Conceptions regarding the learning process of French and Portuguese of the students and

graduates from a School of Languages of a public university in Colombia

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Thesis to Obtain the Bachelor's Degree in Foreign languages with Emphasis on English

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Dedication

This research is a tribute to us. All the years of study and each decision that led us to this precise moment. An opportunity to make our families proud and whose guidance, support, and sacrifice made things a little bit easier.

A tribute to our pets and our friends whose company was a relief on more than one occasion. Thanks for all the support we received in these years of study, we can say it has been worth it.

Acknowledgments

Our tutor for her guidance, knowledge, and advice. Without her words and precise corrections, we would not have been able to reach this much-desired stage. We will keep all that in mind in our professional futures.

The participants who volunteered for this research whose voices were the basis of this research to prove our point.

The UIS School of Languages, its members, and professors for making it possible to reach each one of the participants, even in the most remote places on the planet that are not within the reach of a student.

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Glossary

Belief: contemporary Anglophone philosophers of mind generally use the term "belief" to refer to the attitude we have, roughly, whenever we consider something as true.

Conception: a conception of something is an idea that you have of it in your mind.

Foreign language: a language that is not official within a country, nor typically spoken, and whose speakers from that country must usually acquire through conscious learning.

Language attitudes: any set of beliefs about languages as they are used in their social spheres. Language ideologies are conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices; influenced by political and moral interests, and shaped depending on their cultural setting.

Mother tongue: the general usage of this term denotes not only the language one learns from one's mother, but also the speaker's dominant and home language.

Second foreign language: according to the researchers, it is a second language (without including the mother tongue) that is learned by the speaker and is not widely used by the people of that country.

Appendices

The appendices are attached and you can find them in the UIS library database.

Appendix A. Survey of First Semester Students

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Resumen

Título: Concepciones sobre el proceso de aprendizaje de francés y portugués de los estudiantes y egresados de una Escuela de Idiomas de una universidad pública en Colombia.

Autor: Deibith Emmanuel Gonzalez Velandia & Yaritza Camila Solano Peña

Palabras Clave: Concepciones, idioma, actitudes, aprendizaje, creencias.

Descripción:

Este artículo explora las perspectivas de estudiantes y egresados de la Escuela de Idiomas de la UIS sobre el proceso de aprendizaje del francés y el portugués. La pregunta de investigación tiene como objetivo identificar las concepciones o perspectivas antes y después del aprendizaje de la lengua y su frecuencia dentro de la población. El objetivo es comprender las creencias y actitudes hacia estas lenguas y cómo pueden cambiar con el tiempo. El artículo analiza los antecedentes de la globalización, la discriminación lingüística y la importancia de las actitudes lingüísticas. La metodología implica métodos mixtos, incluidos grupos focales y encuestas. Los datos recopilados analizaron las creencias y percepciones de los participantes sobre el aprendizaje de los idiomas francés y portugués. La mayoría de los participantes estaban muy interesados en aprender francés y portugués, por motivos como viajes, oportunidades laborales y crecimiento académico. Los participantes tenían opiniones encontradas sobre la dificultad de aprender francés y portugués. Los familiares y amigos en general apoyaron los objetivos de aprendizaje del idioma de los participantes. Los participantes creían que aprender una segunda lengua extranjera tendría un impacto positivo en su crecimiento personal, académico y profesional. El estudio también destaca los desafíos que enfrentan los participantes, como enseñar a los niños pequeños y motivar a los estudiantes. En general, los participantes encontraron valioso aprender un segundo idioma, adquirir conocimientos culturales, oportunidades laborales y la capacidad de comunicarse con nativos.

Abstract

Title: Conceptions regarding the learning process of French and Portuguese of the students and graduates from a School of Languages of a public university in Colombia

Author(s): Deibith Emmanuel Gonzalez Velandia & Yaritza Camila Solano Peña

Key Words: Conceptions, language, attitudes, learning, beliefs.

Description:

This paper explores the perspectives of students and graduates from the UIS School of Languages on the learning process of French and Portuguese. The research question aims to identify the conceptions or perspectives before and after learning the language and their frequency within the population. The objective is to understand the beliefs and attitudes towards these languages and how they may change over time. The paper discusses the background of globalization, linguistic discrimination, and the importance of language attitudes. The methodology involves mixed methods, including focus groups and surveys. The data collected analyzed participants' beliefs and perceptions regarding French and Portuguese language learning. The majority of participants were strongly interested in learning French and Portuguese, with reasons including travel, job opportunities, and academic growth. Participants had mixed opinions on the difficulty of learning French and Portuguese. Family and friends generally supported participants' language learning goals. Participants believed that learning a second foreign language would have a positive impact on their personal, academic, and professional growth. The study also highlights the challenges faced by participants, such as teaching young children and motivating students. Overall, participants found learning a second language valuable, gaining cultural knowledge, job opportunities, and the ability to communicate with natives.

Résumé

Titre : Conceptions concernant le processus d'apprentissage du français et du portugais des étudiants et diplômés d'une école de langues d'une université publique en Colombie.

Auteurs : Deibith Emmanuel Gonzalez Velandia & Yaritza Camila Solano Peña

Mots clés : Conceptions, langage, attitudes, apprentissages, croyances.

Description:

Cet article explore les perspectives des étudiants et des diplômés de l'École de langues de l'Université Industrielle de Santander sur le processus d'apprentissage du français et du portugais. La question de recherche vise à identifier les conceptions ou perspectives avant et après l'apprentissage de la langue et leur fréquence au sein de la population. L'objectif est de comprendre les croyances et les attitudes à l'égard de ces langues et comment elles peuvent évoluer au fil du temps. L'article discute du contexte de la mondialisation, de la discrimination linguistique et de l'importance des attitudes linguistiques. La méthodologie fait appel à des méthodes mixtes, notamment des groupes de discussion et des enquêtes. Les données recueillies ont analysé les croyances et les perceptions des participants concernant l'apprentissage des langues française et portugaise. La majorité des participants étaient fortement intéressés par l'apprentissage du français et du portugais, pour des raisons telles que les voyages, les opportunités d'emploi et la croissance académique. Les participants avaient des opinions partagées sur la difficulté d'apprendre le français et le portugais. La famille et les amis soutenaient généralement les objectifs d'apprentissage des langues des participants. Les participants pensaient que l'apprentissage d'une deuxième langue étrangère aurait un impact positif sur leur croissance personnelle, académique et professionnelle. L'étude met également en évidence les défis rencontrés par les participants, tels que l'enseignement aux jeunes enfants et la motivation des étudiants. Dans l'ensemble, les participants ont trouvé l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde utile, l'acquisition de connaissances culturelles, d'opportunités d'emploi et la capacité de communiquer avec des autochtones.

Introduction

There are many reasons behind the decision to learn a foreign language. These often come from a positive perception shared by many speakers, as well as the status that a language may portray to society from both economic and political perspectives. Nevertheless, these implications vary according to the context of the speakers. For that reason, this paper will explore the perspectives of the students of the UIS School of Languages from both bachelor's degrees: in Foreign Languages with an Emphasis on English, and in Literature and Spanish Language. Among them are the ones who just started the programs, the ones who are starting and finishing their foreign language process in French or Portuguese, and the ones who already graduated from both programs. Furthermore, this paper will statistically analyze the frequency with which these conceptions or perspectives are given in these specific groups. For that purpose, the research question that was proposed is: What are the conceptions regarding the learning process of French and Portuguese of the students and graduates from the School of Languages of the Industrial University of Santander before and after learning the language, and the frequency in which they are present within this population?

To conclude, the objective of this research is to inquire about the different conceptions or perspectives that may exist among these groups of students and graduates. From that, this paper will identify as a hypothesis the different sets of beliefs that the participants have based on different specific environments such as family, social, educational, or work (if applicable), and whether they finish their learning process with a positive or negative stand towards the language they chose.

This project is worthwhile as we want readers and teachers to be aware of the different perspectives that people have regarding the acquisition of French and Portuguese as foreign

languages. Knowing how the thoughts of students change during and after the programs, teachers may recognize the strengths and weaknesses in the learning process. Besides, we hope that this study can lead to future studies on how to improve the learning process of these languages within both degree programs offered in the School of Languages.

1. Objectives

1.1. General Objective

To inquire about the different conceptions or perspectives regarding the learning process of French and Portuguese of the students and graduates from the UIS School of Languages (as part of multilingual and intercultural competence training), before and after learning any of those languages.

1.2. Specific Objectives

To identify the different conceptions between the students that start and finish their second foreign language learning process.

To identify the different conceptions between the students who started and finished their respective bachelor's degree programs.

To contrast the positive and negative beliefs surrounding Portuguese and French of the students and graduates from the school of languages at UIS.

To analyze the frequency in which these conceptions are present within this population.

2.   Theoretical Framework

2.1.   Background

When talking about globalization, different contexts might be discussed such as moral, political, aesthetic, and ethical. Each one can be related to certain individuals and social groups whose "wide dissemination has stimulated political awareness, action and empowerment of many groups of citizens worldwide, including those who survive in undignified conditions" (Barragán, 2018, p. 26). (Trad.).

In addition to the previous idea, Siguan (2007) claims that:

> The result of the globalization process is to connect people who speak different languages into contact. For communication to be possible, it is necessary that one of the interlocutors, in addition to their first language, be able to speak the language of the other or that both know a second language that thus serves as a means of communication. (p. 1) (Trad.).

Based on that, Siguan (2007) also claims that:

> The main characteristic of globalization is that new initiatives spread throughout the world. It is true that in some languages, especially in the case of French, efforts are being made to contain the use of anglicisms by looking for substitutes in the possibilities of the vocabulary itself, although the results are rather moderate while in other languages it is not even attempted (p. 2) (Trad.).

Since cases like those are present within this global idea, there is also the thought that discrimination is also present within spheres and is commonly related to matters such as someone's sex, gender or sexual orientation, religion, and political party. Some examples are

"women's equality, respect for children's rights, tolerance towards racial, religious and sexual diversity, and environmental protection, among some of the most frequent causes" (Barragán, 2018, p. 26). (Trad.). Nonetheless, although most of those cases of rejection might be penalized, linguistic discrimination is not as, when talking about linguistic discrimination, is something that remains as many prejudices difficult to eradicate (Wolfram, 1999, p. 30). That is something people do not care about unless they are somehow related to the field of language, whether a student, a teacher, or someone who is picky about how others use language.

Whether positive or negative, speakers do have a set of linguistic beliefs that define their attitudes toward certain languages. Based on this notion, "The same speech sample can produce favorable attitudes at one linguistic level and in certain circumstances, but unfavorable in others" (Barragán, 2018, p. 30) (Trad.) concerning the system of linguistic ideologies. Having said that, this paper will take into account the term *language attitudes,* defined as "Any set of beliefs about languages as they are used in their social spheres. Language ideologies are conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices; influenced by political and moral interests, and shaped depending on their cultural setting" (Irvine, 2012). For that reason, "the principle of the functional duality of linguistic systems may be taken as a starting point as they are not only communication systems but also entities loaded with symbolic value" (Barragán, 2018, p. 29) (Trad.) responding to the need to find in the symbolic nature of languages a source of information that enriches the understanding of these complex systems as authentic social facts (Barragán, 2018).

Therefore, languages such as French and Portuguese are some of the most famous and spoken languages around the world. In the case of Colombia, both are learned as foreign languages. For that purpose, this paper will consider the term *foreign language* as a language that

is not official within a country, nor typically spoken, and whose speakers from that country must usually acquire through conscious learning. According to SIL International in their publication of *The Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (2022 edition), French is the fifth most spoken language in the world and Portuguese is the ninth.

The fact that these languages are in the top 10 proves there is a huge growing population determined to learn them, and implies that there are some reasons for learning them. "Normally, attitudes are conceived as feelings of liking or disliking that are underlined by the totalizing evaluative gaze of a verbal stimulus" (Barragán, 2018, p. 29). (Trad.). Some examples of these linguistic beliefs or language attitudes are when people decide to learn a language to improve their job opportunities, to work abroad, to travel for tourism purposes, as a hobby for training the brain, or for the mere desire of getting in touch with foreign cultural richness as there are unique reasons for learning both languages in which communication is evidenced as a social fact where "...chaque langue a je ne sais quoi propre seulement à elle…" (Bellay, 1549, p. 6).

The creation of the French language was a gradual process influenced by various historical and linguistic factors. Taking into account the ideas of Antoine de Rivarol, in his work "Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française," the French language went through changes and revolutions, with different variations and dialects existing at different times. The language was influenced by adopted Celtic and Latin expressions after the French conquests, resulting in a language that was initially poor and disjointed. However, as the monarchy gained strength and unity, there was a need to unify and refine the language. This led to the development of a written language and a spoken language, with a dual nature that still exists today in which the rich literary tradition and genius of French writers contributed to the prestige and influence of the language. The works of French writers, such as Racine, Molière, and La Fontaine, showcased the

elegance and beauty of the French language, making the language highly appreciated in the literary world (Rivarol, 1783). In the same way, there were contributions to the language during the French Renaissance related to literature, music, painting and sculptures, renaissance gardens, sumptuary or decorative arts, philosophy, religion, and social and natural sciences. Today, French, a language spoken in 29 countries, has long been claimed to be "the language of love"; That seems to be a compelling reason, although in some ways that may respond to stereotypes transmitted through films, songs, and theaters long ago during the rise of modern arts and cinema. Besides, the French language has received a lot of recognition, even in social networks such as TikTok where trending French songs from authors such as Indila, and Édith Piaf, among others, are listened to. As for people's perception about being the language of love, according to a writer of the same nationality as his language, "Quant au son, et je ne sais quelle naturelle douceur (comme ils disent) qui est en leurs langues, je ne vois point que nous l'ayons moindre, au jugement des plus délicates oreilles" (Bellay, 1549, p. 9), and not even more as "Si en telles manières de parler gît la douceur des langues, je confesse que la nôtre est rude et malsonnante" (Bellay, 1549, p. 9).

With regards to Portuguese, which is spoken in 9 countries and recognized mainly because of Brazil, is a language that can be claimed to be the language of Brazilian samba and home of the Amazonia, Iguazu Falls, and Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro. Furthermore, is:

Um dos idiomas mais falados do mundo, estando entre os seis mais falados ao redor do globo, a língua portuguesa não se limita apenas ao Português de Portugal e ao Português do Brasil. Muitos países na África, entre eles Moçambique e Angola, têm o português como seu idioma. Nossa gramática é uma das mais difíceis e complexas que existem, isso porque todas as inúmeras regras, acentos e exceções tornam a aprendizagem muito

complicada e mais demorada para quem precisa aprender a falar (Agência Brasileira De

Traduções, n.d.)

In the case of this language, linguistic discrimination is represented as prejudices difficult

to adjudicate, of which many tend to be justified. An example may be the fact that in 2022 "...the

number of people who live in extreme poverty was 48.2% representing up to 17.9 million

Brazilians, 8.4% of the population" (Swissinfo, 2022). Moreover, research by the Brazilian

Public Security Forum revealed that drug trafficking and deforestation are closely related to the

increase in violence in the Brazilian Amazon region, claiming that "While in the southeast

region, the homicide mortality rate fell 19.2 percent between 1980 and 2019, in the north

[Amazon states] there was a growth of 260.3 percent by drug trafficking groups" (Cunningham,

2022).

Another point to highlight is the importance of literature in terms of Nobel prizes, which

is somewhat related to the number of papers available in a specific language and the importance

a language receives. In terms of numbers, French-speaking countries such as France and

Belgium, have 70 and 11 Nobel laureates respectively, while Portuguese-speaking countries such

as Portugal and East Timor have both 2.

All the previous information is what mainly comes to mind to the participants at the

moment of choosing one of these languages for their bachelor's degree programs, having a big

decision to make where languages start to compete.

Si l'on considère, ce qui n'est guère original, que la violence est la grande accoucheuse de

l'histoire, alors cette violence affecte aussi l'histoire des langues. ...Car, s'il y a guerre des

langues, c'est bien parce qu'il y a plurilinguisme, un monde qui n'aurait qu'une langue ne

connaitrait pas ce type de conflit… (Calvet, 1987, p. 10)

2.2.   Literature Review

One point to consider is the model of Barragán (2018), which consists of three closely related premises, derived from the theoretical development of sociolinguistics and related approaches since the late 1960s, that will support the thesis, and the chosen theoretical approach:

First, language is, by definition, a sum of realizations characterized by their variability; second, this inherent variability feeds linguistic awareness, that is, the historically situated and socially shared way of reflecting on the varieties of language, one's own and others, and their users; third, closely linked to the previous one, that this 'popular' knowledge about linguistic forms and uses is carried out as a social fact thanks to regulatory frameworks in charge of materializing the values on the quality of the language, which circulate explicitly or surreptitiously. (p. 30)(Trad.).

The previous set of attitudes, knowledge, behaviors, and values are determined by socio-political factors rather than linguistic ones that struggle with the structure of languages, the processes of variation and change that characterize them, and are present in all societies, regardless of whether standardization processes have been carried out in them (Milroy, 2001). In this way, by fueling speakers with a particular way to know and live the foreign language by being conscious and certain of its existence, its most characteristic features, and its status compared to other languages, varieties, and users (Barragán, 2018). (Trad.).

The same idea is shared by Calvet (1987) who says:

Ces transformations, dont toutes les personnes tant soit peu cultivées ont plus ou moins connaissance, ne sont pas à proprement parler des phénomènes linguistiques: en les considérant comme tels, on se condamne à ne pas les comprendre. Ils sont la traduction linguistique de mouvements sociaux plus profonds… On voit que cette explication, complémentaire de la précédente, prend en compte des éléments de pratique sociale, de

linguistique externe et permet ainsi d'expliquer le changement dans un va-et-vient entre

l'analyse de la langue et celle de la société. (pp. 8-9)

Having that in mind, there are also three actions to consider: "'To know' 'to believe' and

'to feel' are actions shared by speakers who, more often than not, produce metalanguages that

reflect and nourish their language ideals in daily social interactions, both public and private"

(Barragán, 2018, p. 31). (Trad.) and that "...this new language ideology adds to those that have

historically been produced and underlie the discourses, practices and attitudes" (Barragán, 2018,

p. 26). (Trad.).

"...il y a un étroit rapport entre les besoins de communication d'un groupe (ce qu'il a à

dire, pour employer une expression triviale) et le moyen de communication qu'il se donne (la

façon dont il dit)" (Calvet, 1987, p.17). That, is the reason why "les langues tendent

systématiquement à la régularisation et à la simpliflcation" (Calvet, 1987, p.18).

In addition, the concept of *multilingual contexts* is important to take into account as they

represent "a characteristic profile since the coexistence of several languages has the effect of

inducing not only the progressive enrichment of individual linguistic repertoires but also the

ability to elaborate original codes according to varied communicative circumstances"

(Ambadiang & Garcia, 2006, p. 64). The analysis of someone's attitude towards the set of

ideologies regarding these languages might show how the appropriation and implementation of

the rules work whether they are reproduced as they are emitted, or if they are somehow

processed and reconstructed by ideological mediation (Barragán, 2018). (Trad.). In this way, the

interlocutors consider themselves speakers, language users, rather than native speakers of a

specific language, as well as cultural actors, rather than members of a particular group from the

cultural point of view. In this way, languages and cultures coexist in accordance with the spirit of

communicative empathy of the speakers, based on the variety of interculturalism and multilingualism practiced by them, making transgressing cultural and linguistic borders possible (Ambadiang & Garcia, 2006).

Basically, the sociolinguistic dynamic favors the maintenance of linguistic diversity and develops multilingualism in individuals. In other words, this is the ability to adapt to changing sociolinguistic circumstances by taking advantage of the partial and convergent linguistic competencies of the people involved in the communicative exchange (Fardon & Furniss, 1994). Since, as Puren (1998), says, "the intercultural paradigm provides few indications regarding the cultural contents of language teaching" (p. 44).

Therefore, "Subjectivity taken in this sense acquires in language a scientific status insufficiently developed up to now in linguistic theories, and it manifests itself as a discursive fact, explanatory of a way of conceptualizing" (Pérez, 2001, p. 58) (Trad.). That referred to the subjectivity of people's beliefs surrounding *linguistic subjectivity*, which is based on the intersubjectivity that is specific to language (Benveniste, 1968), and it is understood in light of two fundamental facts: enunciation and the inferential nature of our communication (Moescheler-Réboul, 1994).

2.3.   Legal reference

To fulfill the mentioned research, there is a set of educational standards and a pedagogical legislative framework on which the procedure of the research project is based.

2.3.1.   The Common European Framework of Reference

This provides the basis for the development of the foreign languages degree at UIS University, as well as the curricular guidelines, exams, manuals, etc. involved in learning and

developing a set of skills and the amount of knowledge necessary to reach a certain level of language proficiency.

2.3.2. The general law of education

This guarantees the right of all the country's inhabitants to education, as well as regulates in the educational field the work of the State, its decentralized agencies, and the individuals who receive authorization or official recognition of the studies they teach. (The Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 1994).

2.3.3. The Decree 1075 of 2015 or the Sole Regulatory Decree of the Education Sector

This decree aims to compile and rationalize the regulatory norms that govern the Sector previously mentioned and have a single legal instrument for it.

2.3.4. Decree 1330 of 2019 for the quality of higher education

This decree seeks to regulate the processes of qualified registration and academic quality of Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), to consolidate a vision of quality that responds to social, cultural, and environmental demands.

2.3.5. The pedagogical model of the Industrial University of Santander (UIS)

This assumes comprehensive training as a guiding principle, complemented by a clear orientation towards pedagogical innovation assisted by the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the macro, meso, and micro-curricular spheres. This model focuses on learning and learners, their competencies, and leading to demonstrated results reflected on its graduates as comprehensive citizens and professionals, capable of contributing to the evolution of a fair and balanced society towards the common good.

2.3.6.   The UIS Institutional educational project

This project is the general guideline of the daily duty of the university. A collective construction strategy for the analysis of the global, domestic, and regional environments, as well as the institutional capabilities.

2.3.7.   The Program Educational Project (PEP) for the Bachelor's Degree Program in Foreign Languages with an emphasis on English and the Bachelor's Degree Program for Literature and Spanish Language

First, this research will address the Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Languages with an Emphasis in English with a duration of 10 academic semesters in the city of Bucaramanga, which can be taken on-campus. Colombia recognizes the importance of the English language in all areas (Bases of the National Development Plan 2014-2018, p.52). This career emerged due to the need for qualified teachers to teach English, which is aligned with the curricular contents and the educator's competencies set forth in National Resolution 2041 of February 3, 2016, and, at the international level, within the framework reference for teaching English (Cambridge, 2014). This degree responds to the following needs that arise in the country: Achieve the primary objective of the National English Plan 2015-2025 (PNI), improve the results in the English Proficiency Index (EPI English Proficiency Index), a measurement carried out annually by the Swiss company English First. Additionally, this degree responds to the needs raised in the Santander Development Plan 2016–2019 (PDS), which includes the programs for the development of education, and the Bilingualism Program, among others.

Also, as previously mentioned, the Bachelor's Degree in Literature and Spanish Language with a duration of 10 academic semesters in the city of Bucaramanga which can be taken on-campus. This program is designed in accordance with the requirements demanded by the MEN. The theoretical foundation of the curriculum of the Bachelor's

Degree in Literature and Spanish Language is built based on Law 115 of February 8, 1994, or General Law of Education. This perspective on education and the guidelines in decrees 1075 and 2450, regulate the quality conditions for the granting and renewal of the qualified registration of undergraduate academic programs and those focused on education. Consequently, the conceptual structure of knowledge in the bachelor's curriculum is mobilized through the "Integrating Pedagogical Projects", five basic components, and some special subjects.

3.   Methodology

3.1.   Research Method

To carry out the whole process, we conducted exploratory research based on the mixed-method approach using focus groups to identify from a qualitative point of view the different beliefs surrounding French and Portuguese from the students of the language school before starting and finishing their third language learning process; as well as analyze from a quantitative point of view the frequency in which these beliefs are present within this specific population.

3.2.   Hypothesis, variables, and indicators

We have proposed the hypothesis that French is commonly perceived as a beautiful and useful language by students starting their bachelor's degree programs, one that many may call "the language of love". As for Portuguese, we have proposed that the language is chosen for being "a flirtatious or cheerful language" as well as easy since it shares many linguistic components with Spanish. On the other hand, we thought that most of the people who are finishing or finished their language process of French and Portuguese agree in the fact that both are languages with certain difficulties to be learned as these people are used to the language simplicity of English. Therefore, the variables involved in the research are the languages French

and Portuguese, the positive and negative beliefs surrounding them, and the members of the focal groups.

3.3.   Population and sampling

Through a random sampling procedure, most of the students who study French and Portuguese in the language school (from the foreign languages program, and the Literature and Spanish Language program) were selected to participate in focus groups. From the first semester, there were 34 participants from the foreign languages program, and 34 from the Literature and Spanish Language program. Starting their second language acquisition process, there were 29 participants, and finishing their second language acquisition process, there were 13 participants, having a total of 110 participants between the first and ninth semesters of their respective programs. Something to clarify is that at the time of the data collection process, there were no groups of the subject Portuguese V as there were not enough students to open a group. Therefore, the Portuguese students surveyed were coursing Portuguese IV, which is the previous level before the last level previously mentioned. Their ages range between 17 and 25 years old. Among them, there are different social strata (medium to high), which will make the process more diverse in terms of input collection. Besides, graduates from both programs participated in this research to learn how their second foreign language affected their lives and whether certain beliefs might become true. There were 34 graduates whose ages ranged between 20 and 39 years old. Of them, 16 graduated with a bachelor's degree in Literature and Spanish Language, and 18 with a bachelor's degree in Foreign Languages with emphasis in English. The sampling method chosen for this project is volunteer sampling, having 144 participants who volunteered from both university programs.

3.4.   Data collection instruments

The collection instruments used in the research consisted of four surveys, each one applied to different focus groups in which there were different types of questions such as multiple choice, open questions, rating scale questions, frequency questions, and questions based on the Likert test.

3.4.1.   Survey of First Semester Students

The paper was applied to a focus group consisting of 36 questions. The paper consists of a quantitative survey with some open questions at the end with the aim of finding the beliefs of the Language School graduates who carried out the process of learning their second foreign language (French or Portuguese), as well as the percentage of graduates who also share these beliefs. The survey was divided into 4 sections, this survey used the Likert scale and multiple-choice questions. The first deals with the personal data of the interviewee and the individual field of languages with 16 questions, and finally, the second section deals with the academic environment with 8 questions. The third section is about the family environment with 8 questions, the fourth section is about the social environment with 4 questions. This document can be found in Appendix A.

3.4.2.   Survey of First-Level Language Students

The paper consists of a qualitative survey to know the participants' perceptions regarding their learning process of French and Portuguese. The survey was divided into two sections and had 24 questions in total. The first one is about the personal data of the interviewee and follows the individual field of languages with 14 questions, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The second section is 10 open-ended questions in order to find certain imaginaries shared by undergraduate students, who begin the process of learning their second foreign language. This document can be found in Appendix B.

3.4.3.   Survey of Fifth-Level Language Students

The paper applied to a focus group and consisted of 24 questions. The paper consists of a qualitative survey to know the participants' perceptions regarding their learning process of French and Portuguese. The survey was divided into two sections. The first one is about the personal data of the interviewee and follows the individual field of languages with 14 questions, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The second section is 10 open-ended questions in order to find certain imaginaries shared by undergraduate students, who end the process of learning their second foreign language. This document can be found in Appendix C.

3.4.4.   Survey of Graduates

The paper applied to a focus group consisting of 19 multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The paper consists of a quantitative survey with some open questions at the end with the aim of finding the beliefs of the Language School graduates who carried out the process of learning their second foreign language (French or Portuguese), as well as the percentage of graduates who also share these beliefs. The survey was divided into 2 sections. The first deals with the personal data of the interviewee and the individual field of languages with 14 questions, and finally, the second section deals with the work and economic environment with 5 questions. This document can be found in Appendix D.

3.5.   Resources and Analysis Techniques

To speed up the data analysis process the surveys were administered remotely through Google Forms, having the results immediately registered and uploaded to Google Spreadsheets, creating a database immediately. The next step was to process the data through triangulation of information. Programs such as Google Spreadsheets, Microsoft Excel, and the statistical software JASP were used to analyze the data and create statistical graphs. After that, they were pasted into

Google Documents where each graphic was described in terms of the number of participants and percentages by answer. This document can be found in Annex 5.

4.   Data Analysis

The information was analyzed in different sets of surveys and focus groups. To ease the process, the information within was divided into languages and both bachelor's programs (Foreign Language Students and graduates, and Literature and Spanish Language Students and graduates)

### 4.1.   First-Semester Students Data

For this first survey, the data was analyzed by degree. The first section was the Interviewee's data and his or her personal scope regarding languages.

In the Literature and Spanish Language bachelor's degree Students (LSL students in further mentions), most of the participants were women, being 19 (55.9%). As for the others, 14 participants (41.2%) were men. Only 1 participant (2.9%) is agender or doesn't identify with any specific gender as seen in Figure 1. On the other hand, for the Foreign Languages with Emphasis in English bachelor's degree students (FLEE students in further mentions) the analyzed data showed most of the participants were women, 22 (64.7%). As for the others, 12 participants (35.3%) were men as seen in Figure 2.
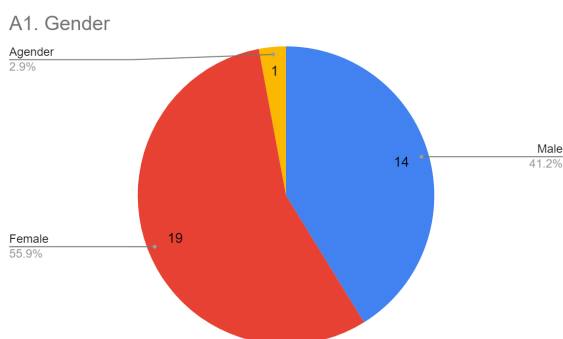
Figure 1   **Figure 2**
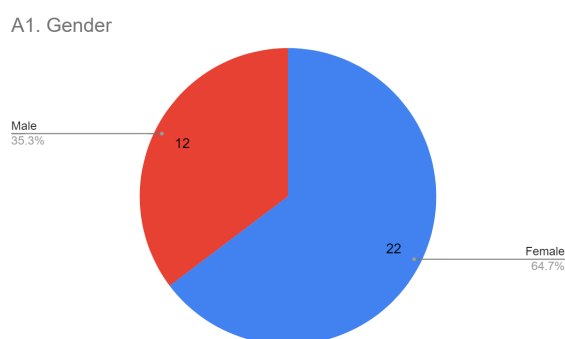
Most of the LSL students, 14, were between 18 and 20 years old (41.2%). 10 participants (29.4) were between 21-25 years old. Another group of 8 participants (23.5%) were between 21-25 years old. As for the others, 2 participants (5.9%) were 26 years old or older as seen in Figure 3. In the case of FLEE students, most of the participants, 14 for each one, were between 18 and 20 years old (41.2%) and 14 and 17 years old (41.2%). And 6 participants (17.6%) were between 21-25 years old as seen in Figure 4.
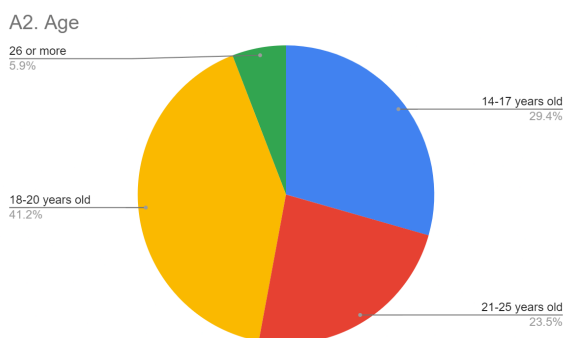
Figure 3   **Figure 4**
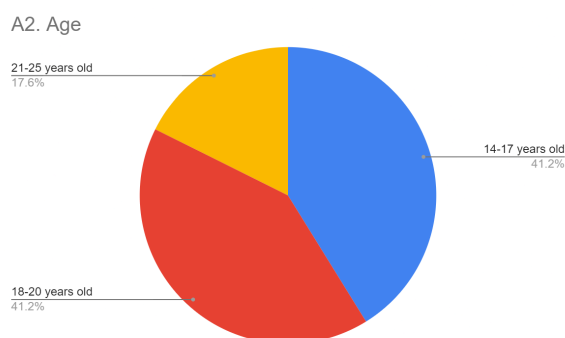

The analyzed data showed that 20 of the LSL students (58.8%), which are the majority of the sample, belong to low socio-economic strata, while the other 14 (41.2%) belong to medium socio-economic strata as seen in Figure 5. As for FLEE students, 21 participants (61.8%), which are the majority of the sample, belong to medium socio-economic strata, while the other 12

(35.3%) belong to low socio-economic strata, and only 1 participant (2.9%) belong to high socio-economic strata as seen in Figure 6.
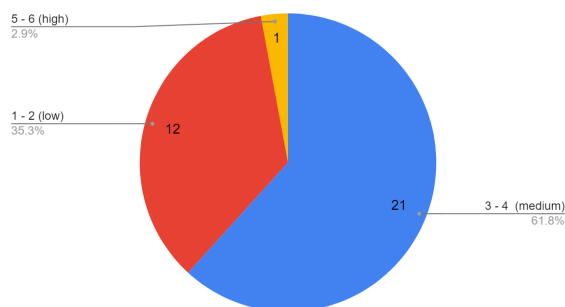
Figure 5　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Figure 6**
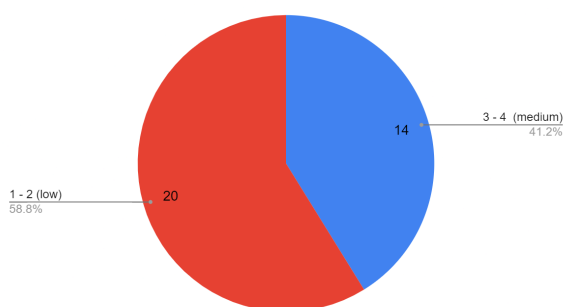
Besides, 12 of the LSL participants, which are the majority of the sample, are from Bucaramanga, while the others, come from different less frequent places such as Floridablanca, Girón, Piedecuesta, San Andrés Islands, Cúcuta, Socorro, Maracay, Bogota, Barichara, Barrancabermeja, Sabana de Torres, and San Antonio del Táchira. 2 of the participants (5.9%) are from Santander but didn't specify where, and 1 participant (2.9%) comes from Santo Domingo de Silos, Venezuela as seen in Figure 7. Regarding the FLEE students, 11 participants, which are the majority of the sample, are from Bucaramanga, while the others, come from different less frequent places such as Floridablanca, Girón, Piedecuesta, Simití Bolivar, Aguachica, Ocaña, Abrego, 2 participants from Guaca and 1 participant (2.9%) comes from Barinas, Venezuela as seen in Figure 8.

Figure 7
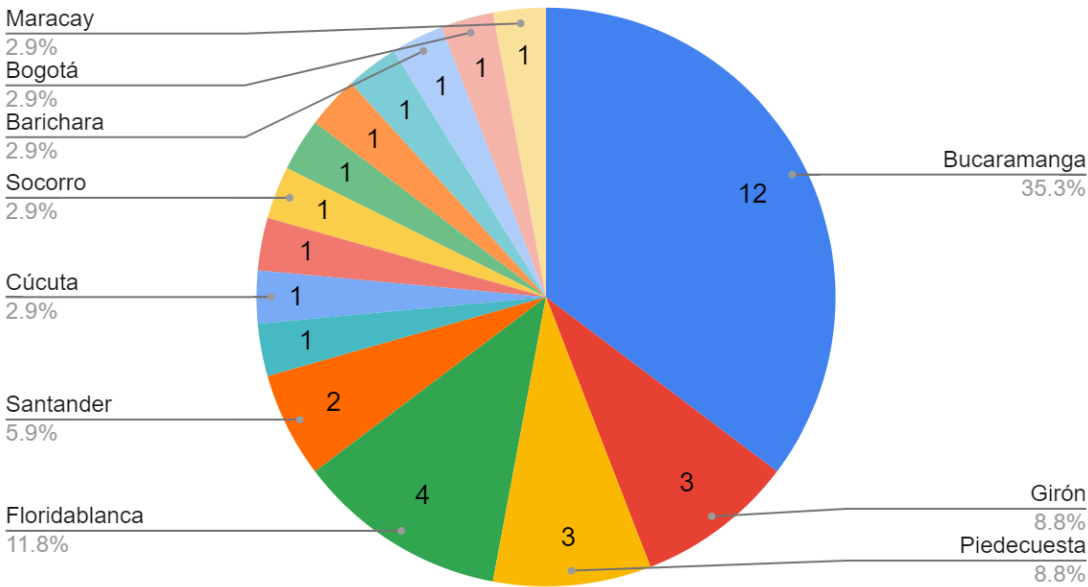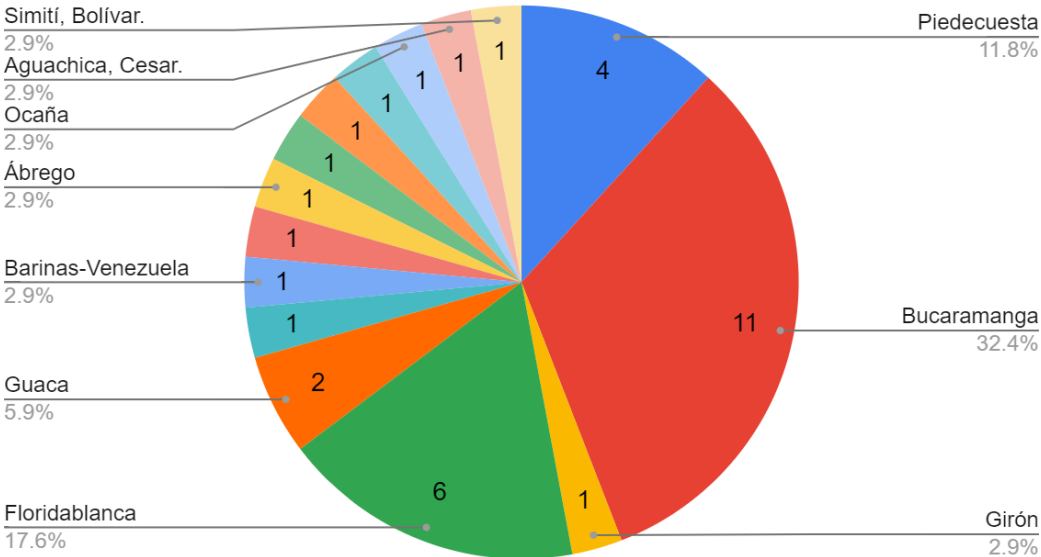

A4. Municipality where you come from
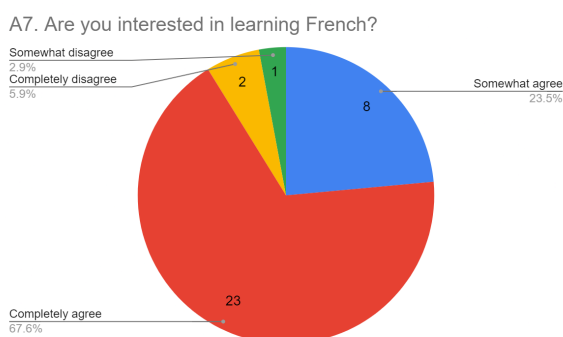
Figure 8


A4. Municipality where you come from

There were 34 participants from the bachelor's degree in Literature and Spanish Language at UIS, and 34 participants from the bachelor's degree in Foreign languages, all of whom were currently in their first semester.

Discussing language preference, on one hand, 23 LSL students (67.6%) are strongly interested in learning French, and 8 (23.5%) are somewhat interested. On the other hand, 1 participant (2.9%) is not interested and 2 (5.9%) don't want to learn the language as seen in Figure 9. About FLEE students, the analyzed data showed that 19 participants (55.9%) are strongly interested in learning French, and 12 (35.3%) are somewhat interested. On the other hand, 2 participants (5.9%) neither agree nor disagree with learning the language and 1 (2.9%) is not interested as seen in Figure 10.

Figure 9   **Figure 10**
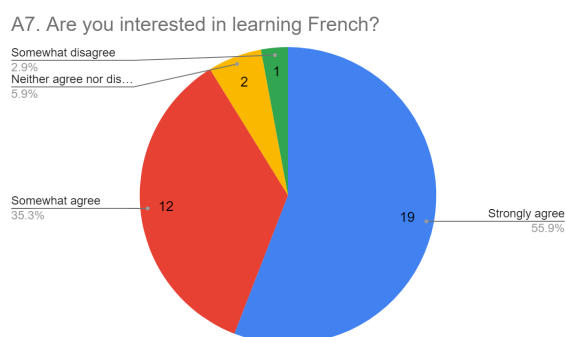
On the other hand, 11 LSL students (32.4%) are strongly interested in learning Portuguese, and 14 (41.2%) are somewhat interested. 5 participants (14.7%) neither agree nor disagree on learning the language. On the other hand, 3 participants (8.8%) are not interested and 1 (2.9%) don't want to learn the language as seen in Figure 11. Furthermore, 13 FLEE students (38.2%) are strongly interested in learning Portuguese, and 15 (44.1%) are somewhat interested. 3 of them (8.8%) neither agree nor disagree on learning the language. On the other hand, 3 participants (8.8%) are not interested as seen in Figure 12.

Figure 11   **Figure 12**

A8. Are you interested in learning Portuguese?

A8. Are you interested in learning Portuguese?
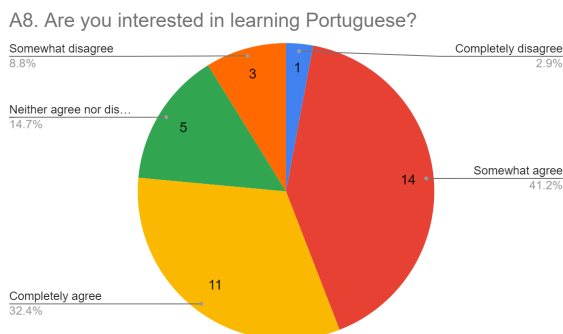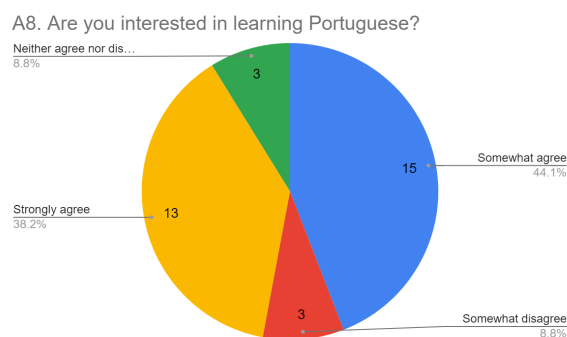
Based on those preferences of LSL students, 27 participants (79.4%) already decided which language to learn. While 7 (20.6%) have not decided yet as seen in Figure 13. As for FLEE students, the analyzed data showed that 24 participants (70.6%) already decided which language to learn. While 10 (29.4%) have not decided it yet as seen in Figure 14.

Figure 13   **Figure 14**

A9. Have you decided which language you will choose when starting your foreign language cycle?

A9. Have you decided which language you will choose when starting your foreign language cycle?
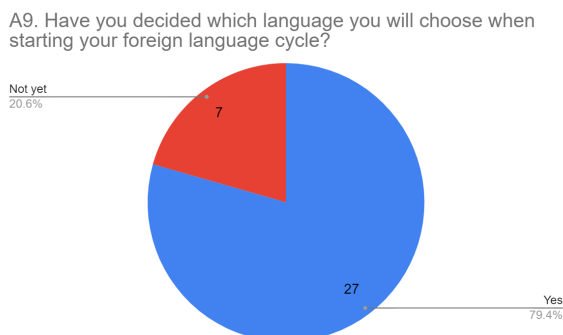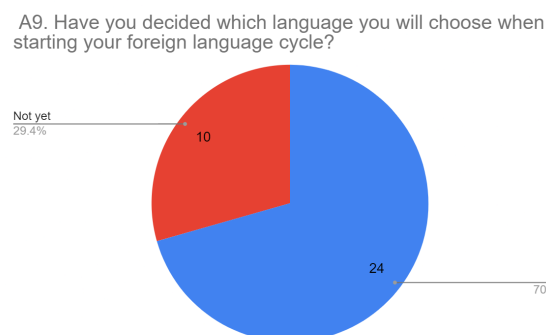
When students finish their first semester, they have to choose among French, Portuguese, and English as seen in Figure 15 (This last one is only available for the LSL students as for FLEE students is mandatory). Among the LSL participants, 28 (82.4%) decided or thought to learn French. The other 6 participants (17.6%) have decided or thought to learn English, meaning that, although most of them are willing to learn Portuguese, is not a priority for them. Of the FLEE participants, 29 (85.3%) have decided or thought to learn French. The rest of the

participants have decided or thought to learn Portuguese as seen in Figure 16. In this case, there

is a huge difference in the number of students per language chosen.
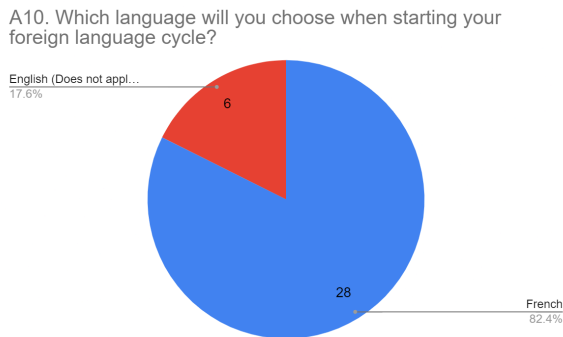
Figure 15   **Figure 16**
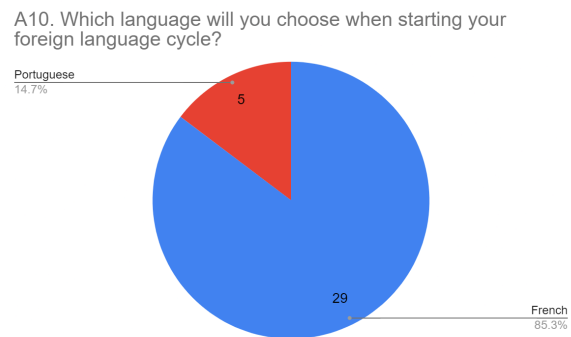
The analyzed data showed that 29 LSL students (85.3%) decided to learn a second

foreign language to meet new cultures and communities, 16 (47%) to travel abroad, 15 (44.1%)

to improve their job opportunities, 15 (44.1%) to improve their academic opportunities, and 4

(11.7%) because learning a second foreign language is mandatory for graduating. Regarding the

FLEE students, their main reason for learning Portuguese or French is to travel abroad with 26

participants (76.4%). Also, the following reasons are academic opportunities, employment, and

income opportunities with 25 participants (73.5%) each. The next reason is to get to know new

cultures and communities with 24 participants (70.5%). Finally, only 1 participant (2.9%)

mentioned his reason for learning the language as mandatory. This can be related to Barragán's

idea that language ideologies can produce and underlie discourses, practices, and attitudes that

shape the process of learning a language for different reasons (Barragán, 2018).

Figure 17

A11. Of the following options, what are your reasons for learning French or Portuguese?
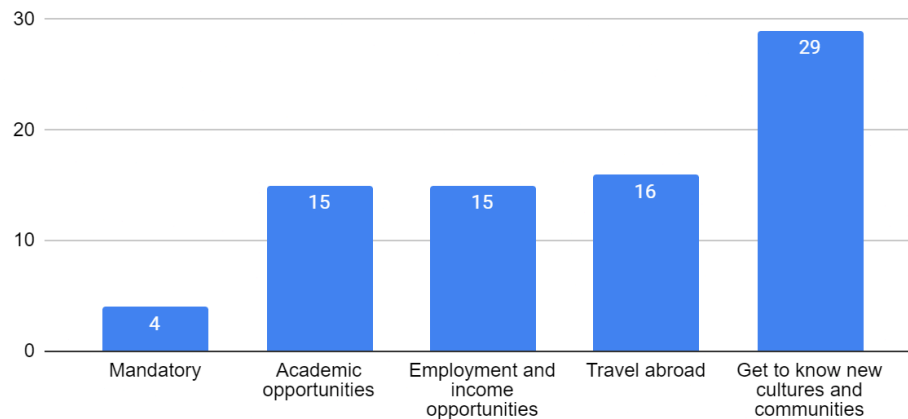
A11. Of the following options, what are your reasons for learning French or Portuguese?

Figure 18

A11. Of the following options, what are your reasons for learning French or Portuguese?
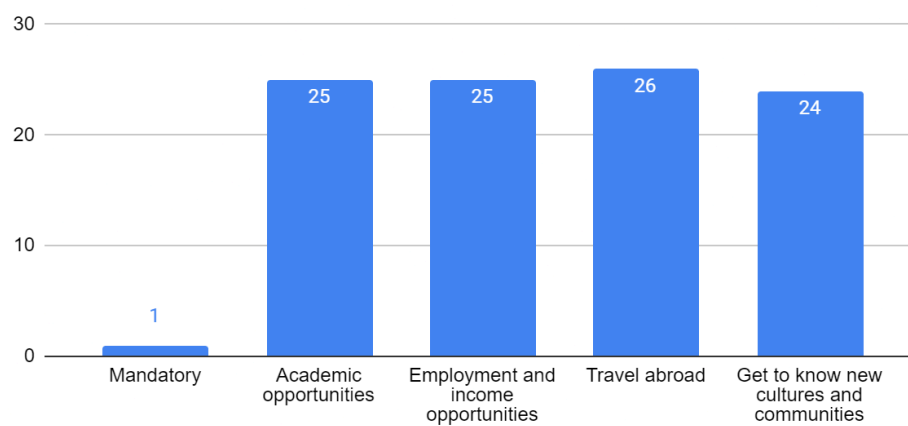
A11. Of the following options, what are your reasons for learning French or Portuguese?

When questioned about places where the French language is spoken, as seen in Figure 19, 26 LSL participants (76.5%) knew the existence of more than one francophone country while the other 8 (23.5%) did not know. Among them, they mentioned Belgium, Canada, Haiti, Monaco, Madagascar, Guinea, France, Luxembourg, Congo, Andorra, Morocco, Senegal, and cities like

Quebec. On the other hand, as seen in Figure 20, 29 FLEE participants (85.3%) know the existence of more than one francophone country while the other 5 (14.7%) do not know. Among them, they mentioned France, Canada, some African countries, and Switzerland. According to that, most of the students from both groups know most of the French-speaking countries based on the number of countries that exist.

Figure 19   **Figure 20**
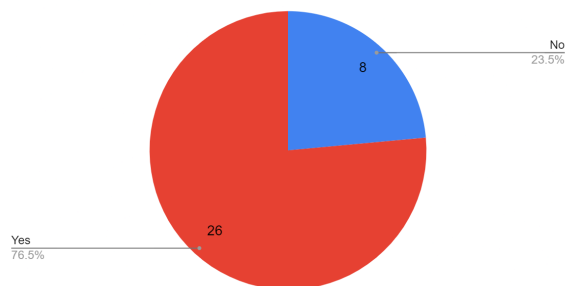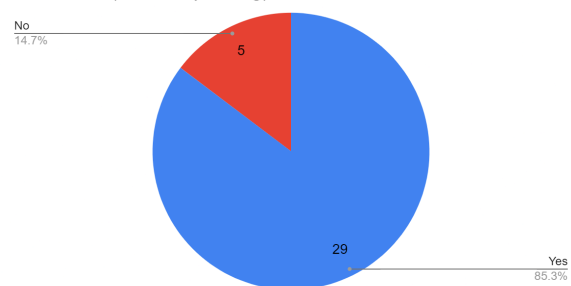
When questioned about places where the Portuguese language is spoken, as seen in Figure 21, 22 LSL students (64.7%) knew the existence of more than one lusophone country while the other 12 (35.3%) did not know. Among them, they mentioned Brazil, Portugal, Angola, and Cape Verde. The analyzed data as seen in Figure 22 about FLEE students showed that 32 participants (94.1%) know the existence of more than one lusophone country while the other 2 (5.9%) do not know. Among them, they mentioned Brazil, Portugal, Angola, Mozambique and Equatorial Guinea. Based on that, most of the students from both groups know at least half of the Portuguese-speaking countries that exist.

Figure 21
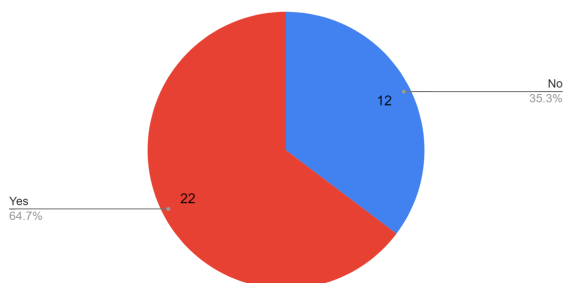
Figure 22

A14. Do you know the names of some Lusophone countries? (Portuguese speaking)

No
35.3%

12

Yes
64.7%

22

A14. Do you know the names of some Lusophone countries? (Portuguese speaking)

No
5.9%

2

32

Yes
94.1%
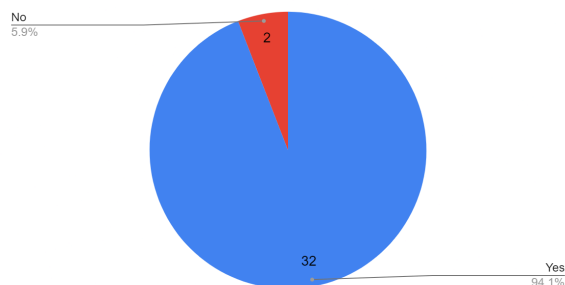
For the language that LSL participants will study, they had to choose from 1 to 4 the previous appreciation they have towards certain factors of the language, where 1 corresponds to what attracts their attention the most and 4 corresponds to what attracts their attention the least. Due to the variety of priorities and answers, the analysis was done based on the trends as synonyms of what mostly tends to be repeated. Based on that and the tendency evidenced, the first priority of this group of participants is the cultural aspect, as seen in Figure 23, followed by the language's unique pronunciation. In third place is the literature that the language can offer. Finally, grammar is the least important aspect among the options given.

As for FLEE students, as seen in Figure 24, the factor most appreciated is pronunciation, followed by cultural aspects, literature, and grammar. In this case, it can be observed that first-semester students tend to prioritize pronunciation as part of language improvement, unlike LSL students who prioritize cultural aspects over pronunciation. However, this is an aspect that may change throughout the academic program as subjects such as linguistics and sociolinguistics, among others, tend to make a difference in students by expanding their horizons in terms of language variety and the idea that language is formed by speakers.

Figure 23

A16. For the language you are going to study, choose from 1 to 4 the previous appreciation you have towards certain factors of the language (Where 1 corresponds to what attracts your attention the most and 4 corresponds to what attracts your attention the least).
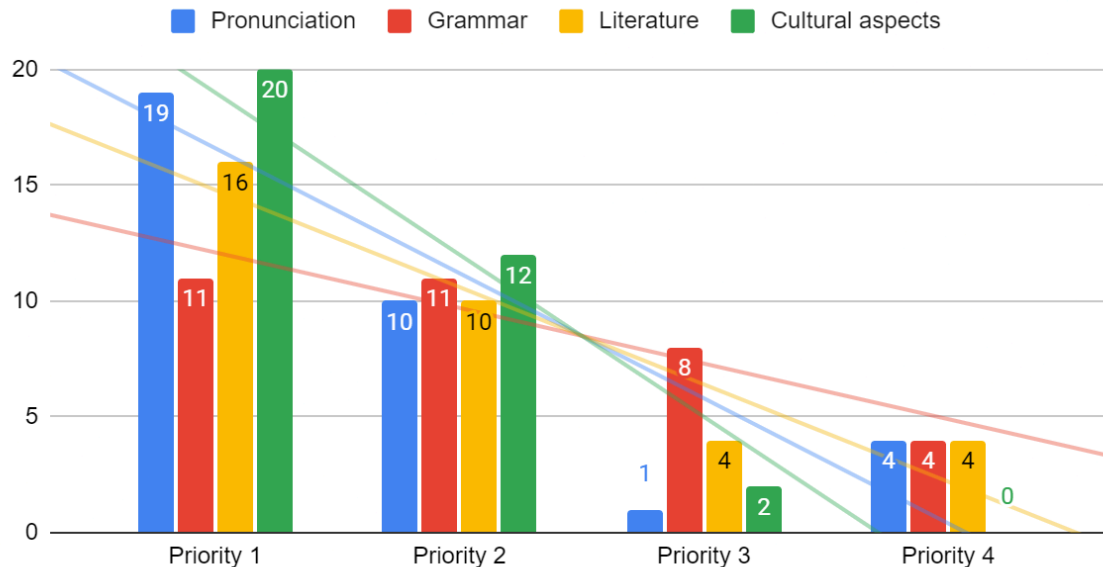
Figure 24

A16. For the language you are going to study, choose from 1 to 4 the previous appreciation you have towards certain factors of the language (Where 1 corresponds to what attracts your attention the most and 4 corresponds to what attracts your attention the least).
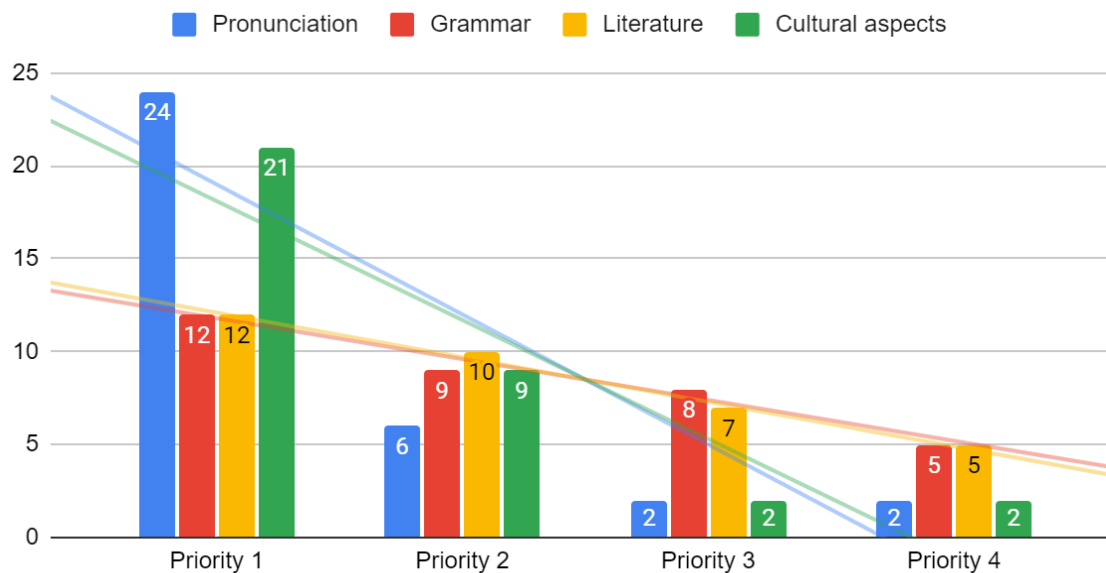
The second section was called the Academic sphere, in which there were questions related to different perceptions about learning French or Portuguese.

Regarding previous contact with the Portuguese language by LSL students, 12 participants (35.3%) have had previous contact while 22 (64.7%) have not as seen in Figure 25. This previous contact is related to experiences with family and friends, video games, Duolingo, music, literature, movies and series, and autonomous study. As for FLEE students, 6 participants (17.6%) have had previous contact with the Portuguese language while 28 (82.4%) have not as seen in Figure 26. This previous contact is related to experiences with friends, video games, teachers, relatives, music, literature, or conversations with natives.
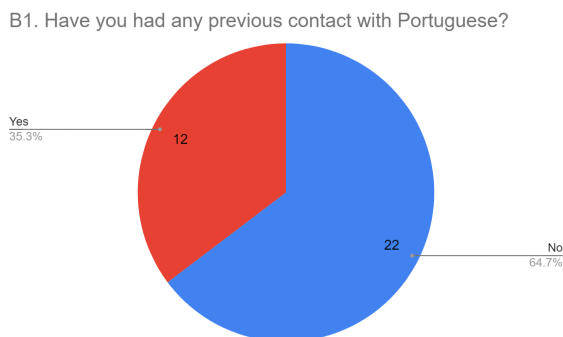
Figure 25   **Figure 26**
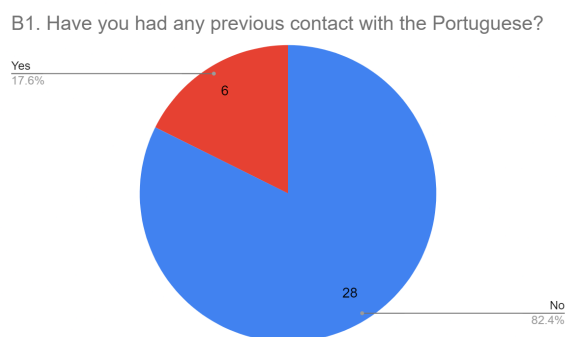
On the other hand, as seen in graphic 27, 13 LSL participants (38.2%) have had previous contact with the French language while 21 (61.8%) have not. Moreover, 15 FLEE participants (44.1%) have had previous contact with the French language while 19 (55.9%) have not as seen in Figure 28. This previous contact is related to experiences with family and friends, video games, Duolingo, music, literature, movies and series, autonomous study, or French courses. Something to be highlighted and analyzed is that, in the Colombian context, having contact with Portuguese is less frequent compared to French, which might help to study the reasons why there are fewer opportunities to get in touch with Portuguese and even more with French; in Colombia, a Spanish country focused on EFL education.

Figure 27   **Figure 28**

B3. Have you had any previous contact with French?   B3. Have you had any previous contact with the French?

Yes
38.2%
13
21
No
61.8%

No
55.9%
19
15
Yes
44.1%
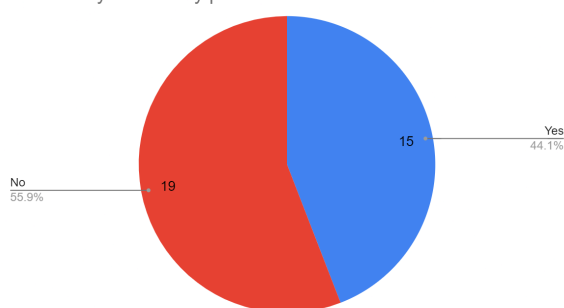
Participants from both bachelor programs were asked what they thought about these two languages being offered at the university. Most of them claimed that having them is good in general as they are highly required in the world in terms of usefulness as they are a good opportunity to get to know new cultures different from yours and the English one, to acquire knowledge, to develop skills, to acquire better job opportunities, and to investigate the importance of learning other languages that are widely spoken in the world and might be used to improve life opportunities in all areas. Besides, the language courses offered at the university are good academic experiences in terms of money in comparison to language courses. Also, those are two languages that are never spoken at school taking into account that Colombian education is only Spanish-centered with an inclination towards the English language, being difficult or expensive to learn another language.

However, there were some participants who claimed that more languages should be offered with the same level and academic load as the two given to the Language School students. Despite UIS being a great opportunity for students interested in learning more than one foreign language thanks to the context subjects (Italian, Catalan, etc.), not all students are interested in any of the two options to be learned as their second foreign language, having limited options. Variety is essential when choosing so that students do not feel tied down and forced to learn

either French or Portuguese. Participants mentioned that, although these two languages are important and recognized, they would like to have more options other than these.

Participants were asked if they consider Portuguese to be easier than French. From that, 2 LSL participants (5.9%) completely agree with the previous statement, and 9 (26.5%) somewhat agree, while 15 participants (44.1%) neither agree nor disagree as seen in Figure 29. On the other hand, 3 (8.8%) participants somewhat disagree and 5 (14.7%) strongly disagree. In the case of FLEE participants, 5 of them (14.7%) completely agree with the previous statement, 17 (50%) somewhat agree, and 10 participants (29.4%) neither agree nor disagree. On the other hand, 2 (5.9%) participants somewhat disagree as seen in Figure 30. Based on that, most of the participants claimed that the comment is relative, incomplete, or dependent on a certain comparison or relationship as all languages have their own complexity and not all people have the same learning capacity. Others claim to simply have not experienced either of both languages yet so they did not have comments.

However, others argued to agree considering that "French has more rules than Portuguese" whether related to grammar, writing, or pronunciation. The Old World Language Families Theory, or the tree of languages, is the most famous representation of language evolution and the easiest way to identify the linguistic proximity of languages. Like Spanish, the participants' mother tongue, Portuguese is an Ibero-Romance Language, and they share certain aspects that make them easier to learn in comparison to French which belongs to the branch of Galloiberian languages.

Figure 29   **Figure 30**

B6. In your opinion, what is your position towards the following phrase: "Portuguese is easier than French"

B6. In your opinion, what is your position towards the following phrase: "Portuguese is easier than French"
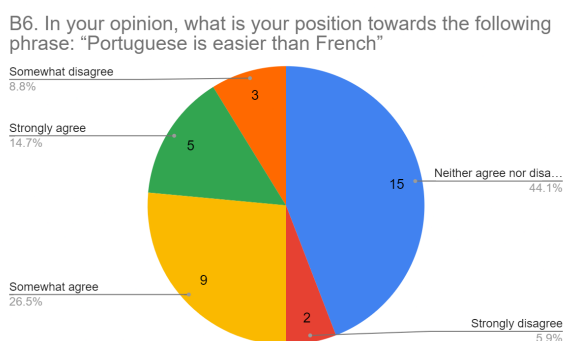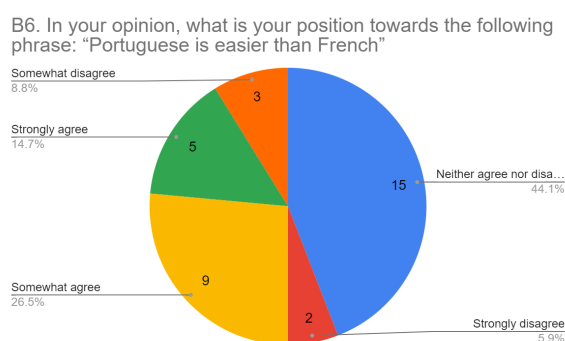
Participants were also asked about their expectations regarding the language they will learn. Among their answers, they claim to have high expectations and hope to learn the language fluently for traveling, working abroad, experiencing new cultures, improving their academic and job opportunities, communicating, and improving their language level. These factors contribute to their motivation to learn the language.

The analyzed data as seen in Figure 31 show that 26 LSL participants (76.4%) count on emotional support from their family, 20 (58.8%) count on economic support, 9 (26.4%) count on academic support from them, and 4 (11.7%) have received orientation or guidance from their family. Regarding FLEE participants in Figure 32, 31 (91.1%) receive emotional support, and 28 participants (82.3%) receive economic support. 11 participants (32.3%) receive academic support, and 6 (17.6%) participants receive orientation or guidance support. This support benefits students in their learning process. A vital part of success is creating a support system because no one achieves success alone. Achieving success is possible thanks to the support someone may receive from others (Marks, 2020).

Figure 31

C1. If you have the support of your family to learn a second foreign language, what type of support do you receive? (Multiple choice)

Figure 32

C1. If you have the support of your family to learn a second foreign language, what type of support do you receive? (Multiple choice)
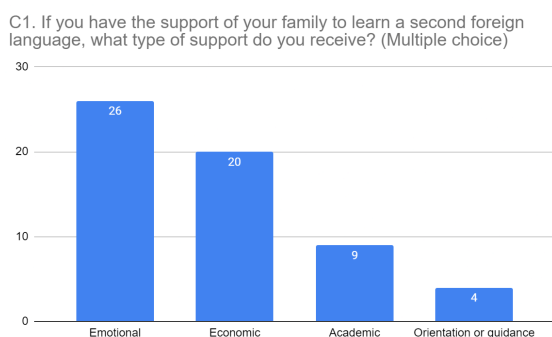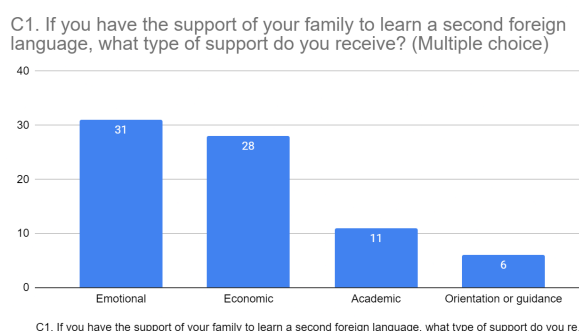
Later, when asked about the frequency in which they receive support, as seen in Figure 33, 12 LSL students (35.3%) claimed to always count on their family support, and 10 (29.4%) almost always. 10 (14.7%) sometimes have it, while 4 participants (11.8%) almost never have it, and 3 (8.8%) never have it at all. Of FLEE students, 25 (73.5%) always count on their family support, and 5 (14.7%) almost always do. 2 (5.9%) sometimes have it, while 2 participants (5.9%) almost never have had any type of help as seen in Figure 34.

Figure 33

C2. To reinforce the previous question, how often do you have the support of your family to study your second foreign langu…

Figure 34

C2. To reinforce the previous question, how often do you have the support of your family to study your second foreign langu…
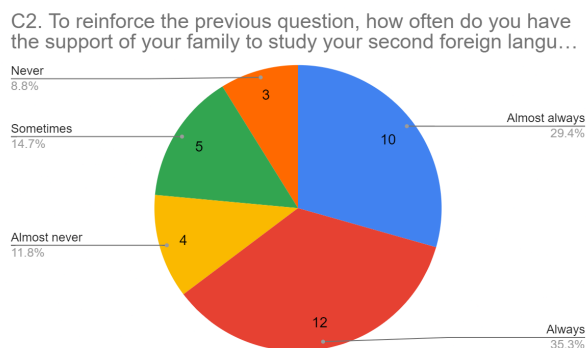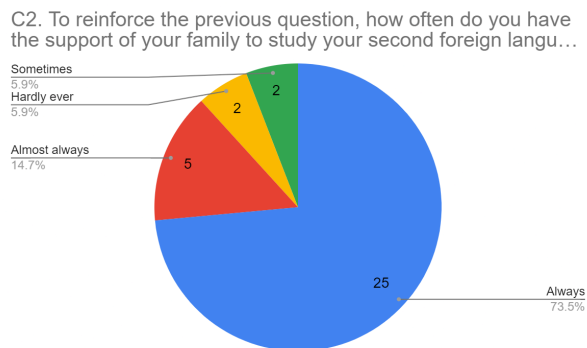
Furthermore, as seen in Figure 35, when talking about the participants' families' opinions regarding the fact that they will learn a Second Foreign Language, 27 LSL students' families (79.4%) are very favorable, and 5 (14.7%) are favorable. However, for 2 of them (5.9%) they are

indifferent. As for the FLEE students' families, 27 of them (79.4%) are very favorable, and 6 (17.6%) are favorable. However, 1 of them (2.9%) is indifferent as seen in Figure 36.
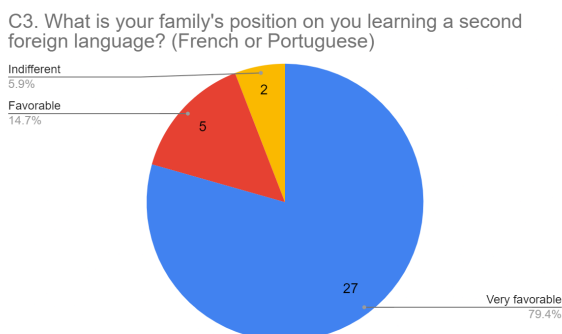
Figure 35   **Figure 36**
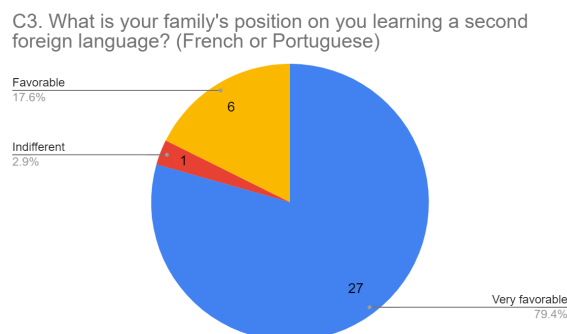
When asked about the same families' conceptions regarding whether learning their chosen second language may be useful for acquiring a job, 21 LSL participants (61.8%) strongly agreed. 6 (17.6%) somewhat agreed, and 5 of them (14.7%) neither agreed nor disagreed. While 1 of them (2.9%) somewhat disagreed and 1 (2.9%) strongly disagreed as seen in Figure 37. Of FLEE students, 24 of them (70.6%) strongly agree. 5 (14.7%) somewhat agree, and 5 of them (14.7%) neither agree nor disagree as seen in Figure 38.
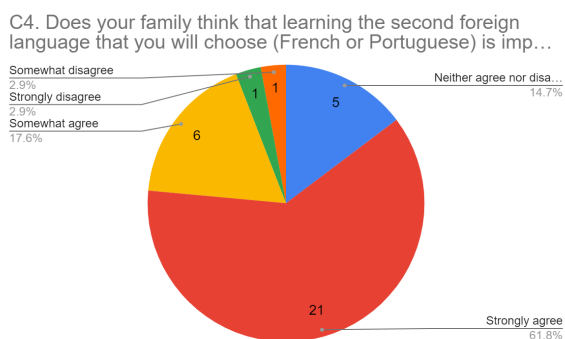
Figure 37   **Figure 38**
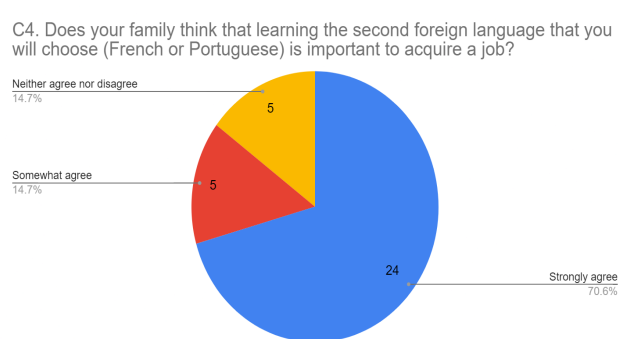
As seen in Figure 39, when asked about their families' positions regarding whether that language may be important to travel, 28 LSL students (82.4%) strongly agreed. 4 (11.8%)
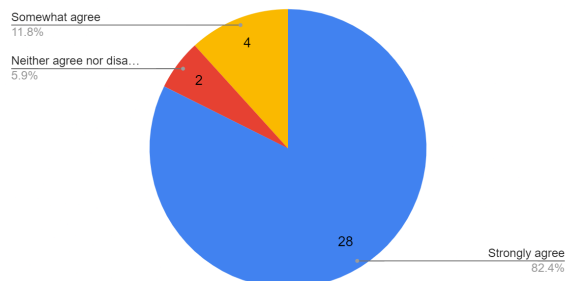
somewhat agreed, and 2 of them (5.9%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Regarding the FLEE students, 22 of them (64.7%) strongly agreed. 11 (32.4%) somewhat agreed, and 1 of them (2.9%) neither agreed nor disagreed as seen in Figure 40.

Figure 39   **Figure 40**

C5. Does your family think that learning the second foreign language you will choose (French or Portuguese) is importan…

Somewhat agree 11.8%
Neither agree nor disa… 5.9%
4
2
28
Strongly agree 82.4%

C5. Does your family think that learning the second foreign language you will choose (French or Portuguese) is important for traveling?

Neither agree nor disagree 2.9%
Somewhat agree 32.4%
1
11
22
Strongly agree 64.7%
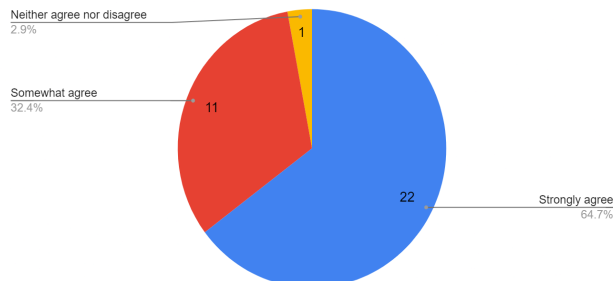
Among all these positions or beliefs, another question made was to know the participants' family beliefs respecting their second foreign language. Some of the participants from both bachelor's programs have not heard any comment from them, but others are excited as speaking another language is useful and vital for their curriculum, job opportunities, and life quality, although the process might be complex or difficult. However, 1 participant's family has shared that English is more important to achieve the aspects previously mentioned.

From that, the frequency in which these beliefs previously mentioned are present within LSL students' family environment is, as seen in Figure 41: Always for 13 participants (38.2%), for 12 (35.3%) almost always, and for 5 (14.7%) sometimes. On the other hand, 2 (5.9%) almost never and 2 (5.9%) never. For the FLEE students, the frequency in which these beliefs previously mentioned are present, as seen in Figure 42 is: for 13 participants (38.2%) always, for 13 (38.2%) almost always, and for 7 (20.6%) sometimes. On the other hand, 1 (2.9%) almost never.

Figure 41

C7. How often do these beliefs that you described in the previous question occur in your family environment?

Never 5.9%
Sometimes 14.7% — 5
2
Always 38.2% — 13
Almost always 35.3% — 12
2
Almost never 5.9%

Figure 42

C7. How often do these beliefs that you described in the previous question occur in your family environment?

Hardly ever 2.9%
Sometimes 20.6% — 7
1
Always 38.2% — 13
Almost always 38.2% — 13
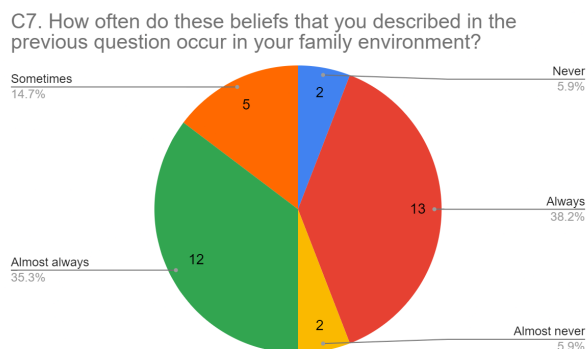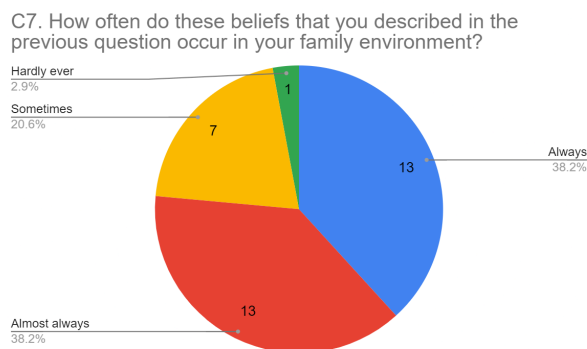
Then, when asked from whom the participants received these comments as seen in Figure 43, the results were that, for LSL students, 25 received them (73.5%) from their parents, 9 (26.4%) from their grandparents, 11 (32.3%) from distant relatives such as uncles, aunts, or cousins, 10 (29.4%) from teachers, and 2 (5.8%) have not received these type of comments from anyone. Of the FLEE students, as seen in Figure 44, the participants mainly received those comments from their parents with 31 (91.7%), 9 (26.4%) participants from their grandparents, 7 participants (20.5%) from their distant relatives, 6 (17.6%) participants from their teachers and only 2 participants (5.8%) from their sisters.

Figure 43

C8. From whom do you mainly receive these comments? (multiple choice)

Parents	Grandparents	Distant relatives	Teachers	Nobody
25	9	11	10	2

Figure 44

C8. From whom do you mainly receive these comments? (multiple choice)

Parents	Grandparents	Distant relatives	Teachers	Sister
31	9	7	6	2

C8. From whom do you mainly receive these comments? (multiple choice)
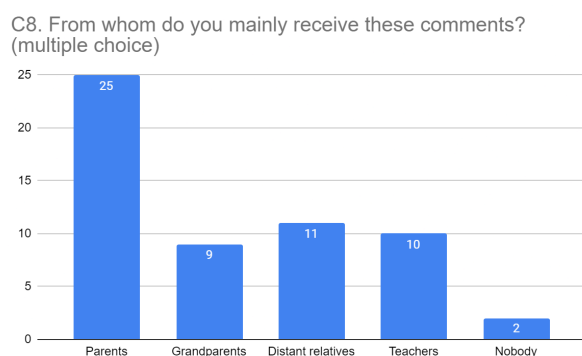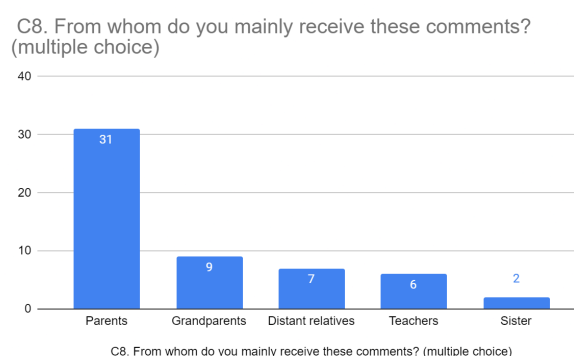
Another question was about the type of comments that are present in the participants' social sphere such as friends, acquaintances, or classmates regarding the fact that they are

learning a second language. Most of the participants have not received any comments at all. Some were excited and have been told that French and Portuguese are useful as well for personal development and job opportunities but English is better in all aspects. The predominance of English as a lingua franca today has been inevitable as has been demonstrated throughout history and attributed to a combination of historical, cultural, and political factors. The rise of the United States as a global power, the concentration of cultural industries in English-speaking countries, and the use of English for international communication and diplomacy have all contributed to the widespread use and influence of the language (Hagège, 2012). The data analyzed shows that the frequency in which these beliefs previously mentioned are present within the social environment of LSL participants as seen in Figure 45 is: for 9 of them (26.5%) always, for 11 (32.4%) almost always, and for 7 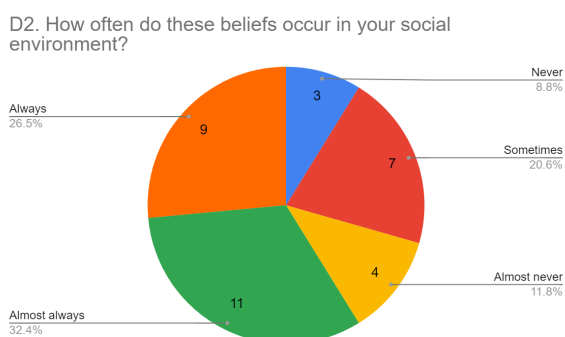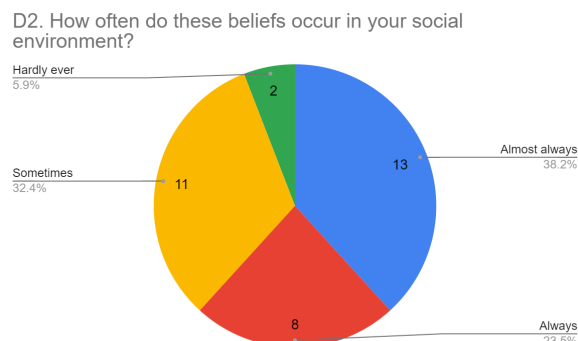(20.6%) sometimes. On the other hand, 4 (11.8%) almost never and 3 (8.8%) never. As for FLEE students in Figure 46, the frequency in which these beliefs previously mentioned are present within their social environment is: for 8 of them (23.5%) always, 13 (38.2%) almost always, and for 11 (32.4%) sometimes. On the other hand, 2 (5.9%) almost never.

Figure 45   **Figure 46**

Another question was whether learning a second foreign language influences their personal, academic, and professional growth. From that, 27 LSL participants (79.4%) strongly

agree, and 6 (17.6%) somewhat agree. However, 1 participant (2.9%) disagrees as seen in Figure 47. As seen in Figure 48, of FLEE participants, 25 participants (73.5%) strongly agree, and 8 (23.5%) somewhat agree. However, 1 participant (2.9%) neither agrees nor disagrees.
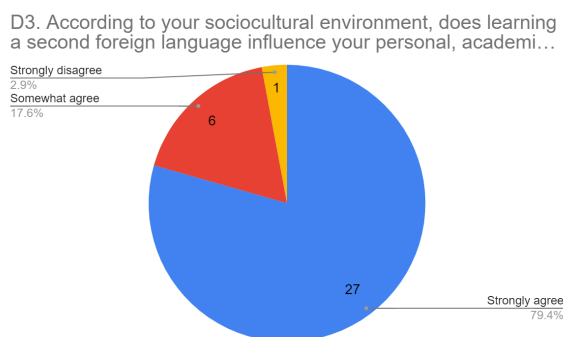
Figure 47   **Figure 48**
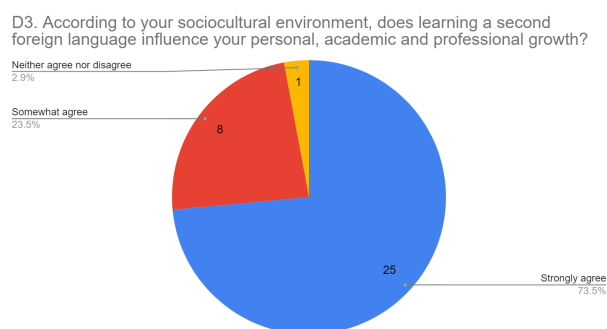
Another finding was that these opinions, for 25 LSL participants (73.5%) as seen in Figure 49, came mainly from friends. 15 (44.1%) came from acquaintances, 8 (23.5%) from their sentimental partners, 4 (11.7%) from nobody, 5 (14.7%) from colleagues, 11 (32.3%) from classmates, and 1 (2.9%) from professors. As seen in Figure 50, 29 (91.7%) FLEE participants mainly received those comments from their friends, 21 participants from their acquaintances, 11 (32.3%) participants from their career classmates, 7 participants (20.5%) from their couple, 2 participants (5.8%) from their family and coworkers and only 1 participant (2.9%) from his teacher.
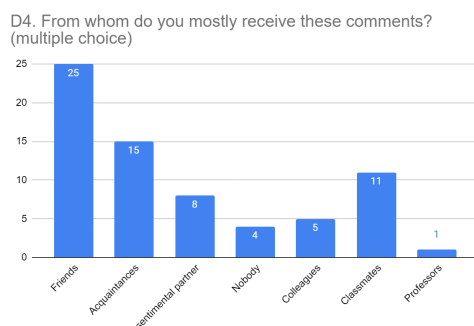
Figure 49   **Figure 50**
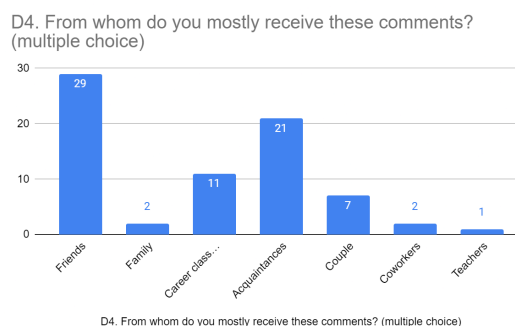
4.2.   First-Level Language Students Data

For this survey, there were open questions and the information was divided among French and Portuguese students.

Participants were asked about the reasons why they chose French as their second foreign language. The findings reveal that 15 participants chose French because they are interested in the country and its linguistic and cultural components. Also, 3 participants chose this language because they think this can bring better both academic and job opportunities in the future. Another 3 participants mentioned they chose French because of people´s comments about the language. Finally, 2 participants mentioned that they already knew the language and they wanted to keep learning a different language. Something to remark is that the influence of the French language was aided by the clear and methodical nature of its grammar and pronunciation. The logical structure of French, which places the subject of the sentence first, followed by the verb and then the object, aligns with the natural order of human reasoning, making the French language easy to understand (Rivarol, 1783).

The reasons why some decided to learn Portuguese may include the following: The first reason pointed out by one participant was the fact that learning a second foreign language is mandatory. But going deeper into that, the second and third reasons by half of the participants are that they have both a sociolinguistic interest and an academic interest in how the language course offered at UIS University praised for its methodology and quality might improve their job opportunities. Finally, the fourth reason according to half of the population is that they do not have any interest in learning the French language due to its complexity and previous bad experiences regarding the subject's methodology and teachers. As for French-language complexity, the idea goes against the natural order of human reasoning proposed previously by Rivarol. Negative comments such as preferences, personal values, or beliefs, give subjective

characteristics to languages (The University of Adelaide, 2014) regarding the desire to learn them or not as there is no evidence that might prove it. Besides, an argument that goes against those negative beliefs presented by the participants is that in the past, the French language represented a flourishing civilization and was associated with power and influence (Hagège, 2012), being at a certain point a hypercentral tongue. However, due to many historical events such as the rise of the English language during the expansionism of the British Empire and the First and Second World Wars, the French language turned into a supercentral tongue that keeps having great relevance (as reflected in the amount of participants that study or plan to study the language) although not as much as a supercentral languages such as English.

The reasons why French language students decided to not learn Portuguese were that five participants had no interest in learning Portuguese. Another reason for not learning Portuguese is that four participants believe that they have fewer opportunities in the future. Another reason is the schedule of the subject. Portuguese only has one group with one specific schedule and no options to choose another schedule, so three participants said this is one reason to not choose Portuguese. Another three participants did not have any specific reason to not choose Portuguese. Finally, some different reasons supported by only one participant each, are the following: one has a preference for French, another person believes that can learn Portuguese without help, and the last one because any of his friends chose Portuguese and he didn't want to feel alone. On the other hand, the reasons why Portuguese language students decided to not learn French, mainly by 5 of the participants was that French is a complex subject with a very particular pronunciation. Among them, there is 1 participant who claims the previous idea due to people's comments about the language, the teachers, and the experiences that had after taking the subject a semester.

The French language students' learning expectations as a result of learning French may include the following: The first reason pointed out by 20 participants was to travel abroad for academic or entertainment purposes. The second reason for 13 of the participants was to meet new cultures and communities. Finally, the third reason for 16 participants was to improve their job & income opportunities. For the Portuguese language students, findings show that students' expectations as a result of learning Portuguese may include the following: The first reason pointed out by 4 participants was to travel abroad for academic or entertainment purposes. The second reason for 5 of the participants was to meet new cultures and communities. The third reason for the same amount was to improve their job & income opportunities. Apart from that, 1 participant expects to use it for romantic motives and 1 participant does not have expectations apart from fulfilling the request of learning a second foreign language.

The beliefs that French language participants have are similar. First, the majority of them, 16 participants, think learning French is difficult, specifically pronunciation. This goes against Rivarol's idea that French aligns with the natural order of human reasoning as mentioned on page 50.

Then 4 participants agreed that French is similar to Spanish. 2 participants thought French would be easy but they realized it is not. Finally, one person thinks French is an excellent language and another participant thought he needs to know English before learning French. For Portuguese language participants, findings include the following: The first reason pointed out by 5 participants was the students' ease of learning the language, mainly because the language is similar to Spanish. However, there were 2 of them who shared their thoughts, which were based on stereotypes such as the use of the suffix "-inho" for most of the words, or the wrong belief that Portuguese is just a badly spoken Spanish.

The French language participants' beliefs before learning the language were that for 16 participants, the majority of them, learning French is difficult, specifically pronunciation. 4 participants agreed that French is similar to Spanish. 2 participants thought French would be easy but they realized it is not. Finally, one person thinks French is an excellent language and another participant thought he needs to know English before learning French. Findings of Portuguese language participants' beliefs before learning the language were for 5 participants, the students' ease of learning the language mainly because it is similar to Spanish. However, there were 2 participants with thoughts based on stereotypes as previously mentioned.

The family, friends, and relatives' perceptions about the fact that some participants are learning French were, for 13 participants, related to the feeling of pride and like regarding learning French, all positive comments. Also, five participants mentioned the perception that learning French is useful for the future as the language offers more opportunities. According to Rivarol (1783), the French language is expected to survive in the future due to its literature and clarity by claiming that "Les États se renverseront, et notre langue sera toujours retenue dans la tempête par deux ancres, sa littérature et sa clarté" (p.15). That suggests that even as empires and kingdoms fall, the French language will endure due to its rich literary tradition and its clear and logical nature. Finally, three participants mentioned the disinterest people have when talking about French learning. For the participants that are learning Portuguese, findings show that half of the parents' participants are proud of them learning Portuguese. However, there is 1 participant whose parents think of learning the language as a long-term issue as they consider this one to have a lack of job opportunities.

When asked whether Portuguese has the same relevance as French within the university, French language participants claim that for most students French is more relevant than

Portuguese. Despite the university offering the same amount of levels for both languages, French is more demanded by students. An example is the fact that, in some semesters, there are fewer or missing groups of a certain level of Portuguese. Besides, when talking about history and education, English and French are the ones whose historical events are taught, leading to unconsciously putting aside Portuguese and giving the language a lack of visibility or promotion. For Portuguese language students, findings show that 3 participants speculate that Portuguese does have the same or even more relevance as students who choose this language finish the course with a higher language level compared to the other language option, even though both of them have the same amount of hours. However, the other half of the participants think that French has more relevance as UIS foreign language students tend to choose this one more due to job opportunities or because there are more scholarships and exchange programs related to French.

French language participants' conceptions of whether their second foreign language has the same relevance as other languages show that for most of the participants, there are other languages such as English that are more relevant than French. However, that might also depend on the importance students give to the languages they are learning. For Students of Portuguese, findings show that students' assumptions include the following: 5 participants claim that Portuguese does not have the same importance as other languages such as English (which is mandatory for the career) and French. On the other hand, 1 participant claims that Portuguese does have the same relevance as might be complex to learn compared to the ones mentioned before.

French language participants were asked to mention three reasons why learning that language is important. Findings show that for most of the participants, learning French is

important to increase the proper knowledge, as well as job and study opportunities. Besides, the language might lead to cultural exchanges with francophone speakers and their surroundings. On the other hand, 2 participants argued that one is learning the language for romantic purposes and the other for health reasons such as avoiding Alzheimer's. For Portuguese language participants, findings include the following: 4 participants recommend learning the language to improve job opportunities; another 2 for traveling, 2 for academic purposes such as expanding their knowledge, and finally 2 participants for learning about different cultures.

Participants were introduced to a hypothetical situation where "María thinks that learning French or Portuguese is useless" and asked if they had heard a similar expression about both languages, in which situations, and from whom. Findings from French language participants show that nearly half of the participants have not ever heard negative comments about Portuguese or French. On the other hand, participants who have listened to those comments discrediting languages said that they are commonly shared in extra-academic situations at home by a relative, at university by students from other careers, or in social spheres with the idea that they are only useful for flirting and dating, among others. Something important to add was certain comments heard outside the academic environment referring in a negative way to the native and ancient languages of the country. For Portuguese language participants, findings show that negative comments that students have heard about Portuguese include the following: Half of the participants claim to have never heard a nasty comment about learning Portuguese. However, the other half have heard things such as being less important than French or that learning the language might be boring. Most of the negative comments come from students of other careers.

When questioned about the French language participants' points of view about the language currently, findings show that for most of the participants learning French is very

important at the point of fostering language learning based on many good experiences and benefits, finding the language entertaining. However, there are a few students who find the language exhausting and demotivating due to its complexity (compared to other languages), negative comments about the teachers and their methodology, as well as the low level that students have when finishing the whole language course. For Portuguese participants who are learning the language, findings show that students' points of view about Portuguese include the following: 1 claims that the language is more complex than what people may think. As for the rest of the participants, they praise the language in every aspect such as the teacher's commitment to making learning easier, interesting, beneficial, and useful, demonstrating a great capacity for patience. Furthermore, the fact that the Portuguese language also provides job opportunities in places such as Portugal or Brazil.

4.3.   Fifth-Level Language Students Data

For this survey, there were open questions and the information was divided among French and Portuguese students.

French students were asked about the reasons why they chose French as their second foreign language. The findings reveal that most participants like and are interested in the language and its pronunciation. The second reason is to have additional job opportunities in the future. Finally, only one participant has another reason which is the interest in literature. For Portuguese students, findings show that students' reasons why they decided to learn Portuguese may include the following: The main reason pointed out by five of the participants is that they have both a sociolinguistic interest and an academic interest in the language course offered at UIS University. Second, one participant believes that Portuguese is easier than French, which goes hand in hand with The Old World Language Families theory and the linguistic proximity of

languages mentioned on page 42. Finally, the third reason according to one participant is that they do not have any interest in learning the French language due to stereotypes such as complexity and previous bad experiences.

The reasons why French language students decided to not learn Portuguese were that the majority of the participants did not have an interest in learning Portuguese, so they chose French as it is the language they like. Another participant mentioned that Portuguese is not difficult since it is similar to Spanish. Finally, two participants did not have any specific reason for not learning Portuguese. On the other hand, among the Portuguese students' reasons for not learning French was, by 3 of the participants, that French is a complex subject with a very particular pronunciation. Also, another 3 participants don't have an interest in learning French. Among them, there is 1 participant who claimed the previous idea due to people's comments about French teachers' teaching style.

French students' expectations after having learned the language were that the first reason pointed out by 5 participants was to travel abroad for academic or entertainment purposes. The second reason for 6 of the participants was to meet new cultures and communities. Finally, the third reason for the same amount as the first one was to improve their job & income opportunities. For Portuguese students, findings show that students' expectations as a result of learning Portuguese may include the following: The first reason pointed out by 5 participants was to travel abroad for academic or entertainment purposes. The second reason for 4 of the participants was to meet new cultures and communities. Finally, the third reason for the same amount was to improve their job & income opportunities.

French students' beliefs about their target language were that three of the participants thought French would be easy to learn. Another person said that it is a nice language with a nice

pronunciation and finally, one participant said it would be difficult. For Portuguese students, the findings reveal that the majority of participants believe that Portuguese is easy and similar to Spanish. Only one person does not have any belief in particular.

The family, friends, and relatives' perceptions about the fact that some participants learned French were that the majority of participants said their relatives felt pride and affection towards learning French, and the majority had positive answers. Also one believes it is good for the future. Finally, only one person mentioned that it is questioned about why French and not English. For Portuguese students, findings reveal that the perceptions that their family and friends have are positive for most participants. Three participants said their relatives think learning Portuguese is something useful for their future and two participants said learning Portuguese is good. One participant said their relatives consider it as a waste of time and another as a reason to be proud of.

When asked whether Portuguese has the same relevance as French within the university, the majority of French students, 4, believe French is more important due to reasons such as there are more French courses, as well as teachers and activities related to the language. On the other hand, two participants believe both languages are important equally. Alternatively, the majority of Portuguese students, 5, believe French is more important due to reasons such as there are more French courses, as well as teachers and activities related to the language. On the other hand, two participants believe both languages are important equally.

French students' conceptions of whether their second foreign language has the same relevance as other languages show that most of the participants believe that English is more important than French. The rest of the participants, 2, believe that French is more important than other languages. Portuguese students´ conceptions reveal that half of the participants believe

Portuguese is not relevant in comparison to other languages. The other half think it is slightly more relevant than other languages. Finally, only one participant believes Portuguese is relevant in comparison with other languages.

French students were asked to mention three reasons why learning that language is important. The findings reveal that four participants agreed that the reason to learn French is to have better academic and job opportunities in the future. Also, three participants agree that learning French makes communication easy. Finally, two participants have a cultural interest in the language and that is the motivation they have. As for Portuguese students, the findings reveal that two of the most important reasons to learn Portuguese are first the interest in the culture of the language and second the interest in communication with Portuguese speakers. Another reason is the job and academic opportunities that are in Brazil for foreigners.

Participants were introduced to a hypothetical situation where "María thinks that learning French or Portuguese is useless" and asked if they had heard a similar expression about both languages, in which situations, and from whom. Findings from French students show that two participants didn't hear any expression related to the language. On the contrary, two participants have heard that French is overrated. Also, one participant said that people said French is more important than Portuguese. Finally, one person heard from other students that outside the university there is no space to practice French. As for Portuguese students, findings reveal that two participants heard that there are other languages more important than Portuguese. Another comment is related to teachers, who believe that Portuguese is not as important as other languages. Also, for students who have to make the decision of which language they choose, French or Portuguese, the majority choose French. And finally, one comment related to the disinformation of the people who don't know the value of Portuguese.

When questioned about the French language participants' viewpoints about the language currently, findings show that three of the participants think French is a difficult language because of the grammar rules and the pronunciation, although they originally thought it would be easy. One participant believes the process of learning Portuguese is more difficult than learning French. Another participant believes the fact that learning French is mandatory is not a motivation. Finally, only one participant mentioned that he enjoys learning French. As for Portuguese students, findings reveal that the majority of participants have a good personal opinion regarding Portuguese. The most common one is that they enjoy the language and the methodology of the professor during the classes. Other opinions are related to the culture of the language, which is interesting. Finally, one participant mentioned that learning Portuguese is easy.

4.4.   Graduates Data

The analyzed data, as seen in Figure 51, showed that most of the participants were women, 24 (70.6%). As for the others, 10 participants (29.4%) were men. Besides, most of the participants, 22, were between 18 and 25 years old (41.2%) and 9 were between 26-30 years old (26.5%). And 3 participants (8.8%) were between 31-39 years old as seen in Figure 52.
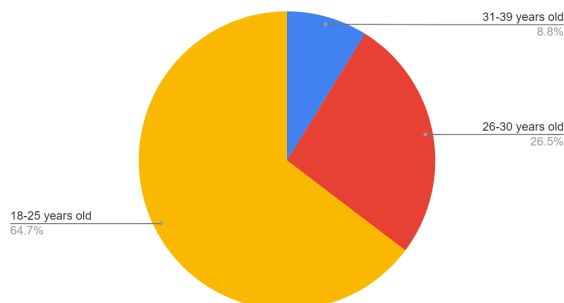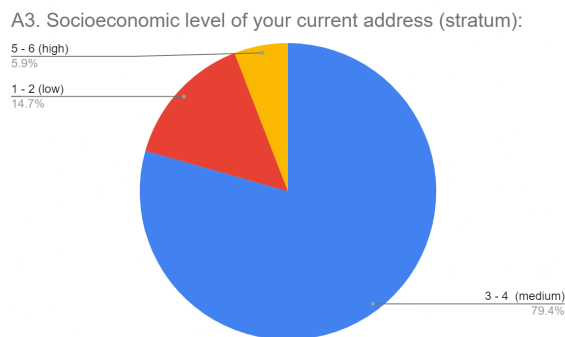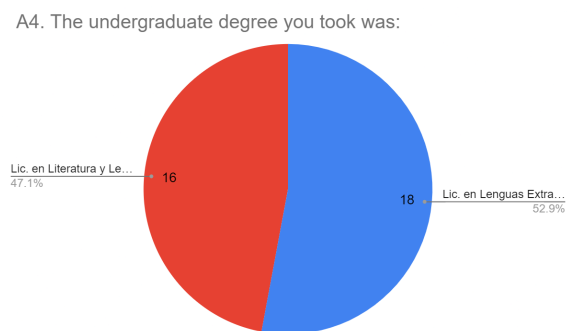
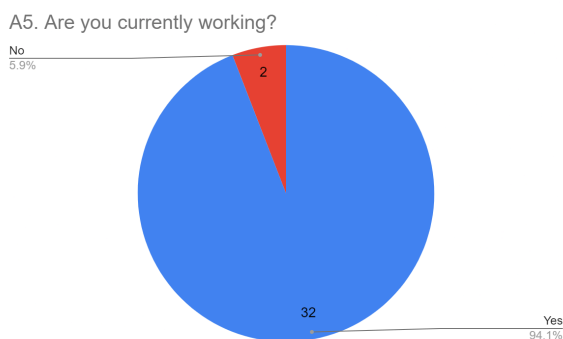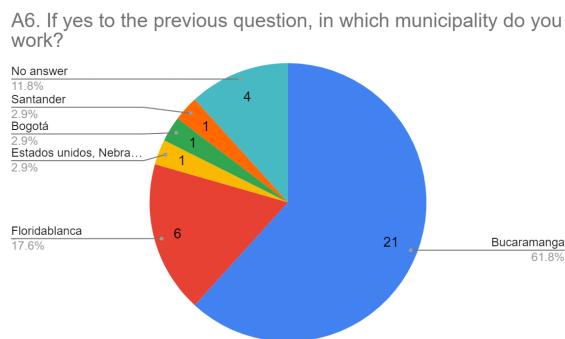**Figure 51**   **Figure 52**
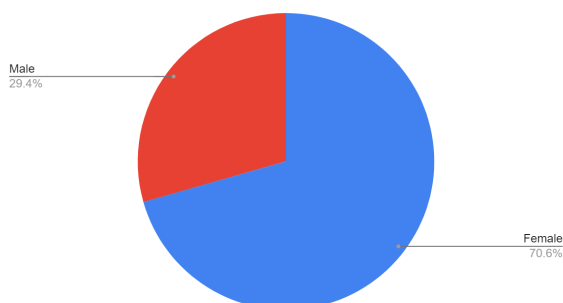
As for their socioeconomic strata where participants are currently living, as seen in Figure 53 the analyzed data showed that 27 participants (79.4%), which are the majority of the sample, belong to medium socio-economic strata, while the other 5 (14.7%) belong to low socio-economic strata, and 2 participants (5.9%) belong to high socio-economic strata. As for their college studies, 18 participants (52.9%) graduated with a Bachelor's degree in foreign languages and 16 participants (47.1%) graduated with a UIS bachelor's degree in literature and Spanish language as seen in Figure 54.
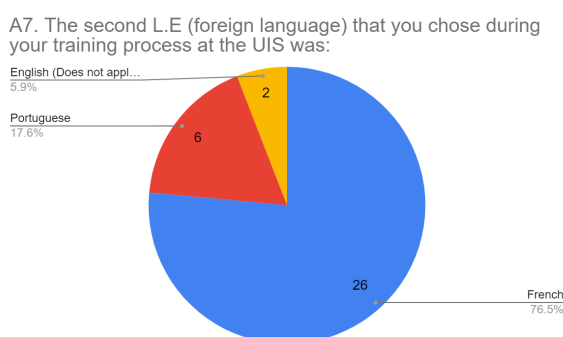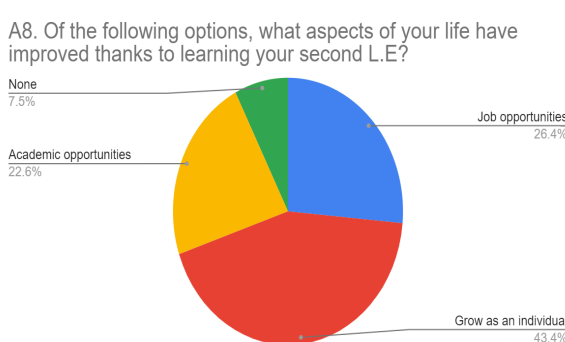
Figure 53   **Figure 54**

The majority of them, 32 (94.1%), are currently working, while 2 participants (5.9%) are not as seen in Figure 55. Among them, 21 participants (61.8%), which is the majority of the sample, are currently working in Bucaramanga, 6 participants (17.6%) in Floridablanca, while the others work in different places such as Bogota and Nebraska, United States. In addition, 4 participants did not answer as seen in Figure 56.

Figure 55

Figure 56

A5. Are you currently working?

A6. If yes to the previous question, in which municipality do you work?

The analyzed data in Figure 57 showed that 26 participants (76.5%), which is the majority of the sample, chose French, while the other 6 participants (17.6%) chose Portuguese. Furthermore, as seen in Figure 58, 23 participants (43.4%) mentioned they grew as individuals, 13 (26.4%) participants mentioned that their job opportunities improved, and 11 participants (22.6%) mentioned that their academic opportunities improved. Finally, 4 participants (7.5%) mentioned that no aspect of their lives has improved.
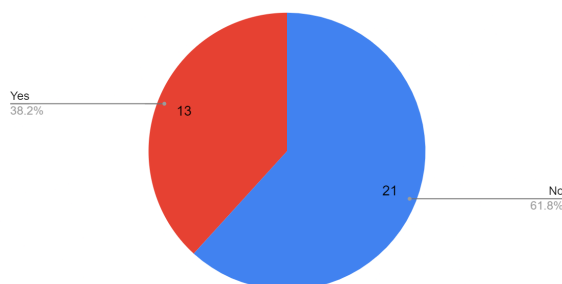
Figure 57

Figure 58

A7. The second L.E (foreign language) that you chose during your training process at the UIS was:

A8. Of the following options, what aspects of your life have improved thanks to learning your second L.E?

The analyzed data in Figure 59 showed that 13 participants (38.2%) have had the opportunity to get involved in higher academic spaces while 21 (61.8%) have not. Among the ones who claimed a positive answer, 6 participants (46.2%%) have had the opportunity to get a master's degree, and 3 participants (23.1%) in a seminar. Other participants mentioned a

congress, postgraduate, ENEUF (National Meeting of French University Students), and being an
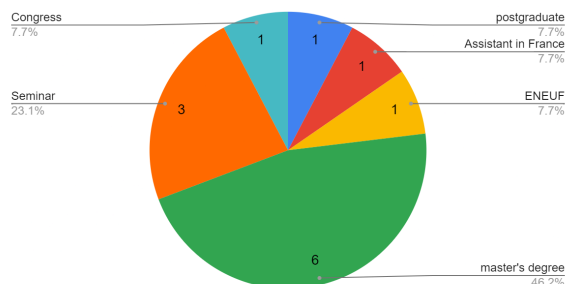
assistant in France as seen in Figure 60.

Figure 59   **Figure 60**

The analyzed data in Figure 61 showed that the participants fulfilled the following

aspects thanks to learning their second L.E. First, 21 participants (36.8%) got to know new

cultures and communities. 14 participants (24.6%) fulfilled their job opportunities. 8 participants

(14%) could travel abroad and communicate with natives. 7 participants (12.3%) mentioned to

fulfill academic opportunities and 6 participants (10.5%) did not fulfill any aspect. Finally, only

1 participant (2.9%) mentioned being able to read literature in the foreign language learned.
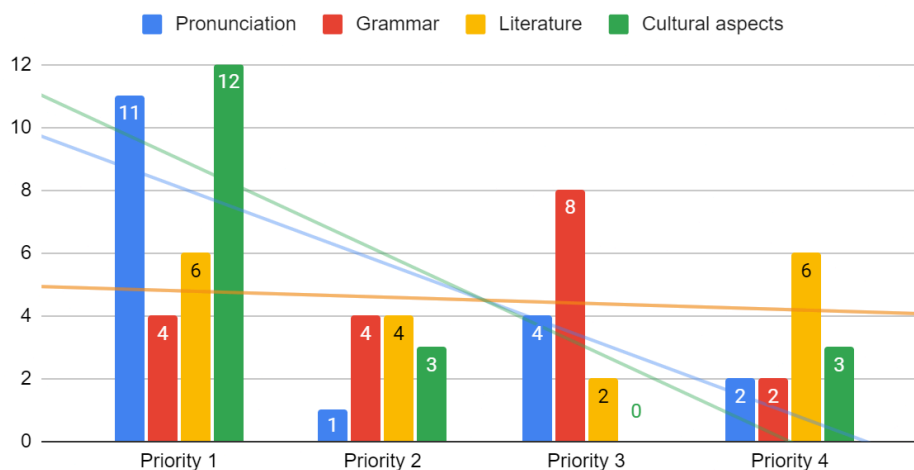
Figure 61

In justification of the previous question, the graduates of both degrees mentioned some

details such as: The majority of participants mention that thanks to this they have been able to

enrich their resume and obtain better job opportunities with a salary better than the average and also improve their quality of life. Others also mention that thanks to learning their second L.E. they have been able to travel either to Brazil or France, interact with people passionate about the language, and live an enriching experience. Some participants also mention that thanks to learning a second L.E. they have been able to consume content in this language, such as literature, music, or films. Finally, some participants also said that they have been able to communicate with native speakers of this language and have been able to start conversations and understand without major problems, which makes them feel good.

At the moment of discussing graduates' priorities regarding their foreign language, opinions tend to clash. Due to the variety of priority options, the results were obtained through trends to value what options repeated the most. Based on that, the factor that is most appreciated by FLEE graduates is the cultural aspect, followed by pronunciation, literature, and finally, grammar as seen in Figure 62. On the contrary, LSL graduates prefer pronunciation above cultural aspects, followed by literature and finally grammar as seen in Figure 63.

Figure 62

A13. For the second L.E that you studied, choose from 1 to 4 the appreciation you have towards certain factors of the language (Where 1 corresponds to what attracts your attention the most and 4 corresponds to what attracts your attention the least)
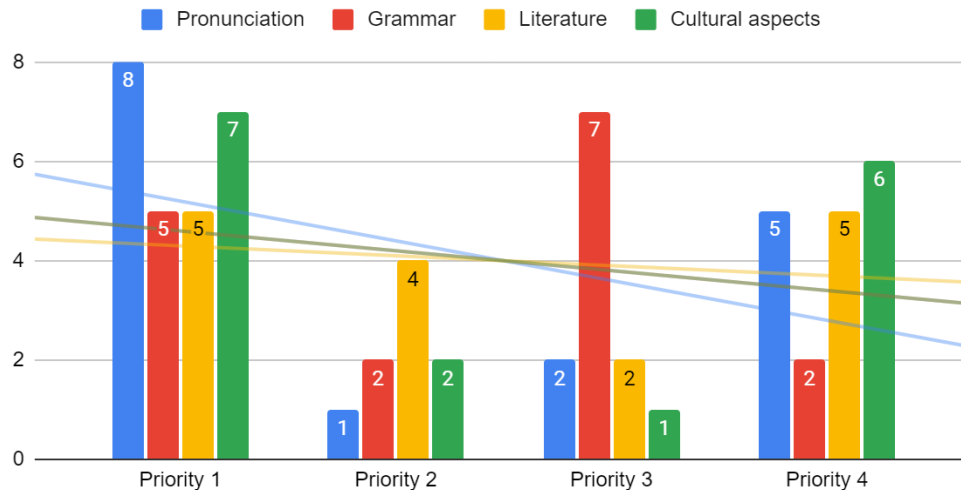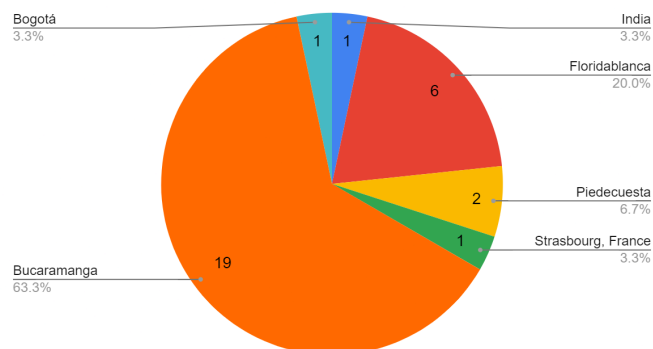
Figure 63

A13. For the second L.E that you studied, choose from 1 to 4 the appreciation you have towards certain factors of the language (Where 1 corresponds to what attracts your attention the most and 4 corresponds to what attracts your attention the least)

From all the samples as seen in Figure 64, 19 participants (63.3%), which are the majority of the sample, currently reside in Bucaramanga. 6 participants (20%) are in Floridablanca, 2 participants (6.7%) are in Piedecuesta while the others are in different less frequent places such as Bogota, Strasbourg (France) and India.
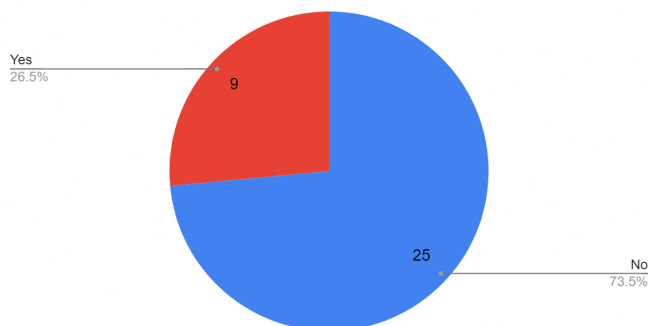
Figure 64

A14. Currently, you reside in:

There was a question about whether participants have had the opportunity to officially teach their second L.E. From that and as seen in Figure 65, 9 participants (26.5%) have had the opportunity while 25 (73.5%) have not.

Figure 65

B1. Have you officially taught your second L.E. in any public or private institution?

In relation to the previous question, 1 participant has had the opportunity to work at the Brazilian Consulate - Teaching Portuguese for Foreigners (PLE). 5 participants have worked as French teachers in public and private institutions, the latter being the most frequent places in the field. Based on that, 28, which are the majority of participants, answered affirmatively that for them learning their second language is worth the study. By knowing this second L.E. job offers will be broader and your resume will be more valuable. However, 6 participants gave a negative answer saying that for them their second L.E. is not worth the study as "those languages are not well known in Colombia and job offers are limited".

Among the challenges mentioned by some participants (since not all answered this question), 2 mentioned the difficulty of teaching French to early children since they already have to learn their mother tongue, which makes this process very difficult compared to young people or adults. 2 other participants mentioned the role emotions play in learning as some students are

not motivated to learn a second language. There are challenges mentioned, such as generating a connection between culture and language, teaching grammar, the fear of having the wrong accent, the fear of ridicule, and comments from students for not being native teachers of that language. Besides, the expectations that the participants have managed to meet are: to learn more about Brazilian culture and be able to travel to the country for work and tourism purposes, awaken the students' interest in the French language and culture, develop skills as a teacher, and access a salary increase.

5.   Conclusions

In conclusion, as people have different wills, they have different opinions on the same topic. "...s'il y a guerre des langues, c'est bien parce qu'il y a plurilinguisme, un monde qui n'aurait qu'une langue ne connaîtrait pas ce type de conflit…" (Calvet, 1987, p.10). The data reveals that French students predominantly select French as their second foreign language out of a genuine fondness for the language and its pronunciation, alongside considerations of job prospects and literary interest. Conversely, Portuguese students often opt for Portuguese due to sociolinguistic and academic interests, anticipating that is less challenging than French and citing negative stereotypes and past experiences as reasons for their disinterest. The choice to not learn the other language seems rooted in a lack of enthusiasm, with some perceiving Portuguese as similar to Spanish and French being viewed as complex with challenging pronunciation. Based on that, this paper follows Bellay's (2001) idea that, "...on ne doit ainsi louer une langue et blâmer l'autre : vu qu'elles viennent toutes d'une même source et origine, c'est la fantaisie des hommes, et ont été formées d'un même jugement, à une même fin..." (p. 3). On the other hand, these findings highlight that French is the more popular choice for both groups, driven by a

combination of personal interest and perceived academic and career advantages. This underscores the perception that French holds greater utility across various academic contexts.

Also, the data underscores the significant influence of both family and friends on participants' language learning journeys. The majority of participants enjoy strong support from their families, who recognize the personal, academic, and professional benefits of acquiring a second language, although English sometimes takes precedence in certain cases. Friends also play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards language learning, with their comments and opinions impacting students' motivations and choices. Overall, French is generally perceived positively by both family and friends, associated with pride and future opportunities, though some individuals do encounter disinterest from others regarding their French learning pursuits. For Portuguese, parents are generally proud, but concerns about job opportunities were expressed by one participant's family.

Additionally, the data highlights the diverse perspectives and opinions among participants regarding the relevance and importance of French and Portuguese in their university context. Some participants expressed a desire for a broader range of language options, suggesting an opportunity for universities to enhance language programs. French is generally perceived as more relevant within the university, with higher demand. However, opinions on the relevance of Portuguese vary, with some students valuing it equally or even more due to language proficiency outcomes. French students often see English as more important, while Portuguese students have divided beliefs about Portuguese's relevance compared to other languages. "…ne me puis assez émerveiller de l'étrange opinion d'aucuns savants, qui pensent que... ...le langage seulement, devait être jugée bonne ou mauvaise" (Bellay, 2001, p. 3). Moreover, participants' experiences suggest that both languages face challenges in terms of perception and opportunities for practice

outside the university. Nonetheless, Portuguese students generally hold a positive view of their language, culture, and teaching methodology.

Regarding graduates, the data highlights the multifaceted benefits and challenges experienced by them in their language learning and teaching journeys. Positive involvement in language programs led some participants to pursue advanced degrees, attend various events, work as assistants abroad, and explore new cultures and communities. Graduates of foreign languages and literature and Spanish language programs emphasized cultural aspects in French and pronunciation in Portuguese, with literature and grammar also holding importance. While a minority had the opportunity to officially teach their second language, those who did gained diverse teaching experiences. Overall, most participants found studying their second language to be a worthwhile endeavor, citing expanded job opportunities and numerous valuable experiences. However, challenges such as teaching young children, motivating students, bridging culture and language, and addressing accents were noted, alongside the fulfillment of expectations, including cultural immersion, professional growth, and increased teaching skills.

6.   Recommendations

Based on the previous research, the university should work on campaigns promoting the Portuguese language so that more students get to know the advantages that learning the language can offer and, hence, have more students and teachers in the bachelor's programs. In this way, further studies can delve into the challenges and benefits experienced by language program graduates, emphasizing the development of teaching skills and addressing potential gaps in language education programs. Additionally, exploring the influence of linguistic stereotypes and prejudices on language choice and learning motivation are topics that vary depending on the

context, opening up a large number of studies and findings related to different languages due to their subjective nature which varies across cultures.

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