

# Attitudes towards the adaptation of foreign personal names

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Eduardo Tadeu Roque Amaral

**Abstract:** This study examines the attitudes of a group of native Spaniards towards aspects concerning the necessity of adapting foreign names to the official languages of the country and towards the legal regulations governing name assignment and modification. The research adopts theoretical principles from socio-onomastics and linguistic attitude analysis, also incorporating social and anthropological concepts. Data were collected in person through interviews conducted in the city of Salamanca during April and May 2023. This study analyses the responses of 40 participants, stratified by gender (male and female) and age group (18–29 years; 30–45 years; 46–64 years; 65 and older). In general, the results indicate a recognition of names as an identity sign that the state should acknowledge and respect. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe both agreements and disagreements regarding the adaptation of names, as well as the influence of the social factor of age on attitudes.

**Keywords:** socio-onomastics, attitudes, personal names, foreigners, Salamanca

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## 1. Introduction

Spain is a multicultural and multilingual country. According to data from the National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística – INE), on October 1, 2023, the country had a resident population of over 48 million, of which more than six million were foreigners, mainly from other European countries as well as Central and South America. The province of Salamanca, from which the data under analysis come, had 326 886 residents, 6.34 per cent of whom were foreigners, understood as those who do not possess Spanish nationality.

Regarding multilingualism, Article 3 of the Spanish Constitution establishes that Castilian (or Spanish) is the country's official language and other languages are recognized as official in their respective autonomous communities, in accordance with their Statutes (Spain 1978). This possibility has been adopted by various communities, such as the Basque Country with regard to Basque; Catalonia with regard to Catalan and Aranese; Galicia with regard to Galician; the Valencian Community with regard to Valencian; part of Navarre with regard to Basque; and the Balearic Islands with regard to Catalan (Ministerio de Política Territorial y Memoria Democrática 2024). Additionally, according to the 2021 Survey on Essential Characteristics of the Population and Housing (ECEPOV-2021) published by the INE, there are 10 languages in the country that are spoken by at least one per cent of the population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2023). The most frequent are Castilian (96.0 per cent), English (14.7 per cent), Catalan (14.2 per cent), Valencian (5.6 per cent), Galician (5.2 per cent), French (3.7 per cent), Basque (2.3 per cent), Arabic (1.6 per cent), Romanian (1.1 per cent) and Italian (1 per cent).

In this multiculturalism and multilingualism context, it is natural that anthroponyms of different origins coexist and that speakers develop distinct attitudes towards personal names. This study aims to conduct a qualitative analysis of this kind of attitude presented by native Spaniards residing in Salamanca regarding the maintenance or adaptation of foreign names and surnames. The data are analysed based on the theoretical framework of socio-onomastics and linguistic attitudes (Ainiala 2016; Ainiala & Östman 2017; Garrett 2010). More-

over, in line with the development of sociolinguistic studies, this work acknowledges that judgments and opinions about linguistic facts are inherent to human beings, their worldview, and the culture in which they are embedded (García Marcos 1999).

This paper is structured as follows: The next section addresses the relevant legal and theoretical framework for the study, mentioning previous research in onomastics on attitudes. Then, the methodological procedures adopted in this study are detailed, focusing on the collection and analysis of oral language data. After outlining these procedures, the results obtained are presented and discussed in two other sections. Finally, the conclusions derived from this work are presented, advocating greater respect and tolerance for the name of others, for the way others wish to be addressed, no matter how different their name may be or how difficult it may be to pronounce.

## 2. Legal and theoretical framework

Since the 20th century, there has been an increasing recognition of rights related to personal names, in addition to other individual rights acknowledged in various international treaties (UNICEF 2019). The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe emphasizes the right of individuals to be recognized as persons and to have their names officially registered. It recommends that '[p]ersons belonging to national minorities have the right to use their personal names in their own language according to their own traditions and linguistic systems. These shall be given official recognition and be used by the public authorities' (OSCE 2009 [1998]:5). The same institution recommends that 'persons who have been forced by public authorities to give up their original or ancestral name(s) or whose name(s) have been changed against their will should be entitled to revert to them without having to incur any expenses' (OSCE 2009 [1998]:14).

In the case of Spain, the country underwent strong regulatory restrictions on name selection during the 20th century (Fernández Domingo 2017; Fernández Pérez 2015). During the Francoist period, the Order of 18 May 1938, prohibited the registration of 'abstract,

biased names, or any others that are not contained in the Roman Martyrology for Catholics’ and stated that ‘in the case of Spaniards, names must be registered in Castilian’ (Spain 1938). According to Article 54 of the Law of 8 June 1957, on Civil Registration, in the case of Spaniards, names should continue to be registered in Castilian. The permission to register names in the different languages of Spanish territory began with legislative changes in 1977, while for foreign names following suit in 1994 (Spain 1994). These restrictive norms have left marks on Spanish society, as evidenced in the analysis that follows.

Currently, Spain’s civil registration law explicitly adopts the principle of free choice of name, which is included in the title of Article 51 of Law 20/2011, of 21 July on Civil Registration. According to this regulatory provision, a name may be chosen freely and will be subject only to the following restrictions: a) attributing more than two simple first names or one compound name; b) registering names that are contrary to the dignity of the human person or that make their identification confusing; c) naming an individual with the full name of a living sibling. Article 50 of the same law allows an individual to replace the first name with the equivalent in any of the languages of Spain.

Among the hypotheses for changing a surname through a declaration of intent allowed by the law, as provided by Article 53, Paragraph 4, the registry officer may authorize the change of a surname to ‘[t]he spelling regularization of surnames to any of the official languages corresponding to the origin or residence of the interested party, and the graphic adaptation to these languages of the phonetics of also foreign surnames’ (Spain 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

People who acquire Spanish nationality are allowed to keep their previous surnames, but to do so, they must express their interest at the time of acquisition or within the two months following the acquisition or reaching the age of majority. This short two-month period prioritizes state interest over individual interest, as pointed out by Fernán-

<sup>1</sup> In the original: ‘La regularización ortográfica de los apellidos a cualquiera de las lenguas oficiales correspondiente al origen o domicilio del interesado y la adecuación gráfica a dichas lenguas de la fonética de apellidos también extranjeros’ (Spain 2011).

dez Domingo (2017). The names and surnames must not be contrary to international public order, as stipulated by Article 56 of the aforementioned law.

In terms of theoretical foundations, this study can be included in the set of contemporary socio-onomastics research and is based on linguistic studies of attitudes, adopting the assumption that attitudes can provide a significant contribution to understanding the relationship that speakers establish with proper names, in this case, foreign personal names. Due to the issues raised by the collected data, some concepts from social and anthropological studies will be used to complement the socio-onomastic analysis.

Garrett (2010:20) considers attitude as an evaluative orientation towards some social object. More specifically, Blas Arroyo (2012 [2005]:322) defines linguistic attitudes as ‘critical and evaluative positions that speakers adopt regarding specific phenomena of a language or even about varieties and languages conceived as a whole’.<sup>2</sup> The same author points out that it is neither linguistic nor aesthetic differences that are at the origin of attitudes, but rather stereotypes and prejudices related to the people who speak one linguistic variety or another.

In this type of analysis, the concepts of opinions and values are also important. Garrett (2010) notes that many researchers often use the concept of opinions as equivalent to that of attitude, but he emphasizes that opinions are expressed in a discursive manner, while attitudes, at least in certain cases, can be more difficult to articulate. This reveals situations where a person’s opinion does not necessarily reflect their underlying attitude. In this study, it will be seen that differences like this can generate contradictory attitudes towards people’s names. In the case of the concept of values, these are broader and more general and shared by members of a linguistic community. For our purposes, they can be related to legal principles, which, although

<sup>2</sup> In the original: ‘posturas críticas y valorativas que los hablantes realizan sobre fenómenos específicos de una lengua o, incluso, sobre variedades y lenguas concebidas como un todo’ (Blas Arroyo (2012 [2005]:322).

not always nominally cited, are perceptible in the social groups in which the participants are embedded.

Although studies in different fields have demonstrated the relationship between the perception of personal names and the discrimination against individuals (Amit & Dolberg 2023; Martiniello & Verhaeghe 2023; Molla, Rhawi & Lampi 2022), there is limited research within onomastic studies addressing attitudes toward anthroponyms. One work that deserves mention is Knoblock (2019), which analyses the attitudes of Russian-speaking Ukrainians towards the Ukrainization of traditionally Russian proper names (personal names and toponyms). The author collected attitude data from Ukrainians who had fled the war in their homeland, seeking refuge in the Russian Federation and living in temporary housing provided by the Russian government. The author's work confirms the importance of the freedom to use proper names in a person's first language and shows that people who expressed the intention to return to Ukraine were less likely to report some negative feelings caused by the Ukrainization of proper names, whereas those who planned to stay in the Russian Federation were more likely to do so. According to the results obtained, the rigid policy of Ukrainization as an action of national affirmation, which even infringed upon parents' control over naming their children according to the language they used in the family, indeed seemed to cause some resentment in the group studied.

In a recent work, Waldispühl (2024) explores the relationship between personal names and migration, providing an overview of research on this subject. As the author observes, 'adult immigrants typically prefer to retain their original given names and surnames, as these are intimately connected to their identity and cultural heritage' (Waldispühl 2024:27). The author further notes that the adaptation of names may be viewed as strategies for integration into a host community or as responses to societal pressures, a theme that will be important for the analysis of the data in this study.

With data from the Spanish language, though with very different objectives, the studies by Salamanca and Pereira (2013), Salamanca Gutiérrez, Millán Contreras and Rodríguez Gutiérrez (2015), and

Campo Yumar (2023) can be cited. None of these, however, analysed responses from sociolinguistic interviews. The works we have been publishing based on the results obtained in Spain can therefore contribute to filling a gap in the field (Amaral 2024).

Regarding the specific theme of this study, namely the adaptation of names, some clarifications are needed. During the interviews, the methods of which will be explained in the next section, no nuances of types of adaptation were established, as the aim was to allow the interaction to be as spontaneous as possible without falling into technicalities. The initial interviews had already shown that, as the questions approached technical or legal matters, many participants stated they were unable to express themselves. Therefore, the solution found was to allow participants to answer the questions and, subsequently, to perform the most pertinent analysis. For this, it is important to note that the adaptation of foreign names can take different forms. As pointed out by Julià-Muné (2017:33), it is possible to use the name in the Latin alphabet or, depending on the origin of the name, resort to transliteration (from other alphabets, such as Cyrillic) or to transfer or conversion (such as from pinyin for Chinese). In this regard, as explained by Waldispühl (2024), name changes can occur at different levels, including phonetic, orthographic, lexical, and semantic alterations.

It is also important to mention that the maintenance or adaptation of people's original names should be considered from the perspective of social studies on discrimination. Therefore, the question raised by Paula Guerra, former president of SOS Racism, is of crucial relevance: 'What we need to ask ourselves is why there are people who feel the need to change their name to have a trouble-free life in another country' (Giménez Lorenzo 2019)<sup>3</sup>. The decision, according to the approach we advocate here, should always come from the bearer themselves and never from another person who claims a possible need to facilitate pronunciation. The same author argues: 'Having

<sup>3</sup> In the original: 'Lo que tenemos que preguntarnos es por qué hay personas que se ven con la necesidad de cambiar su nombre para tener una vida sin problemas en otro país'.

a name imposed on you implies a horrendous dehumanization [...] it is to infantilize someone, as if they belonged to you: “I change it because it is hard for me to pronounce” (Giménez Lorenzo 2019)<sup>4</sup>.

The previous issue is well discussed by Bucholtz (2016), who considers personal names as sites of struggle for linguistic autonomy and the right to self-definition. Considering that these elements involve issues of personality and power, and using the notion of indexical bleaching, which implies a removal of contextually marked ethnoracial meaning, the author analyses student discussion data regarding Hispanic-origin names used by English speakers. Among her arguments, Bucholtz contends that strategies used to designate an individual differently from their given name should not be seen as mere linguistic accommodation or cultural assimilation, but as acts of ethnoracial performance that demonstrate the assertion of the right to be designated as one wishes. These issues will be revisited in the discussion section, which will relate the results to studies on linguistic hierarchies and raciolinguistics.

### 3. Methods

The data from this work are part of a broader project aimed at analysing the attitudes of speakers from different backgrounds towards the assignment and change of personal names, establishing possible relationships with recent legal changes and the social transformations of the last decades (Amaral 2024). The general objective is to qualitatively analyse the variation of anthroponyms, considering social variables such as gender and age, as well as other factors that may influence the treatment of this topic. The inclusion of these variables follows common procedures in sociolinguistic studies, including those

<sup>4</sup> In the original: ‘Que te impongan un nombre implica una deshumanización atroz [...] es infantilizar a alguien, como si te perteneciera: ‘te lo cambio porque a mí me cuesta pronunciarlo’.

on attitudes (Cestero & Paredes 2018)<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the variable of age will be used to observe potential differences in attitudes between individuals who were born and lived under stricter name registration rules and those from generations with more flexible rules.

The data analysed in this study were collected in person in the city of Salamanca in 2023<sup>6</sup>. The participants, all of Spanish nationality and residents of the Salamanca capital, were invited to participate in a sociolinguistic survey in which they were asked to express their attitudes, beliefs, and opinions regarding the assignment and change of personal names. For this purpose, a script previously prepared by the researcher was used, but recordings developed in a semi-spontaneous manner. The surveys were conducted individually, in different locations (university, town square, or cafeteria), according to the availability and comfort of each participant. A total of 17 hours of audio were collected, and a sample of 151 951 words was obtained.

This study analyses the responses of 40 participants, who were stratified into groups (G) based on gender and age. Women were assigned to odd-numbered groups, while men were assigned to even-numbered groups. Age groups were defined as follows: G1 and G2 include participants aged 18 to 29; G3 and G4 cover those aged 30 to 45; G5 and G6 include individuals aged 46 to 64; and finally, G7 and G8 comprise participants aged 65 or older. Notably, there is a minimum age difference of 8 years between groups, ensuring proper classification. Table 1 presents the participant stratification, identified by specific codes. The coding system is as follows: in the code SLM05-F22, for example, SLM represents the data collection city (Salamanca), 05 is an internal number assigned by the research team,

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the selected variables, it is believed that other factors, such as social class, profession, or education level, may influence attitudes toward personal names, though these were not controlled in this research. Future studies with a larger sample size may establish criteria for controlling variables like these.

<sup>6</sup> The project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (CAAE: 59802322.0.0000.5149).

F indicates a woman participant (M for man), and 22 corresponds to the participant's age.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1. List of participants in the Salamanca (Spain) interviews.**

| Female participants                |           | Male participants                  |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 st age group<br>G1 (18–29 years) | SLM05-F22 | 1 st age group<br>G2 (18–29 years) | SLM02-M21 |
|                                    | SLM14-F21 |                                    | SLM04-M22 |
|                                    | SLM20-F21 |                                    | SLM07-M19 |
|                                    | SLM28-F22 |                                    | SLM17-M21 |
|                                    | SLM36-F21 |                                    | SLM19-M21 |
| 2nd age group<br>G3 (30–45 years)  | SLM09-F42 | 2nd age group<br>G4 (30–45 years)  | SLM10-M37 |
|                                    | SLM15-F41 |                                    | SLM30-M30 |
|                                    | SLM24-F41 |                                    | SLM31-M37 |
|                                    | SLM25-F41 |                                    | SLM32-M35 |
|                                    | SLM39-F41 |                                    | SLM37-M43 |
| 3rd age group<br>G5 (46–64 years)  | SLM08-F48 | 3rd age group<br>G6 (46–64 years)  | SLM03-M59 |
|                                    | SLM11-F56 |                                    | SLM13-M52 |
|                                    | SLM16-F56 |                                    | SLM21-M54 |
|                                    | SLM18-F58 |                                    | SLM27-M54 |
|                                    | SLM34-F51 |                                    | SLM33-M53 |
| 4th age group<br>G7 (65 and older) | SLM12-F77 | 4th age group<br>G8 (65 and older) | SLM42-M68 |
|                                    | SLM22-F71 |                                    | SLM43-M79 |
|                                    | SLM23-F77 |                                    | SLM44-M93 |
|                                    | SLM40-F83 |                                    | SLM45-M84 |
|                                    | SLM41-F80 |                                    | SLM46-M78 |

To achieve the established objective, this text analyses the responses provided to questions that are related to the issue of foreign names. Initially, each participant was asked: ‘In your opinion, should foreign proper names be adapted to national languages?’ Whenever necessary, that is, when it was noted that the participant did not fully understand the question, the following examples were given: ‘*Mary* to *María* or *Johann* to *Juan*’. Subsequently, it was asked: ‘Should people who wish to acquire Spanish nationality be able to keep their original surnames, or should they adapt them to Spanish regulations?’ It is important to highlight that these questions were asked after a series of previously presented questions on the assignment and change of

<sup>7</sup> For ethical reasons, in this text, names or any data that could identify the participants have been removed.

individuals' names, and the participants were, therefore, immersed in the topic of proper names and had examples in mind.

The questions about foreign names were presented in a general manner, meaning that the interviewer mentioned only a few examples, as previously mentioned. This approach was adopted to avoid bias or influencing the responses. It seems plausible that attitudes toward, for example, white American academic names on the one hand and Latin American worker names on the other could differ<sup>8</sup>. However, investigating such differences, which are important to study, would require a different methodology.

## 4. Results

Before discussing the actual results of the issues raised, it is important to highlight that several participants, throughout the interviews, demonstrated an awareness that the names are closely linked to the identity of their bearer, as observed in examples (1) and (2). In example (3), a participant, an 83-year-old woman, even goes so far as to sanctify the given name<sup>9</sup>:

(1) los nombres deben mantenerse como son, ¿no? porque yo creo que también es un poco parte de la **esencia de cada persona** (SLM07-M19).<sup>10</sup>

[Names should be kept as they are, right? Because I believe that they are also a bit part of each **person's essence**. (SLM07-M19)]

(2) Yo creo que no se tiene que hacer cambio porque es **una cosa que te define también**, con lo cual, tal cual te lo han puesto (SLM04-M22).

<sup>8</sup> I thank one anonymous reviewer for pointing out this hypothesis.

<sup>9</sup> The given name is also considered a sacred element in other cultures (Frazer 1950 [1922]:245).

<sup>10</sup> All the bolded text in the examples is my own emphasis.

[I believe that no changes should be made because it is **something that also defines you**, so it should be left as it was given to you. (SLM04-M22)]

(3) Yo creo que si tú tienes un nombre, te deben respetar. Es **como cuando vas a un país musulmán y te tienes que descalzar y taparte la cabeza** para entrar a una mezquita (SLM40-F83).

[I believe that if you have a name, it should be respected. It's **like when you go to a Muslim country, and you have to take off your shoes and cover your head** to enter a mosque. (SLM40-F83)]

It is worth noting that the beliefs expressed in (1) and (2), unlike in (3) are those of university students. Although young people generally demonstrate a more favourable attitude towards the freedom of assigning and changing names<sup>11</sup>, the perception of the name as a fundamental element of personality is shared by speakers across different age groups in the population under analysis. Respect for individual rights related to the name is more evident in more abstract situations than in concrete cases, especially regarding the names of transgender individuals (Amaral & Anastácio forthcoming).

Still regarding the relationship between name and identity, during the interviews, several participants expressed opposition to changing surnames for women who marry abroad, as seen in example (4). In example (5), a participant associates this change with a loss of identity.

(4) Por eso me refiero a su identidad, ¿no? (...) Porque, porque claro, aquí tenemos dos apellidos, pero en el resto de Europa (sic) tienen un apellido o en Estados Unidos tienen un apellido. Entonces lo único que **me molesta es que la mujer pierda su apellido**, pero por lo demás todo está bien (SLM23-F77).

[That's why I'm referring to her identity, right? (...) Because, because of course, here we have two surnames, but in the rest of Europe (sic) they have one surname, or in the United States they have one surname. So the only thing that **bothers me is that the**

<sup>11</sup> Leibring (2018) found results in this direction, despite using data from a limited number of Swedish teenagers.

**woman loses her surname**, but otherwise everything is fine. (SLM23-F77)]

(5) en Estados Unidos, por ejemplo, si te casas, tu apellido ya pasa a ser el de tu marido. (...) en ese sentido, es que **es como perder un poco tu identidad**, ¿no? (SLM34-F51).

[In the United States, for example, if you get married, your surname becomes that of your husband. (...) in that sense, it's like **losing a bit of your identity**, isn't it? (SLM34-F51)]

Considering the awareness of the relationship between name and identity as explained above, it is not surprising that, during the interviews, participants shared accounts of people complaining about old norms and restrictions from times when the choice of names was much more controlled by the state, as explained earlier. In (6), for example, the participant recalls being denied the right to register the desired name.<sup>12</sup>

(6) El problema de España con esto de las lenguas es que tenemos, han politizado demasiado, **en el tiempo Franco se politizó demasiado las lenguas**, ¿no? (...) Por ejemplo, yo no me pude inscribir como X en el registro civil. [...] a mí me tendrían que haber inscrito como X, porque estaba bautizado en la Iglesia como X, pero **se negaron en el registro** (SLM03-M59).

[The problem with Spain and the issue of languages is that they have become overly politicized. **During Franco's time, lan-**

<sup>12</sup> Cases of critical evaluation of the naming process are also recorded, as seen in the example (i). However, this type of evaluation will not be addressed in this paper.

(i) E I., tengo entendido su nombre anglosajón I. [deletrea el nombre] y sin embargo la, este tipo de gente suele ponerlo, los padres, muchos padres lo registran como suenan, ¿no? fonéticamente y [deletrea el nombre] cosas así. A mí personalmente me parece una cosa muy ridícula, pero sí, claro que, que lo transcriban como quieran (SLM30-M30).

And 'I', I understand that their English name is spelled 'I' [spells it], and yet these types of people often register it, the parents, many parents register it as it sounds, right? Phonetically, and [spells it] things like that. Personally, I think it's a very ridiculous thing, but yes, of course, they can transcribe it however they want. (SLM30-M30)

**guages were excessively politicized**, right? (...) For example, I couldn't register myself as X in the civil registry. [...] They should have registered me as X, because I was baptized in the Church as X, but **they refused at the registry**. (SLM03-M59)]

#### 4.1 Adaptation of foreign names to national languages

Regarding the specific responses to the questions in this study, the results generally reveal that the vast majority of respondents – 78 per cent (n= 31) – express clear opposition to adaptations of foreign names. However, various attitudes towards this phenomenon warrant further analysis within the context of onomastic studies. The data reveal that some participants recognize the importance of making an effort to correctly pronounce someone else's name, as observed in (7).

(7) No, porque cada uno tiene su nombre y hay que respetar la, la identidad. La identidad de cada uno, no, **por difícil que nos sea**, hay veces en España ya sabes que somos muy malos para los idiomas, bastante (risas) (...) (SLM34-F51).

[No, because everyone has their own name, and we need to respect the, the identity. Each person's identity, right? **No matter how difficult it might be for us**, there are times in Spain, as you know, we are quite bad with languages, really (laughs). (SLM34-F51)]

On the other hand, although less frequently, there is a certain normalization of adapting foreign names. In these cases, participants view the adaptation as natural, without questioning the other person's preference for being referred to by their original name or a form resembling it. This normalization of adaptation, though rare, is not confined to any specific group and is observed both in the speech of a young person, as exemplified in example (8), and an older person, as shown in example (9). In (10), a participant reports ambiguity regarding a friend's name. The young person reveals that an American friend prefers to be called by her own name but is referred to differently. Interestingly, the participant believes that the friend is not bothered by this discrepancy, despite it being clear that she would prefer her original name to be used.

(8) Bien, eh aquí entramos en la fonética española, porque **nosotros lo adaptamos todo, todo**. [...] y ayuda mucho cuando estos mismos estudiantes chinos, pero puede ser de cualquier país, pues ya traen pensado y te dicen su nombre en español, lo que significa en español, entonces si una se llama Chan Wan Ying te dicen que se llama Nube, pues hombre **es más fácil** decir Nube que... (SLM17-M21)

[Well, here we enter into Spanish phonetics, because **we adapt everything, everything**. [...] and it helps a lot when these same Chinese students, but it could be from any country, already come with it planned out and they tell you their name in Spanish, what it means in Spanish. So, if one is called Chan Wan Ying, they tell you that they are called Nube, well, **it's much easier** to say Nube than... (SLM17-M21)]

(9) Los españoles los adaptamos todo a nuestro idioma, desde siempre, [...] quiero decir que lo lo, **lo castellanizamos todo**, entonces sí, normalmente. (...) Vale, yo creo que eso es indiferente, que es un poco, claro esta castellanización estaría en el ámbito familiar (SLM23-F77).

[Spaniards adapt everything to our language, it has always been like that, [...] I mean, **we Castilianize everything**, so yes, normally. (...) Okay, I think that's indifferent, it's a bit, of course this Castilianization would be in a family setting. (SLM23-F77)]

(10) *Participante*: También tengo otra amiga que se llama *Lyra*, o le llaman *Lera* o le llaman *Lara*.<sup>13</sup>

*Entrevistador*: ¿De dónde es?

*Participante*: De Estados Unidos también y, y vamos o sea, **ella no se molesta, pero lo que ella querría que le llamasen por su nombre**, que es *Lyra* (SLM17-M21).

[Participant: I also have another friend named *Lyra*, or they call her *Lera* or they call her *Lara*.

Interviewer: Where is she from?

Participant: From the United States as well, and, well, I mean, **she doesn't get upset, but she would prefer that people call her by her name**, which is *Lyra*. (SLM17-M21)]

<sup>13</sup> For this example, mock names were used to make the lecture more accessible.

Regarding the influence of extralinguistic factors, participants from Group 8 (older men) exhibit clearly an attitude in favour of adaptation. In (11) and (12), the participants do not even raise the issue of the name the bearer wishes to be called by:

(11) Yo sería más bien **partidario de que se permitiera poner la traducción**, por ejemplo, en vez de *Elizabeth*, llamarla *Isabel*, porque sí estaría bien. Estaría bien. Yo ahí si te digo sí (SLM45-M84).

[I would rather be **in favour of allowing the translation**, for example, instead of *Elizabeth*, calling her *Isabel*, because that would be good. It would be good. There I would say yes. (SLM45-M84)]

(12) Hombre, si los quieren usar, **debieran adaptarse**, porque sin adaptación me parece peor (SLM44-M93).

[Well, if they want to use them, **they should adapt**, because without adaptation it seems worse to me. (SLM44-M93)]

## 4.2 Retaining or adapting original names to acquire Spanish nationality

Regarding the second question of whether people seeking to acquire Spanish nationality should adapt their surnames to the Spanish system, 80 per cent of the 40 participants (n= 32) clearly express opposition to the need for adaptation. Many of these statements reflect attitudes aligned with the principle of autonomy of will, as exemplified in (13) and (14). In the latter case, the participant argues that there is no necessary connection between acquiring nationality and changing one's name and surname.

(13) Si lo quieren mantener, o sea, creo que ahí también **depende de la voluntad de la persona** [...] Es que tu nombre es algo muy personal, muy particular (SLM39-F41).

[If they want to keep it, I mean, I think that also **depends on the person's will** [...] It's just that your name is something very personal, very specific. (SLM39-F41)]

(14) Yo creo que también **es libre de si quiere hacerlo o no lo quiere hacer**. Yo creo que el hecho de que cambies de nacionalidad no tienes por qué cambiar tu nombre ni tu apellido (SLM11-F56).

[I believe **it's also up to the individual whether they want to do it or not**. I think that just because you change your nationality, it doesn't mean you have to change your name or your surname. (SLM11-F56)]

Similarly to the previous examples, in (15), the participant defends the same principle. However, he attempts to distinguish between administrative, linguistic, and social factors – a topic we will revisit later.

(15) Pero vuelvo al terreno de que eso yo creo que ya es una **cuestión más administrativa**, ¿no? En cuanto a lo lingüístico y a lo social, pues que cada uno decida cómo se quiere llamar y si lo adapta o no adapta (SLM32-M35).

[But I return to the idea that I believe that's more of **an administrative issue**, right? As for linguistic and social aspects, let everyone decide what they want to be called and whether they adapt it or not. (SLM32-M35)]

As observed in other studies conducted with data from the same population (Amaral 2024), the imposition of norms for maintaining or changing given names and surnames is often justified by the need for legal and administrative security. In examples (16) and (17), participants of different genders clearly express this concern. However, in the second case, the female participant shifts their argument to emphasize respecting the will of the name bearer.

(16) Vale, eh entra en juego la administración, que es terrible con el nombre porque (...) Sí, en este caso mira, aquí me voy a hacer un poco de lo que he dicho hasta aquí. Yo creo que se debe adaptar **porque es un, es un lío**. (...), entonces no sé es muy espinoso, pero yo diría que sí, en este caso [múltiples apellidos] al menos debería adaptarse para evitar confusiones (SLM17-M21).

[Okay, the administration comes into play, which is terrible with names because (...) Yes, in this case, look, I'm going to deviate a bit from what I've said so far. I think it should be adapted **because**

**it's a mess.** (...), so I don't know, it's very tricky, but I would say yes, in this case [multiple surnames] it should at least be adapted to avoid confusion. (SLM17-M21)]

(17) La gente con, con muchos nombres y no, no, no caben, no, no caben en los títulos, no cabe (en nada). Entonces una cosa normal, pero bueno, si también un poco eso con ciertos límites, porque el espacio es limitado. (...) Pero, pero bueno, un poco también dentro de lo que la persona quiera (SLM25-F41).

[People with, with many names and no, no, they don't fit, no, they don't fit on titles, they don't fit (on anything). So, a normal thing, but well, also a bit of that with certain limits, because space is limited. (...) But, but well, also within what the person wants. (SLM25-F41)]

Along the same lines, concerning the legal-administrative control of given names and surnames, it is worth noting the attitude expressed in example (18). In this case, the participant acknowledges that the name is not the primary means of individual identification. Therefore, the state should not impose excessive obstacles or restrictions on the selection or adaptation of names and surnames, as there are, according to the participant, other means of identifying citizens.

(18) Estamos en el siglo 21 y (hay) **formas de poder regular o de identificar esa persona con un sistema distinto**, no sé, yo lo [adaptar los nombres y apellidos] veo una estupidez (SLM31-M37).

[We're in the 21st century and there are **ways to regulate or identify that person with a different system**, I don't know, I see [adapting names and surnames] as foolish. (SLM31-M37)]

Beyond the justification based on the need for legal-administrative control, notable attitudes emerge regarding the relationship between names and feelings of nationality. In this context, the attitude of the participant exemplified in (19) is particularly significant. This participant views the adaptation of names as a means of facilitating integration between foreigners and nationals, valuing potential integration over the principle of individual choice. Similarly, examples (20) and (21) illustrate this perspective:

(19) Bueno si adquiere la nacionalidad a efectos de documentación española, estaría bien que tenga dos apellidos como cualquiera. Entonces te haga registrado. Mantenga uno para su nacionalidad de origen y tenga la construcción igual que nosotros, al igual el orden de los apellidos para identificarle, **precisamente (eso) también es un elemento de integración**. Porque si solo tiene uno, parece que queda marcado que ha sido extranjero, aunque es extranjero. A mí me parece, no sé si hasta el punto obligarle, pero bueno, si se podría obligar, tú te nacionalizas, necesitamos dos apellidos, traes la afiliación de tu padre, de tu madre, pon el orden que sea y ya está. Y si trae más de dos, que se quede con dos (risas) (SLM27-M54).

[Well, if someone acquires nationality for the purpose of Spanish documentation, it would be good for them to have two surnames like anyone else. Then get registered. Keep one for your nationality of origin and have the same structure as us, including the order of the surnames to identify them, **precisely (that) is also an element of integration**. Because if you only have one, it seems that it marks that you have been a foreigner, even though you are a foreigner. To me, it seems, I don't know if to the point of forcing them, but well, if it could be enforced, you get naturalized, we need two surnames, bring your father's and mother's names, put them in any order and that's it. And if you bring more than two, keep two (laughs). (SLM27-M54)]

(20) Sí, si te haces, desde luego la idea de adquirir una nacionalidad extranjera, debes de **acomodarte a todos los indicios de ese país**, incluso el cambio del nombre (SLM45-M84).

[Yes, if you go through with the idea of acquiring foreign nationality, you should **adapt to all the aspects of that country**, including changing your name. (SLM45-M84)]

(21) Deberían adoptar sus apellidos, pues, no sé, yo creo que debería ser optativo. Igual, ¿no? si uno quiere verdaderamente **sentir la experiencia completa española**, ¿no? vienes a España y dices "voy a ser un español más como otro y con todos los detalles", pues igual sí puedes hacer, puedes adaptarlo (SLM07-M19).

[They should adopt their surnames, well, I don't know, I think it should be optional. The same, right? If one truly wants **to feel the**

**complete Spanish experience**, right? You come to Spain and say, “I’m going to be just another Spaniard, with all the details,” then maybe yes, you can do it, you can adapt it. (SLM07-M19)]

Attitudes like those observed in (19), (20), and (21) are not very common in the data, but it is interesting to note that these attitudes come from male participants, and, with the exception of (21), from individuals over the age of 50. This suggests an influence of the generational factor, as there is no similar connection between name adaptation and Spanish nationalism among younger and middle-aged groups. Moreover, the differences between the perceived need for adaptation by foreigners versus Spaniards are quite revealing. In example (22), the participant focuses solely on the benefit to the native population of the host country, rather than considering the interests of the foreigner.

(22) Hay gente, por ejemplo de sobre todo asiática que cuando viene sí que se cambien los nombres y apellidos, pero es, es casi más comodidad. Es es para que resulte **más fácil a nosotros adaptarnos a sus, a sus nombres** (SLM10-M37).

[There are people, especially from Asia, who when they come here do change their names and surnames, but it’s almost more for convenience. It’s so that it’s **easier for us to adapt to their names**. (SLM10-M37)]

Similar to example (22), other participants report examples of natives from Asia who adopt new names as a naturalized practice to integrate into the host country. However, there is one case where the attitude is in the opposite direction: the participant in (23) advocates for the adaptation of surnames by natives of the host country:

(23) Cada uno tiene sus apellidos y dependiendo de dónde venga, pues sí, si en su país, por ejemplo, Portugal, que tienen un montón de apellidos y luego pues nada, pues nosotros, **yo creo que nos tenemos que adaptar** (SLM09-F42).

[Everyone has their surnames, and depending on where they come from, well, if in their country, like Portugal, they have a lot of surnames, then well, we, **I think we have to adapt**. (SLM09-F42)]

One participant reports that in the Basque Country the names of immigrants are often replaced with *Iñaki*. Although the participant does not explicitly relate their account to the issue of identity, it is evident that this practice serves to obscure the immigrants' identities in the eyes of the host country's inhabitants. This erasure seems to occur more due to external necessity or discrimination than by the individual's own interest, as the name, as seen, is considered an important element of personality. This issue will be revisited in the next section.

## 5. Discussion

This work presents results from an analysis of the attitudes of native Spaniards toward the maintenance or adaptation of foreign names. Generally, the data reveal a strong recognition of names as an integral component of identity that should be respected. However, there are cases that deviate from this trend, and this result deserves to be discussed in greater depth.

One notable aspect in the analysis is the naturalization of adapting foreign names by some participants. In these cases, interviewees view adaptation as a natural process and do not question whether the other person prefers to be addressed by their original name or a form resembling it. In this regard, the findings of Chang Vargas and Chaves Chang (2022) in the field of anthropology are relevant. Their analysis of the anthroponymic context among Chinese and their descendants in Costa Rica reveals generational differences. First-generation individuals, born in China, use a Chinese name in intimate and family contexts, while adopting another name for social integration purposes. In contrast, third-generation individuals (with 25 per cent Chinese ancestry) demonstrate a renewed pride in their Chinese heritage by naming their children or businesses with Chinese names.

When contrasting the results of the cited authors with those of this study, it is important to highlight the significance of names in reaffirming identity, despite the different aspects they address. On one hand, some participants in our research, particularly older individuals, associate given names with national integration. On the other

hand, younger and middle-aged participants place greater importance on the principle of the autonomy of will. This shift suggests that, following decades of stringent state control over names, the current freedom to choose a name (Law 20/2011, of 21 July) is largely justified by the need to affirm personal identity.

The more conservative attitudes toward the adaptation of foreign names may be related to the appreciation of the Spanish language at the top of what is considered a linguistic hierarchy – a discursive construction that establishes the local relative status of different languages in relation to transnationally circulating ideas of multilingualism (Hult 2012). In the case of Sweden, for example, Hult (2012) discusses the position of Swedish and English at the top of the linguistic hierarchy, followed by other European languages and the languages of national minorities. For Spain, it is possible to place the Spanish language (or Castilian) at the top of this hierarchy, especially in the case of Salamanca, a city that hosts the oldest and one of the most prestigious universities in the country. In this sense, some participants reinforce a discourse that values Spanish in the use of personal names. By emphasizing the relationship between names and identity while simultaneously advocating for the adaptation of foreign names regardless of the bearer's will, the participants position the language of these names at a lower rank within the hierarchy. Their attitudes reveal the belief that foreign names serve to identify their bearers among themselves but not for communication within Spanish territory. This demonstrates the assertion by Bucholtz (2016), already presented, according to which personal names are sites of struggle for linguistic autonomy and the right to self-definition.

In a way, the results discussed in the last paragraph can also be related to studies on raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores 2021; Rosa & Flores 2017), which 'conflate certain racialized persons with linguistic deficiency irrespective of their empirical linguistic practices' (Rosa & Flores 2017:177). Generally, the premise is that these individuals need to modify their linguistic practices to gain approval from another socially privileged group. From this perspective, Rosa and Flores (2017) examine the ways in which discourses of accom-

modation, which permeate resource-based approaches to language teaching, contribute to the normalization of the reproduction of the white gaze by marginalizing the linguistic practices of minority populations in the United States. The authors observe that the linguistic practices of heritage language learners are devalued not because they fail to meet a specific linguistic standard but because they are spoken by racialized bodies and are thus heard as illegitimate by the white subject who listens to them. The white subject, in this case, should be understood as an ideological position and a mode of perception that shapes society. In the authors' study, it is observed that the skills of racialized English learners are ignored or erased, along with the maintenance of the concepts of linguistic purity and racial purity as powerful ideological constructions.

Although the authors' perspective differs from that adopted in this study, it is worth highlighting how the rejection, by some participants, of the use of the foreigner's registered name and the unreflective advocacy for adaptation also mark a form of identity erasure for this individual. Furthermore, the idea of linguistic purity also emerges in the interviews, expressed by some participants who argue for the need to maintain Spanish as the dominant and prestigious language in interactions with foreigners. In this case, one can observe the explicit manifestation of a *language ideology*, which, as defined by anthropologists, can be understood as a 'set of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use' (Silverstein 1979:193). These beliefs materialize in attitudes that are employed as attempts to use language as a space to promote, protect, and legitimize interests, generally those of a hegemonic standard that benefits certain social groups to the detriment of others (Kroskrity 2010; see also Milani 2007). In the end, as pointed out by Blas Arroyo (2012 [2005]), mentioned earlier, stereotypes and prejudices related to the people who speak one linguistic variety or another are at the origin of attitudes. More conservative attitudes like these, as seen, are found in the responses of some participants.

## 6. Conclusions

This study explored the hypothesis that legislative changes over recent decades could lead to greater acceptance and assimilation of foreign anthroponyms among participants. It was observed that past norms regarding name assignment have left lasting social impacts, prompting individuals to seek greater freedom today. Specifically, participants from older generations, who were born and registered under now-repealed laws, express dissatisfaction with the former rigidity of state control over anthroponyms. In this context, the defence of the autonomy of the will is also evident when addressing foreign naming systems that some participants view as sexist. Evidence suggests that speakers tend to value their own anthroponymic system, often due to limited exposure to other systems or a lack of consideration regarding potential improvements.

The data from this study confirm previous findings regarding the influence of social factors on onomastic issues. Young people tend to be more liberal regarding rules concerning anthroponyms, while women are generally more sensitive to interests related to the attribution or adaptation of names. Additionally, the study observed that generational factors contribute to attitudes linking name adaptation with the integration of foreigners. This observation, particularly among male participants over 50 years old, suggests that further research with a larger sample size is needed to determine the extent and specific cases in which adaptations are more or less accepted. Similar to studies conducted in other communities, such as those by Amit and Dolberg (2023), Bucholtz (2016) and Kim (2007), it is also crucial to include the perspectives of foreigners themselves in the integration process in Salamanca. This approach would help understand how the forms used to designate them relate to their linguistic autonomy and the right to self-definition.

Additionally, future studies could contribute to promoting greater respect and tolerance for others' names, also considering the recommendations of the OSCE mentioned at the beginning of this work. In line with since Bucholtz's (2016) recommendations on the use of foreign names, it is important to refrain from modifying names to

make them easier to pronounce or to accommodate personal preferences unless the bearer explicitly permits or requests it; as previously stated, the adaptation of names can be seen as a strategy for integration into a host community or as a response to societal pressure (Giménez Lorenzo 2019; Waldispühl 2024). After all, previous studies on this topic have demonstrated that it is essential to ask individuals how they prefer to be addressed, without questioning whether their preferred form aligns with standard conventions, and to avoid placing blame on others for their names or on oneself for a lack of familiarity with them.

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