

Article

Language Vitality of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea: Language Use and Attitudes

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Abstract: This study investigates the use of and attitudes towards, Spanish in the multilingual Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the only African country with Spanish as an official language. The Spanish dialect of Equatorial Guinea is an understudied area, although descriptive research on the Spanish language spoken there began in the 1950s. Very few research studies have been carried out on the sociolinguistic dynamic of this multilingual country. Four scales of language vitality were utilized and it was demonstrated that Spanish in Equatorial Guinea is not endangered and continues to thrive. An online survey was also performed to assess Spanish language use and attitudes towards the Equatoguinean variety of Spanish. Respondents were highly educated, middle-class and spoke at least two languages. It was observed that Spanish was the functional language in almost all the sociocultural contexts or domains. Equatorial Guineans share that Spanish is important to their identity as the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa.

Keywords: Equatorial Guinea; language vitality; language use; language attitudes; Spanish language

1. Introduction

This study investigates the use of and attitudes towards, Spanish in the multilingual Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the only African country with Spanish as an official language ([Lipski 2000](#); [Schlumpf 2016](#)). The population of Equatorial Guinea is approximately 1.2 million, with 28% of the inhabitants living in the insular region (Great Elobey, Little Elobey, Bioko, Corisco and Annobón) and 72% in the Continental region (Rio Muni) ([Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Guinea Ecuatorial 2015](#)). A linguistic survey shows that Spanish shares its official status in Equatorial Guinea with two other European languages, French and Portuguese. Autochthonous languages are recognized as integral to the national culture ([Ley Fundamental de Guinea Ecuatorial 2012](#)). Additionally, Annobones/Fa d'ambô and pidgin English (pichinglis or pichi) are spoken, although the latter is not officially recognized due to its stigmatized status in society and is therefore treated as an “invisible language” ([Lipski 2000](#)). Figure 1 summarizes the number of speakers of different languages in Equatorial Guinea.

[Ruiz Martínez \(2002\)](#) points out there is no such thing as a monolingual Spanish-speaking Equatorial Guinean. She also mentions that predominant use of indigenous languages (Fang, Bubi, Benga, Kombe/Ndowe, Bujeba/Bisio, Balengue and Seki/Baseke), spoken in different geographic regions, influences the Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea. Additionally, the presence of other languages (English, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Korean, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo) has been noted ([Morgades Besari 2005](#)).

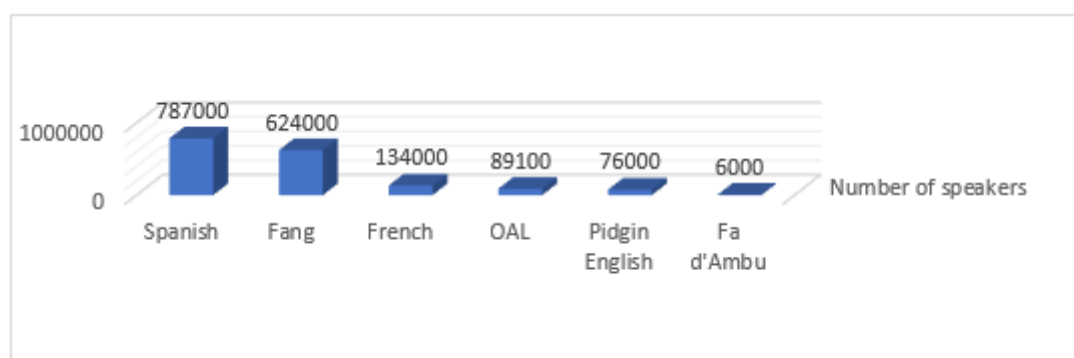


Figure 1. Number of Language Speakers in Equatorial Guinea. Source: *Ethnologue* (Simons and Fennig 2018). The breakdown of other autochthonous languages [OAL] is shown in Table 1.

Linguistic Situation

The autochthonous languages mainly belong to the Bantu language family, with the most spoken languages being Fang, Bubi, Ndowe and Bujeba (Simons and Fennig 2018). Bubi is indigenous to Bioko Island. Benga is spoken in the coastal zone of the continental region and the islands of Corisco, Big Elobey (Elobey Grande) and Little Elobey (Elobey Chico). Ndowe is indigenous to the coast of Rio Muni. Baseke, Balengue and Bujeba are spoken in the province of Litoral. While Fang, the most spoken autochthonous language, is indigenous to mainland Equatorial Guinea, its use has spread to the islands of Bioko and Annobon. Fa d'ambo, a Portuguese-lexifier creole, is spoken on the island of Annobon. Pidgin English is the lingua franca in Bioko Island, Annobon and in some areas of Bata. The indigenous languages, which are mostly of oral tradition, are neither used as a lingua franca nor taught as a subject in schools. Efforts to keep them alive has been championed by some intellectuals and institutions like the *Instituto de Lingüística del Consejo de Investigaciones Científicas y Tecnológicas* (CICTE) (the Linguistic Institute of the Council of Scientific and Technological Research). The Institute established language academies for the local languages and while their efficacy has not been evident (Manso Luengo and Bibang Oyee 2014), they have worked in collaboration with other institutions like SIL International, the *Promotora Española de Lingüística* (PROEL) and UNICEF to translate documents about public health and to dub religious videos in the local languages. Indigenous languages are maintained through intergenerational transmission and tend to be used frequently in family and conversational settings, political rallies, some radio and television programs, traditional oral literature, folklore, modern music and in religion. Indigenous languages may be under threat of disappearing without an explicit language policy that recognizes their status and introduces them in the national educational system as compulsory subject, while providing the necessary institutional, material, financial support and personnel (Manso Luengo and Bibang Oyee 2014). The major threat against autochthonous languages occurs when parents or caretakers stop transmitting them to their children at home. As the language data from Ethnologue Simons and Fennig (2018) demonstrate, some indigenous languages are classified as threatened as children are not speaking the native languages of their parents.

As a result of Equatorial Guinea seeking closer economic ties with Francophone countries in 1983 and its membership in the Economic Community of Central African States in 1985, French was incorporated, in 1988, in the educational system as a compulsory subject and an official national language in 1997. Portuguese became an official language in 2007 with the goal that Equatorial Guinea would become a full member of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (*Comunidad de Países de Lengua Portuguesa* (CPLP)). In 2010, the government of Equatorial Guinea signed a decree to amend the first paragraph of article 4 of 1998 Constitution to include Portuguese as its third official language for closer ties and membership with the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (Proyecto de Ley Constitucional 2010).

Spanish is spoken throughout the country. More than 85% of the population speak Spanish and it is not only the medium of instruction but also a compulsory subject for students. From the period of 1968 to 1979, the use of Spanish was prohibited (Nistal Rosique 2007, p. 73) in favour of Fang but it was still the language of international relations and the judiciary, as it was the only written language while the local languages were of oral tradition. During this 11-year period of isolation, the national educational system and the use of Spanish suffered enormous setbacks (Nistal Rosique 2007). With a new government in 1979, the use of Spanish was standardized and it was recognized as an official language in the Constitution of 1982. The difference in linguistic competence in Spanish between the older and younger population has been attributed to Equatorial Guinea's isolation (Nistal Rosique 2007; Lipski 2004). In 2007, Nistal Rosique indicated that there was a big difference in linguistic competence of Equatoguineans older than 40 years of age compared to that of the younger generation whose Spanish use, she described as lamentable and deteriorating (Nistal Rosique 2007, p. 74). On the other hand, while Lipski admits that younger Guineans' competence in the Spanish language is significantly lower because of the hiatus, he is skeptical that a period of about 10 years of discontinued use of Spanish will have "major long-range linguistic consequences for Equatorial Guinea" (Lipski 2004, p. 118).

While the majority of the Equatorial Guinean population speaks Spanish, there is no empirical study or language survey/data which has determined the level of proficiency (Morgades Besari 2005; Larre Muñoz 2013) or the number of monolingual speakers among Equatorial Guineans. There is still much to be done in the training of teachers to keep abreast of language teaching methods and materials (Nistal Rosique 2007; Manso Luengo and Bibang Oyee 2014). It has been suggested that a collaboration with the Cervantes Institute would be beneficial to those who do not speak and write Spanish well (Morgades Besari 2005). Three groups of Spanish speakers have been identified in Equatorial Guinea: those who speak and write Spanish well (14%); those who need to learn Spanish as a second language (74%); and those who need literacy training (12%) (Morgades Besari 2005; Nistal Rosique 2007). Three varieties of Equatoguinean Spanish were described by Mohamadou (2008, p. 217). The first, *español popular*, is basilectal and the variety farthest away from standard Peninsular Spanish: it is the least prestigious and is spoken by the non-literate population such as farmers and labourers. The second, *español común* is mesolectal, an intermediate variety between the *español común* and *español oficial*, spoken mainly by the employees of the administration. The final, *español oficial*, is acrolectal, the most prestigious and closest to Peninsular Spanish: it is the Spanish of the elite and intellectuals such as doctors, journalists, judges and university professors. These different registers of Spanish depend on factors such as schooling, profession and closeness in relationship between interlocutors (Mohamadou 2008).

In this multilingual Republic, a kind of pluriglossic situation has developed where Spanish is the language of prestige and social mobility, the lingua franca among the different ethnic groups across different social classes and is also the functional language for expressing cultural, commercial, political needs. Spanish is the language of education and the administration, French is often used in the business world, while the local languages seem to be confined mainly to the family sphere (Manso Luengo and Bibang Oyee 2014). Given this rich linguistic landscape of Equatorial Guinea, it is worthwhile to assess the vitality and use of the Spanish language there. Additionally, scholars like Nistal Rosique, Bolekia Boleka and Morgades Besari have sounded the alarm that Spanish is at risk of losing its prominence (Larre Muñoz 2013) due to the growing influence of languages such as French, English and Portuguese. In the following sections, we examine the language vitality of Spanish by examining (1) the use of and attitudes towards, the Spanish language, (2) opinions and perceptions about the Equatoguinean variety of Spanish, including observations of a pilot study and (3) we propose future directions for the study of Equatoguinean Spanish.

2. Language Vitality of Spanish

For some time, scholars have sounded the alarm that the use of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea is in danger. In 1986, [Granados \(1986\)](#) thought that the use of Spanish might become limited to major cities such as Malabo and Bata (p. 135). In 1995, Quilis and Casado-Frenillo cautioned that influence of French presented a threat to the stability of Spanish (p. 34). In 2005, the potential threat of French to the vitality of Spanish was also echoed by Morgades Besari: “*la incorporación del francés como lengua obligatoria en la escuela, podría alterar la preponderancia del español*” (the inclusion of French as a compulsory subject in school could alter the dominance of Spanish). In 2007, Nistal Rosique affirmed that although Spanish was the medium of instruction, it was not thriving for the following four reasons (p. 74):

- (1) students attending college tend to speak their native language at home, instead of Spanish
- (2) teachers do not have the requisite professional training or a solid competence in the Spanish language
- (3) the education system faces many deficiencies related to personnel, teaching materials and other important logistics
- (4) the population has not cultivated the habit of reading and there is a scarcity of bookstores

[Morgades Besari \(2005\)](#) shared similar observations on the younger generations’ linguistic competence and the hurdles against improving it. She affirmed that teaching Spanish in the Guinean education system is exacerbated by a severe shortage in dictionaries, textbooks, reference books and resource materials. In 2011, Bolekia lamented the weakening state of Spanish: “*el idioma español está seriamente amenazado . . . por la creciente influencia de otras lenguas, como el francés y el portugués, y por el desinterés oficial*” (the Spanish language is severely threatened . . . by the growing influence of other languages, such as French and Portuguese and official disinterest) (quoted in [Naranjo 2011](#)). Considering these opinions highlighting the threats that Spanish faces in Equatorial Guinea, we used four scales of language vitality, usually applied to endangered and minority languages, to Spanish.

The four scales of vitality, namely the three-category conceptual model of revitalization, the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), the Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework and the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), were chosen to assess the language vitality of Spanish from different perspectives. The first scale considered here is the three-category conceptual model of revitalization ([Giles et al. 1977](#); [Giles 2001](#); [Abrams et al. 2009](#)) which is based on status factors (economic, social and symbolic status of language), demographic factors (geographic density and distribution of language speakers) and institutional support factors (religion, administration, mass media, education and community) ([Baker 2006](#)). Applying this model to Spanish in Equatorial Guinea, we have already seen that not only does Spanish enjoy prestige, it is the most spoken language and the functional language of religion, education, administration and mass media.

The second scale used to measure language vitality is the GIDS ([Fishman 1991](#)) which outlines eight stages for reversing language shift. The highest stage a minority language can attain, stage 1, is when the language is used in “education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels” (395). Spanish has attained stage 1 in Equatorial Guinea.

The third scale utilized is UNESCO’s LVE framework ([UNESCO 2003](#)), which is a six-level scale for assessing languages in danger. It is based on nine factors and six of these examine the vitality of a language: intergenerational language transmission, absolute number of speakers, proportion of speakers within the total population, trends in existing language domains, response to new domains and media and materials for language education and literacy. Two factors evaluate the language attitudes of both governments/institutions and community members. The ninth factor assesses the urgent need for documentation. While the first factor, intergenerational transmission, may not apply directly to Spanish as it is mostly acquired a second language, Spanish has the largest absolute number of speakers (see Table 1 below) and is used in most language domains including the media and

education. With regards to the seventh factor of official support, Spanish enjoys considerable state support in Equatorial Guinea as it is protected constitutionally. Not only do government policies favour Spanish, Equatorial Guinean authorities have expressed and reaffirmed their unique Afro-Hispanic identity in Africa. In a speech to II International Congress of the Spanish Language (*Congreso Internacional de la Lengua Española*), organized by the Royal Spanish Academy (la Real Academia Española, RAE) and Cervantes Virtual, hosted in Valladolid 2001, the president of Equatorial Guinea Teodoro Obiang (2001) expressed interest in the creation of a Spanish language Academy in Equatorial Guinea, with the support of the Instituto Cervantes, the Real Academia Española and the Association of Spanish Language Academies (*Asociación de Academias de Lengua Española*). Such an academy, the president affirmed, would reinforce the dissemination of Spanish in mass media and strengthen courses in Spanish as a foreign language offered by the National University of Equatorial Guinea (*Universidad Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial*). The Equatoguinean Academy of the Spanish Language (*Academia Ecuatoguineana de la Lengua Española*) was created in 2013 and became a member of the *Asociación de Academias de Lengua Española* in 2016. The president of the *Academia Ecuatoguineana de la Lengua Española*, Agustín Nze, in his address to the XV Congress of the ASALE (2015), underlined the importance of Spanish in Equatorial Guinean society, not only as an official language but also a bond of social cohesion: “*el español no es solo idioma oficial en Guinea, sino vínculo de cohesión social y queremos que recupere su lugar en la sociedad ecuatoguineana. Venimos de África porque creemos en la solidaridad del mundo hispánico*” (Spanish is not only an official language in Guinea but also a link of social cohesion and we want it to regain its place in the Equatoguinean society. We came from Africa because we believe in solidarity with the Hispanic world). Since the 1980s, the government of Equatorial Guinea has initiated and sought to strengthen ties with Spain through cooperation. Their collaboration with the *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional* (AECID, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation) has led to several educational initiatives including the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) setting up two campuses in Malabo and Bata in Equatorial Guinea, the founding of the National University of Equatorial Guinea (*Universidad Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial*) (UNGE) in 1995 and Spanish Cultural Centres in Malabo and Bata, with Spanish classes for adults (Schlumpf 2016). Since 1997, UNGE has corroborated with the University of Alcalá de Henares to disseminate Spanish language in Africa. The Spanish Cultural Centres in Malabo and Bata have become the focal points for requests for classes, books, articles, journals and other publications in Spanish not only from Equatorial Guinea but also from sub-Saharan African countries, especially Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon and Benin (Nistal Rosique 2007).

The eighth factor, Equatoguineans’ attitude towards Spanish, has been positive, with a desire for it to be valued and promoted (Quilis 1983, 1988; Chirilă 2015). Only a few studies have measured the attitudes of speakers towards the Spanish language in general. Quilis (1983, 1988) carried out seminal work on the linguistic attitudes of high-school and university students in Equatorial Guinea and showed they had positive attitudes towards Spanish. Recently, Chirilă (2015) also found similar results. Lipski (2000) suggests that the vitality and resilience of Spanish is largely the result of the “poignant search for national identity” amidst French-, English- and Portuguese-speaking African countries. The use of Spanish is an “unmistakable badge” of national identity for Equatorial Guineans abroad (Lipski 2000, p. 13). Despite the presence of French and pidgin English, Spanish continues to be seen as the national language, which gives Equatoguineans a unique identity among other African countries even though they use their local languages among themselves (Lipski 2014, p. 868). The continuous expansion of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea results from many factors including personal, emotional, academic, religious and economic. With regards to the ninth factor of language documentation, Equatorial Guinean Spanish is already a well-documented language with dictionaries, audio and video recordings and other comprehensive texts and language materials.

Unlike the three scales of vitality just described, the EGIDS (Lewis and Simons 2010) does not evaluate the status of only endangered languages but of all languages. Based on the EGIDS, a 13-level scale, which synthesizes Fishman’s GIDS and UNESCO’s LVE, Spanish in Equatorial Guinea

is classified as a national language, that is, “the language is used in education, work, mass media and government at the national level” (Simons and Fennig 2018).

Table 1. Language Users (including first and second languages speakers) in Equatorial Guinea.

Language	Locations	Speakers (Total)
Spanish	Widespread	787,000
French	Major cities	134,000
Portuguese	ND	ND
Pidgin English	Bioko Norte and Bioko Sur provinces	76,000
Fang	Continental Equatorial Guinea	624,000
Fa d'Ambu	Annobón province	6000
Ndowe	Litoral province	9200
Bujeba	Litoral province	13,000
Baseke	Litoral province	11,000
Benga	Litoral province	4000
Bube	Bioko Norte and Bioko Sur provinces	51,000
Balengue	Litoral province	900

Source: Ethnologue (Simons and Fennig 2018); ND = not described.

Simons and Fennig (2018) also labels the status of other languages. French is considered a national language, like Spanish but Ethnologue provides no data on monolingual speakers for both languages or about speakers of Portuguese. Pidgin English and Fang are languages of wider communication, that is, although they do not have official status, they are used in mass media and work. Baseke (Seki), Kombe and Bujeba (Kwasio/Bisio) are considered vigorous because they are used in sustained face-to-face interactions across all generations. Bube and Benga are threatened languages because the number of users is decreasing even though they are employed in face-to-face interactions. Balengue is considered a shifting language as there is no intergenerational transmission: members of the child-bearing generation continue to speak the language among themselves but do not teach it to their children.

In summary, the four scales of vitality show that Spanish in Equatorial Guinea is under no threat of disappearing and continues to thrive. It is one of most secure languages, if not the most secure, in Equatorial Guinea. Larre Muñoz (2013) also came to the same conclusion that Spanish is alive and well in Equatorial Guinea and no other language can threaten it: “*en lo que se refiere a la presencia, la implantación del español en el país me parece que está asegurada. No creo que su situación esté amenazada por ninguna otra lengua, ni por el francés, ni por el pichi, ni por el inglés, ni por el portugués*” (with regards to the presence, the implementation of Spanish in the country, it seems secure to me. I do not think that its situation is threatened by any language, be it French, Pidgin, English or Portuguese). After establishing the important and dominant position of Spanish in the country, we now turn our attention to the prevailing attitudes towards Equatorial Guinean Spanish.

3. Equatorial Guinean Spanish

The Spanish dialect of Equatorial Guinea is an understudied area, although descriptive research on the Spanish language spoken there began in the 1950s (Lipski 2000). Very few research studies have been carried on the sociolinguistic dynamic of this multilingual country. Lipski (2000, p. 30) laments the paucity of research on Equatorial Guinea: “it is ignorance of the rich research possibilities—ignorance even of the existence of the country itself—rather than possible hardships, which have deterred able fieldworkers and scholars from undertaking studies on Equatorial Guinean Spanish.” Previous scholarship on Equatorial Guinean Spanish has primarily focused on giving detailed analysis of the morphosyntax, lexicon and phonology (González Echegaray 1951, 1959; Bibang Oyee 2002; Castillo Barril 1966; Granda Gutiérrez 1984, 1988; Lipski 1985; Quilis 1992; Quilis and Casado-Fresnillo 1992). The general conclusion drawn from these studies is that the Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea is nonstandard because of many errors in pronunciation, orthography and syntax.

Since Spanish has been a second language for the majority of the Equatoguinean population for about two centuries, some researchers may be tempted to view the Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea, not as a variety on its own but as some variant of Peninsular Spanish. However, Lipski argues against this view, pointing out that the Englishes and Frenches of ex-colonies of Britain and France are considered worthy varieties, for example, the Englishes of India, Philippines and Nigeria and the Frenches of Senegal, Ivory Coast and Tahiti (Lipski 2014, p. 876). While acknowledging the unique lexical richness and distinctive features that characterize the Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea, most scholars do not think an Equatoguinean variety exists (Bibang Oyee 2002; Nsue Otong 1986). A few scholars (Lipski 2008, 2014; Schlumpf 2016) have argued for an Equatoguinean variety of Spanish, citing its distinctive characteristics. Lipski (2014) makes the claim that any linguistically well-informed native speaker of Spanish can easily identify the speech of speaker of Equatoguinean Spanish because of its intonation. He cites the following phonological features, as outlined in Castillo Barril (1966, p. 16): “*el tono de voz elevado, el timbre nasal, cierta debilitación de las consonantes de articulación dura, el seseo, una entonación ligeramente melosa, con el ritmo entrecortado y una variedad de tonos silábicos*” (high pitched, the nasal timbre, the weakening/softening of consonants with strong sounds (lenition), the seseo, a slightly mellifluous intonation, with faltering rhythm and a range in syllabic tones). Furthermore, the main features of Equatorial Guinean variety of Spanish described by Lipski (2014, pp. 875–77) are:

- (1) an occlusive articulation of /b/, /d/, /g/
- (2) the retention of the final /s/ of a syllable or word
- (3) the interchangeable use of interdental consonant /θ/ common in Peninsular Spanish and /s/ common in the Spanish varieties of Hispanic America
- (4) the neutralization of tap /r/ and trill /rr/
- (5) the conjugations of the verbs in pronouns *tú* and *usted* forms are used interchangeably
- (6) the lack of distinction between the use of *ustedes* and *vosotros*
- (7) the predominant use of the preposition *en* with motion verbs
- (8) its most distinctive characteristic, the use of alternating phonology tone on each syllable, an influence of the autochthonous Bantu languages

Language Attitudes towards Equatoguinean Spanish

The first linguistic studies conducted by Europeans on Equatorial Guinean Spanish were marred by prejudice and discrimination. The consensus was that the Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea was *incorrecto* (incorrect) and *mal hablado* (poorly spoken), a prejudice that has persisted until today (Lipski 2014; Schlumpf 2016). Lipski’s review of literary texts since the 16th century showed that Spaniards had the misconception that Blacks spoke “*un castellano defectuoso*” (a defective Spanish) (Lipski 2014, p. 866). The Equatorial Guinean Spanish speaker has been mischaracterized as having the linguistic competence of a three-year-old native speaker of Castilian Spanish, lacking in elegance/poise and vocabulary, unable to communicate well spontaneously, unable to grasp the nuances of spontaneous linguistic expression and to have a distinct accent from the native speaker of Peninsular Spanish (Lipski 2014; Schlumpf 2016). In the documentary *Cervantes en Africa* (*Cervantes in Africa*) (Sikota 2009), some intellectuals gave a negative assessment of Equatorial Guinean Spanish. Juan Tomas Ávila, an Equatorial Guinean writer, referred to it as “*una mala asimilación del español*” (a bad assimilation of Spanish). Justo Bolekia Boleká, a university professor and author from Equatorial Guinea, labelled it as “*un español incompleto ... basilectal, de un nivel bajo totalmente para resolver los mínimos problemas comunicativos ... un español malo por falta de formación incompleta de toda la sociedad*” (an incomplete Spanish...basilectal, of completely low standard to address minimal communicative problems ... a bad Spanish as a result of the incomplete education of the whole society). Bolekia Boleká (2005) further stated that, “*los ecuatoguineanos que no han tenido la oportunidad de vivir ‘inmersiones lingüísticas totales,’ o carecen de un nivel alto de instrucción, se convierten en agresores del castellano, lengua que usan para resolver sus problemas comunicativos, sin prestar atención a la norma que rige*

en dicha lengua, sobre todo al ser usuarios deficitarios de sus propias lenguas autóctonas, con el pidgin-english como lengua de comunicación interétnica" (Equatoguineans who have not had the opportunity to live in a full language immersion [environment] or lack a high level of education, become aggressors of Spanish, a language they use to solve their communication problems, without paying attention to the rules that govern Spanish, particularly being deficient users of their own indigenous languages, with Pidgin English as the language of interethnic communication). Lipski (2014) expresses scepticism about such negative attitudes since he believes they are mainly provoked by racial stereotypes. He recounts some of the stereotypes that existed in the 16th century and continue to exist about Black Spanish speech in Spain, Latin America and Africa. There is an assumption that the speech of Africans and African descendants is unintelligible and defective. Unfortunately, these racial stereotypes persist in jokes, popular music, literature and even in teaching approaches. In the Equatorial Guinean context, these negative attitudes affect the portrayal of Spanish within and outside, the country: *"los conceptos racistas sobre la capacidad lingüística y cultural de los negros representan impedimentos psicológicos que moldeaban la visión del habla guineana que se iba formando dentro del país y en el exterior"* (the racist concepts about the linguistic and cultural capacity of Blacks represent psychological impediments which have shaped the view of Guinean speech which is developing in and out of the country) (Lipski 2014, p. 868). These racist attitudes are also expressed towards the speech of African-American Vernacular English (Holmes 2013). Children who speak African-American Vernacular English are erroneously thought to be deficient in linguistic skills and thus are socially disadvantaged: "Children who use vernacular forms are not disadvantaged by inadequate language. They are disadvantaged by negative attitudes towards their speech—attitudes which derive from their lower social status and its associations in people's minds" (Holmes 2013, p. 420).

Additionally, what these negative opinions miss is that there is a difference between acquiring a language from birth (as a first language), like native speakers of Castilian Spanish and learning it as a second language, like speakers of Equatorial Guinean Spanish, who already have developed their phonological and mental representations in their native languages. The debate on Equatorial Guinean Spanish will benefit from studies and theories of second language acquisition, bilingualism and language contact instead of being viewed through the lens of monolingual language acquisition. It is common for the first language, in the case of Equatorial Guineans, their autochthonous languages or pidgin English, to influence their second language, for example, Spanish, a process called cross-linguistic transfer. Cross-linguistic influence/interference is "the influence of a person's knowledge of one language on that person's knowledge or use of another language" (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008, p. 1). Thomason (2001, p. 11) affirms that "all aspects of language structure are subject to transfer from one language to another" without exception. Her statement relates to extensive research that has been done on the influence of one's first language on the acquisition of a second language. The fact that Equatorial Guineans have an accent different to a native speaker of Peninsular Spanish is to be expected since the phonology of the first language has already been formed and hence would influence their second language. Besides, this is a moot point, since all language varieties have an accent (Esling 1998). The issue is that some accents are perceived as standard while others are considered non-standard and foreign. A native speaker of Argentinian Spanish speaks with an accent different from a native speaker of Mexican Spanish or Cuban Spanish. Even among native speakers of Mexican Spanish, there are also individual and regional variations in pronunciation.

Some positive attitudes have been expressed towards the Equatoguinean Spanish. Lipski (2008), one of the major proponents of this variety, noted that most studies prefer to highlight the differences from Peninsular Spanish. He, on the other hand, proposed that the deviations from standard Peninsular Spanish, a result of incomplete acquisition of Spanish, are what makes Guinean Spanish an emerging dialect of Spanish. Lipski (2008) compared some of the salient characteristics of Equatorial Guinean Spanish, namely the incorrect use of prepositions, the neutralization of rhotic sounds, the inconsistency of seseo and ceceo, the variability of noun-adjective agreement among others, with dialects of Spanish spoken in Spain, Latin America and the Philippines. Results reveal that the features of Equatorial

Guinean Spanish can be observed in the Spanish dialects spoken in bilingual communities in Latin America (Andean region, Paraguay and Central America) and the Iberian Peninsula (Basque Country, Catalonia, Gibraltar and Galicia). These results make a case for Equatorial Guinean Spanish to be considered a dialect of Spanish. Nistal Rosique (2007) commends the rich localisms inherent in the Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea. Morgades Besari (2005) affirms that speaking of a distinctive Equatoguinean variety of Spanish does not mean that it is inferior to other varieties in Spanish-speaking world: *“decir que hay un español característico de Guinea Ecuatorial no es adoptar una postura peyorativa, y tampoco significa que la lengua española propia de Guinea Ecuatorial sea inferior al español que se habla en otros países de habla hispana; lo cierto es que, en cada uno de los países en que se habla la lengua española, el español presenta unas características peculiares en lo que se refiere a la fonología y al léxico”* (to say that there is a Spanish variety characteristic of Equatorial Guinea is not to take a pejorative stance nor does it mean that Equatoguinean Spanish is inferior to the Spanish spoken in other Spanish-speaking countries; the fact is that in each of these Spanish-speaking countries, the Spanish language has unique characteristics with regards to phonology and vocabulary). Other intellectuals in the documentary, *Cervantes en África*, share positive attitudes. For example, Inongo-Vi-Makome proposes that Equatoguinean Spanish is a variety on its own: *“es castellano guineano pero castellano”* (it is Equatoguinean Spanish but Spanish [regardless]) and Gustau Nerin describes the vibrant emerging Spanish variety on the streets: *“tiene un español muy bueno . . . muy fantástico . . . [con] una vitalidad y fluidez increíble que curiosamente no han llegado a la escritura. Un español de la calle muy vivo [y] expresivo, pero no hay una lengua culta”* ([Equatorial Guinea] has very good Spanish . . . very fantastic . . . [with] an incredible vitality and fluency which, interestingly has not yet transitioned into written form. A very vibrant and expressive street Spanish but there is no standard Spanish). So far, the reviews of Spanish use and attitudes in Equatorial Guinea have focused mainly on the opinions of scholars. To complement these studies on language vitality, in the next section, we will assess the language use and attitudes of the Equatorial Guinean public in a pilot study.

4. Pilot Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess the vitality of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea by examining two factors: language use and attitudes. The goal was to shed light on the various language domains where Spanish is predominant and to measure the attitudes of speakers towards, not only Spanish language in general but also the dialect of Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea. While a few studies have looked at the attitudes towards the Spanish language in general, little is known about Equatorial Guineans' perceptions about the Spanish dialect that they speak. This project was designed to determine if the views of Equatorial Guineans about their dialect of Spanish are in line with or contrary to, the assessment of previous studies.

The questions that guided this project are:

1. How widespread is the use of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea?
2. What are the attitudes of citizens towards Equatorial Guinean Spanish?

4.1. Previous Studies

For this study, the term attitude refers to the “feelings people have about their own language or the language of others” (Crystal 1992, p. 25) and perception to the “underlying beliefs and presuppositions about language” (Preston 2010, p. 88). Language attitude is one of key factors to the maintenance of endangered languages. Negative attitudes towards indigenous languages in Spanish-speaking countries by the non-indigenous population have led parents and caregivers in indigenous communities to not transmit the language to their children, preferring that their children learn Spanish, the language of opportunity and rejecting bilingual education (Hornberger and Coronel-Molina 2004). Some of the consequences of negative attitudes towards ‘different speech’ are low self-esteem and self-internalization of stigma, linguistic insecurity, prejudice/discrimination and

social disadvantage. Examples are a study by [Hartley \(1999\)](#) on Oregon respondents' perceptions of varieties of English and a study by [Alfaraz \(2003\)](#) on Miami Cubans' perceptions of varieties of Spanish. In the first study, there were comments like Californian English was a totally different language, New York English speakers are fast-talking, cold and rude and the Kentuckian dialect of English is slow-paced, reaffirming the stereotype that Southerners are laid back. These opinions show that language attitudes do not have to do with language itself but with people's attitude towards a group of people. This is more pronounced in the study of [Alfaraz \(2003\)](#) where Miami Cubans rated Peninsular Spanish as the most prestigious variety and gave the highest ratings for being correct and pleasant to South American varieties, followed by those of Central America and the Caribbean. Interesting, although Miami Cubans are aware of the low prestige and stigma attributed to Caribbean Spanish, they failed to recognize that Cuban Spanish belongs to that stigmatized variety. Interestingly, pre-revolution Cuban Spanish received almost as high ratings as Peninsular Spanish while post-revolution Cuban Spanish received lower ratings. The study concluded that race and economic development played a role in the higher ratings of South American varieties of Spanish, while politics was a factor in pre-revolution Cuban Spanish being highly rated.

Positive language attitudes could facilitate the learning or maintenance of a language and could contribute to in-group identity and solidarity ([Tararova 2017](#); [Cooper and Fishman 1977](#)). In the case of Equatorial Guinea, results in attitudinal studies have been positive. [Quilis \(1983\)](#) carried out a language attitude survey towards Spanish among Equatorial Guinean high school and university students from different ethnic groups. Some of the questions focused on the language practices of the participants and their relatives and attitudes about Spanish and the autonomous languages. The results showed that most participants liked speaking Spanish and wanted it to be the language of instruction in schools. Similar results were reported in an attitudinal study by [Quilis \(1988\)](#). The 1988 study used a similar research group, high school and university students in Bata and Malabo. Comparing the two studies, [Quilis \(1988\)](#) concluded that the use of Spanish in daily familial conversations had increased significantly during the intervening five-year period and that speaking Spanish proficiently remained important to Equatorial Guineans. Most of the participants in [Quilis' \(1988\)](#) study estimated that the use of Spanish has increased in the previous 10 years. With regards to the indigenous languages, participants overwhelmingly supported the view that their mother tongue was important to them ([Quilis 1983, 1988](#)). In their opinion, "*la lengua materna tiene importancia tradicional y forma parte de la cultura*" (the mother tongue has traditional importance and is part of the culture) ([Quilis 1988](#), p. 720).

[Chirilă \(2015\)](#) also conducted a similar attitudinal study in Malabo, which she compared her results with those of [Quilis \(1983, 1988\)](#). She noted very positive attitudes towards Spanish among high school, technical school and university participants. They also identified positively with their mother tongue. Additionally, she reported the language choices for participants with regards to emotional situations. Spanish was the preferred language for expressing tenderness, anger, elegance, vulgarity, humour, trustworthiness, respect and authority. In all three studies, participants opined that it was necessary that Equatorial Guineans learn and speak Spanish well. A participant gave the reason that speaking Spanish well was key to the development and technological progress of the country: "*Sí, es muy importante, porque solo y solamente así podremos adquirir los conocimientos necesarios para el desarrollo de nuestro país si tenemos en cuenta que nuestros dialectos no tienen página en el mundo de la civilización y de la tecnología*" (Yes, [speaking Spanish well] is very important, because that is the only way we can acquire the necessary knowledge to develop our country if we take into consideration that our dialects do not have a presence in the civilized and technological world) ([Chirilă 2015](#), p. 61).

Generally, these three studies show that Spanish is the language of education and work while indigenous languages are reserved for informal communication. However, in the [Chirilă's \(2015\)](#) study, Spanish was the preferred language for communication with parents unlike the indigenous languages in [Quilis's](#) studies. These language attitudinal studies did not focus on speakers' attitudes and perceptions about Equatoguinean Spanish, a point covered in this pilot study.

4.2. Material and Methods

4.2.1. Respondents

Ten Equatorial Guineans completed the questionnaire online. All participants were born in Equatorial Guinea with ages ranging between 18 and 54. Five reported living in Equatorial Guinea at the time of survey completion. Five respondents mentioned they had lived in a Hispanic country, Spain, for at least three months, with the longest duration being more than 17 years. As shown in Table 2, all participants spoke at least two languages and 40% self-identified Spanish as their first language. Those with Spanish as their mother tongue did not report speaking any local language. They communicated in Spanish with their parents and 90% of the participants had completed or were in the process of completing a university degree.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents ($n = 10$).

Age (Years)	
18–24	3
25–34	4
35–44	2
45–54	1
Gender	
Male	7
Female	3
Ethnicity	
Annobones	1
Bubi	2
Fang	6
Fang-Annobones	1
Mother Tongue	
Fa dambo	1
Bubi	2
Fang	3
Spanish	4
Languages Spoken	
Spanish	10
French	8
Local languages	6
Portuguese	1
Pichi	5
Other (English, Turkish, Catalan)	4
Academic Level	
Finished high school	1
Finished Polytechnic	1
Finished University	2
In University	5
In Graduate School	1
Occupation	
Student	5
Doctor	1
Office worker	1
Technician	1
Businessman	1
Civil servant	1

4.2.2. Procedure

Respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire online. The use of a questionnaire enabled the collection of data on demography, language use and attitudes about language use in a relatively short time.

Some questionnaire items of Rubin (1974) and Choi (2005) were used to measure language use of Spanish and the indigenous languages. Other questionnaire items from Bell (2014); Quilis (1988); Holmes (2013); and Cooper and Fishman (1977), as well as open-ended questions about the dialect of Spanish, were included.

4.2.3. Questionnaire

There were 18 questions on language background and demographic characteristics which covered age, gender, level of education, occupation, native language, ethnicity, number of languages spoken and location. Attitudinal questions included 10 questions or items on opinions about languages spoken in Equatorial Guinea. Twenty additional items were included to solicit participants' evaluative responses on the Equatorial Guinean dialect of Spanish. To assess the vitality of Spanish, 45 questions on language use in multiple contexts or domains were asked. The questionnaire included a short additional information section addressing respondents' comments on the questionnaire and/or language use in Equatorial Guinea. To summarize, the questionnaire was divided into six sections (see Appendix A):

- Language history (response type: short answer)
- Individual language use and choice (response type: multiple-choice)
- Societal language use (single choice)
- Language beliefs and opinions (7-point Likert scale)
- Evaluations of Equatorial Guinean Spanish (semantic differentiation scale/7-point Likert scale)
- Demographic characteristics

When appropriate, the mean value and standard deviation (SD) were calculated. Missing data were excluded from the data analysis.

The survey was anonymous, that is, the names of the respondents were not collected. The survey was administered online using the Qualtrics software platform. For this online survey about language use and attitudes in Equatorial Guinea, recruitment was initiated by contacting friends and professional colleagues from that country and asking them to reach out to other Equatorial Guineans by email and social media. By the nature of this recruitment approach, the pool of potential participants is not representative of the general population but rather has a higher educational status. Recruitment was largely done through Facebook. A link to the questionnaire was circulated to groups or communities of Equatorial Guineans. The survey was presented in Spanish.

4.3. Results

The results of the survey are summarized under four categories: individual Spanish usage, societal use of Spanish, opinions about Spanish and attitudes toward Equatorial Guinean Spanish.

4.3.1. Individual Spanish Usage

In 15 questions, respondents were asked to indicate the languages they would choose to use when speaking with different interlocutors (e.g., spouse, friends, priest and teachers). The language choices were local languages, Spanish, French, pichi or other. Multiple languages could be selected for each question. Regarding the use of local languages, about 60% of respondents chose to use it when speaking with their parents or siblings. However, in other social situations, the majority of participants (from 56% to 100%) picked Spanish as a language they would use. For example, when speaking with a priest or a doctor, 80% of respondents chose to use Spanish. Figure 2 summarizes the use of Spanish with different interlocutors. French as a language of communication was chosen for speaking with teachers (55% of respondents), work colleagues (50%), the boss (44%), employees (40%) and the doctor (40%); French was not a frequent choice for speaking with family members or friends. Pichi was chosen infrequently for all social situations: the highest rates of response were for use with the spouse (33% of respondents), friends in the neighbourhood (30%), neighbours (30%) and work colleagues (25%).

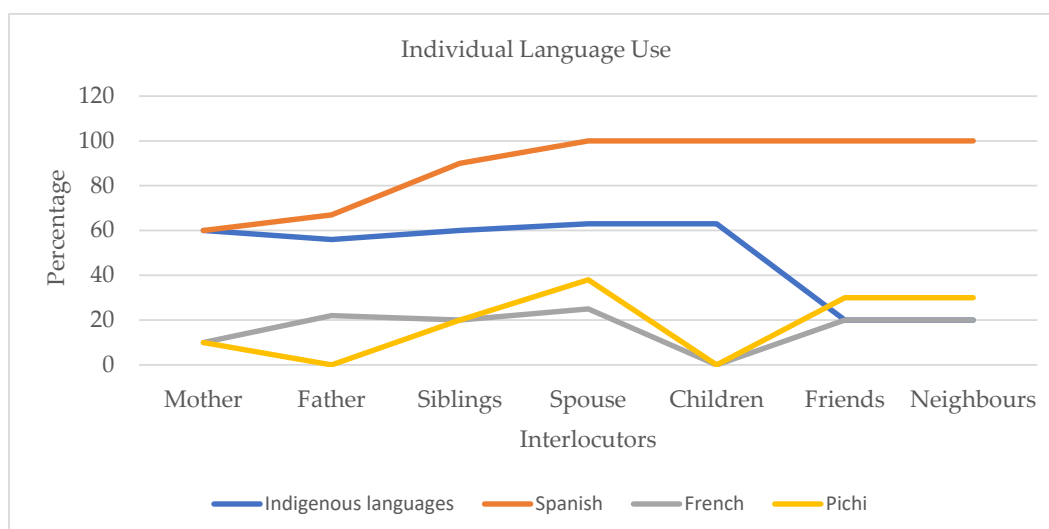


Figure 2. Use of Spanish and other languages with different interlocutors (%).

4.3.2. Spanish Use in Society

There were 30 questions to evaluate the language that was most commonly used in a variety of situations and venues, especially in the home, media and social discourse in Equatorial Guinea. The language choices were Spanish, French, local language or pichi and the participants had to choose only one language for each question. At home, Spanish was the most commonly used language (67% of respondents), followed by local language (33%). Spanish was also the most common language for television, newspapers and radio programs (89% vs. 11% for French). Similarly, in a variety of educational settings from primary school to university, Spanish was most commonly used (89% to 100%, followed by French at a maximum of 11%). Spanish was also the language of choice when dealing with government institutions, the courts, the bank, shops and religious ceremonies (88%, followed by French at 12%). One area where local language was the first choice is singing of folk songs (75% vs. 11% Spanish and 11% French). More diverse language choices were seen for interactions in the market or at the police station but Spanish was still the first choice (45% vs. local language at 33%). Pichi was rarely chosen as the commonly used language in any situation, except bargaining in the marketplace (33%), to gossip (11%) or at the market (11%). Figure 3 summarizes the domains of language use by Equatorial Guineans.

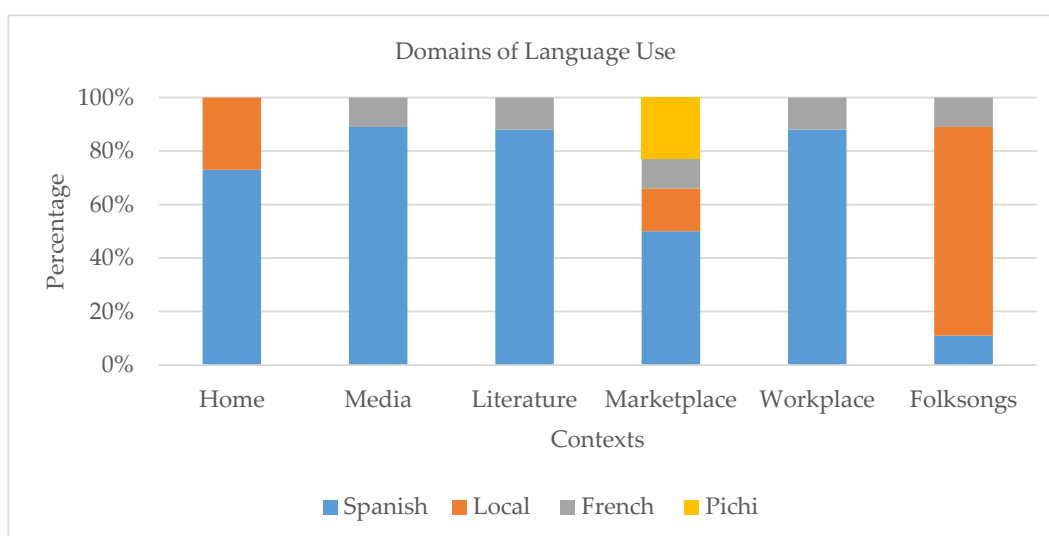


Figure 3. Domains of Language Use.

There were 7 questions in the questionnaire to assess the most common language used in different emotional situations (e.g., intimacy, insults, anger) (see Figure 4). For all seven situations, Spanish was most commonly used (ranging from 55% to 78%). The second choice was local language, with a frequency of 22% to 44%. French was infrequently chosen in these emotional situations (maximum of 12%) and pichi was not chosen at all.

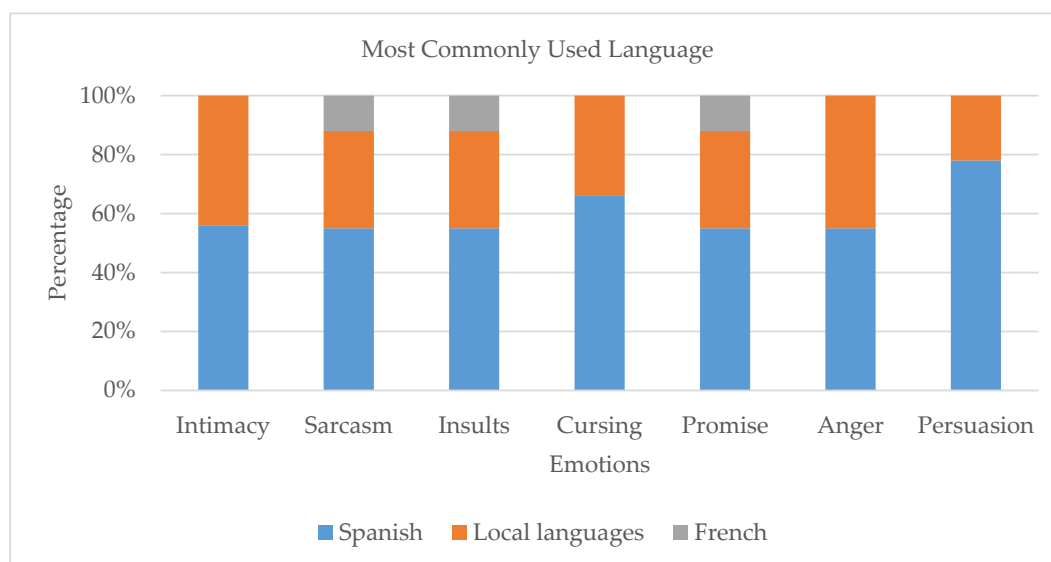


Figure 4. Commonly-used language to express emotions.

4.3.3. Opinions/Attitudes towards Spanish

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent they agree or disagree with 10 statements about Spanish (see Table 3). They strongly agreed that Spanish was the most widely used language in Equatorial Guinea. Their affirmation is in line with the view that the Spanish is not threatened by any other language (Larre Muñoz 2013). Respondents also strongly agreed that they find it easier to speak Spanish than their mother tongue and that they liked speaking Spanish. Spanish was seen as important to the identity of Equatorial Guineans as the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa by the respondents. There was very strong agreement that it was necessary for Equatorial Guineans to learn and speak Spanish well. While 61% of respondents expressed neutrality when asked if Equatorial Guineans spoke Spanish well, there was strong agreement with the statement that they would recommend Equatorial Guinea as a centre for learning Spanish in Africa. A closer look at the results of the respondents who reported Spanish as their first language (L1), showed that the mean score was close to neutral concerning whether Equatorial Guineans spoke Spanish well. When asked if the Guinean Spanish should be considered a dialect like any other in South America or Spain, the mean score was close to neutral. Respondents neither agreed or disagreed that the quality of Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea was low.

Respondents strongly agreed that their mother tongue was important to them. There was also strong agreement that French was an important language and a similar level of agreement concerning interest in learning English. Respondents expressed modest agreement concerning the possible use of local languages as the medium of instruction in schools. Respondents with Spanish as their first language were neutral with regards to the use of local languages. Respondents also were neutral concerning the statement that pichi is a vulgar street language.

Table 3. Opinions about Spanish.

Statements	Mean	S.D.
1. Spanish is important to the identity of Equatorial Guinea	5.6	0.8
2. It is easier to write Spanish than my mother tongue	6.4	0.8
3. It is easier to speak my mother tongue than Spanish	4.9	1.6
4. I like speaking Spanish	6.8	0.4
5. Equatorial Guinean Spanish is a dialect like any other in South America or Spain	4.5	2.2
6. Guineans speak Spanish well	4.3	1.6
7. It is important that Guineans learn and speak Spanish well	6.9	0.3
8. I recommend Equatorial Guinea as a centre for learning Spanish in Africa	6.6	0.7
9. Spanish is the most spoken language in Equatorial Guinea	6.7	0.5
10. The standard of Guinean Spanish is low	4.3	2.0

Rated on a 7-point scale with 7 = totally agree, 4 = neutral, 1 = totally disagree (n = 10).

4.3.4. Notions about Equatorial Guinean Spanish

Respondents were presented with 20 positive adjectives such as elegant, musical, superior and rich and asked to rate their applicability to the Equatorial Guinean dialect of Spanish (Table 4). The responses of two participants were eliminated as they were only partially complete. The mean rating on all 20 items was 4.4, an indication that respondents neither strongly agreed nor disagreed with these characteristics. The characteristics that received the highest mean ratings were ‘funny,’ ‘affectionate’ and ‘logical.’

Table 4. Semantic Differential Ratings of Equatoguinean Spanish.

Adjectives	Mean	S.D.
Intimate	3.6	2.1
Precise	4.5	1.8
Musical	4.4	1.7
Rich	3.9	1.4
Sophisticated	4.3	1.6
Rhythmical	4.4	1.5
Beautiful	4.6	1.5
Superior	3.9	1.6
Pure	4.5	1.3
Sacred	4.0	2.1
Refined	4.5	1.1
Relaxing	4.0	1.3
Elegant	3.9	1.7
Pleasing to the ear	4.0	1.8
Logical	4.9	0.8
Charming	4.4	1.2
Colourful	4.5	1.3
Persuasive	4.5	1.6
Affectionate	4.9	0.6
Funny	5.9	0.8
Average	4.4	1.5

Ratings were made on 7-point scale. 7 = totally agree, 4 = neutral, 1 = totally disagree (n = 10).

4.4. Discussion

The objective of the project was to answer two research questions: (1) how widespread is the use of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea in comparison with indigenous languages? and (2) what are the attitudes of citizens towards Equatorial Guinean Spanish? With respect to the first question, it was found that Spanish is the most preferred language used in individual interactions and in many social domains. These results corroborate the findings of Chirilă (2015) that Spanish is the most preferred language in multilingual Equatorial Guinea in most contexts. We also used four scales of vitality

and demonstrated that Spanish in Equatorial Guinea is not endangered and it continues to thrive. [Nguendjo Tiogang \(2015\)](#) affirms that, “*no se puede negar que el español, lengua oficial, sigue siendo la más influyente, la que más se usa*” (it cannot be denied that Spanish, the official language, remains the dominant and most commonly used language). When respondents in our survey were asked to select one language, Spanish was the dominant language contrary to the views of some scholars ([Morgades Besari 2005](#); [Nistal Rosique 2007](#)) that the use of Spanish is threatened by French and the growing influence of English. Based on the present data, the use of French and local languages in Equatorial Guinea seems limited. The results also showed that Spanish was the preferred language for emotions, consistent with the findings of [Chirilă \(2015\)](#). Taken together, these results suggest that there is a preference for Spanish among educated Equatorial Guineans.

The results regarding the second research question of this project indicate that Equatorial Guineans generally have a positive attitude towards the Spanish language and consider it an integral part of their identity. However, participants did not favourably support the view that the quality of Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea is standard/high. A possible conclusion which could be drawn from the respondents’ neutral stand towards the quality of Spanish and Guineans’ Spanish speaking ability is that this educated pool of respondents has some reservations about quality of Spanish spoken by the general population. In the present data, it was noted that the characteristics of Equatorial Guinean Spanish that received the highest average ratings were “funny,” “affectionate” and “logical.” This is the first study to ask participants about the variety of Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea. Another study asked subjects to describe Spanish in general but did not specify the Equatorial Guinean variety: a majority of participants described the Spanish language as interesting, beautiful and easy to learn ([Chirilă 2015](#)). While there is a general consensus among scholars ([Morgades Besari 2005](#); [Nistal Rosique 2007](#); [Bibang Oyee 2002](#); [Quilis and Casado-Fresnillo 1995](#)) that Equatorial Guinean Spanish is not standard, there are no other studies specifically soliciting the Equatorial Guinean public’s perceptions about their Spanish. It is noteworthy to mention that the comments of some university participants ([Chirilă 2015](#)) mentioned that the quality of Spanish could be improved. For example, a participant claimed that “*los guineanos hablan mal el español por falta de la lectura, es decir al guineano no le gusta leer*” (Equatoguineans speak Spanish poorly due to the lack of reading, that is, Guineans do not like to read) while another wished that “*se haga un esfuerzo para mejorar[ar] el habla de la lengua español[a] en nuestro país*” (an effort could be made to improve the Spanish spoken in our country) ([Chirilă 2015](#), p. 121). In the current study, semantic differential ratings of Guinean Spanish demonstrate that Equatorial Guineans hold neither overwhelming negative nor positive attitudes toward their variety of Spanish. However, with a small sample size, caution must be exercised, as the findings may not be generalizable to the entire population.

A further study with an increased number of participants would be necessary to confirm and extend the current results. With a larger sample size, social variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, economic status and education, could be assessed to evaluate their possible influence. Semi-structured interviews could also be included to provide insight into participants’ responses, especially the many neutral responses that were recorded. Additionally, there is a lack of detailed information on which sections of society in Equatorial Guinea speak non-standard Spanish. Such information is important because one’s social class and education can influence speech characteristics. [Larre Muñoz \(2013\)](#) maintains that many illiterates speak Spanish without knowing how to write it and underscores the fact that there have been very few empirical studies on the different levels and skills of Spanish in Guinean society. For the outlined reasons and to develop a full picture of the quality of Equatorial Guinean Spanish, citizens of different social class and educational background need to be studied.

5. Conclusions and Future Directions

In conclusion, the aims of this article were to explore the vitality of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea and assess the attitudes of Guineans toward their variety of Spanish. Analysis showed that the Spanish language in Equatorial Guinea is thriving because it is the most spoken language and is supported by

the state and community which hold positive attitudes towards it. We also reviewed the prevailing attitudes and debate concerning the quality of Equatorial Guinean Spanish and support the position that the Equatorial Guinean variety of Spanish is a dialect like any other and that negative attitudes towards it are linguistically unfounded. The results of an experimental study on Equatoguinean Spanish, one of the first investigations into how the Equatorial Guinean public perceive their variety of Spanish, were presented. The two research questions of the pilot study were (1) how widespread is the use of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea in comparison with indigenous languages and French? and (2) what are the attitudes of citizens towards Equatorial Guinean Spanish? Respondents were highly educated, middle-class and spoke at least two languages; they participated in an online survey. It was observed that Spanish was the functional language in almost all the sociocultural contexts or domains (home and family, work, entertainment, religion, government, mass media, education). Spanish was also the preferred language for expressing emotions. Equatorial Guineans believe that Spanish is important to their identity as the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa. Learning and speaking Spanish well was important to the respondents. In general, the participants showed very positive attitudes towards the use of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea. The respondents' subjective evaluation of their dialect of Spanish, regarding adjectives such as beautiful, rhythmical and sophisticated, was neutral. Nonetheless, respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they would recommend Equatorial Guinea as a centre for learning Spanish in Africa. Although the pilot study was based on a small sample of participants, the findings generally support the view that Spanish is the lingua franca and functional language of Equatorial Guinea.

This article has also revealed some research gaps on the status of Equatorial Guinean Spanish. It would be informative to complete an extensive national language survey to investigate language use in all domains as well as attitudes. There is also a need for empirical studies on the levels of proficiency of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea. Studies of such a nature will differentiate and determine features resulting from incomplete acquisition of Spanish and those that are characteristic of Equatoguinean Spanish. It would also be valuable to assess the language policy and initiatives of the Equatoguinean Academy of the Spanish language. A possible goal of the Academy could be to establish a corpus of texts and annotated versions of audio and video recordings of Equatorial Guinean Spanish for linguistic analyses.

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Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Sección I: Antecedente lingüístico

1. ¿Qué idioma aprendió usted primero (es decir su primer idioma)?
2. ¿Habla Ud. este idioma frecuentemente?
3. ¿Puede Ud. mantener una conversación en su primer idioma?
4. ¿Puede Ud. discutir o tratar asuntos de la universidad/del trabajo en ese idioma?
5. ¿Qué otros idiomas habla Ud.?
6. ¿Alterna Ud. entre dos o tres idiomas en una conversación?
7. ¿Ha vivido en Guinea Ecuatorial desde su niñez?
8. ¿Ha vivido en otro país hispanohablante? ¿Dónde? ¿Y por cuánto tiempo?
9. ¿Qué idioma(s) habla su madre?
10. ¿Qué idioma(s) habla su padre?

Sección II: Uso lingüístico (individuo)

En qué idioma(s) se comunica Ud.

1. Con su esposo/a
2. Con su esposo/a enfrente de sus niños
3. Con sus niños
4. Con sus padres
5. Con sus hermanos
6. Con su(s) empleado(s)
7. Con su jefe
8. Con amigos en su vecindario
9. Con amigos en el centro
10. Con sus vecinos
11. Con sus profesores
12. Con el médico
13. Con el curandero
14. Con el padre o cura
15. Con su compañero de trabajo

Sección III: Uso lingüístico (social)

¿Qué idioma se suele utilizar ...

1. En casa
2. En una tienda
3. En transmisión de radio
4. En la transmisión de televisión
5. En periódicos
6. Para chismes
7. En una clase universitaria
8. En una clase en colegio o instituto
9. En una clase primaria
10. Para expresar sarcasmo
11. En los documentos escritos para la enseñanza
12. Para discutir sus estudios con otros estudiantes
13. Para discutir sus estudios con profesores
14. Para escribir literatura (novelas, obras de ficción y no ficción)
15. Para dar mandatos militares
16. Para jurar
17. En el mercado
18. Para regatear
19. En el banco financiero
20. En la comisaría de policía
21. Para contar chistes
22. En una ceremonia religiosa
23. En las instituciones gubernamentales
24. Para insultar
25. En los tribunales
26. Para maldecir
27. Para decir cosas íntimas
28. En las canciones folclóricas

29. Para hablar con bebés
30. Para persuadir a alguien

Sección IV: Actitudes lingüísticas hacia el español

1. El español es importante para la identidad de Guinea Ecuatorial
2. Es más fácil escribir español que mi lengua materna
3. Es más fácil hablar mi lengua materna que el español
4. Me gusta hablar español
5. El español guineano es un dialecto como cualquier otro en América del Sur o España
6. Los guineanos hablan bien el español
7. Es importante que los guineanos aprendan y hablen bien el español
8. Recomendando Guinea Ecuatorial como un foco para aprender el español en África
9. El español es la lengua más hablada en Guinea Ecuatorial.
10. El nivel del español guineano es bajo.

Sección V: Actitudes hacia el español ecuatoguineano

1. Íntimo
2. Preciso
3. Musical
4. Rico
5. Sofisticado
6. Rítmico
7. Bonito
8. Superior
9. Puro
10. Sagrado
11. Refinado
12. Relajante
13. Elegante
14. Agradable al oído
15. Lógico
16. Encantador
17. Colorido
18. Persuasivo
19. Afectuoso
20. Gracioso

Sección VI: Antecedente demográfico

1. ¿Cuál es su sexo?
2. ¿Cuál es su edad?
3. ¿Cuál es su nivel de educación (o el último curso que ha terminado)?
4. ¿Cuál es su ocupación?
5. ¿Cuál es su país natal?
6. ¿Cuál es su etnia?
7. ¿En qué comuna/ciudad vive usted?
8. ¿En qué ciudad ha pasado más años?

¿Tiene algún comentario sobre el uso de idiomas (español, lenguas locales, etc.) que nos quiera compartir?

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