants who work in environments that require significant oral communication with little access to materials that facilitate written communication (e.g., beauty, construction, health care, and utilities) reported relying on non-verbal behaviours when they do not know a word or require time to think of what they want to say. José Fernández said, “if I need a tool to do something, then I point to the material I am using and say, ‘I need the tool to work with this material’.” In a high stress environment where co-workers are impatient, Rosa Rodríguez reported using her body to feel confident “I'm a tall person. I tend to usually squat or hunch, but when they (coworkers) seem impatient I stand up straight and put my hand on my waist as if to say, 'how can I help you?’”

**Avoiding Situations.** In contrast with coping strategies that occur during real time interactions, some participants use avoidance as a mechanism to feel protected, reduce their stress and avoid publicly making pronunciation and grammar mistakes. Forty six percent of participants mentioned avoiding talking in meetings, with peers and with clients, or avoiding going into work. For example, Claudia Pérez mentioned that she restricts her participation in meetings to only necessary circumstances “if it is not very important, I do not speak in French. If the meeting was in Spanish then I would give my opinion freely.” Nelly Sánchez explained that she avoids asking questions to protect her professional standing as her questions can be perceived as a lack of knowledge rather than substandard language comprehension.

**Being Proactive.** Although proactive behaviours such as providing a disclaimer on their nonnative proficiency or leading the conversation by “setting the pace” with prepared questions were only utilized by 33% of the participants, they are helpful coping strategies for those who do use them. Some participants let peers or clients know by saying “I have an accent. I recently

learned English" or "neither English nor French is my mother tongue" to break the ice, set expectations or draw out empathy from the native speaker. They explained that this mechanism is helpful because after disclaiming this information, they perceive a positive reaction from who they are communicating with. For example, Claudia Pérez said, "I don't really remember many people who were impatient when I explained that to them. Most of those people told me 'you are doing very well'."

**Theme 5: Adaptions in Interactions**

This theme documents the participant's perceptions of communicative behaviours that native speakers have when interacting with them in the workplace. This theme includes instances when participants referenced their experiences interacting in the workplace, their perceptions of communicative styles by native speakers, and their positive or negative interpretations of these behaviours. As this research focuses on the subjective perceptions and experiences of nonnative speakers regarding the behaviours of native speakers, the findings have been organized into examples of accommodation and nonaccommodation as outlined by Gasiorek (2015; 2016) and Gasiorek & Giles (2012) and discussed in the thesis Introduction and Theoretical Framework and Literature Review chapters.

***Sub-Theme 1. Perceptions of Accommodation***

Building on the conceptualization of communicative adjustments from a listener's perspective by Gasiorek (2015), accommodation "is generally defined by the perceived appropriateness of the communicative adjustments made by a speaker" (p. 578). This section describes the instances in which participants perceived that native speakers adjusted their communicative behaviours appropriately to facilitate interactions and enhance their relationships. These include instances where participants stated having a successful conversational experience and a positive perception of the communicative behaviours from their native speaking peers (e.g., "They speak to me slower when I don't understand them").

Seventy-five percent of the participants stated that they perceived accommodative behaviours from native speakers when interacting with them. Participants stated that in their workplaces, native speakers modified their speech rate, used basic language, repeated and emphasized certain words, and employed helpful non-verbal communication cues such as pointing to an object or using hand gestures. For example, Adolfo Galvis remembered that during the first six months of his job placement, his peers spoke slower and used basic language which "helped me to understand what they were saying when they spoke to me." Similar to Adolfo, other participants stated that these accommodative adjustments were more prevalent at the beginning of their career. Nazareth Recinos also mentioned that her co-workers adopted similarly helpful behaviours to facilitate her adaptation to her new workplace, "In the first moments of my work I did feel that the people were trying to speak more slowly. The change wasn't that abrupt. It was unusual that people were aggressive and required me to understand immediately."

When Ross Vila was asked if she perceived adjustments in communicative styles by native speakers, she answered that her manager "speaks to me slowly, she tries not to use jargon or if she uses jargon, she immediately tells you 'that it means such a thing' because she sees my eyes that conveys the question 'what is she saying to me?'." Ross explained that she has a positive perception of these behaviours as "I know she is doing that because she wants me to understand her, and she is also interested in me learning the language."

Similar to Ross, many participants reported that accommodative adjustments were made after they conveyed through non-verbal and verbal expressions to native speakers that they were failing to comprehend the message. Ilya Giraldo's experience illustrates this situation:

> Sometimes they forget a little that I don't understand that kind of English [colloquial and fast]. Then they pause. First of all, I let them know that I understand nothing or very little with my body language or with gestures. So, they notice and remember who they are

talking to, and restart talking. Some speak slowly, repeat words, or emphasize certain keywords within the message. I notice that, and I am grateful for that.

Patricia Velasquez explained that the majority of her co-workers are considerate with her "because they understand that I'm just learning the language, so if I don't understand the word they explain it to me using signs or show it [the object] to me."

Also, participants identified behaviours that improved the social relationships and the conversational dynamics such as when the native speaker made an effort to establish relationships, when their native language was acknowledged in conversations, and when native speakers actively help and empathize with their situation. For example, Alexis Arguello spoke about his peers taking the extra step to understand him by asking questions and speaking about topics common to both parties; Roberto Bolaño mentioned that his boss started the daily work meetings by greeting the group with "buenas noches"; and Patricia Velasquez remembered that in her job interview the examiners reassured her that they could rephrase questions if she did not understand, and Fernanda Batz said how her boss asked her directly if it was ok to correct her e-mails in order to improve Fernanda's writing skills.

Participants felt grateful for these communicative adjustments as they perceived positive motives from native speakers such as facilitation comprehension, supporting language competence improvement, promoting conversations, and demonstrating consideration.

***Sub-Theme 2. Perceptions of Nonaccommodation***

In contrast to perceptions of appropriate communicative behaviours, this category documents the instances in which participants perceive inappropriate behaviours to the needs of the interaction. This conceptualization of nonaccommodation is from Gasiorek & Giles (2012). Here, the nuances of nonaccommodative behaviours are divided into two subgroups, underaccommodation and overaccommodation.

**Underaccommodation.** This section documents cases where participants perceived that native speakers did not adjust or sufficiently adjust communicative behaviours to facilitate the interaction or consider the participant´s conversational needs. Gasiorek (2016), citing Coupland et al. (1988), defines underacccommodation as a "communication behavior perceived to undershoot the level of implementation desired for successful interaction" (p. 88). Examples that Gasiorek (2016) uses to illustrate this behaviour includes speakers talking too fast or using jargon with a partner that is unable to follow the conversation. When participants perceived too little or no adjustments by their native speaking peers when interacting with them (e.g., "They did not change how fast they spoke, nor the words they used, nor did they repeat much. They just spoke normally"), these references were coded as "Underaccommodation."

Seventy-five percent of the participants perceived underaccommodative behaviours from native speakers when interacting with them. They shared that their peers spoke using their "default" speed, which for many nonnative speakers can be perceived as too quick to follow. For example, Patricia Velasquez mentioned that generally her colleagues "do not speak to me slowly. If I say to them, 'I'm sorry, can you speak to me more slowly?' They do it once, but then they forget, and when we speak again, they talk to me fast again". Lupe González remembered when she was working in a fast-food restaurant at the beginning of her career in Canada, she experienced difficulties in her workplace due to underaccommodating young peers,

> If I did not understand something because they spoke very fast, they spoke even faster to me. And they blamed me, saying "it's that she doesn't understand the orders, it's that she doesn't understand what is being said." So, I had to put one foot on the ground to defend myself as best as I could.

Other forms of nonaccommodation identified by the participants included instances when they perceived that their co-workers used phrases filled with jargon, did not have the willingness to repeat instructions, or left them out of productive interactions. To illustrate these points,

Fernanda Batz said, “I had a boss who spoke at 2000 words per minute, and I was like 'ahhh' and was sweating, and I asked, 'can you repeat that?' And she said, 'I'm too busy with so much to do.” Furthermore, José Fernández explained that, happily, as he began to adapt to his workplace:

> I no longer needed instructions to be repeated because I saw that it annoyed people, because in my work they do not like to repeat the instruction more than twice, because time is valuable, time is money and they do not want to repeat anything.

Participants were occasionally completely ignored and excluded from workplace conversations and believed that this was motivated by the native speaker’s assumptions that the participants were unable to comprehend the conversation. Alexis Arguello stated that: “Each time I asked this person a question, they would answer my partner. Instead of answering me he answered my partner as if I couldn’t understand him.”

Many participants identified the lack of accommodation as inconsiderate and a barrier to the comprehension of a conversation. Some, however, did not perceive the lack of accommodation as inconsiderate, as they explained that this made them feel equal to the native speaker. Others thought that native speakers should not always have to accommodate nonnative speakers. As María Velázquez expressed when she was asked how she felt when her co-workers did not adjust their communicative behaviours when interacting with her,

> Not everyone is going to be patient or considerate with you. On one hand, I think you have to make an effort, even though you think ‘I didn't understand what he said’ at the moment, but you need to make an effort to understand them. But, I don't know, maybe at first, when they look at the situation and notice that I am having a hard time they should be more compassionate. But I also don't think they should always have that patience either, as I don't think they have to change the way they talk to me. Rather, I am the one who has to make the effort.

Even though there is a strong desire to adapt to and resolve the challenges that come from working in a nonnative language, participants noted that native speakers do not often make the effort to facilitate interactions. They believed that native speakers have greater conversational resources to reduce misunderstandings when there are pronunciation problems or a lack of vocabulary, however when underaccommodation occurs participants often feel greater responsibility for the communication process. Ilya Giraldo explained:

> Sometimes I feel they do not make the slightest effort to improve their communication with me, because they know that the responsibility to understand is on me. The consequences of not understanding will fall on me. The fact that they don't make the effort to improve their communication a little bit, I feel like there's a little bit of discrimination there.

According to the participants this lack of effort also occurs when native speakers do not ask for further elaboration when they did not understand something, or do not react to the contributions of nonnative speakers. Carolina Palacios feels that this behaviour shows her that she is not being listened to, and that her professional identity is disrespected.

**Overaccommodation.** This section describes cases where the participants perceived native speaking peers engaging in a communicative behaviour that went beyond what they considered necessary for the interaction. Gasiorek (2016) defines overaccommodation “as communication behavior perceived to overshoot or exceed the level of implementation necessary for a successful interaction” (p. 88) and explains that the use of high volume, simple vocabulary and syntax, and slow speech rate can be examples of this behaviour. When participants expressed that their native speaking peers excessively changed their communicative behaviours in their interactions with them (e.g., “She would repeat it to me as if I was stupid” or “They spoke so slowly, but too slowly and with a super high voice”), these instances were included in this section.

Forty two percent of the participants perceived overaccommodative behaviours from native speakers when interacting with them. For example, Pedro Reyes recalled how one of his co-workers crossed the line between being helpful and causing him emotional distress and annoyance when trying to repeatedly correct his English speech: "Everything I said, she said: 'no, this is how it is said, make this sound.' At the beginning it's fine, but if I can't tell you anything without you correcting me, I found it annoying".

In addition to persistent correction, participants reported perceived overaccommodative behaviours from native co-workers such as exaggeratedly slow delivery of speech, a louder than usual volume, over explanation, unnecessary repetition and attempts to use Spanish. Fernanda Batz describes overaccommodative behaviours of her co-workers in which she was the only person with a nonnative accent:

> They talk to you super loud and I think to myself that I can hear them just fine, what is wrong with this person? Or they talk to you super-fast and I asked them, 'Can you speak a little slower?' Then they speak to you very slowly, but too slowly and with a raised voice.

As Fernanda describes, when participants asked native speakers to slow down their speech, the native speakers overaccommodate by speaking louder than usual or speaking extremely slowly. In this study, participants feel that when native speakers use exaggeratedly slow speech, this is a behaviour tainted with condescension making them feel inferior and less intelligent. As an example, two years ago Susana Espinoza started a position that required increased English interaction after having worked for over 15 years in an environment that primarily required French. She noticed that:

> Now that I work more with people who speak English, when I ask them to repeat something either because I'm taking notes or because I don't understand them, they speak

> more slowly. And sometimes they speak so slowly it´s as if I don't have the same IQ as them (laughs).

Participants mentioned that they believed native speakers did not feel the participants understood some conversations resulting in overaccommodative adjustments. For example, Patricia Velasquez, who uses her workplace as a space to practice her second language, French, recalls the case of a co-worker who "Has traveled to Latin America and knows a little bit of Spanish. He thinks I don't understand him, so he speaks to me in Spanish. I say to him 'please don´t tell me in Spanish, tell me in French."

These situations take a toll on the participant`s self-concept, who feel they are responsible for the overaccommodative behaviours and start to monitor their nonnative language usage. When Lupe Gonzalez was asked for her impressions about the times when native co-workers unnecessarily repeated or spoke more slowly than usual, she reported that these adjustments:

> Make me wonder if there is something wrong. Maybe the person has a bias from previous experiences, or if there is something I am doing wrong. Am I expressing myself in some way that makes them believe that I do not understand them or that something they say is unclear to me? And when that happens, I speak as they do. The way I read the situation is that I have to show them that I do understand them. So, I speak like them.

Similar to Lupe, other participants react to nonaccommodation by attempting to demonstrate their nonnative language competency. They also expressed that following overaccommodation by native speaking peers, they did not desire to engage in interactions with them. For example, Fernanda reflected "Later on, how eager are you really to ask that person again? Or you have to put your armor on and be scared by saying 'I don't understand' to them. So, it's quite tiring. It's extra stress at work."

It is relevant to mention that for some participants when over- or underaccommodation occurred, they directly addressed the situation by establishing a conversation with their

coworkers about their perceptions. As the participants explained, it is difficult to have these kinds of conversations in the workplace as they can be uncomfortable. Following these conversations, native speakers apologized and expressed they would be more mindful and aware when interacting with other nonnative speakers.

This chapter described the experiences of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants navigating the workplace in the Canadian National Capital Region. Five themes portrayed the experiences of this population in relation to their linguistic identities and intergroup interactions. The first theme (‘Spanish and Identity’) reported on the participant’s perceptions of their linguistic identity and the role of their native language in Canadian workplaces. ‘Projecting a Nonnative Linguistic Identity in the Workplace’ comprised the second theme and described the participants’ perceptions of their self-concept and their cognitive and emotional experiences when working in a nonnative language. The third theme (‘Identity Shifting and Self-Concept’) documented the changes in the participants’ self-perceptions as a result of their experiences of working in a nonnative language. ‘Coping Strategies’ is the fourth theme and highlighted the strategies that participants employ to navigate the Canadian workplace. Lastly, the fifth theme (‘Adaptations in Interactions’) documented the participants’ perceptions of the communicative behaviours that native speakers enact when interacting with them.

The following chapter will discuss these findings in the context of the current literature and drawing on this study’s chosen theoretical framework to answer the research questions.

# Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the experiences of first-generation Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants in the Canadian National Capital Region, especially in terms of their linguistic identities and their intergroup relations in the workplace. The following research questions were conceived:

RQ1-How do Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants negotiate their linguistic identities in their workplaces, and how do their social identities change as a result of their experiences?

RQ2-What are the coping strategies native Spanish speakers use to navigate the Canadian workplace as non-native speakers?

RQ3-What are the participants' perceptions and emotional responses to the communicative adjustments made by native born speakers in their interactions with them?

Drawing on the narratives offered up by participants, this chapter addresses these research questions using concepts from ethnolinguistic identity and communication accommodation theories.

## RQ1-How do Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants negotiate their linguistic identities in their workplaces, and how do their social identities change as a result of their experiences?

The participants narratives in this study echoed the previous experiences of nonnative speakers in workplaces from other research (Cheng et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2017; Myles, 2009; Neeley et al., 2012; Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Russo et al., 2017; Tregunno et al., 2009, 2009; Woo & Giles, 2017). The findings showed that Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants working in Canada experienced extra cognitive and emotional demands when navigating their workplaces.

Cognitive demands experienced by the participants in this study included needing extra time or effort to demonstrate their professional competency, requiring constant monitoring of their speech and increased processing times to explain ideas and concepts and effectively communicate with peers and clients. Some common emotional experiences of the participants were fear, embarrassment, stress, anxiety, anger, and frustration. These emotions occurred when participants expected or encountered communication challenges, when they thought of the potential repercussions of being a nonnative speaker, and when they perceived differential treatment compared to native speaking peers.

Experiencing predominantly negative emotions when working in a nonnative language has previously been described. For example, in a study on the experiences of nonnative speakers in the United States, Kim et al. (2019) reported negative emotions such as frustration and embarrassment from the participants when they interacted with native speakers as they were unable to express themselves well or when their speech was corrected. In a study on workers from a French high-tech company that instituted English as the organizational language, Neeley (2013) found that nonnative speakers feared communicating in English due to the possible negative evaluations and mistakes they made while speaking.

As the participants navigated the cognitive and emotional intricacies of working in a nonnative language, they underwent a shift in identity from an initial stage of self-doubt to one of confidence and comfort in the workplace. Aligning with these findings, Ros i Solé, (2004) explains that the linguistic identity of individuals who speak multiple languages is fluid and dynamic and continuously changes “throughout an individual’s lifetime” (p. 231). This current study also highlights the fluidity and dynamic nature of the identity shifting process as participants mentioned moving back-and-forth between these two stages. Cameron (2001) indicates that identity is shifting, is “something that people are continually constructing and

reconstructing in their encounters with each other and the world" (p. 170). In this study, the shift in identity of the participants is influenced by an interplay of the following factors:

***Comparing the "Old" to the "New" Self***

Latinos in the United States and Canada identify the Spanish language as a key element to their identity and a fundamental aspect of their lived experience (Bergman et al., 2008; Davis & Moore, 2014; Turchick Hakak et al., 2010). The majority of the participants in this study spoke of the meaningful role Spanish has in allowing them to express their true selves. This aligns with Coleman (1988), who stated that "the 'real self' or core self may be tied to the mother tongue in such a way that feelings, personal disclosures, or displays of the inner self and personality are best expressed in one's native language" (p. 329).

In this study, language was linked to the development of the participant's self-concept or "a person's perception of himself … formed through his experience with his environment" (Shavelson et al., 1976, p. 411). Adjectives such as "free", "spontaneous", "competent" and "solid" were used to describe their perceptions of themselves when speaking in their native language. However, participants explained how switching from Spanish to working in a non-native language changed the way in which they perceived themselves. In English or French, they thought of themselves as "distant", "quiet", "limited" and "restricted". In support of this, Offermann et al., (2014) stated that "losing language capability can be seen as losing a part of the self that is linked with one's cultural heritage and identity" (p. 646). In a study on French, German, Japanese and American organizations implementing an English only policy in the workplace, Neeley et al. (2012) described how non-English speaking workers in these organizations felt both restricted and reduced by their language ability, as there was a clear loss working in their nonnative language compared to their native language.

Participants in this study experienced what Neeley (2013) calls status loss or the subjective feeling of decreased professional standing when they compared their "old" self,

working in their home country in their native language, to their "new" selves. The powerful role of language in the construction of a professional image was also highlighted by Vaara et al. (2005). Participants in that study explained how "half of our professional competence had been taken away when we had to use a language that was not our native tongue" (p. 609). In this current study, participants mentioned new challenges that did not exist in their previous workplaces when using their native language. These new challenges included having to re-learn technical and colloquial terms, attune their listening skills to different accents, and handle tasks that were challenging in their nonnative language such as answering calls, participating in group meetings or writing reports.

By losing the language capabilities of their native language, participants had to re-construct themselves in their nonnative language. Many participants highlighted the important role of the Canadian workplace in exposing them to their nonnative language, which in turn improved their communication abilities in that language. Yates (2017) indicated that "it is often the workplace itself that is the most significant site for migrant language learning" ( p. 425). In a study of language acquisition by South-East Asian newcomers to Canada over a ten-year period, Hou & Beiser (2006) found that the length of time in the workforce was a significant factor for these newcomers in achieving English proficiency.

***Us and Them: Comparing the Self with the Other***

Tajfel (1978) defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his (or her) knowledge of his (or her) membership in a language group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 63). Even though Latin Americans in Canada are an internally diverse group (Veronis, 2007; 2010), participants in this study shared a common and natural bond with other Latin Americans through their language. Giles et al. (1977) state that in-group speech reminds members of that group of their common ethnic background. In agreement with previous studies (e.g., Bergman et al., 2008; Davis &

Moore, 2014; Offermann et al., 2014), participants in this study explained that speaking Spanish identified them as Latin American group members.

Participants in this study spoke of how their native linguistic identity could have positive implications in the Canadian workplace. This is similar to the findings of other studies, where Spanish speakers working in the United States reported the benefits of their language for their work (Bergman et al., 2008). Similarly, participants in this study reported how Spanish was integral to their employment by supporting projects requiring Spanish or helping Spanish speaking clients. They also highlighted the positives of their native language during informal interactions with peers and clients who were interested in the Spanish language. Offermann et al. (2014) highlights the positive implications of interest in other languages by indicating that "reaching out to learn even a little of another's mother tongue is an expression of validation and interest that extends the hand of inclusion" (p. 656). Whether necessary for work or part of informal interactions, participants had a sense of pride and uniqueness in their language as they were valued for an intrinsic characteristic, similar to what Brewer (1991) and Moyer (2007) stated. Furthermore, as explained by Tajfel (1974, 1982), occasions in which participants distinguished themselves in a positive manner helped them achieve a favorable sense of their own native linguistic identity, which in turn improved their self-esteem.

Giles et al. (1977) note that one's style of speech is a critical factor in identifying a member of a group in comparison to a contrasting group. Social identity acquires its meaning by comparisons between groups (Giles et al., 1977). Neeley (2013) identified a "linguistic divide" between native and nonnative speakers in an organizations' lingua franca. In this present study, participants defined themselves as dissimilar from their native speaking peers, in the sense that they perceived that they did not measure up or were inferior to their native speaking colleagues. This finding is supported by Tajfel & Turner (1979), who state that individuals position themselves as "better" or "worse" in relation with members of other groups. Similarly, Vaara et

al. (2005) found categories of superiority and inferiority between native and nonnative speakers in an organization. Participants in this current study explained that native speakers were superior as they could express themselves in a timely, elaborate and sophisticated manner. In comparison with native speaking peers, some participants felt they were in a disadvantageous position as they had to work harder and longer in their workplaces due to their language deficiency.

Participants in this study did not express resentment towards their native speaking peers as was found in other studies (Neeley, 2013); however, they did desire to "sound like them", they were frustrated at not being able to "speak or write like" them, and they accepted that "even though we have a good level of English, we are never going to master [the language] as well as a person whose mother tongue is English".

Some participants even expressed their desire to adopt the linguistic characteristics of their native speaking peers by attempting to change their accents. This has been predicted by ethnolinguistic identity theory, which claims that individuals who feel their social identities are unfavorable will try to "acquire, or at least aspire toward, the characteristics (physical, linguistic, and/or psychological) of this other group" (Cargile et al., 1995, p. 195). However, in agreement with research in applied linguistics (Scovel, 2000) and communication accommodation theory (Beebe & Giles, 1984; Zuengler, 1991), nonnative speakers may not have the ability to acquire native linguistic skills due to learning or physiological limits. The Spanish-speaking Latin American participants in this study made it clear that their attempts to master English or French native accents and pronunciations were nearly impossible to attain.

Some participants were initially embarrassed by their Spanish accents, pronunciation, and mistakes; however, following exposure to other immigrants and nonnative speakers in their workplaces they overcame this embarrassment. Participants found reassurance when comparing themselves with other nonnative speakers, while avoiding comparisons to native speakers. Tajfel (1982) explains "positive social identity can be achieved, in a vast majority of cases, only through

appropriate intergroup social comparisons" (p. 24). Here, the similarity of experiences between nonnative speaking groups allowed the participants to compare and identify with other immigrant social groups. Changing the reference group of comparison is one of the social creativity strategies described by the social identity and ethnolinguistic identity theories. Tajfel & Turner (1979) explain that positive distinctiveness can be reached by "changing the out-group (or selecting the out-group) with which the in-group is compared -- in particular, ceasing or avoiding to use the high-status out-group as a comparative frame of reference" (p. 43). Ultimately, an individual who has positive views of their language and its cues (e.g., accent, pronunciation) will "be more assertive in communication, and experience more positive interactions" (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010, p. 221).

***Linguistic Identity and Evaluations in the Workplace***

As language and its cues can identify an individual's membership in a particular social group, they can also be used to assign stereotypes to these individuals (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). Stereotypes are "specific characteristics and roles associated with a group and its members" (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010, p. 217). For example, speakers of nonstandard language varieties (e.g., ethnic, regional, foreign varieties) are viewed as less intelligent, less competent, more difficult to understand, and disfluent (Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012; Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Lindemann, 2002). Similar to previous research of nonnative speakers (e.g., Derwing, 2003; Kim et al., 2019), participants in this study were aware of negative stereotypes associated with being a nonnative speaker. These included perceptions that their co-workers were skeptical of their professional competency, questioned their fit for the job, did not believe the participants understood the language, and did not recognize their previous educational experiences. Some of these perceptions were similar to what Turchick Hakak et al. (2010) described in their study of the factors for success or barriers confronted by Latin American professionals in the Canadian job

market. Participants in their study perceived that their accent was linked to assumptions of lower language skills or performance levels that led to differences in treatment in the workplace.

Birney et al. (2020) indicate that being aware of negative stereotypes increases the emotional and mental burden on the recipient. In this study, participants expressed being afraid and anxious about making mistakes in their workplace communications. They also highlighted the persistent pressure to demonstrate their capabilities and exceed expectations. Therefore, a constant threat was ingrained into their experiences as they felt they were at risk "of possibly being judged and treated stereotypically, or of possibly self-fulfilling such a stereotype" (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 798). Roberson & Kulik (2007) explain that a stereotype threat has a negative impact on the feelings and behaviors of workers, so it is difficult for them to perform to their potential even though they tend to work harder.

Śliwa & Johansson (2014) explain that in organizations, evaluations of a speakers' accent, vocabulary and grammar are extended to "the professional competences of the speaker, her or his status within the organization, and her or his career progression prospects" (p. 1146). Here, participants expressed their fears of potentially losing their jobs and the associated economic insecurity in Canada, due to the possibility of being evaluated on their linguistic competency and the effects on their workplace image and professional ability.

In a study of adult immigrants by Derwing (2003), one third of the participants said they experienced discrimination from native Canadian speakers which included rudeness, anger, an unwillingness from Canadians to understand the immigrants, and being ignored, all because of the way the immigrants spoke. This study had similar findings as the participants spoke of native speakers in their workplaces displaying hurtful behaviors that caused participants to experience emotional distress and made them question their decision to come to Canada.

Although participants spoke about behaviors from co-workers that negatively affected their confidence in their workplaces, they also spoke about how their professional competency

was positively reaffirmed by peers and supervisors. Realizing that other factors such as professional contributions (e.g., knowledge, previous training) were valued above language competency gave confidence to the participants. In support of this, Woo & Giles (2017) claim that "for employees to become successfully assimilated into their workplace, being recognized for their performance, valued for their opinion, and feeling competent about doing their job is critical" (p. 44). Participants also pointed out how co-workers who displayed signs of empathy such as being patient and helpful were pivotal for positive workplace experiences. Indeed, research on immigrants adjusting in the workplace states that support from helpful and patient co-workers is one of the most significant factors for immigrants in managing stressors such as dealing with tasks and communication challenges in the workplace (Bhagat & London, 1999).

**RQ2-What are the coping strategies native Spanish speakers use to navigate the Canadian workplace as non-native speakers?**

Even though participants improved their nonnative language competency over time, they recognized their continued shortcomings as nonnative speakers. For example, they noted that writing took longer, that misunderstandings arose during phone calls, or that they struggled at times to find the correct words to explain complex concepts.

As previously discussed, participants believe that certain characteristics that distinguish them as nonnative speakers (e.g., their accent, pronunciation, and grammar mistakes) can jeopardize perceptions of their competency and fit for the job. Knowing their limitations and anticipating any challenges allowed them to create coping strategies to help them navigate the workplace with confidence, and ultimately protect their professional image.

Findings from this study build on previous literature which identified a number of mechanisms that nonnative speakers employ to navigate workplaces (Cheng et al., 2020; Deneire, 2008; Kim et al., 2019; Lønsmann & Kraft, 2018; Myles, 2009; Neeley, 2013; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). Participants mentioned utilizing a series of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and

interactional coping strategies to manage their cognitive and emotional experiences from working in a nonnative language.

The development of these strategies can be categorized as another social creativity strategy as described by the social identity and ethnolinguistic identity theories. Social creativity occurs when "the group members may seek positive distinctiveness for the in-group by redefining or altering the elements of the comparative situation" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 43). For example, Salvadorian workers in the Ontario auto parts industry highlighted the importance of working harder than others to maintain their jobs (Manzano-Munguía, 2003). Similarly, participants in this study spoke of striving to do "the best possible job" in order to project a positive professional image. By employing these measures, participants attempt to enhance their social identities by emphasizing key strengths they have (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the above cases, positive distinctiveness was sought after by stressing the quality of their job over other dimensions that could potentially lead to negative evaluations (e.g., lack of nonnative language proficiency).

***Intrapersonal Strategies: Time, Effort and Recognition***

As part of their intrapersonal coping strategies, participants mentioned advanced preparation, use of technological resources, and taking advantage of sources provided by their workplaces (e.g., manuals, brochures, and training). They rehearsed (e.g., presentations, meetings), practiced pronunciation, used visual aids, researched topics in-depth, and/or reviewed their writing multiple times. Some of these strategies were similar to those used by engineering interns from China working in Canada who rehearsed and memorized texts in preparation for presentations (Myles, 2009). Participants in this current study also used digital grammar checkers, websites such as YouTube, and online translators to improve their vocabulary, correctly pronounce words, improve their writing, identify synonyms, and determine the correct usage of certain words and phrases.

Participants often required more time, including working outside of work hours, in order to complete tasks. When this preparation and effort was not valued in the workplace, they expressed disappointment. This experience can have a negative effect on the employee and on the workplace, as a lack of recognition can cause employee burnout (Jackson & Schuler, 1983), while workplace appreciation can improve retention and engagement (Baggett et al., 2016). These latter authors indicate that praise for accomplishments or positive feedback on the quality of work in a group setting (e.g., during team meeting), or through written communication (e.g., in an email) can make employees feel valued, important, and loyal to their organizations. Participants would have benefitted from more positive feedback on their work.

Participants also spoke of using resources from their workplaces such as manuals, brochures, and training opportunities. These training opportunities not only covered language and communication workshops, but also coaching and mentorships programs. These programs were not common in most Canadian workplaces, but when participants had access to them, they generated positive effects on the participants' confidence and sense of comfort in the workplace. Previous research supports these accounts. For example, in a study on the outcomes of short-term coaching (Grant et al., 2009), participants receiving four coaching sessions over a ten-week period indicated an increase in self-confidence, resilience, and general well-being in the workplace. Multiple studies on mentorship in the workplace have demonstrated its positive impacts on employees in coping with challenges of ambient discrimination at work (Ragins et al., 2017), reducing the likelihood of emotional exhaustion or burnout (Thomas & Lankau, 2009), and increasing general job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2007). Findings from this present study highlight the value of organized workplace programs for increasing confidence due to the lack of language capabilities of nonnative speakers navigating in an English or French speaking environment.

***Interpersonal Strategies: Learning Alongside Peers***

Interpersonal coping strategies consisting of asking peers for help or learning from them were important for participants to ensure their written communications were correct, in facilitating their understanding of topics, and for learning their nonnative language. Participants in this study often addressed concerns or sought help from fellow Spanish speakers. This finding is supported by Dovidio & Gluszek (2012), who state that categorizing people into ingroups and outgroups is a basic human process as “people spontaneously like, trust, care about, cooperate with, and help ingroup members more than outgroup members” (p. 87). Due to their shared experiences, language, and cultural similarities, participants in this study felt safe approaching Latin American peers. This is similar to the findings of a study of 14 Danish organizations whose workers sought help from members of their same linguistic groups or language clusters when encountering challenges in their workplaces (Tange & Lauring, 2009). Giles et al. (1977) explain that in-group speech promotes feelings of solidarity amongst members of that group.

Participants in this study also found it easy to approach other first-generation immigrants as they perceived them to be more empathetic than native speakers. However, participants also recognized and respected the knowledge of their native speaking peers in language and communication matters, making them the preferred group when seeking help. The assistance provided by these native speaking peers helped the participants navigate their workplaces, helped deal with challenges, and expanded their communicative repertoires. As stated previously, having helpful co-workers is one of the most significant factors for immigrants managing workplace stressors (Bhagat & London, 1999).

Participants also said they selected specific peers in their workplaces to ask for help as not all native speaking peers were willing or had the disposition to help. The willingness to help of some native speaking peers can be explained by an intergroup approach as empathy and the desire to help increase when members belong to the same group (Tarrant et al., 2009). These authors showed that students had more empathy and intentions to help members of the same

university (ingroup) versus students from a different university (outgroup). That being said, it is noted that having a previous positive interaction with an outgroup member results in an increased willingness to help outgroup members (Johnston & Glasford, 2018; Lauring & Klitmøller, 2015). Within organizations, increased intergroup contact can be facilitated by encouraging employees to establish connections with nonnative speakers by collectively working on common tasks (Woo & Giles, 2017).

***Interactional Strategies: Being Active and Proactive***

In their study on English language in the workplace and associated communication challenges, Cheng et al. (2020) demonstrated that newcomers in Ontario entry-level workplaces often asked interlocutors to repeat or slow their speech when they had difficulties in understanding accents or when following rapid speech from native speakers. In this study, participants used this technique but also employed other strategies, including written and non-verbal gestures to help comprehend and convey messages during interactions.

In contrast, avoiding interactions is another strategy mentioned by some of the study participants. Nonnative speakers in the workplace often restrict their communication to strictly professional encounters as their professional identity could be evaluated negatively due to their linguistic deficiencies (Deneire, 2008; Kim et al., 2019; Neeley, 2013; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). Although some participants in this study avoided talking with peers and clients as well as speaking during meetings; most of them opted for active strategies such as extensive preparation or asking peers for help. This can be explained by the participants placing an emphasis on projecting a positive professional image as avoidance behaviours often result in "creating the impression of the non-native speaker being less able to contribute to the organization than native speakers" (Śliwa & Johansson, 2014, p. 1145).

This study additionally shows proactive approaches taken by the participants including the declaration of their nonnative proficiency at the start of conversations, or by controlling

conversations through prepared questions. Declaring their nonnative identity was noted as an attempt to draw empathy from their interlocutors. This strategy was recognized by Neeley et al. (2012) in their study of employees' reactions to the implementation of English as the organizational common language in which they found that when nonnative speakers openly acknowledged their language difficulties, their native speaking peers transformed their feelings from irritation to helpfulness.

**RQ3-What are the subjects' perceptions and emotional responses to the communicative adjustments made by native born speakers in their interactions with them?**

The third research question aimed to document how native Spanish speakers in Canadian workplaces experience, evaluate and react to accommodative behaviours from their native English or French-speaking peers.

***Experiences of Communicative Adjustments in the Workplace***

Participants spoke of their experiences of the adjustments in communicative behaviours made by their native speaking peers. Dragojevic et al. (2016) explain that communicative adjustments fulfill two primary functions: cognitive (fostering coherent interactions) and affective (managing social relations).

Palomares et al. (2016) indicate that accommodative behaviours such as speaking slowly can increase comprehension during intergroup encounters where language differences potentially create barriers for effective communication. Participants in this study mentioned that conversational experiences were facilitated when native-speaking peers decreased their speech rate, used basic language, repeated, and emphasized words, or utilized non-verbal communication cues. Accommodation not only aids comprehension, but also contributes to the development and improvement of the bond between individuals (Palomares et al., 2016) and thus played an important role in workplace interactions in this study. For instance, participants felt they were integrated into the work team when co-workers displayed an interest in maintaining interactions

with them, whether it be through asking questions, discussing common topics, or even occasionally using words in Spanish.

Participants also mentioned nonaccommodation in their workplaces where communicative adjustments hampered any “positive interaction[s] and/or increase[d] the social distance between participants” (Gasiorek, 2016, p. 85). These included instances in which participants perceived that their native speaking peers were excessive in their behavior (overaccommodation) or were doing little or nothing to help (underaccommodation) during their interactions.

Participants in this study shared multiple instances of overaccommodation including excessive corrections, an exaggeratedly slow speech, use of high volume, over explanations, redundant repetitions, and unwanted use of Spanish. Speaking louder than usual, articulating extremely slowly or embellishing inflection are considered examples of what Zuengler (1991) termed foreigner talk, and which are defined as behaviors used by native speakers that attempt to assist nonnative speakers (Gallois et al., 2005). Examples of what participants considered as underaccommodation included when native speaking peers spoke with their “default” speed, used jargon, were uneager to repeat instructions, did not ask for clarification when they did not understand the participants, and ignored or excluded participants from interactions. Consistent with other studies (e.g., Gasiorek & Giles, 2012), this current study shows that experiences of underaccommodation are more prevalent than experiences of overaccommodation but that both are negatively perceived.

***Between Understanding and Belonging***

Coupland et al. (1988) explain that underaccommodation is generally perceived by listeners as being unhelpful in a conversation. Similarly, participants in this study perceived underaccommodative behaviours as barriers to comprehension and at times the cause of misunderstandings. The ability of participants to understand the message declined when their co-workers used their default rate of speech or jargon-filled phrases. This is problematic in settings

such as workplaces where participants bear negative consequences from not understanding instructions. For example, in this study some participants were blamed by co-workers for misunderstandings and some participants spent all day completing a simple task because of communication breakdowns.

Gasiorek (2016) indicates that underaccommodation increases the perceived social distance between interactants, as the listener believes their conversational partners to be inconsiderate. Here, participants noted that underaccommodative behaviors were enacted by thoughtless speakers (e.g., “They do not care if you understand or not. They just talk, and it is all on you if you do not understand”); however, others observed underaccommodation as a signal of their integration into the group of native speakers (e.g., “I feel integrated. I feel like they are seeing me as a person no different to them.”).

Although participants recognized that underaccommodation negatively affected their comprehension of an interaction (cognitive function), they also did not want to compromise their chance of fitting into the group (affective function) by bringing the issue to light. For example, Adolfo Galvis stated:

> I felt that they were trying to speak at a basic level so that I understood, but once they thought that I was at their level, they said things that I did not understand, but I said "yes, yes, of course" (laugh).

There exists a tension between participants needing accommodation versus their desire to reduce the social distance from native speakers. On the one hand, not asking for accommodation could negatively affect their ability to comprehend critical workplace information, while on the other, asking for accommodation could potentially widen the social distance from their native speaking peers as well as tarnish their professional image.

***Participants’ Attributions and Evaluations***

Dragojevic et al. (2016) explain that accommodation can be subjective, which can be considered either appropriate or inappropriate based on the perceptions of the listener. Inferences about a speaker's motives or intentions influence the way in which listeners evaluate communicative adjustments as appropriate or inappropriate.

Gasiorek & Giles (2015) found that when individuals inferred positive motives (e.g., being helpful) from others' behaviours in an interaction, communicative behaviours that could be perceived as being nonaccommodative in other circumstances were seen as accommodative. For example, an individual speaking extremely slowly, using very basic words and translating to their interlocutors' native language (overaccommodation) was perceived as accommodative (e.g., appropriate adjusted) when the listener believed that the speaker was intending to be helpful. Similarly, when participants from this current study perceived interlocutors as having positive motives (e.g., "[they] make you feel like you can learn and improve your language", "[my co-worker] is interested in my understanding [of things]", "[they] make you feel welcome", or "[they] show interest in me"), they perceived accommodative behaviours. In sum, communicative behaviours that can be perceived as overaccommodative, such as using simple language or speaking slowly, were perceived as facilitating interactions and enhancing relationships when associated with positive motives.

Positive motives attributed to native speaking peers by participants included supporting language improvement, facilitating comprehension, and generating conversations. These positive motives were linked with behaviours that, according to participants, facilitated a successful interaction. This finding supports what Gasiorek (2015) highlights: "The more positive the inferred motives, the more appropriately adjusted (the same) communication was perceived to be" (p. 579).

Attributions of motives are connected with how an individual evaluates an interaction and the interlocutor (Gasiorek & Giles, 2012). In this study, participants used adjectives such as

empathetic, respectful, understanding, collaborative and kind to describe native speaking peers whom they perceived to hold positive motives. In contrast, when participants perceived interlocutors as unwilling to make an effort to communicate or basing their behaviours on stereotypes, they evaluated these native speaking peers as disrespectful, discriminatory, and inconsiderate.

When participants perceived nonnative speaking peers as not making any attempts at accommodation, they believed these native speakers held negative motivations. In these instances, the participants felt they were being made to be fully responsible for the communication process, and perceived that these native speakers were apathetic about any negative consequences from miscommunications. Some participants justified the lack of effort from native speakers as they believed that non-native speakers should primarily be responsible for effective communication; however, this did not change the way in which the native speaking peer was evaluated. The findings in this study support the importance of attributions (positive or negative) in influencing how participants perceive and evaluate interactions and native-speaking peers (Dragojevic et al., 2016).

***Consequences of Perceived Nonaccommodation***

Perceptions of nonaccommodation hinders mutual understanding, increases social distance, and fosters negative evaluations of the speaker (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Nonaccommodation also negatively affects the willingness to engage in future interactions with that party (Gallois et al., 2005). In accordance with this latter assertion, participants in this study mentioned that after perceiving overaccommodation in their interactions, they attempted to avoid further interactions with the overaccommodative native speaking peers. If interactions were required, the participants adopted defensive behaviours.

Participants in this study also spoke of how nonaccommodation affected their self-concept and well-being. When their native speaking peers used exaggeratedly slow speech, unnecessary

repetition, excessive correction, and a louder than usual volume, participants felt inferior and less intelligent, professionally disrespected, and that they were being patronized. They also experienced emotional distress, annoyance, and extra stress in the workplace. Ryan et al. (1986) explain that experiencing constant overaccommodative behaviours such as patronizing talk can have negative effects in older adults including decreased well-being, a lack of engagement in interactions, and "a distorted sense of self" (p. 14).

In this study, participants reacted to nonaccommodation in multiple ways. Some participants mentioned passive reactions such as not alerting the speaker to the inappropriateness of their behaviour and trying to understand the interactions on their own. Others assumed active reactions such as asking questions, demonstrating their language competency, or directly confronting the speaker. In either case, participants prioritized the protection of their jobs and reputation by "being professional and respectful", while carefully considering their comfort level with the native speaker.

Reacting to nonaccommodation has a range of consequences for the listener and can "put individuals in a challenging interactional position" (Gasiorek, 2016, p. 94). For example, when the listener perceives that they are being patronized, they can either play along, which prolongs nonaccommodative behaviors, or they can directly confront these behaviors which may negatively affect the relationship between the interactants (Lagacé et al., 2012).

Consequences of nonaccommodation in the workplace not only affect the interactants, but can also affect organizations. For example, there are a number of negative implications associated with avoidance of communication including poor knowledge transfer in the workplace or a failure to maintain information networks (Tange & Lauring, 2009). Boggs & Giles (1999) describe how reacting with hostility to overaccommodative behaviours leads to a constant cycle of continued overaccommodation and hostility. Eventually, this can lead to those on the receiver end of overaccommodation quitting and or even suing the organization.

### *Consequences of Perceived Accommodation*

Perceived accommodation facilitates mutual understanding, decreases social distance, and fosters positive evaluations of speakers (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Perceived accommodation also enhances the listeners' self-esteem, job satisfaction, and confidence in establishing partnerships with the speaker (Giles et al., 2007). Participants in this study reported that having native speaking peers who appropriately alter their communication towards the participants' conversational needs made them feel respected and valued. When this occurred, participants gained confidence in adapting to and navigating their workplaces. For example, José Fernández said that having an accommodative partner who asked questions and spoke of common topics increased his confidence: "[Conversing] was coming off more natural for me. I felt more confident that I could share, and I didn't have the pressure of having to sound correct or having something prepared".

Participants highlighted the essential role of accommodative behaviors when starting a new position, which for most adult immigrants is their "main social gateway into a new society" (Remennick, 2013, p. 155). They expressed appreciation and gratitude for co-workers that had greater awareness of the communicative challenges for nonnative speakers.

However, in order to achieve appropriate accommodation, participants mentioned that they had to make their native-speaking peers realize that they were not appropriately meeting their communicative needs. Some participants had receptive peers who readily changed their communicative behaviors after being given non-verbal clues such as quizzical or nervous expressions, while others required complicated conversations to have their needs met. Participants noted that when they raised issues of accommodation, native speakers generally modified their behaviors to accommodate the specific communicative needs of the participants.

Participants appreciated instances when native speakers initiated conversations to speak about expectations of appropriate communicative adjustments. This behavior led to successful

conversational experiences, and as Gasiorek (2016) explains: "Unless interlocutors alert speakers to their errors and/or the way interlocutors perceive the encounter, speakers may not realize their communication is inappropriately adjusted and/or perceived as problematic" (p. 91).

All conversations concerning appropriate accommodation for successful interactions occurred based on an individual's initiative. In no instance did any of the participants mention the involvement of their organizations in generating spaces where native and non-native speakers could collectively converse about the appropriate accommodations to facilitate their interactions with one another.

Organizations need to generate systematic and long-term initiatives to encourage empathy among workers regarding the presence of language diversity in the workplace (e.g., Kim et al., 2019; Neeley et al., 2012; Offermann et al., 2014). Furthermore, promotion of open conversations by organizations in which workers are able to share their expectations of what the other person can do would endorse the idea that both interlocutors share the responsibility for effective communication. This recommendation is critical for Canadian workplaces, for which one in three workers by 2031 is projected to be an immigrant (Martel et al., 2011).

Drawing on concepts of ethnolinguistic identity and communication accommodation theories, as well as other research, this chapter discussed the experiences Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants in Canadian workplaces. These experiences were described in terms of the negotiation of their linguistic identities, the coping strategies they used to navigate the workplace, and their perceptions and emotional responses to the communicative adjustments made by native speaking peers when interacting with them. The following chapter will present a summary of this study's findings, practical implications, the study's limitations, and possible future research directions.

# Chapter Six: Conclusion

## Summary of Findings

This study explored the experiences of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants working in the National Capital Region of Canada, and has shed light on the powerful role of language in the construction and negotiation of identity in the workplace. The study showed that, in their native Spanish language, participants have a vehicle to truly express themselves, ascribe membership to the Latino American identity, and create a bond with members of this linguistic group. A sense of pride and uniqueness emerged when the Spanish language had a beneficial role in the workplace by facilitating the service of Spanish clients, allowing the exchange of information between organizations and colleagues in Canada and Spanish speaking countries, and enabling informal interactions with some peers and clients.

In contrast, participants felt restricted and limited when navigating in a nonnative linguistic identity in workplaces. Of particular note were the cognitive and emotional experiences that affected the participants' work-related routines. For example, participants reported an increase in mental and intellectual effort as they required working longer hours to complete a task or needed to constantly be aware of how to articulate what needs to be said in their nonnative language. Participants also identified an extra emotional load when they perceived differential treatment from their native speaking peers, or when their language skills were perceived by others as a detriment to their workplace performance.

Despite the challenges reported by participants, the experience of navigating the workplace in a nonnative language also provided benefits. For example, participants reported undergoing a shift in identity characterized by personal growth, confidence, and an increased comfort when working in their nonnative language. Factors such as being exposed to other nonnative speakers in the workplace, having professional competence valued regardless of language proficiency, or being surrounded by supportive and empathetic peers were central to

this identity shifting for the participants in this study. However, as previously discussed, this process does not develop in a one-way direction. Participants' experiences showed that this process of identity shifting is dynamic as they move between stages of confidence and comfort to stages of self-doubt and reduced confidence. As one participant said, it is "One step back, two steps forward" [Un paso atrás, dos adelante].

Results of this study also provide a rich description of the coping strategies that Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants employ to navigate their workplaces while projecting a positive professional image. Participants explained their need for advanced preparation, using technology, and taking advantage of workplace resources (e.g., mentorships, language and communication training, brochures, manuals) as examples of some of these strategies. They also indicated the pivotal role of their peers in helping to ensure their written communication is correct, in facilitating the understanding of topics, and in supporting them in learning their nonnative language. Although participants displayed avoidance behaviours when interacting with peers and clients as well as during meetings, they also employed active and proactive strategies. For example, they drew on written and non-verbal gestures to comprehend and convey information during interactions, or they disclosed their nonnative language proficiency to generate empathy with their interlocutors.

Participants also spoke about their perceptions of either accommodative or nonaccommodative behaviours from their native speaking peers. A reduced speech rate or the use of basic language were considered accommodative behaviours that can increase comprehension and improve relations between peers. In contrast, speaking louder than usual or extremely slowly and using jargon were perceived as nonaccommodative behaviours. This study demonstrated the importance of mutual negotiated accommodation in helping Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants adapt to and navigate the Canadian workplace.

## Practice and Policy Implications

An important issue in workplaces centers on what organizations can do to create an environment where workers with different linguistic backgrounds can showcase their potential, succeed and thrive (Kim et al., 2019; Offermann et al., 2014; Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Sanden, 2018; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). This study offers a window to the specific language experiences that growing immigrant populations in Canada endure in the workforce, the strategies they employ to navigate the workplace, and their perceptions when interacting with native speaking peers. With the findings from the study and the recommendations below, human resource practitioners, educational institutions, and settlement agencies may have relevant information and suggestions to develop nuanced and targeted initiatives.

**Keep Training a Diverse Workforce.** Previous studies have emphasized the importance of immigrants being able to access continued language training and educational opportunities in Canada (e.g., Cheng et al., 2013; Ngo & Este, 2006). Participants in this current study mentioned language and communication workshops as a strategy to help navigate their workplaces with confidence. Organizations, in partnership with educational institutions and settlement agencies, should provide access to language and communication courses as part of their training programs and ongoing support for nonnative speakers. Specifically, participants in this study would benefit from learning both colloquial language and technical terminology, enhancing their conversation skills by phone or video calls, improving their writing of work reports, and upgrading their public speaking skills in the workplace. These training opportunities could help organizations fully benefit from immigrants who arrive in the Canadian workforce with valuable experience and education (Lochhead & Mackenzie, 2005), but with insufficient language skills. However, training need not be restricted to workshops. Coaching and mentorship programs can also be part of an integral organizational language training program as these initiatives can have multiple benefits in matters of self-confidence, resilience, job satisfaction and general well-being for

employees (see Grant et al., 2009; Harris et al., 2007; Ragins et al., 2017; Thomas & Lankau, 2009).

**Have Open Conversations.** Organizations need to educate their entire workforce on matters of language diversity. Having candid conversations about the benefits of a linguistically diverse workforce, negative stereotypes and discrimination towards nonnative speakers, or the daily struggles of nonnative speaking peers are important to enhance empathy among the workforce and insight into the benefits brought by the nonnative speaking colleagues (e.g., Kim et al., 2019; Neeley et al., 2012). Participants in this study reported openly acknowledging their language difficulties to colleagues to draw empathy as a coping strategy to navigate the workplace. Organizations can also encourage workplace conversations to set the tone and define expectations regarding desired communicative behaviors when native and nonnative speakers work together.

**Peers Need to Assist.** This study highlighted the critical role of native speaking peers in facilitating the integration of nonnative speakers into the workplace. For example, participants spoke of how having supportive and empathetic peers was critical for a positive work experience, and how they asked native speaking peers for assistance when encountering language and communication challenges. Having supportive and helpful peers is important for immigrants to manage stressors in the workplace (Bhagat & London, 1999; Lai et al., 2017). Hence, organizations should actively encourage native speakers to support nonnative speakers emphasizing that "language diversity has the potential to improve organizational performance and thus benefit everyone in the organization" (Kim et al., 2019, p. 89).

**Recognize their Contributions.** Workplace recognition has positive consequences for worker retention and engagement (Baggett et al., 2016). In this current study, being recognized for their professional contributions despite their nonnative language competency was pivotal for

the participants to gain confidence. Positive feedback for providing service or dealing with international collaborators in multiple languages should be promoted. This encourages nonnative workers to hold a positive attitude towards their own linguistic identity, allowing these workers to be assertive in their communication and have positive interactions with other speakers (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Furthermore, the extra effort made by nonnative speakers in daily tasks should be recognized in periodic employee performance evaluations. This includes all the work, effort, and time behind a task (e.g., extensive preparation, multiple revisions, work outside regular hours) that a nonnative speaker undertakes in order to perform satisfactorily. This effort should be properly recognized as an indicator of the workers' skills and traits.

**Hire a Diverse Workforce.** Participants mentioned feeling more comfortable communicating in the workplace when they heard different accents and when peers committed grammatical mistakes in the organization. The presence of other nonnative speakers in the workplace was also important for participants in overcoming negative self-perceptions of their nonnative identity markers (e.g., embarrassed at having an accent or making mistakes). Hiring competent nonnative speakers in positions of power is a suggested strategy for organizations to challenge negative stereotypes and provide role models for nonnative speakers (Kim et al., 2019). Participants in this current study also perceived that the presence of other nonnative speakers resulted in more open and tolerant attitudes among native speakers. Having a work environment where intergroup contacts are promoted enhances opportunities to learn about the out-group, which increases overall comfort in intergroup encounters, and increases empathy with the out-group' concerns and needs (Pettigrew, 2011). However, creating environments that embrace diversity is not only important in the hiring process but also with everyday organizational practices. Managers need to champion initiatives that improve the working conditions of employees from different social identities by acknowledging the existence of stereotypes in the

workplace (Roberson & Kulik, 2007), highlighting diversity as a source of learning and organizational strength (Cronin & Weingart, 2007; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Lauring & Selmer, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Phillips et al., 2004), and facilitating communication interchanges among teams (Ayoko et al., 2002).

**Current Limitations and Future Research**

In this study, the diversity of the participant pool was highly valued for an exploratory study of the common experience between different Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants navigating the Canadian workplace. These differences included working in diverse languages (e.g., English or French), job types, gender, length of time in Canada, and time spent learning the nonnative language. However, because the participants reflected a wide variety of characteristics, their numbers were insufficient to analyze the data using different variables. For example, the different levels of nonnative language proficiency may affect what the participants perceive as appropriate communicative adjustments, working in an Anglo or French speaking environment may generate different experiences for the participants, and coping strategies may change according to the type of job. Future studies should examine larger population pools to understand the impact of these individual variables separately.

Immigrants' feelings on integration and welcomeness have subtle variations depending on whether the host community is a linguistic majority or minority (see Bourhis et al., 2010). Based on this, experimental and observational studies should be designed to understand how Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants experience interactional dynamics with Anglophones in comparison with Francophones. The Canadian National Capital Region is unique as it features two different linguistic backgrounds with English primarily in Ottawa (ON) and French in Gatineau (QC) (Veronis, 2015).

This study presents the perceptions of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants working in a nonnative language in Canada. Future studies can be extended to examine the experiences and perceptions of native speakers when working with nonnative speakers. In particular, the kind of cognitive and emotional challenges that native speakers experience when working in linguistically diverse organizations, what they consider to be the benefits of having peers from different linguistic backgrounds, and their perceptions of how native and nonnative speakers can effectively work together, support each other, and make the most of everyone's knowledge and experience would provide important insights.

One purpose of this study was to encourage research on language issues in the Canadian workplace and its implications for identity negotiation and intergroup relations. Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants were chosen as the subjects in this study for multiple reasons as listed in the introduction and methodology sections, including representing a "rapidly growing population in Canada" (Armony, 2014, p. 7), and due to the common linguistic identity between the author and participants. Speaking in their native language can be important in creating an atmosphere where participants could fully express their ideas, convey genuine responses, and express deeper emotions (Tsang, 1998). Future research could be extended to individuals from other linguistic groups in the Canadian workforce to observe possible similarities or differences in their experiences.

In multilingual contexts language and its markers are considered the most relevant dimension of personal and group identity (Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012; Dragojevic et al., 2013; Giles, 1977; Sachdev & Bourhis, 2001). In fact, participants in this study expressed that the Spanish language was a crucial element of their identity. However, a limitation of this study is that other dimensions were not considered. For this reason, future studies should identify the relevance of linguistic identity in comparison to other social identity dimensions (e.g., age,

gender, sexual orientation, disability), and how these dimensions influence the experience of Spanish speaking Latin Americans working in Canada.

Despite its limitations, this study provided empirical evidence that contributes to increased understanding of the experiences of Spanish-speaking Latin American immigrants navigating the workplace in a nonnative language. In the context of increasing immigration to Canada and diversity in the workforce, having insights into this topic offers important considerations for organizational practices, initiatives, and attitudes to create an environment where nonnative speakers can showcase their potential and thrive.

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**Appendix 1. Personal Statement**

I have a music playlist in Spanish that reminds me that I need to be brave and must not forget that I am the result of thirty-one years of experience and not just the previous five years of my life. But when I operate in my second language (English) I forget what I was, a self-confident person with good ideas and important professional experiences to share, and with the ability to generate insightful conversations with people.

The songs I listened to before my shifts as a barista at a popular coffee shop chain in Ottawa reminded me to be brave and strong, and to have an open mind. I had to be brave to acknowledge my constant language related mistakes without showing the tears of frustration in my eyes in front of a customer, and the challenge of saying or pronouncing something incorrectly and having my colleagues laugh at me. I had to be strong in my training sessions when my instructor always directed their conversation to other native English-speaking baristas and never to me, or when my co-workers did not include me in their conversations. I constantly had to keep an open mind and put in an extra effort into listening and understanding my boss's directions, the requirements of my co-workers, and the requests of customers.

My days began with an anxiety, developed into frustration, and ended up with physical and mental exhaustion. I had anxiety about all the consequences that working in a language other than Spanish would bring to me. That frustration did not leave me in my daily life as I felt that my linguistic inadequacy led to people around me judging me as an unintelligent person. At the end of the day, I only felt mental and physical exhaustion from having to think in a second language and constantly worrying about listening, understanding and expressing myself correctly.

Each of the tasks that my work brought meant challenges and learning opportunities. I remember my first day at work when I didn't have the specialized vocabulary to describe the tastes of different types of coffee, something that would have been absolutely simple in my own

language. I came home to make mnemonic cards with new words to describe the different types of coffee and studied them for several weeks. Or to pacify the frustration of customers having to repeat their order multiple times to me, I offered them a superlative customer service experience by being friendlier than my coworkers and going out of my way to praise their outfits. My supervisor at the time was a key element in my strategy to survive working in a second language by teaching me some useful phrases that I constantly repeated and imitating her pronunciation of words. My boss felt empathy for me since she explained to me that expressing herself in her second language was also very challenging for her.

In my free time I practiced small talk with my neighbors and random people, listened to the radio all the time, read novels in English, independently studied English grammar, watched television programs in English, went to free language classes, and limited my encounters with people whose native tongue was Spanish.

From one moment to the next, I quit the language that shaped my identity and made me the person I was, and immersed myself in new linguistic waters. The person who once reflected a sophistication and complexity of thought was diluted, leaving a new person who was clumsy, quiet and simple. My own perception of my identity and the way in which I project to others has completely changed for the worse, so I have to remind myself who I was before this new language and so I listen to my songs in Spanish.

I cannot deny that I gradually improved my pronunciation, and listening to instructions became more natural. But avoiding situations also became a reoccurring practice for me. I avoided answering calls fearing that the other person would not take me seriously because of my accent, I did not participate in team work meetings for fear of not expressing my thoughts correctly or that my colleagues would make fun of me, and I even turned down a promotion out of fear of not doing a good enough job given my lack of confidence in communicating in a second language.

Gone were the days when my communication skills set me apart from other professionals. My previous work in corporate internal communications allowed me to use my Spanish language skills to give life to messages that were distributed among the workers of our large national organization. I was immersed in Spanish for so many years that navigating the intricacies of the language and its expressions was natural, free, and rewarding for me.

However, in my new reality my previous Spanish linguistic identity was also an element that gave me value compared to my co-workers. My accent made me easily identifiable as a Spanish speaker, made customers more patient with my conversation skills, and were curious enough to ask me for a few words to describe the coffee or how to greet them in Spanish. Many of the customers repeated these words in an effort to learn something new. Being a native Spanish speaker, my colleagues identified me as a person from a region that produces coffee and considered me an authority on the product.

After being a barista I transitioned to a job as a marketing assistant at a local organization with business in Hispano-America. Here, my linguistic identity was a favorable factor for me as the job required my Spanish skills to develop relationships with Hispanic clients. However, in this organization most of my daily functions and interactions were in my second language. I had to face the constant fear of answering calls in English, and had to interact with native English speakers by supporting them with specific tasks.

During that time, I swapped my music playlist for podcasts to improve my conversational skills. I was constantly having trouble understanding the first and last names of people calling the company, so I printed out a phonetic alphabet that I kept in front of the phone to deal with these emergency situations. I was aware that my communication skills were not comparable to those of a native English speaker, but I looked for other ways to overcome those shortcomings. I started working with other departments to optimize their communications with Spanish-speaking clients, I used my previous experience in communications to design more professional marketing pieces

for the organization, and I distinguished myself by always being available and enthusiastic to help the team with any task.

One of the attributes of this company was the linguistic diversity of its workforce. Spanish, Arabic, Polish, Russian, and Korean were some of the languages that circulated in the corridors even though English still prevailed as the common language of the organization. This linguistic diversity was a competitive advantage for the organization since it allowed us to speak to clients with different linguistic identities around the world. This linguistic diversity also allowed the workers to form small groups to speak our own native language and the comfort of being able to use these languages.

One of these groups was a group of native Spanish speakers. My Hispanic colleagues and I preferred to share our lunch time as we liked being able to talk about our lives and make jokes in our language. From this group I not only received human warmth and camaraderie, but also received professional help. Every time I had a question or a difficulty I knew I could count on my Spanish-speaking colleagues. They were the ones I turned to if I couldn't understand the accent of a person on the other end of the line, or if I needed corrections when writing an email to a customer in English.

I can say that the most significant human and professional connections that I made in my time at this organization were with people with whom I shared the same language. With other co-workers, language and different cultural references were barriers that separated us. I perceived that some co-workers minimized my opinions because they did not sound sophisticated enough, or I perceived that they did not make an effort to understand my accent and responded with empty statements to my sentences. For this reason, I limited my interactions with other groups and avoided any opportunity in which I felt I was going to be judged such as participating in meetings or social activities.

Time has passed and it has been several years in which being a non-native English speaker has shaped my identity and the way I establish relationships with others. And it means that being a non-native speaker means doing more work than normal, it means spending more time doing each of the tasks, it means being brave to show others that you have the same capabilities as a person who has spoken a language their whole life, it means being strong to accept the differences that separate us from others, and it means having an open mind to stay positive when communicating with others.

Anxiety, frustration and exhaustion do not leave me. Nor does my playlist in Spanish. Today, instead of giving up the language that made me who I am, I have made the decision to fully embrace the elements that differentiate me from others such as my accent and my non-native fluency to distinguish myself from others and to be a living testimony that our world is changing and we need to adjust and to be more empathetic with our differences.

**Appendix 2. Recruitment Flyer**

## PARTICIPANTS WANTED

for a research study that seeks to document the experiences of native Spanish speaking immigrants in Canadian workplaces.

Would you like to share your experience?

- ☑ Are you a native Spanish speaker?
- ☑ Do you primarily work in English or French in Ottawa/Gatineau?
- ☑ Are you a first generation immigrant from an Hispano-American country?
- ☑ Did you arrive to Canada as an adult?
- ☑ Did you learn English or French in or after high school?
- ☑ Have you had previous work experience before arriving in Canada?

Let's have a conversation!

- ☑ Participants will be interviewed for 60 to 90 min.
- ☑ We can talk in either Spanish or English
- ☑ You can choose the place (physical or virtual) and time
- ☑ The interview will be audio recorded
- ☑ Your participation is anonymous and confidential

Are you interested or know someone who would like to participate?
Please, contact Paola Tamayo

uOttawa

## SE BUSCAN PARTICIPANTES

para estudio que busca documentar las experiencias de immigrantes que son hablantes nativos del español en lugares de trabajo de Canadá.

¿Te gustaría compartir tu experiencia?

- ☑ ¿Eres un hablante native del español?
- ☑ ¿Trabajas principalmente en inglés o francés en Ottawa o Gatineau?
- ☑ ¿Eres immigrante de primera generación de origen Hispano-Americano?
- ☑ ¿Llegaste a Canadá siendo adulto?
- ☑ ¿Aprendiste inglés o francés en o después de la secundaria?
- ☑ ¿Tuviste experiencia laborar antes de llegar a Canadá?

¡Conversemos!

- ☑ Participantes serán entrevistados de 60 a 90 minutos.
- ☑ Podemos hablar en español o en inglés
- ☑ Tú eliges el lugar (físico o virtual) y la hora
- ☑ El audio de la entrevista será grabado
- ☑ Tu participación es anónima y confidencial

¿Estás interesado o conoces a alguien que lo estaría?
Por favor, contacta a Paola Tamayo

uOttawa

**Appendix 3. Ethics Approval**

01/09/2020

Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

**CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE I CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number** | S-08-20-6003 |
| **Titre du projet / Project Title** | Reporting the experiences of Spanish speakers in Canadian workplaces |
| **Type de projet / Project Type** | Thèse de maîtrise / Master's thesis |
| **Statut du projet / Project Status** | Approuvé / Approved |
| **Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)** | 01/09/2020 |
| **Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)** | 31/08/2021 |

**Équipe de recherche / Research Team**

| **Chercheur / Researcher** | **Affiliation** | **Role** |
|---|---|---|
| Jully MERCHAN TAMAYO | Département de communication / Department of Communication | Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator |
| Jenepher LENNOX-TERRION | Département de communication / Department of Communication | Superviseur / Supervisor |

**Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments**

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**Appendix 4. Interview Protocol**

**Reporting the experiences of Spanish speakers in Canadian workplaces**

**Interview protocol (English)**

**Opening**

- Thank the interviewee for their participation.
- Explain the purpose of this study.
- Assure the participants that the information will be confidential, and their identity will remain anonymous.
- Ask the participants to read and sign the consent form.
- Remind the participants that the interview will be audio recorded.
- Explain that this interview represents a safe academic space to share their experiences and freely speak their minds.
- Ask the participants whether they have any questions before starting the interview.

**Linguistic identity negotiation questions**

1. Tell me about your current job and what has been your experience working in (English or French)?

*Possible prompts:*

Is there any particular emotion that you feel when you have to work in a foreign language?
Can you give me an example of a moment or situation that illustrates those emotions?

2. How is your current working experience different from when you were working in Spanish?

*Possible prompts:*

In what ways has your perception of yourself changed as a result of this current experience?
Have you felt that your identity has changed as a result of this experience?

3. Tell me about any situations in which Spanish has represented an asset or strength for you in your current workplace?

*Possible prompts:*

How did it make you feel?

**Coping strategy questions**

4. Can you describe the strategies you use to navigate the workplace in (English or French depending on what the participant answered in the demographic questionnaire)?

*Possible prompts:*

Mention different scenarios (meetings, chats, oral interactions, answers to question #1)

Have these strategies changed over time?
Have you noticed any of these strategies losing effectiveness over time?
What else have you done to enhance your experience working in English or French outside of your workplace?

5. Can you think of a time when working in English or French was extra challenging for you? Tell me about it and what did you do to overcome this situation?
*Possible prompts:*
Does this situation happen often?

**Intergroup communication and communicative adjustment questions**
6. Can you tell me about your interactions with your co-workers?
*Possible prompts:*
How do you feel during these interactions? How are these interactions in formal and informal settings? Do you socialize with your coworkers often?

Sometimes native speakers change their communicative styles when interacting with non-native speakers. They may speak slowly, vocalize words strongly, correct the other person' language, or use very simple words.
7. Have you perceived people in your workplace adjusting their communication styles when interacting with you? Can you tell me about these situations?
*Possible prompts:*
How did you feel when this happened?

8. Is there someone in your workplace with whom you communicate very well? Tell me about this person and why?
*Possible prompts:*
Is there someone in your workplace with whom you do not feel you communicate with well? Why?

**Closing**

- Ask the participant how they are feeling after the interview and if there is anything else that they want to share.
- Thank the interviewee for their participation.

## Appendix 5. Consent Form

### Consent Form (English)

**Title of the study:** Reporting the experiences of Spanish speakers in Canadian workplaces

**Researcher:**
Jully Paola Merchán Tamayo, Master's in Organizational Communication Student
Department of Communication, Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

**Supervisor:**
Jenepher Lennox-Terrion, Full Professor
Department of Communication, Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

**Invitation to Participate:** I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Jully Paola Merchán Tamayo and supervised by Jenepher Lennox-Terrion. This project is part of the requirements to complete a Master's degree in Communications at the University of Ottawa.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to explore and document the experiences of first-generation native Spanish speaking immigrants in the Canadian National Capital Region workforce in relation with their linguistic identities and relationships with others.

**Participation:** My participation will essentially consist of answering a demographic survey and taking part in an interview with the researcher in which I will be asked about my experiences involving my linguistic identity in Canadian organizations, the coping strategies that I use to navigate the workplace as non-native speaker, and my perceptions and emotional reactions to the communicative adjustments that native born speakers make in their interactions with me.

The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes and will be audio recorded. I will select the language (Spanish or English) and where the interview will take place. This place can be a physical venue or through a virtual platform, with the former following recommended public health guidelines in the context of COVID-19.

**Risks:** My participation in this study requires that I share personal experiences, and this may cause me some emotional discomfort. I have received assurances from the researcher that every effort will be made to mitigate these discomforts by being able to skip questions, change the topic, or pause the interview.

**Benefits:** My participation in this study will help to create an understanding about issues that are not familiar to native speakers in Canadian organizations; and in so doing I will potentially contribute to the creation of awareness, empathy and support towards non-native speakers who navigate the workplace in a foreign language. Also, my participation will enrich the research studying first generation Spanish native speakers' experiences in Canada.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:** I have received assurances from the researcher that the information I share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for this study and that my confidentiality will be protected by removing my name from the information and replacing it with a fictitious name or pseudonym. This name will be used in combination with my country of origin, current occupation, age and some of my direct quotes in the final report, publications or presentations.

**My anonymity** will be protected by using a fictitious name in place of my real name. Other names and organizations mentioned by me during the interview will not be disclosed in the final report. The researcher and her supervisor will be the only people who will have access to the information that allows the link between the pseudonyms with the real identity of the participants.

**Conservation of data:** Audio data collected will be transcribed into a Word document. The documents will also be printed. The hard copy data and the electronic transcripts, voice recordings, questionnaires and notes will all be stored in a locked briefcase in the home of the researcher and in her personal computer protected by a password known only by the researcher. A copy of the data will be kept in a secure manner in the supervisor's office within the University of Ottawa campus once the University re-opens their buildings following the COVID-19 situation. After five years of completion of the data collection, hard copies of the data will be destroyed, and electronic data will be deleted.

**Voluntary Participation**: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw from this study, all data gathered up till the time of withdrawal will be discarded.

**Acceptance:** I, , agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Jully Paola Merchán Tamayo from the Department of Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, whose research is under the supervision of Jenepher Lennox-Terrion.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: *(Signature)* Date: *(Date)*

Researcher's signature: *(Signature)* Date: *(Date)*

**Appendix 6. Demographic Survey**

**Spanish speakers in Canadian workplaces:**

**Demographic and background questionnaire (English)**

1. How old are you? ______ years old
2. What is your gender identity? ______________________________
3. What is your country of origin? ______________________________
4. How long have you been in Canada? _____ years _____ months
5. What is your educational background?

☐ Some high school ☐ High school ☐ Bachelor's degree
☐ Master's degree ☐ Ph.D. or higher ☐ Trade school
☐ Prefer not to say ☐ Other ______________________________

6. What was your occupation before immigrating to Canada?

__________________________________________________________________

7. How long have you been working in Canada?_____years _____months
8. What kind of industry do you currently work in?

☐ Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
☐ Utilities
☐ Computer and Electronics Manufacturing
☐ Wholesale
☐ Transportation and Warehousing
☐ Software
☐ Broadcasting
☐ Other Information Industry
☐ Real Estate, Rental and Leasing
☐ Primary/Secondary (K-12) Education
☐ Health Care and Social Assistance
☐ Hotel and Food Services
☐ Legal Services
☐ Not-for-profit
☐ Religious
☐ Mining
☐ Construction
☐ Other Manufacturing
☐ Retail
☐ Publishing
☐ Telecommunications
☐ Information Services and Data
☐ Finance and Insurance
☐ College, University and adult
☐ Other Education Industry
☐ Arts and Entertainment
☐ Government and Public Admin.
☐ Scientific or Technical Services
☐ Military
☐ Other ______________________

**9.** What is your position in the organization?

_______________________________________________________________

**10.** How long have you been working there? ______ years ______ months

**11.** What language do you use most in your workplace?

☐ English ☐ French ☐ Spanish

☐ Other ______________________

**12.** Did you study this language comprehensively when you were a child (before high school)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

**13.** How long have you been learning this language? _____ years

**14.** Do you use this language at home? ☐ Yes ☐ No

**15.** On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable and confident do you feel understanding in this non-native language (1 equals not at all and 10 equals completely)?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**16.** On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable and confident do you feel speaking in this non-native language (1 equals not at all and 10 equals completely)?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**17.** On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable and confident do you feel writing in this non-native language (1 equals not at all and 10 equals completely)?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**18.** In this study, your confidentiality will be protected by using a pseudonym. What name would you like used in the study? ___________________________________________

## Appendix 7. Coding Framework

| Theme, Definition | Example |
|---|---|
| Spanish and identity<br><br>Perceptions of the participants regarding their behaviours, abilities and characteristics related to their native language. Direct references to Spanish language will be coded within this theme. | Native language and self-concept<br>Indicates how participants perceive and give meaning to the connection between Spanish and their own identity.<br>• Spanish is connected to their cultural heritage.<br>• Spanish is associated with belonging to a broad Latin-American culture.<br>• Confidence.<br>• An ease in communicating and expressing ideas or concepts in a more detailed way.<br>• Richness in their communicative repertoire.<br>• An easiness in projecting their identities (who they are).<br>• Speaking in Spanish is fluid and natural.<br>• Feeling more sociable and spontaneous with “chispa (spark)”.<br><br>Opportunities at work that reinforce positively linguistic identity<br>Conditions that moderate the participants´ stances regarding their native language when working in Canada.<br>• Spanish is useful to ‘break the ice’ when interacting with co-workers and clients.<br>• Spanish is appreciated in the workplace by co-workers and clients. They are asked to speak in Spanish.<br>• Spanish is attractive for other people who like Latin culture.<br>• Spanish is required in their workplaces (some participants).<br>• Spanish has been useful in their workplaces.<br>• When Spanish is required, participants feel unique, special and helpful. |
| Projecting a non-native linguistic identity in the workplace<br><br>Instances that describe how has been the experience of working in a nonnative language. | Non-native linguistic identity and self-concept<br>Participants´ perceptions regarding their behaviours, abilities and characteristics as non-native speakers.<br>• Insecurity/lack of confidence.<br>• Introvert, serious and silent.<br>• Expression is not as rich, “lack of color to garnish the speech”.<br>• Not being the same person as when they speak their native language.<br><br>Cognitive experiences<br>Mental processes that participants associate to working in a non-native language.<br>• Extra-effort to prove professional competence and not to confirm prejudices (attention to non-native writing).<br>• Extra-effort to produce speech. Thinking extra to come up with the words.<br>• Monitoring actions, being extra careful.<br>• Takes longer to complete any task (reviewing documents to make sure it is a good job).<br>• Difficulties to communicate their ideas.<br>• The communication style is different in each language. |

- It is not just about knowing how to do your job. It is also about how to communicate very well and being away of misunderstandings.
- Difficulties when having phone conversations.
- Difficulties understanding other non-native accents.
- Not being familiar with technical language or colloquial language.

Emotional experiences
Feelings that participants manifest when navigating the workplace as non-native speakers.

- Fear: (e.g., not being understood/making mistakes/being judged/confirming stereotypes/getting fired because of a lack of language competence).
- Stress: (e.g., pressure of not confirming stereotypes: reviewing documents, not making mistakes).
- Frustration: (e.g., not being able to be the same person they were before (expression)).
- Fatigue.
- Feeling devalued: (e.g., comparing themselves with native speakers)
- Linguistic anxiety: (e.g., inability to choose the correct words)

Shifting linguistic identity in the workplace

Includes instances that describes a process of change in comparison with the past and a result of the experience and the internal or external forces that encourage this transformation.
Statements that refer to “now”, “after”, “some years after”, “today” “I am”, “before and now”, “over time”.

Shifting identity and self-concept
How the participants observe themselves as a result of their experience.

- The workplace helps language improvement-it is a learning opportunity.
- Confront their fears and insecurities.
- Improve their self-esteem.
- Being capable to make themselves understandable (positive).
- Cultural enrichment.
- Have an open mind and are more flexible

Shifting processes
Conditions that moderate the experience of participants when navigating the workplace as non-native speakers.

- Receiving empathy and support by co-workers and bosses.
- Professional competence is praised/valued.
- In their workplace there are multiple accents.
- Presence of other immigrants.
- Presence of other Spanish speakers.
- Having the assurance that professional skills are more valued than language competence “we don’t need a Shakespeare here”.

Coping strategies

Mechanisms that are enacted by the participants to navigate the

Strategies in the workplace:
Encompasses strategies that take place in the workplace and are related to:

1. Intrapersonal strategies: Actions participants use within themselves.

| | |
|---|---|
| workplace with their non-native speaker identity and to manage the daily challenges and tasks of working in a non-native language. | • Not translate each word, focusing on understanding the full message.<br>• Using non-verbal communication when not knowing the words.<br>• Using writing communication instead of verbal communication (phone).<br><br>2. Interpersonal strategies: Actions that involve the participation of other individuals.<br>• Learning from their co-workers (pronunciation/how to say it)<br>• Seeking help from other immigrants and other Spanish speakers.<br>• Seeking help from co-workers (specific ones) in an effort to learn and improve their confidence.<br><br>3. Technological strategies: Actions that involve the use of technological tools.<br>• Translators<br>• Proofread and edition applications.<br><br>4. Avoidance strategies: Actions that indicate escape of situations. Includes what situations, why they avoid them, and how they avoid them.<br>• Not participating in meetings when it is not necessary.<br>• Withdrawing from meetings with superiors.<br>• Participation backstage.<br>Trying not to endanger professional perceptions among their coworkers (e.g. not asking in a meeting).<br><br>Strategies in personal time:<br>Activities that participants engage in outside their workplaces.<br>• Read books to increase their vocabulary.<br>• Interacting with other people in their non-native language (volunteering, using services from the public library).<br>• Exposure to the language through different social situations (yoga classes, supermarket).<br>• Taking language courses as their language competence learned from their origin countries is not as good as they thought.<br>• Entertainment in the non-native language (total immersion).<br>• Total immersion into the non-native language. Being away from Spanish. |
| Adaptations in interactions<br><br>Participant's perceptions and reactions to the adjustments in communicative behaviours that native speakers enact when interacting with one another. | Perceived accommodation and reactions:<br>Instances where participants perceive that native speakers adapt their communicative behaviours to facilitate interactions and improve relations. Reactions are included.<br>• Asking the non-native speaker to feel free to ask for repetition if required: the participant feels consideration towards them.<br>• Using non-verbal communication to make the non-native speaker understand words: the participant feels consideration towards them.<br>• Their co-workers make an effort to understand them: guessing, for example. The participant feels grateful. |

Perceived non-accommodation and reactions:
Cases where participants perceive:

1. Overaccommodation (excessive behaviours in relation to the needs of the interaction)
    - Using some words in Spanish because they feel participants do not understand. The participant does not appreciate it because they want to improve their non-native language competence.
    - Over accommodation: finishing the sentences of non-native speakers. It is perceived to be a better behaviour than no-reaction at all.
    - Making corrections to their speech. It is perceived as a positive because the participant asked to be corrected to learn quicker.

2. Underaccommodation (falling short in relation to the desired levels required in the interactions)
    - Not repeating instructions because co-workers (native speakers) get upset.
    - Not changing their speed, words, and lack of repetition: the participant feels integrated.
    - No accommodation: is good as it helps non-native speakers get used to regular speech.
    - No accommodation: they should be more accommodative when non-native speakers show they are having trouble understanding (non-verbally).
    - Native speakers forget to slow down their speech.

## Appendix 8. Codes, Categories, Subthemes and Themes

### Theme 1: Spanish and Identity

#### ***Sub-Theme 1. Native Linguistic Identity and Self-Concept*** *(N = 24/Ref. = 96)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Defined by the Spanish language<br>n = 23<br>#Ref. = 90 | Connection with other Spanish speakers | 18 | 41 | "Now informally, with the Spanish speakers in my workplace, it's let's say lunchtime that we talk there, we speak Spanish. It's like one relaxes the mind. One is more relaxed when speaking Spanish, the first language." (Miguel Pérez) |
| | Emotional connection to the Spanish language | 8 | 8 | "When I teach Spanish, I teach it is with an enormous passion that I do it because I love my language and because it is much easier for me than teaching French. So, I have a passion and I identify 100% with what I'm teaching because I know it, because I think that I'm kind of sharing my knowledge with them." (Nana Ortíz) |
| | Spanish is a vehicle to truly express themselves | 14 | 24 | "My identity in Spanish is too human, and here I feel like I can't do it that much. So, it does not mean that I have lost my humanity, my sense of fairness, but I feel that I cannot express it in the same way." (Patricia Velasquez) |
| | Spanish is linked to a Latino-American identity | 10 | 16 | "My mother tongue is connected with my heart, with the reason for existing. My existence is in Spanish and my soul is Latin. Even if I speak any language, I will always be Latin American." (Steph Braun) |
| Spanish is not an important element of their identity<br>n = 4<br>#Ref.= 6 | Engaging with English over Spanish | 2 | 4 | "The fact that I use English more than Spanish, I find that now my English is my first language and Spanish is the second." (Andy Prada) |
| | Spanish has a secondary role in defining identity | 2 | 2 | "I think that the language is important for me, but more importantly for me is my cultural heritage to define my identity because I come from a culture that is called a hot culture where people are more emotional, where the family relationship it's more important. Here it is more individualistic." (José Fernández) |

#### ***Sub-Theme 2. Situations at Work that Reinforce Native Linguistic Identity*** *(N = 24/Ref. = 74)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The advantage of Spanish in the Canadian workplace | Employment due to Spanish speaking ability | 6 | 8 | "When I arrived, I started looking for my competitive advantage. So, I looked for a job that needed both languages. My native language and English. So that's what I got when I got to Canada." (Pedro Reyes) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| n = 20<br>#Ref. = 37 | Spanish is a minor advantage in the Canadian workplace (occasional usage) | 12 | 15 | "It has only been once in the call center, but not much, someone who needed help in Spanish and no, because I liked it a lot. And it feels like a better one than 'I have one more advantage because I have another language and I can help people who are here in that language'". (Clara Cepeda) |
| | Spanish is highly significant in the Canadian workplace | 7 | 14 | "The opportunity I had to travel, interact with other people, climb quickly in promotions for the simple fact that I spoke Spanish." (Alexis Arguello) |
| The advantage of Spanish in informal interactions in the workplace<br>n = 10<br>#Ref. = 20 | Peers and clients ask to learn or practice Spanish | 6 | 7 | "I am happy when my peers ask me 'how do you say this in Spanish?' And I love teaching that to them." (Nazareth Recinos) |
| | Peers and clients express they like the Spanish language | 8 | 13 | "Some people have been attracted by my language or it is something exotic and it is also like having a fun time with some words in Spanish like 'amigo', 'gracias', 'hola', things like that. Benefits in my work, that has helped me to obtain a job, a promotion or some benefit, in my case it has not had that. Rather, it has been something more fun, curious, exotic, nothing more." (José Fernández) |
| Participants' perceptions to using Spanish in the workplace<br>n = 15<br>#Ref. = 17 | Feeling surprised that Spanish is useful | 1 | 1 | "I was surprised. Obviously, I was glad I wasn't expecting it. I said first that nothing is absolutely irrelevant to the fact that I speak Spanish." (Carolina Palacios) |
| | Observed as an opportunity to further connect with Canadians | 1 | 1 | "I love it because you are no longer the lady who has the accent, you are no longer the lady who speaks differently, who speaks strangely and who, perhaps, does not understand you. People assume, and it's very interesting that because you have an accent, you don´t understand. That because you have an accent, and you speak weird is a bit silly." (Steph Braun) |
| | Their feeling of being helpful by speaking Spanish | 8 | 9 | "I have helped in some projects, when they have to make videos, for example. And they have asked me for information or to correct it in Spanish. Of course, you feel satisfaction to be able to help in your mother tongue." (Mia Flores) |
| | Their feeling of being unique and proud of speaking Spanish | 6 | 6 | "You feel useful and you feel happy because you know that you are contributing your grain of sand to a project that can become bigger. To be in an environment where you are unique, that you are the only person who can help because you know the language." (Tomás Cruz) |

## Theme 2: Projecting a Nonnative Linguistic Identity in the Workplace

### ***Sub-Theme 1. Nonnative Linguistic Identity and Self-Concept*** *(N = 22/Ref. = 160)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Changes in behaviour and lack of confidence | 13 | 28 | "But when I came here, it was like all that security was gone and that's when I began to realize that I had many fears within me. Fears that I could cover before with the security of being in a familiar place that I knew, of being within my own culture with my language, there were no things to worry about." (José Fernández) |

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perception of their ability to act and to perform a task in their non-native language n = 22 #Ref. = 160 | External comparison (to native-speaking peers) | 8 | 13 | “Even though you speak it, you already feel like you speak English, but there is always a person who speaks it better.” (Alexis Arguello) |
| | Feeling out of place when socializing with peers | 12 | 48 | “In the environment in which I work humour is a constant. And it's a constant from which I feel excluded because, even though I can handle a certain level of context language, idioms of humour are completely unknown to me and I don't understand jokes. One is aware that there is no connection with the group.” (Ilya Giraldo) |
| | Internal comparison (their abilities in native vs. non-native language) | 15 | 26 | “But for the very reason that one is comparing all the time with what you were as a professional in your own language, it makes you doubt and fear to seek resources in other people.” (Fernanda Batz) |
| | Lacking the ability to communicate, express ideas and demonstrate knowledge, experience and performance | 13 | 30 | “Being able to express or tell a person if they feel bad how I understand it in their language is very complicated, I would like to say a thousand and one words, but I can only say ten, twenty, by far thirty. So, I can't be the person I was in Colombia in matters of that, maybe in the future.” (Patricia Velasquez) |

***Sub-Theme 2. Cognitive Experiences*** *(N = 24/Ref. = 231)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Challenging situations n = 24 #Ref. = 134 | Challenge with public speaking | 4 | 4 | “I didn't even have been in the office for six months and I had to prepare a workshop and teach it. It was hard. So, it was like "what am I going to do?", "How am I going to do it?" Total anguish, fear, I am going to show that I do not speak the language. So, it's like I don't know, sweating (laugh), your belly trembles, your voice trembles.” (Fernanda Batz) |
| | Difficulties communicating by phone-video calls | 7 | 11 | “At the beginning, when I had to make a phone call. I remember that I was organizing an event and I had to make guest lists. And many times, I had to phone the guests to ask them for their email. I think that this has been one of the most difficult tasks of my life because I did not understand.” (Claudia Pérez) |
| | Difficulties to explain concepts | 11 | 15 | “So, if it was difficult for me because they were busy, it happens that they are giving you five minutes of their time, then you have to say it all very quickly and to the point and that's it. I got stuck and got very nervous because I tried to give them my best effort and my best information, but hey, they are busy with their things. (María Velázquez) |
| | Difficulties with technical and colloquial language | 14 | 20 | “I came very confident with my English and when I began to have job interviews, I realized that my English was not what I believed. Because you, according to the way you express yourself for a job interview and you have to use English, a very good level of English and a technical level, you realize that sometimes you are not prepared for the subject of sentences or expressions of work.” (Mia Flores) |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Difficulties writing and producing documents | 5 | 10 | "Later, I entered the Government, and I was there for three years, again very hard because it was a very hard professional writing issue." (Mia Flores) |
| | Perceiving differential treatment, discrimination or prejudices | 10 | 23 | "If I want to impress someone because I have had an experience of discrimination. They believe that because we have an accent, we do not have a brain. When I write to those people who indirectly want me to make me feel less or inferior, I then start to use the words that I have learned." (Alexis Arguello) |
| | Problems in understanding others | 16 | 39 | "That was the biggest challenge that I felt was difficult for me to understand people with an accent. And the irony is that I have my own accent, but I couldn't understand people with an accent." (Adolfo Galvis) |
| | Problems of others understanding them | 8 | 12 | "In the call center. Most of all, the problems that I had there is that people told me "I can't understand you" or "this is too serious for me, I would like to talk to someone else", the truth is, I didn't feel bad." (Clara Cepeda) |
| Intensive intellectual or mental effort<br>n = 20<br>#Ref. = 97 | Difficulties in finding the right words | 9 | 14 | "Sometimes it gives you anxiety, right? I mean, you're in a meeting and sometimes you're thinking, and you say "hell, how do you say this thing?" Like sometimes you get stuck." (Carolina Palacios) |
| | Extra work or effort is required | 11 | 20 | "Here the effort at work is double. A great frustration is when you are part of a team, you put the best of yourself in that work, but when it comes to communicating what was, why and how it was done, it is the English speaker who gets the merit. That is a frequent situation." (Ilya Giraldo) |
| | Fatigue from having to communicate in a non-native language | 7 | 14 | "Very hard, very stressful. I have never experienced such hard stress in my life and in my career, in my 10 years working on other things. In an entrance job here so much stress, so much mental exhaustion, I finished completely exhausted." (Mia Flores) |
| | Increased concentration in what or how they themselves have to say | 10 | 17 | "But since the question continued that something had to be said, then I felt the pressure of what to say and it made me anxious to think what I was going to say." (María Velázquez) |
| | Increased concentration in what others say | 3 | 3 | "It is a challenge to try to understand at the same time under stress the orders or requirements they have, the technical language because my training is not medical, nor is it in the area of health. So, it has been like adapting to technical language and to the slang that they use under stress. It has been like I look everywhere trying not to lose information." (Rosa Rodríguez) |
| | Increased times required for communicating | 7 | 11 | "Every time I have a meeting and make a presentation, sometimes I have to think and analyze certain things, like looking for certain words and it is for practice, I guess I have to practice more." (Miguel Pérez) |
| | Requiring more time to accomplish tasks | 9 | 18 | "In other words, if I knew that they were going to ask me how they were going to do the breaks, I had already organized to explain them. And all that preparation consumes much more time than normal, and it is your turn at home, suddenly, you also use the internet and write and everything and look "oh, I'm going to present this plan to you" "How is this plan?"." (Ross Vila) |

***Sub-Theme 3. Emotional Experiences*** *(N = 24/Ref. = 129)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Excessive emotional experiences n = 6 #Ref. =11 | Being mocked | 1 | 3 | "I was replacing in an art course and then every time I said something to a student, she started to lash out at me. That was so offensive, but really so offensive that it was a moment that I couldn't hide my emotions and I started crying. All I did was turn around, the bell rang, the students came out and I stayed there for about ten minutes, I cried, cried, and cried." (Nelly Sánchez) |
| | Mistreatment because of communication difficulties | 3 | 4 | "I remember that I decided to stand up and when people said, 'good morning', no words came out and I feel that somebody push me from my waist and say 'speak'. This woman pushed me. And here that is not allowed, you cannot push people. (…) That was very cruel, that was very harsh." (Steph Braun) |
| | Negative comments from peers and clients | 3 | 4 | "He made comments like 'you were lucky to find a job here because you are a newcomer', but I kind of did not understand those phrases. I still do not understand the double meaning in French, it is very difficult for me to understand that. So that was a big challenge that even though I didn't understand it at the time after thinking about it, it hurt me. So, I did get it." (Rosa Rodríguez) |
| Expectations of negative professional or social consequences due to non-native language skills n = 10 #Ref. = 24 | Jeopardizing how others perceive them professionally in the workplace | 3 | 3 | "And the frustration perhaps when I said that if I am going to do something without having any idea of what he wanted to say to me, "why didn't I ask?" I think that was basically due to the pride, perhaps of not wanting to accept that I did not understand, and I do not know, it may be." (José Fernández) |
| | Perceptions of negative reactions from co-workers and clients | 6 | 12 | "In English I feel that I lack vocabulary, I lack fluency. I believe that it is always the fear of being judged when they say, 'she speaks incorrectly' or 'how did she come to live here and has not learned?'." (María Velázquez) |
| | Possibility of losing their jobs | 6 | 9 | "Before if I felt more insecure that I could lose my job. Because my job is, then, to write. I cannot afford to write badly or speak badly or say something that is not understood. So, that, the anxiety was of the consequences that could bring for me not to write well in English or speaking it well." (Carolina Palacios) |
| Expecting and encountering communication difficulties n = 22 #Ref. = 67 | Grammar and pronunciation mistakes | 6 | 16 | "At first, I was afraid to speak with mistakes in front of several people, but now if we have a meeting with several people, I don't feel that way, I am more confident that if I make a mistake it is the minimum or they will not notice it." (Clara Cepeda) |
| | Having to communicate in a non-native language | 9 | 13 | "When I arrive at work, I say 'well, I have to change the chip, I have to start thinking in English'. So, there it comes in like a little bit of a fear." (Ross Vila) |
| | Inability to communicate properly | 9 | 14 | "I get very frustrated because I have a lot of things in my head to say, but I have a hard time expressing them fully." (José Fernández) |

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Misunderstandings or the need to repeat multiple times | 2 | 3 | "And sometimes I remember that I had a misunderstanding that we had to deliver a job and there was a misunderstanding of deadlines with a colleague. I had understood one thing and obviously, and I still consider that I was correct, but, nevertheless, at that time it was a problem that perhaps he suspected that I had not understood due to my lack of language." (Tomás Cruz) |
| | Not being able to comprehend others | 5 | 5 | "At the beginning I was nervous and anxious when I had to go to the meetings if I was able to capture all the information. And at first I kind of came out with a big head from concentrating on this language so much" (Nana Ortíz) |
| | Not being comprehend by others | 9 | 10 | "Well, at the beginning it is that fear and that fear. As well as a knot that is made to one in the chest to communicate in the most fluid way. That was the most 'challenging' thing there was. Emotions is the fear of saying things well or in a way that can be understood more." (Adolfo Galvis) |
| | Situations of communication difficulties | 5 | 6 | "When I had a meeting with the boss that I had to present the results to her to the school's finance directors, I was very nervous. Many times, that gave me anxiety." (Claudia Pérez) |
| Perceptions of differential treatment n = 7 #Ref. = 14 | Being treated in a different way due to non-native language | 7 | 14 | "That when I asked them to speak to me slower, they began to speak louder, louder. And it was that the person spoke very softly, and I approached him and said, 'Can speak to me a little more slowly?' And he started "YES, OF COURSE." That's like (…) and it's in a workspace. And at the time it was a rage that gave me 'how so and what happens to this person? What do they think?' And anger, but then I felt it was my fault because I asked him to speak slower. So, it is like that same roll of demanding one more and it is those conflicting emotions of anger, because they are treating you and in the end that is discrimination, and it is being racist." (Fernanda Batz) |
| Positive experiences in the workplace n = 7 #Ref. = 13 | Being included | 4 | 5 | "In general, the emotions have been very good. Joy, the fact of sharing with new people in the language that I did not know, the acceptance of people who have welcomed me. There is everything, but almost for the most part they welcomed me well." (Nazareth Recinos) |
| | Being valued and feeling that they are doing a good job | 4 | 8 | "Another emotion is like joy, satisfaction when I feel that it is a good course, when I feel that they have learned, and I know it when students ask. There is fear, there is joy, there is satisfaction, from time to time there is disappointment, because you say 'I work, I make an effort, I prepare' and sometimes you feel that you are not valued." (Nelly Sánchez) |

## Theme 3: Shifting Linguistic Identity

### ***Sub-Theme 1. Identity Shifting and Self-Concept*** *(N = 23/Ref. = 92)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experiencing changes in self-perceptions after working in their non-native language<br>n = 23<br>#Ref. = 92 | Growing confidence in themselves | 17 | 28 | "That at first you don't feel confident, like you don't know if you are going to be able to work in that language or if you are going to return to your country. Yes, I think that after all those stages that one goes through here, there comes a time when you feel confident that you can do it. Your perspective changes, as you have more security about yourself when you go through barriers, especially those of the language, which is the strongest." (Claudia Pérez) |
| | Increasing levels of comfort in the workplace | 14 | 46 | "Now I feel more comfortable, but that level of comfort has taken me several years because I already understand work more, too." (Mia Flores) |
| | Sense of personal growth | 11 | 18 | "I believe that a lot has changed you in the sense of being humbler, undoubtedly because of what I tell you, because of this blow of reality and seeing that first, you do not know them all, that how difficult it is to try to get ahead when You do not have all the tools." (Tomás Cruz) |

***Sub-Theme 2. Factors that Shift Self-Perception*** *(N = 23/Ref. = 106)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitudes towards aspects identify them as non-native speakers<br>n = 11<br>#Ref. = 22 | Accepting making mistakes | 6 | 10 | "Right now, with my new boss I have more confidence, I tell her 'I have not edited the document, but that's how it goes.' And she is 'that´s all right.' She likes the ideas." (Carolina Palacios) |
| | Accepting their accents and pronunciation errors | 9 | 12 | "At first, if we all gathered at a table for lunch, then I didn't participate as much, I don't know why my accent made me a bit concerned. I mean, having an accent, but now I feel that it is something very normal because people come from all over the place, and, well, everyone, each one with his accent." (Clara Cepeda) |
| External forces that encourage a transformation<br>n = 22<br>#Ref. = 84 | Incidence of the workplace in non-native language competency improvement | 15 | 26 | "Every time that I had to write reports, I already knew that I was going to spend days without sleep, in corrections and all this. So, it was a lot, a lot, a lot, a lot of work. And the truth is that I learned a lot." (Miguel Pérez) |
| | Perceiving a supportive work environment | 16 | 28 | "I think it was easier than I thought because I worked with my boss the first week, directly with him. And when he saw me, he said 'wow, you work very well. Stay in this company'. Things changed when I saw empathy in him. He knew I didn't understand things, but he tried to be more patient." (José Fernández) |
| | Presence of diverse accents and languages in the workplace | 9 | 13 | "Listening to accents, ways of making grammatical mistakes among your peers and that made me feel quite comfortable in the sense of communicating because it was like everyone here were learning, everyone here has an accent, everyone here make grammatical mistakes." (Fernanda Batz) |
| | Professional competence is praised and valued | 7 | 17 | "At first there was skepticism of what I was doing, but then that skepticism faded and there are no longer any questions about revisiting what I wrote. You need to be remembered what you do well." (Lupe Gonzalez) |

## Theme 4: Coping Strategies

### ***Sub-Theme 1: Intrapersonal Strategies*** *(N = 21/Ref. = 183)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Engaging in preparation tactics<br>n = 20<br>#Ref. = 112 | Crafting formats and templates | 4 | 8 | "I work a lot with formats to make everything more systematic and to save time in writing and review and make it more effective."<br>(María Velázquez) |
| | Practicing at home or receiving help from family and friends | 6 | 6 | "When my son has time, I explain him a topic and ask him if he understands me. He is in secondary school."<br>(Nelly Sánchez) |
| | Preparing and prior practice | 16 | 45 | "For my comfort, I always try to prepare myself as much as I can."<br>(Mia Flores) |
| | Preparing visual help | 14 | 24 | "In a meeting I have to write down everything I'm going to say. I have all the notes."<br>(Ross Vila) |
| | Researching the topic in depth | 7 | 12 | "At work if there is something new, I ask my boss if he can give me literature to find out more about what we are doing and to learn the vocabulary initially."<br>(Clara Cepeda) |
| | Reviewing | 8 | 10 | "When I start to revise or write, an important issue for me is revision. When I write a page, even an e-mail, I read it again from beginning to end and I still do that, and if something is missing, I fix it. After the second read, I would read aloud to make sure everything was okay, and then read backwards, word by word or by set of words. As you will realize, that takes a long time and I still use those strategies."<br>(Miguel Pérez) |
| | Self-pep talk | 4 | 7 | "You give yourself a pep talk that is to talk to yourself beforehand and you tell yourself 'I can, I have the strength to do it, I trust myself'. It's like cheering."<br>(Lupe González) |
| Taking advantage of technology<br>n = 19<br>#Ref. = 58 | Using a digital grammar checker | 5 | 9 | "I was scared, but I helped myself and I paid for a subscription to something called Grammarly."<br>(Carolina Palacios) |
| | Using a search engine | 10 | 13 | "It was very difficult at first, but the great help I had at that time was the internet because I did advanced searches through Google."<br>(Susana Espinoza) |
| | Using specific web sites | 7 | 14 | "I also use this Lingue page because it gives you examples of how it is written. So that's one of the things when I'm writing a report, when I'm writing an email."<br>(Fernanda Batz) |
| | Using translators | 13 | 22 | "I have an application, everyone has it today, a translator to which I quickly go when I see a word that I do not understand, especially when I am reading some information. I put that word and it tells me the meaning."<br>(Adolfo Galvis) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Using sources from the workplace<br>n = 8<br>#Ref. = 13 | Using sources from the workplace | 8 | 13 | "There are times when you can be very aware of how you speak, and I have actually taken trainings or workshops or sought help to help structure my head to cope with some insecurities. I have been very fortunate that these services can be offered where I work."<br>(Lupe González) |

***Sub-Theme 2: Interpersonal Strategies*** *(N = 20/Ref. = 86)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asking for help from peers<br>n = 19<br>#Ref. = 63 | Asking for help from peers-General | 15 | 35 | "Obviously, before giving the workshop, I approached a couple of people 'can you please check my slides?' 'You can read this?' 'Can you tell that I have no spelling errors and that it is understood? There are my notes, can you read them?'."<br>(Fernanda Batz) |
| | Asking for help from peers-Native speakers | 8 | 16 | "So, when I have an important document, I always arrange for a colleague who is a native speaker to correct it and help me. And I frankly tell my boss 'look, I don't have English or French as my mother tongue, I need someone to help me write, read and review for certain types of documents'."<br>(Susana Espinoza) |
| | Asking for help from peers-Non-native speakers | 1 | 1 | "And the other is that also here in Canada and in Quebec there is a lot of immigrants, so you not only work with people from the region but with many immigrants who are very friendly, and they explain to you what you don't know. Because they know that they also went through the same thing and they are very kind to welcome you."<br>(Patricia Velasquez) |
| | Asking for help from peers-Spanish speakers | 3 | 11 | "Sometimes I rely a lot on the Mexican woman, because she has lived here for about twenty years and I sometimes feel like it was because of insecurity itself, I would tell her, "(name), check this to see if it makes sense" or I would change some things."<br>(Carolina Palacios) |
| Learning from peers<br>n = 12<br>#Ref. = 23 | Expanding vocabulary and pronunciation | 11 | 14 | "What I was trying to do is take notes or ask, sometimes, what that meant or what it is. And in that way try to understand and what a job is like in which you repeat things every day, basically, somehow those words and expressions stay in your head."<br>(José Fernández) |
| | Mirroring native speakers | 6 | 9 | "Imitation has served me well and, for example, here they do like "offff". Then, like the same, try to do the same to see if suddenly I get a little closer not to what they are, but to speak to them with the same gestures."<br>(Rosa Rodríguez) |

***Sub-Theme 3: Interactional Strategies*** *(N = 20/Ref. = 90)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Avoidance behaviours<br>n = 11<br>#Ref. = 17 | Avoiding asking questions | 4 | 6 | "In my workplace I try not to ask a lot because if they see that you ask a lot, you kind of look bad. Because they do not understand that it is not that one does not know the subject, but that it is the language."<br>(Nelly Sánchez) |
| | Avoiding interacting with others | 5 | 7 | "When I was in the cafe, I started by cleaning the tables, cleaning the bathrooms, washing dishes and I felt protected from not being in front of the cashier, in front of the customer. I felt protected from being behind the dishes, I felt protected from being in the bathroom, in the back room."<br>(Lupe González) |
| | Avoiding participation in meetings | 3 | 3 | "When it is a meeting that is at another level, higher level, I always have the tendency to say, 'I help from the background or behind the scenes' I am always going to avoid being the one who is going to speak, to explain."<br>(Mia Flores) |
| | Avoiding the workplace | 1 | 1 | "I think that the first week I was working at the second company caused me a lot of stress. And he really came home as very relieved and said, 'I don't want that tomorrow comes because I don't want to go.' Because I did not want to face that situation. The first reaction was to try to run away, not to confront myself."<br>(José Fernández) |
| Behaviours to comprehend a message<br>n = 14<br>#Ref. = 36 | Asking for repetition and repeating instructions to clarify | 14 | 26 | "When I was not sure, I asked. Or if they could translate that word for me or how to say something. I pointed it out to him. My strategy was to ask how you say that, how you can pronounce a thing. And when I was not sure of an order or an indication, I repeated what I had understood. One strategy is to repeat and ask them if that was the indication."<br>(Roberto Bolaño) |
| | Synthesizing the message- Selecting only the key idea | 2 | 5 | "One strategy that sometimes comes up is to try to replace what is being said to me with my own understanding of what is being said. That generally this is a more direct way, sometimes it may seem that it is rude English, to clarify a long explanation that is being given to me of a task then I register it, I synthesize it in a "must be done", subject + verb + predicate and that's it."<br>(Ilya Giraldo) |
| | Using common sense to fill the blanks | 3 | 5 | "I believe that during the four years that I have been doing the translation in my head and it is only recently that I began to take the central idea. For example, one of the people who speaks very fast and is difficult to understand is my boss and especially when he calls me on the phone. I no longer listen to everything he says to me, I try to stay with the idea of what he is trying to tell me in the conversation, with that it is already easier to handle that part."<br>(José Fernández) |
| Behaviours to convey a message<br>n = 13<br>#Ref. = 27 | Relying on written communication | 9 | 12 | "In French there are many words that I have never understood and that every time I say, they say 'what? that?' until they know what I mean, because either I have told them in English, or I have taught them in writing."<br>(Claudia Pérez) |
| | Using non-verbal language | 7 | 15 | "One is non-verbal language. Yes, non-verbal language is great. I have always said that I have had excellent non-verbal language. Especially with my English-speaking patients because I don't speak English and they still understand everything I want to tell them."<br>(Patricia Velasquez) |
| | Controlling the conversation | 4 | 5 | "I always start like this, first number one and two or else I don't understand anything. 'No yes, I want to sell', then what I try is that I ask the questions because if I let them talk, less. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proactive behaviours in a conversation<br>n = 8<br>#Ref. = 10 | Announcing disclaimers | 4 | 5 | But sometimes there is information that I do not understand much, so I am setting my pace." (María Velázquez)<br>"I started the workshop saying 'this is the first time that I am facilitating this in this space. I am not an expert in the English language.' And it was like saying 'look, I have an accent. I learned English. So here I am. I'm going to ask you, if you don't understand something, ask me and I can use a different way of explaining it and that when you speak, don't speak too fast'." (Fernanda Batz) |

## Theme 5: Adaptions in Interactions

### ***Sub-Theme 1. Perceptions of Accommodation*** *(N = 18/Ref. = 105)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accommodation<br>n = 18<br>#Ref. = 61 | Acknowledging Spanish in conversations | 4 | 4 | "And one of the things that helped break the ice is his personality and that is that the first days of me working, he came and asked me a question and three words in Spanish. And there I said, "he is like good people"." (Adolfo Galvis) |
| | Correction | 3 | 5 | "She never spoke slowly to me, never. Only correcting me made her feel good with me and I felt good with her because I managed to understand everything and her language if she is very Quebecois then I liked being with her." (Patricia Velasquez) |
| | Modification to slower speech rate | 12 | 15 | "Speaking more slowly is more special because a person who knows that I am native or that I speak the language very well, speaks without restraint. Speaking more slowly and using more gestures and a high tone of voice is what I know." (Ross Vila) |
| | Native speakers actively help when Spanish speaker is having difficulties speaking | 4 | 4 | "Sometimes I was wanting to say something, and they would finish me the sentence, "Is that what you wanted to say?" And I "thank you"." (Nazareth Recinos) |
| | Perceiving an effort-interest to promote conversations and establish interactions (common topics-asking questions) | 11 | 17 | "Because I started talking to her and she told me "calm down, talk to me." So that gave me the opportunity to feel free and she asked me "oh, what are you eating?" I bring an arepa for lunch and she asks me what it's made of. And we talk about cooking recipes and then everything is very informal and very calm. There are people like that from the first moment we know that here there is no feeling, that here we do not vibrate at the same frequency, there is no way." (Rosa Rodríguez) |
| | Repetition and emphasis in certain words | 5 | 8 | "I think that at work we also have the issue of communication because we are people, there are a lot of English-speaking people, but there are from other countries. So, we just have that diversity of accents, etc. and as the way of communicating, there are also sometimes people who help you to a certain extent, like repeating the word, for example." (Fernanda Batz) |

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Use of helpful non-verbal communication cues | 2 | 3 | "There are some who are very understanding because they understand that I am just learning the language, so if I don't understand the word, they explain it to me with signs or show it to me." (Patricia Velasquez) |
| | Use of simpler speech | 4 | 5 | "I feel that he is all the time interested in my understanding what is going on around me. He sometimes acts as a translator, not because he translates from one language to another, but because he translates from a general conversation into a language that we both know, a more basic language." (Ilya Giraldo) |
| Asking for accommodation n = 7 #Ref. = 11 | Native speaker asks if accommodation is required | 2 | 3 | "I was lucky that afterwards they changed my boss and the boss that I had sometimes I sent her an email and she said to me "is it okay if I reply to your emails with some corrections?" and I said, 'yes, please!'." (Fernanda Batz) |
| | Spanish speaker communicates the need for accommodation | 6 | 8 | "They have changed because I ask them to change. They speak to me slower when I don't understand them. Especially my clients whose first language is French, because sometimes they can't speak English well." (Andy Prada) |
| Evaluations to accommodative behaviours n = 18 #Ref. = 33 | Demonstrate consideration | 4 | 5 | "Completely grateful. I did not feel that they tried to belittle me, because I have seen that in other people who feel that they are being belittled. I don't see it that way, I feel like they are doing me a favour because as a result of that I feel that I can improve." (Adolfo Galvis) |
| | Facilitates comprehension | 9 | 10 | "I feel very good because I know she was doing that because she is interested in me understanding her, and she is also interested in me learning the language more." (Ross Vila) |
| | Promotes conversation | 8 | 12 | "The French are different, and I feel well identified with them: "Good morning, how's your weekend? How are your children?" English, no. Not even a "good morning." Yes, there is a big difference and I feel good with the French group." (Mia Flores) |
| | Supports language improvement | 5 | 6 | "Good because it was what helped me. At no time did I feel bad because they assumed that I did not understand, on the contrary, it was my reality. And from that reality, I accepted the correction, I accepted the help. I was humble, because the truth is that here I came to come across learning and there is no other choice than to be humble." (Nazareth Recinos) |

### ***Sub-Theme 2. Perceptions of Nonaccommodation*** *(N = 22/Ref. = 123)*

| Category | Codes | n | #Ref. | Example quote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Underaccommodation n = 18 #Ref. = 48 | Native use phrases filled with jargon | 5 | 8 | "Personally, when it came to work issues, I understood them very well. But when my co-workers in the same meeting started talking to each other in that slang, I didn't understand a damn thing." (Roberto Bolaño) |

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| | Participants feel left out of productive interactions | 3 | 3 | "He addressed the other person, and I was 'hey, I'm here. Why don't you talk to me?' Or sometimes he would give the information to the other person so that person would come and show it to me." (Alexis Arguello) |
| | Perceiving lack of effort by native speakers to facilitate interactions | 10 | 14 | "I notice that people were more impatient at the beginning, like they didn't understand, and they were like 'I don't understand you, I don't understand you'." (Claudia Pérez) |
| | Perceiving that their co-workers did not have the willingness to repeat instructions | 3 | 3 | "I no longer need to be repeated because I have seen that it annoys people because in my work, they do not like to repeat the instruction more than twice, because time is valuable, time is money and they do not want to repeat it. If you did not understand, then try to find a way to do it even though you did not understand." (José Fernández) |
| | Using default speed | 14 | 20 | "I think they speak as normal as when they speak to anyone. When I speak in Spanish and I know that people don't speak Spanish, I do have that awareness of trying to speak slowly or modulate words better, because I was already on that side, that they speak to you very fast and you don't understand anything. But, in my work, I think everyone talks at their own pace. (María Velázquez) |
| Evaluations to underaccommodation<br>n = 17<br>#Ref. = 27 | Inconsiderate and a barrier to the comprehension of conversations | 11 | 15 | "You feel that this is my situation, and he knows it, he knows it and you feel that that person could do a little more to improve that communication with you. So, I have felt that, on some very rare occasions, that they do it with an emphasis on a discriminatory attitude in which they do not make the slightest effort to improve communication, because they know that the responsibility to understand belongs to one . That the consequences of not understanding, it is one who will carry them. But they don't make the effort to improve communication a bit. I feel there is a bit of discrimination there." (Ilya Giraldo) |
| | Manifesting a desire to do not require communicative adjustments from native speakers to begin with | 6 | 6 | "My colleagues do not speak to me slowly. If I say to them, "I'm sorry, can you speak to me more slowly?" They do it once, but then they forget it, and they come back and talk to me quickly. Anyway, I prefer that they do it that way, because I don't get used to it (slower speech)." (Patricia Velasquez) |
| | Perceiving pre-conceived ideas about nonnative speakers | 4 | 4 | "Two natives are talking to each other making good or bad judgments, as if I were not there and above all, taking for granted that I am not understanding anything that usually I can understand." (Ilya Giraldo) |
| | They feel treated as equals | 2 | 2 | "I feel good. If they start to speak slowly or vocalize, I'm going to feel bad because I'm going to think "this guy thinks I don't understand him". So no, I feel super good." (Nana Ortíz) |
| Overaccommodation<br>n = 10<br>#Ref. = 18 | Attempts to use Spanish (unnecessary) | 1 | 1 | "One of the administrative assistants has traveled to Latin America and knows a little bit of Spanish. So, he thinks I don't understand, and he tells me in Spanish. I tell him "don´t tell me in Spanish, tell me in French"." (Patricia Velasquez) |
| | Exaggeratedly slow speech | 8 | 8 | "Now that I work more with people who speak in English, when I ask them to repeat me, either because I'm taking notes or because I don't understand them, they will speak to me |

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| | | | | very slowly. And sometimes they speak much slower to me as if I don't have the same IQ as they do (laughter).” (Susana Espinoza) |
| | Louder than usual volume | 2 | 3 | “There are people who simply don't know, there are people who yelled at me, I said “even if they yell at me, I don't understand. It's the same but shouted”. "How can I explain that you talk to me that way." That was newcomer. That was very funny. Or they said things believing that he did not understand them, but he did understand them. Multiple things happen.” (Steph Braun) |
| | Persistent correction | 1 | 1 | “This person was in their 50s and when I arrived the language was harder for me. So, everything I said, she said: "no, this is how it is said, make this sound." At the beginning it's fine, but if I can't tell you anything without you correcting me, I found it annoying.” (Pedro Reyes) |
| | Unnecessary repetition and over explanation | 2 | 5 | “In my career, people spoke more slowly, people repeated things to me, then I told them that I had understood them or if they needed something in space because you repeat me twice.” (Lupe Gonzalez) |
| Evaluations to overaccommodative behaviours n = 7 #Ref. = 9 | Feeling inferior or less intelligent | 5 | 6 | “And I know he did it with that intention of making me feel like I was a fool, and I didn't know better. Because there were other boys from India whose English was technically great, but not good in regular talk. And then he always wanted to make them feel like they were less, and he tried with me, too, but I stopped him cold. In a good way, professionally, I told him that there was no need for that and that I could fully understand him. And then he didn't do it again.” (Alexis Arguello) |
| | Native speakers believe nonnative speakers don’t understand them | 3 | 3 | “One of the administrative assistants has traveled to Latin America and knows a little bit of Spanish. So, he thinks I don't understand, and he tells me in Spanish. I tell him “don´t tell me in Spanish, tell me in French”.” (Patricia Velasquez) |
| Reactions to Nonaccommodation n = 9 #Ref. = 21 | Asking questions | 1 | 1 | “When they start talking super-fast or slang like that, sometimes I say "hey, now, what does this mean?" (Carolina Palacios) |
| | Confronting the speaker | 5 | 8 | Sometimes I have a colleague who does not understand what he is saying, and I tell him “You can speak more slowly, you have a very complex accent” and he laughs and says “Mia, we will speak more slowly”. (Mia Flores) |
| | Feeling responsible for overaccommodative behaviours | 2 | 3 | “It makes me wonder if there is something, it may be that the person arrives with bias from before or if I am expressing myself in some way that makes them feel that I do not understand them or that something is not clear to me. And when that happens, I speak normal. The way I see it is that I have to show them that I am understanding them, and I speak like them.” (Lupe Gonzalez) |
| | Feeling unmotivated for new interactions | 2 | 2 | “Afterwards, how eager are you going to ask that person again? Or you go with the armor on and with the fear of saying "I don't understand." So, it is quite exhausting. It's an extra stress at work.” (Fernanda Batz) |

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| Having a conversation about nonaccommodation | 3 | 3 | "And years later I told her, and she deeply apologized, and she told me "it was not my intention". Because there were several times when she began to laugh, she hit me on my self-esteem, on my self-confidence." (Lupe Gonzalez) |
| Making jokes | 1 | 1 | "My co-workers laugh and sometimes make fun of a word I said wrong, but then they correct me. So, we do it as a joke. Because they don't want to offend me either or I tell them "Perfect, now you speak to me in Spanish." They tell me "Hola, una cerveza." And I tell them "Did you see? Shut up"." (Andy Prada) |
| Stating their competency | 3 | 3 | Then I showed them with actions that I could already be at a much higher level, and the interaction completely changed. (Adolfo Galvis) |

**Table 1. Participants Profile Summary**

| Participant (pseudonym) | Age | Country of origin | Time (years) | | Education | Occupation | | Industry |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Living in Canada | Working in Canada | | Home country | Current | |
| Adolfo Galvis | 42 | Venezuela | 4 | 4 | Bachelor's | Real State Advisor | Sales Associate | Sales |
| Alexis Arguello | 54 | Nicaragua | 32 | 25 | Postgraduate | Receptionist | Technical Support Engineer | Telecommunications |
| Andy Prada | 52 | Chile | 27 | 24.5 | Bachelor's | Graphic Designer | Esthetician | Beauty |
| Carolina Palacios | 37 | Venezuela | 1.33 | 1.16 | Master's | Chief of Emergency Operations and Humanitarian Assistance | Specialist in the Formulation of Cooperation and Development Projects | Development and Humanitarian Assistance |
| Clara Cepeda | 47 | Colombia | 16 | 16 | Postgraduate | Chemical Engineer | Laboratory Technician | Government and Public Administration |
| Claudia Pérez | 32 | Cuba | 6 | 6 | Bachelor's | Accountant | Accounting Assistant | College, University and Adult Education |
| Fernanda Batz | 43 | Guatemala | 8.5 | 6 | Master's | Psychologist | Gender Equality and Inclusion Advisor | Development and Humanitarian Assistance |
| Ilya Giraldo | 45 | Colombia | 3 | 3 | Bachelor's | Social Sciences and Spanish High School Teacher | Skill Labour | Construction |
| José Fernández | 43 | Ecuador | 4.5 | 3 | Bachelor's | Technical Advisor of Lubrication Systems | Installation Assistant of Heating Systems | Utilities |
| Lupe Gonzalez | 36 | Mexico | 10 | 10 | Bachelor's | Executive Assistant | Deputy Project Manager | Government and Public Administration |
| María Velázquez | 49 | Mexico | 15 | 5 | College | Director Human Resources Assistant | Sales Assistant | Wholesales |
| Mia Flores | 43 | Peru | 11 | 10.5 | Bachelor's | Senior Procurement Agent | Project Corporate Programs Officer | Government and Public Administration |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Miguel Pérez | 36 | Bolivia | 8.5 | 7 | Master's | Project Designer | Budgeting and Compliance Manager | Development and Humanitarian Assistance |
| Nana Ortíz | 51 | Colombia | 19 | 18 | Bachelor's | ESL Teacher | Spanish and French Teacher | Primary/Secondary (K-12) Education |
| Nazareth Recinos | 51 | El Salvador | 6 | 4 | Bachelor's | Technology Sales Consultant | Project Manager | Non-for-profit |
| Nelly Sánchez | 47 | Colombia | 11 | 9 | Postgraduate | University Professor | Math and Sciences Teacher | Primary/Secondary (K-12) Education |
| Patricia Velasquez | 37 | Colombia | 2 | 1 | Master's | Nurse | Care Agent | Health Care and Social Assistance |
| Pedro Reyes | 32 | El Salvador | 6 | 5 | Bachelor's | Financial Risk Analyst | Data Base Administrator | Wholesales |
| Roberto Bolaño | 47 | Colombia | 1.25 | 1.03 | Bachelor's | Biologist | Cleaning Maintenance | Utilities |
| Rosa Rodríguez | 42 | Colombia | 1.5 | 11 | Postgraduate | Academic Coordinator University | Storer | Health Care and Social Assistance |
| Ross Vila | 57 | Colombia | 16 | 15 | Bachelor's | University Professor | Administrator Child Care Center | Other Education Industry |
| Steph Braun | 49 | Venezuela | 13 | 12 | Bachelor's | Human Resources Manager | Project Manager | Government and Public Administration |
| Susana Espinoza | 50 | Chile | 26 | 26 | Master's | German Tutor | Government Policy Program Supervisor | Government and Public Administration |
| Tomás Cruz | 52 | Mexico | 16 | 16 | Bachelor's | Architect | Accommodation Officer in Maintenance | Government and Public Administration |

**Table 2. Participants Language Use Profile**

| Participant (pseudonym) | Language predominantly used in the workplace | Time learning this non-native language (years) | Use of this non-native language at home | Feelings of confidence and comfort with this non-native language 10-point Likert scale (1-Not at all, 10-Completely) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Understanding | Speaking | Writing |
| Adolfo Galvis | English | 24 | No | 9 | 7 | 7 |
| Alexis Arguello | English | 32 | Yes | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Andy Prada | English | 33 | Yes | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| Carolina Palacios | English | 8 | No | 9 | 10 | 8 |
| Clara Cepeda | English | 25 | Yes | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Claudia Pérez | French | 8 | No | 9 | 8 | 7 |
| Fernanda Batz | English | 7 | No | 7 | 5 | 4 |
| Ilya Giraldo | English | 5 | No | 5 | 6 | - |
| José Fernández | English | 4.5 | No | 9 | 6 | 8 |
| Lupe Gonzalez | English | 20 | Yes | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| María Velázquez | English | 10 | No | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Mia Flores | English | 15 | Yes | 8 | 7 | 9 |
| Miguel Pérez | English | 20 | No | 10 | 8 | 9 |
| Nana Ortíz | English | 25 | No | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| Nazareth Recinos | French | 6 | No | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| Nelly Sánchez | French | 11 | Yes | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Patricia Velasquez | French | 2.5 | No | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| Pedro Reyes | English | 6 | No | 10 | 8 | 9 |
| Roberto Bolaño | French | 1 | No | 7 | 8 | 6 |
| Rosa Rodríguez | French | 15 | Sometimes | 8 | 5 | 6 |
| Ross Vila | English | 37 | No | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Steph Braun | English | 13 | No | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Susana Espinoza | English | 30 | No | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| | French | 30 | Yes | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| Tomás Cruz | English | 16 | No | 9 | 8 | 8 |

**Table 3. Pilot Participants Profile Summary**

| Participant (pseudonym) | Age | Country of origin | Time (years) | | Education | Occupation | | Industry |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Living in Canada | Working in Canada | | Home country | Current | |
| Alana Salgado | 38 | Colombia | 4 | 1.5 | Postgraduate | Specialist in Humanitarian Assistance | Project Administrative Officer | Development and Humanitarian Assistance |
| María Brenes | 33 | Costa Rica | 4.33 | 1.16 | Bachelor's | Gender Equality Advisor | Line Cook and Cashier | Hotel and Food Services |

Pilot Participants Language Use Profile

| Participant (pseudonym) | Language predominantly used in the workplace | Time learning this non-native language (years) | Use of this non-native language at home | Feelings of confidence and comfort understanding, speaking and writing in this non-native language 10-point Likert scale (1-Not at all, 10-Completely) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alana Salgado | English | 4 | No | 7 |
| María Brenes | English | 6 | No | 6 |

**Table 4. Interview and Transcription Times per Participant**

| Participant (pseudonym) | Country of origin | Interview Time | Transcription Time |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adolfo Galvis | Venezuela | 56 min | 2 hr 35 min |
| Alexis Arguello | Nicaragua | 1 hr 10 min | 3 hr 36 min |
| Andy Prada | Chile | 55 min | 2 hr 33 min |
| Carolina Palacios | Venezuela | 1 hr 23 min | 4 hr 27 min |
| Clara Cepeda | Colombia | 1 hr 09 min | 3 hr 10 min |
| Claudia Pérez | Cuba | 1 hr 02 min | 3 hr 07 min |
| Fernanda Batz | Guatemala | 1 hr 36 min | 4 hr 54 min |
| Ilya Giraldo | Colombia | 57 min | 2 hr 51 min |
| José Fernández | Ecuador | 1 hr 39 min | 4 hr 26 min |
| Lupe Gonzalez | Mexico | 1 hr 44 min | 3 hr 42 min |
| María Velázquez | Mexico | 1 hr 49 min | 5 hr 12 min |
| Mia Flores | Peru | 1 hr 11 min | 3 hr 48 min |
| Miguel Pérez | Bolivia | 1 hr 30 min | 3 hr 46 min |
| Nana Ortíz | Colombia | 31 min | 1 hr 49 min |
| Nazareth Recinos | El Salvador | 1 hr 19 min | 4 hr 07 min |
| Nelly Sánchez | Colombia | 1 hr 06 min | 3 hr 42 min |
| Patricia Velasquez | Colombia | 58 min | 3 hr 12 min |
| Pedro Reyes | El Salvador | 1 hr 22 min | 4 hr 43 min |
| Roberto Bolaño | Colombia | 1 hr 14 min | 4 hr 23 min |
| Rosa Rodríguez | Colombia | 56 min | 2 hr 46 min |
| Ross Vila | Colombia | 48 min | 2 hr 43 min |
| Steph Braun | Venezuela | 1 hr 33 min | 3 hr 49 min |
| Susana Espinoza | Chile | 1 hr 25 min | 3 hr 47 min |
| Tomás Cruz | Mexico | 54 min | 2 hr 21 min |