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The Role of Origin in English and Spanish Forenames

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Abstract: This study explores the evolving interest in names. Until now, the little research conducted has focused on surnames and place names. This paper examines the influence of origin and self-identity on reactions to forenames and pet forms by employing a comparative approach across English and Spanish languages. With 425 participants from Murcia, Spain, and Leeds, United Kingdom, this study employed a self-designed semi-structured questionnaire in both languages. The questionnaire addresses demographic information and name preferences and liking based on the participant and name origins. Using quota non-probability sampling and personal interviews, the research applied qualitative and quantitative analyses utilising SPSS 28.0.0 and thematic analysis. The findings highlight participants' connections between names and origins, echoing the linguistic–cultural interplay. Divergences emerge in discussing fashion trends and self-identity expressions between Spanish and English participants, potentially tied to historical and linguistic factors. The study underscores varying name significance in the two districts, revealing insights into cultural and identity associations. Future research is recommended to explore sociodemographic factors and gender differences.

Keywords: forenames; reactions; origin; self-identity; culture; Spanish; English; contrastive study

1. Introduction

The Bible states that man was created by God with the characteristic ability to name and to speak (Redmonds 2004). The interest that human beings have in naming can be seen in daily life. For instance, when a child has a new toy or a pet, he/she wants to give it a name (Olaya-Aguilar 2014). Dunkling (1977), Albaigès ([1995] 1998) and Darlington (2021) refer to the issue of names as a fascinating topic, but, despite this interest, it has only been regarded as a pastime and not as a primary purpose (García-Cornejo 2001; Redmonds 2004). Although in recent times the interest in this subject has grown, until now, most of the research carried out on names in both England and Spain has been devoted to the exploration of surnames and place names (Robson 1988; Postles 2002; Alomar 2005; Gamella et al. 2014).

Authors such as Albaigès ([1995] 1998), Tibón ([1956] 2002) or Earnshaw (2012) draw attention to the fact that society and history are expressed by means of names. The names themselves, as well as the reactions to names, are full of expressivity (Evans and Green 2006). Many different factors can be involved in the choice of a name, e.g., euphony, fashion, origin, meaning, family tradition, or religion (Withycombe [1945] 1977; Cutler et al. 1990; Zittoun 2004). This study uses a comparative perspective in order to provide more empirical evidence for the role that origin plays in the reactions to forenames and pet forms in two different languages, English and Spanish.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Origin

The language of a group of people is its soul and the best expression of its personality (Narbarte-Iraola 1983). Malinowski ([1923] 1946) moots the idea that language must be studied together with culture. Hofstede ([1980] 2001, p. 21) also links culture and language:

"Language is the most clearly recognisable part of culture". In the last few decades, Sercu et al. (2005) have been industrious in their efforts to integrate the visible aspects of a culture into the language curriculum, i.e., the country's customs and traditions, history, music, art, sports, food, etc. Guillén-Nieto (2009) thinks that the hidden aspects of a culture must also be integrated into language. She emphasises the fact that for second-language acquisition to be fully accomplished, it is helpful that students "understand the relationship between a speech community's preferred patterns of non-linguistic and linguistic behaviour and the value orientations that are at the core of a culture" (p. 57).

According to Guillén-Nieto (2005) and Loukianenko-Wolfe (2008), a lack of awareness of cultural aspects on the part of other cultural groups may lead to communication barriers, such as misunderstandings or stereotypes. Lewis ([1996] 1999) states that the English-speaking Britons have an instrumental orientation, so they may regard Spaniards as irrational and embarrassing. The expressive orientation of Spaniards may make them perceive Britons as cold and even deceitful for not showing their emotions. Britons may see Spanish explicitness as aggressive and rude, whereas British implicitness, including the use of hedging and mitigation, may be wrongly seen as a lack of truthfulness by Spaniards. Another way of understanding this sense of implicitness or lack of aggressive expressiveness in the English language is by interpreting it in the context of political correctness, something that people have been aware of in the UK and the USA for decades, unlike in Spain. Therefore, in the United Kingdom, there is a tendency to avoid using pejorative terms, especially when talking about other cultures, gender, etc. (Bernstein 1990; Levine 2010).

Enfield (2000) highlights the ideas of ethnocentrism and monolinguocentrism, which involve privileging one language over another, as, for instance, in the case of English. Russell (1991) claims that psychologists are interested in all people and not just those who speak English. Whorf considers that there is no reason for English people to be ethnocentric because their language is not the only logical one. Boas (1938), for example, is of the opinion that other cultures that were considered to be primitive are as complex as those in *civilised* Europe.

As far as ethnic origin is concerned, Day (1998) analyses the ethnic group. He provides the following definition: "an ethnic characterization of someone is a description of that person as a member of a particular type of social group" (p. 152). The ascription of people to a given social group, in this case, an ethnic group, is called *linguistic ethnic group categorisation*. The categorisation that a person may use to refer to another person can be straightforward, that is, by using a lexically obvious ethnic group label such as *Swede*, or it can be more subtle. He states that in some cases, people use another person's belonging to an ethnic group to disqualify him/her. Day (1998), in agreement with de Certeau (1984), notices that, in this case, the reaction of the person in the ethnic group is found to be resistance. Day (1998, p. 170) explains that "after all, what is being resisted is not simply some casual joke or triviality: what is at issue is the person's place in the activity of the group and their participation in the life it gives". Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) examined the issue of discrimination in the labour market: how white-sounding names are more favoured than black-sounding names in terms of callbacks for interviews, for example.

Mateos (2007) classifies populations into ethnic groups by using people's names. To some scholars, proper names "are among the main communicators of national identity" (Fomenko 2011, p. 76). The classification of individuals according to their ethnic origin is often possible by looking at their names. Yonge (1863, p. 1) is of the opinion that "we shall find the history, the religion, and the character of a nation stamped upon the individuals in the names they bear". As explained by Valentine et al. (1996), upon hearing the names *Michio Yamato* or *Natalia Todorova*, it is assumed that the bearers of these names are of Japanese and Slavic origin, respectively. Nonetheless, on certain occasions, names are common in more than one culture: e.g., *Anne Sinclair* can be found in both France and Britain. Therefore, a name may hint at its bearer's origin or not (it could be a foreign name that has nothing to do with the origin of the individual).

In the case of Spanish onomastics, Roman, Greek, Jewish, and Germanic names form part of its repertoire (Kohoutková 2009). Spanish society, like many others, has been created from a mixture of many civilisations throughout history. The first population in Spain was Iberian. The only name that remains from the Iberians is probably *Indalecio*. This was followed by Roman colonisation, and the Roman system is the basis of our onomastic repertoire. *Cognomen* or *nomen gentilicium* was the second name, which indicated the gens or tribe to which the person belonged: *Cornelia*, *Iulia*, etc. (Albaigès [1995] 1998). In Hispania, Greek names were more common in Andalusia and the coast of Tarragona. Greek names added exoticism to the urban areas (Abascal 1994). In the 9th and 10th centuries, the working classes were given Germanic names as well, which made the onomastic repertoire poorer because Hebrew, Greek and Latin names were used less often. Male and female names were more likely to be of Germanic and Latin origin, respectively (Kohoutková 2009).

In recent decades, immigration has caused some changes in Spain (Maíz-Arévalo 2007). In 1994, any language could be used for names (Albaigès [1995] 1998). Tibón ([1956] 2002) covers foreign names used due to the influence of other countries or Spanish regions, e.g., *Gladys* (Anglo-Saxon influence), *Yvonne* (French influence) or *Ítalo* (Italian influence). To give an example, during the last few years, names from Euskadi (e.g., *Aitor, Ainhoa* or *Iker*), Anglo-Saxon countries (e.g., *Kevin*, *Jéssica* or *Christian*), Ireland (for instance, *Ian*) or Nordic areas (namely, *Erik*) have been introduced into the Balearic Islands. Islamic, Chinese or Slavik names are also common nowadays (Llur Martí 2007). In a study carried out on anthroponomastics in the Balearic Islands (Mas i Forners 2005), a small percentage of Arabic names were also studied. The name *Mohammed* was becoming increasingly popular, which shows the effect of immigration. More working-class people opt for names of Anglo-American origin (Besnard and Desplanques 1987; Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004), e.g., *Alison*, *Cindy*, *Cynthia*, *Jennifer*, *Linda* and *Melissa*, including orthographic changes—where the spelling imitates English pronunciation, for instance, *Daiana* for *Diana*, *Brayan* instead of *Brian*, etc. Martinell-Gifre and Lleal-Galceran (1981) give, as an example of Anglophone aspirations, the form *Patry* in Spain. Nowadays, there are more parents who choose a name from a different language, but this does not necessarily imply a fondness for the culture in question (Faure [2002] 2007). Referring to the effect of immigration on names, Llur Martí (2007, p. 109, our own translation) claims that "an accurate and in-depth study of these recent changes would be extremely laborious", and he does not see himself "with the strength and willingness to cover it".

Turning now to the question of English onomastics, we will focus specifically on Yorkshire as an example, as the story of the origin of this county can also be said to be true for the rest of England (Baring-Gould 1910). The original population was Celtic, and the Angles and Saxons followed. In 790, Yorkshire was invaded violently by the Danes/Jutes, who spread to the Midlands (the former Mercia) and gave rise to numerous place names of Danish and Norse origin. Danes/Jutes even kept their Scandinavian personal designations, which were passed on until the present day: for example, the surname *Oliver* is similar to the first name *Olafr*. Between the widespread use of Anglo-Saxon names and the Norman Conquest, there was a very large gap, which ended up with the almost complete disappearance of Anglo-Saxon forenames. After the mid-thirteenth century, just some familiar names remained, such as *Edith*, which has undergone a recent revival, or *Alfred* and *Harold*, which became popular in the nineteenth century to the 1920s, although they seem old-fashioned in the twenty-first century (Clark 1995).

The Norman Conquest gave rise to an increase in population and commerce. The Conquest implied a major change in name patterns. The Norman masters brought young men with Norman blood to England. In 1152, Henry Plantagenet married Eleanor of Guienne, the divorced wife of Louis VII of France. Traders, merchants, etc., came to England, and both foreign and English names existed side by side. In the twelfth century, the name-stock in England was very varied and rich because there were original island names (Old English and Old Scandinavian), as well as those brought by the Normans. In

many cases, French names, e.g., *Rolle*, became Anglicised, i.e., *Raoul*. Thus, the French *Jacques* lived side by side with the English *James*. Names such as *Richard, Robert, Henry* and *William* became very popular after being introduced by the Normans. Names such as *Alice, Matilda* and *Emma* have Germanic origins, and they were brought to England by the Normans. During the 300 years of fighting warfare between France and England, there was a continuous flow of people between England and France. Isabella of France, Edward II's wife, introduced French people with surnames from England that were unknown in France.

During the twelfth century, Flemings settled in Yorkshire, with the introduction of Flemish names (e.g., *Bowdler*), although most of them were introduced later, in the sixteenth century. Afterwards, these names spread to Scotland and Wales. Germans also came to the country in the 14th century because they aimed to show the English better methods for mining (they introduced technical terms). The poll tax from the 14th century revealed that there was immigration from other parts of England, Scotland, Ireland and France. After the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, fugitive Huguenots settled in England and, later on, Ireland, introducing French names. In 1709, after the order of destruction from Louis XIV, people from the Bavarian Palatinate were given refuge by Queen Anne and brought German names. This was intensified by the arrival of the Hanoverian dynasty, which resulted in an increase in the North Germanic population in England. Likewise, Netherlanders came to England after the accession to the throne of William of Orange (1689). After the French Revolution (1789–1799), Swedes, Poles and Italians, as well as Spanish and Portuguese Jews, began to spread across Yorkshire (Baring-Gould 1910).

In the nineteenth century, there was already an increasing influence of names from Scotland, Wales and Ireland, although sometimes, this is difficult to identify given that the name already had a history in England (Redmonds 2004). For a long time, it has been acceptable that people of Irish origin use traditional Irish names, e.g., *Séan* or *Siobhan*, or the Anglicised forms of these names. The reason why many parents use these names is to make their children aware of their national heritage (Dunkling 1977). Nowadays, names of Irish, Scottish Gaelic or Welsh origin are more freely chosen for children, even if no connections can be established with Scotland, Wales or Ireland.

Until the 1940s, it would have been thought that a person bearing the name of Kevin, which comes from the Irish *Caoimhghin* ("handsome at birth"), was Irish by birth, but the name began to spread, and in the 1960s, it reached its peak in England, but its popularity has decreased since then (Dunkling 1977). In Scotland, English names such as *John, James*, etc., coexist with others of Scottish origin, such as *Ian, Cameron, Malcolm, Donald, Douglas* or *Gordon*. In the 1950s, Scotland was the most notable source of new names in England. The Scottish influence on girls' names was less obvious, for example, in the case of *Janet, Brenda* and *Lesley* in 1950. In 1925, there were Scottish girls' names such as *Kathleen* (*Catherine*) and *Eileen* (*Helen*), *Sheila* or *Muriel*. Scottish and Irish family names had dictionaries by G.F. Black and E. MacLysaght, respectively. However, little has been explored about forenames in terms of their origin in Scotland. From Wales, we find *Gladys, Winifred* and *Gwendolen*, and for boys, we have *Trevor* (Redmonds 2004).

The stock of names increased in the Victorian period and the 20th century as new names appeared from other parts of the world. This subscribes to the view that, according to SIRC (2007), nationality does not play such an essential role nowadays in Britain, as national identities are more flexible, and it is common to cross the borders of individual countries—although a third of all the people still attach a strong tie between nationality and their sense of belonging. In Abascal's (1994, p. 35) words, "names travel more than people". Names coming from France, such as *Jacqueline* or *Ivonne*, can be found in England. English-speaking countries have borrowed names such as *Olga, Tamara, Natasha, Nikita* or *Maxim* from Russia since the late 19th century (Dunkling 1977). Hanks et al. ([1990] 2006) explain that *Tanya* is a "Russian pet form of Tatiana" (p. 257). Conventional Russian names are usually of Byzantine Greek origin (saints venerated by the Orthodox Church) and, to a lesser degree, borrowed from Slavonic languages. In the second half of the twentieth century, names of Scandinavian origin became fashionable, e.g., *Ingrid* or *Astrid*.

There is little difference between Danish, Norwegian and Swedish names. According to Habibi (1992), the interest in Muslim names increased after the resurgence of Islam and the revitalisation of Muslim culture. In the UK, some Arab names became popular in the 1990s. An example is *Yasmin*, which can be found used by people with no connections to the Arab or Muslim world. Dictionaries that deal with names in languages other than English or Spanish are, for instance, Woulfe ([1974] 1991) and Burgio ([1970] 1992), who focus on Irish and Italian, respectively.

Cross-cultural studies are important in the field of cognition. Guillén-Nieto (2009) highlights the idea that since the mid-20th century, the interest in cross-cultural communication has increased, maybe as a result of growing globalisation. However, cross-cultural studies are difficult to conduct (Piaget 1971, as cited in Dasen 1974). Most of the cross-cultural studies carried out focus on non-Western cultures.

Some languages "tolerate" some sound sequences but do not accept others, which are common in other languages, though. Ullmann (1962, p. 42) explains that "it is common knowledge that words borrowed from a foreign language are often adapted to the phonetic structure of the receiving idiom". This can be related to the fact that English-speaking preschoolers have a tendency to choose the syllable pattern permitted in their language (Messer 1967).

According to Aguiar e Silva (1984), the writer often resorts to the origin, history and semantic vicissitudes of the word. Some writers often attach importance to purity. Thus, the lexis needs to belong to their native language and not be borrowed from other languages. There are divergent views, as other writers prefer the borrowed term without any alteration. Mackenzie (1939) thinks that foreign words evoke local colour or a sense of exoticism or even snobbism.

2.2. Self-Identity

Self-identity is "the awareness of one's unique identity" (Your Dictionary 1996–2023, para. 1). Albaigès ([1995] 1998, p. 17, our own translation) points out that "the name contains the being". The name represents who a person is in his/her life (Cruz 2015). According to Tsiropulos (1987, p. 12, our own translation), "a person's name forms his/her essence: when entering life he/she faces life as flesh and name". The name is an essential component of the person and his/her identity (Zonabend 1984). As claimed by Bryner (2010, para. 2), "we're always trying to think about the first bit of a child's identity". Forenames "are, in essence, the emblem of our immersion into self, identity" (Earnshaw 2011, p. 140). As Antaki and Widdicombe (1998, p. 1) put it, "identity (…) is part and parcel of the routines of everyday life". In fact, some authors, such as Dunkling (1977) or Windt-Val (2012), have reflected upon this and leave us with the following ideas: "we feel as intimately bound up with our own names as we do with our reflections in a mirror" (Dunkling 1977, p. 11), "my name (…) is a reflection of me, like my face in a photograph" (p. 10) and "it is (…) *your* name. You were given it at birth and have every right to use it" (Dunkling 1977, p. 26, emphasis in original).

Names identify, not only mean (Ullmann 1962). When pronouncing a name, we need to imagine the person behind it because the name is his/her identity. The bearer should be identified by his/her name (Lévi-Strauss 1962). In Valentine et al.'s own words (1996, p. 28), "in naming a seen person, conceptual processing involves both access to a token address in memory from a recognition unit, and access to descriptive properties that define the person's identity from this token address".

We write names with capital letters at the beginning in order to exalt the bearers of those names. We know people from their names. The person may die, but as long as the name is in our memory or we write it or pronounce it, the person remains alive. The name lives "when read, heard and communicated" (Tsiropulos 1987, p. 23, our own translation). The fact that names are still written on graves implies that the people bearing them lived once and are still alive in some way.

Studies on the self-identification of names are, for instance, Aldrin (2011), who explored forenames from a sociolinguistic and identity-theoretic standpoint. She deals with parents' choices of first names as acts of identity. Aldrin's (2011) aim is "to examine how parents in Sweden at the beginning of the twenty-first century use the process of naming as a resource to contribute to the creation of various identities for both themselves and the child" (p. 4). She demonstrates that the choice of first names by parents "is an important social act" (Aldrin 2011, p. 4), and this social act creates identities both in them and in their children. McKinlay and Dunnett (1998) expound that the study of self and identity has pervaded the social sciences.

The right to have a name is one of the basic rights of the human being. In Western countries, Article 24-2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights from 1966 states that "every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name" (as cited in Valentine et al. 1996, p. 6). Names do not cost anything and are obligatory (Dupâquier 1981). The Declaration of the Rights of the Child and, more recently, the Convention of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 also stress the importance of this right. The background note nº2 of the Convention says that "sometimes, children are even treated as possessions or commodities to be bargained with or traded. In its more extreme forms, the denial of an identity to children has led to slavery, prostitution, discrimination against ethnic minorities, and forced separation from parents" (as cited in Valentine et al. 1996, p. 6).

Social psychologists, particularly Nuttin (1985), have studied an intriguing phenomenon called the *name-letter effect*, which claims that letters present in a person's name are more attractive to that person than other letters. According to this scholar, the name is the most unique of all the attributes of the self. This could be supported by the idea that mere ownership of a compound object implies the view of each of its constituents as more attractive. Nuttin (1985) showed two lists of letter pairs to elementary school children and undergraduate students. They had to choose the most attractive letter in each pair (all of them were provided with the same lists). The lists contained letters from their own first name and/or family name and letters from unrelated names. Letters included in their names were more often chosen by each of them. Similarly, in Nuttin (1987), when selecting preferred letters in a random alphabet presentation, participants often selected letters from their own names, and this was found to extend to twelve European languages: Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish.

Furthermore, the language choices that we make index our identity (Ochs 1992); in other words, the way that people use language has some relevance in expressing what they are (Bordieu 1983). Sacks (1974) examined the conversational interaction amongst a group of teenagers and realised that they talked about the question of identity: who they were and what they did (as cited in Edwards 1998).

In the 21st century, with the rise of globalisation, it is believed that in Britain, the sense of belonging is being lost. Neighbourhoods are becoming more impersonal. SIRC (2007) states that "The development of industrial society raised fears that we were losing our sense of community—that the faceless, anonymous sprawl of the world's cities was depriving us of the basic need to feel as though we are part of something bigger than our selves" (p. 8). Sociologists such as Emile Durkheim or Anthony Giddens have explored these fears. Maybe it is not that we have lost the sense of belonging but that we are trying to find new ways of locating ourselves in a society that is changing. Before, belonging was more rigidly marked by class, religion or even gender, sexual orientation and race. Now, there is much more freedom to choose the categories (brands, lifestyles, communities, etc.) to which a person belongs.

3. Objectives

This study uses a comparative perspective in order to offer more empirical evidence for the role that origin and, in relation to this, self-identity play in the reactions to forenames and

pet forms in two different languages, English and Spanish, particularly the metropolitan districts of Leeds and Murcia, respectively.

Several research questions were addressed in order to carry out this study:

1. What reactions are triggered by people's forenames and pet forms in the metropolitan district of Murcia?
2. What reactions are triggered by people´s forenames and pet forms in the metropolitan district of Leeds?
3. What relationship can be found between the reactions to the forenames and pet forms in the metropolitan district of Murcia and those in the municipal district of Leeds?

The needs of our research were best met by adopting a complementary design (mixed-methods research), which implies including aspects from both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches.

Key Terms

For the purposes of the present study, the terms that need clarification are defined and operationalised below.

Foreign: One of the definitions provided by the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2008, p. 560) for the term *foreign* is "belonging or connected to a country which is not your own". Given that the cases of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland are controversial, further clarification is required. Carter and McRae (2016) explain that England is only one of three countries making up Great Britain, together with Scotland and Wales. He also comments on the fact that all of these countries, together with Northern Ireland, constitute the United Kingdom, a "country" (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 2008, p. 1590). Thus, England would be "a country within a country". In our study, the different component countries within the United Kingdom referred to by our participants, i.e., Scotland, Ireland and Wales, are analysed in conjunction with other countries outside the United Kingdom, such as Poland. Therefore, all of them will be regarded as *foreign*. Similarly, taking Spain as a reference point, *foreign* will refer to other countries outside Spain and aspects related to them.

Forename cognate (vs. name version): Given that there is no specific definition of a version and cognate when referring to names, we are going to provide the meaning of these two terms as employed in our study. Although both terms can be applied to names with the same meaning, as defined by Hanks et al. ([1990] 2006), in this study, a cognate will refer to the same name but as used in another language or country, with its corresponding translation, if one exists, e.g., Jéssica (Spanish) and Jessica (English) or Luis (Spanish) and Louis (English). A version will apply to the same name used in the same country and language, although with a different origin (e.g., Sonia/Sofía or Sophia; Sonia has Russian roots, whereas Sofía/Sophia has Greek roots) (Faure [2002] 2007).

Pet form: When providing information about each name, Hanks et al. ([1990] 2006) add, if relevant, pet forms (or pet names), as well as short forms. For instance, from the name *Patrick*, they offer the following examples: *Pat* as a short form and *Paddy* as a pet form. Another example is *Jenny* as a pet form and *Jen* as a short form for the name *Jennifer*. Therefore, the pet name is a form that implies some change from the original (in the case of Paddy, a change from <t> to <d>) and/or lengthenings (<y>, together with the doubling of the previous consonant) and shortenings (*Pat*, with the omission of <trick> and *Jen*, with the omission of <nifer>). In this study, however, for the sake of economy, the term will be used generically, without specifying, and therefore, is likely to include shortened forms, too.

4. Methodology

The participants were 425 males and females over 25 years old whose usual place of residence was the metropolitan district of Murcia or Leeds in Spain and the United Kingdom, respectively. In particular, there were 219 and 206 informants from the areas of Murcia and Leeds, respectively (see Figure 1). A semi-structured questionnaire in

two versions, in Spanish and English, designed by the researcher herself, was used. The structure of the questionnaire followed that in Serrano (2008) and consisted of the following parts: (1) questionnaire introduction; (2) body of sociodemographic questions (about their origin) and (3) central body of questions, that is, a relevant question about the research problem. The central body of questions in the questionnaire included 15 names or groups of names for the participant to comment on his/her liking or preferences as well as origin (both the origin of the respondent and that of the name may play a role here) (Appendix A).
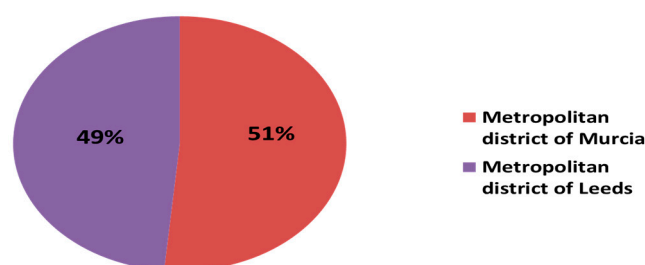

Figure 1. Participants classified in terms of metropolitan district (Murcia or Leeds).

As for the procedure, the study was conducted over a period of two years. First of all, the metropolitan districts, Murcia and Leeds, were chosen. Our participants were then selected from those who met the conditions previously mentioned (quota non-probability sampling strategy). Once our respondents had been chosen, the questionnaire in its two versions was designed. Only when the name was present in both Spanish and English was it included in the list of forenames selected. Before launching the project, our research instrument was revised by experts in the field in Spain and England as well as pilot-tested (Dörnyei 2007). A personal interview modality was included (Rincón 1991). This took about 10 min to fill in. Participation was voluntary from an intentional random selection. The locations common to both countries were streets and markets. After explaining what the study consisted of, the interviewer directly interviewed the participants. The semi-structured questionnaire served as a guide for this face-to-face interview.

5. Data Analysis

Once the data had been collected, they were analysed by using the statistical package SPSS 28.0.0 for Windows (SPSS, Inc. [1989] 2023, an IBM Company, Chicago, IL, USA). The information from the variables was introduced into data matrices, and an exploratory study and an expert consultation were undertaken. The information was then subjected to univariate analysis techniques: frequency and percentage counts were conducted. Graphical techniques such as bar and pie charts were used.

A qualitative analysis of the quantitative information was carried out. In addition, a purely qualitative analysis was undertaken if verbal information was provided by participants willing to add spontaneous comments to their answers. The analytical procedure of textual data followed was that proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). A mixed (deductive–inductive) qualitative approach was employed for the extraction of categories. For the text segmentation, the thematic criterion was used. Paraphrases and, mainly, direct quotes are included to support the findings. Likewise, the meanings behind the categories are shown in graphical representations, mainly networks, which assemble and organise the information.

6. Results and Discussion

For the name versions Antonella–Antonia, 21 informants in Spain point out that "Antonella no es un nombre nuestro; no me gusta" ("Antonella is not a name of ours; I don't like it") (participant 77), thus underlining the idea of possession, a trait of self-identity: "it is (...) *your* name" (Dunkling 1977, p. 26, emphasis in original). Another comment that reflects similar attitudes is "Me gusta Antonia porque es más español y tradicional"

("I like Antonia because it is more Spanish and traditional") (participant 56). Hofstede ([1980] 2001, p. 21) links culture and language: "language is the most clearly recognisable part of culture". Although the use of traditional names decreased in the 1990s (BabyCenter 2015), a mixture of traditional and original names was found in the twentieth century (Browder [1978] 1998). Similarly, regarding the name Ana, Spanish participant 160 adds, "El nombre Ana solo me gusta porque es español" ("I just like the name Ana because it is Spanish").

In a related vein, turning now to the name version Sofía, it elicits positive remarks in relation to its origin and meaning: "Me gusta Sofía por sus orígenes griegos y significado: 'sabiduría' y también porque lo siento como nuestro: nuestra Reina se llama así y una buena amiga también" ("I like Sofía due to its Greek origins and meaning: wisdom and also because I feel it as ours: our Queen is called that and a good friend too"). The first part of the comment is usually made by cultured people and, in particular, teachers (e.g., participant 47). Names designated qualities (Albaigès [1984] 1993). In the Spanish onomastic repertoire, names derived from Greek are very common, and the Greek culture exalted qualities associated with refinement and distinction. As for the positive reaction that this participant shows towards the name for being associated with the Queen, although it would seem that in recent years, the Monarchy, especially the former King, in Spain has been going through a difficult moment, the opinion about Queen Sofía remains unaffected. King Felipe and Queen Letizia's second daughter bears her grandmother's name as well. The fact that this informant also adds that a friend of hers, who is a lovely person, is named Sofía is connected to this statement by Requena (1994, p. 1): friends "strengthen our own capacity to imagine, know and build up reality. They provide us with an essential feeling of identity and belonging to a group" (our own translation), thus reinforcing the idea of self-identity.

Most of the informants providing comments in Spain, 10, to be exact, describe the cognate Jénnifer in terms of its origin, that is, "Un nombre de por ahí fuera" ("A name from out there") (e.g., participant 87), a common expression to indicate that the name in this case is not Spanish in origin. However, although it is clear that the participant who claims this does not like the name, as native speakers, we do not think that the expression contains pejorative suggestions but is just colloquial. As a contrast, this respondent emphasises that she has a very Spanish name, Carmen.

Nonetheless, seven informants are more radical regarding Jénnifer: "Los nombres extranjeros están invadiéndonos; a mí me gustan los nombres normales: los que son cristianos y nos son familiares" ("Foreign names are invading us; I like normal names: those which are Christian and are familiar to us") (e.g., participant 95). Foreign names are seen as non-normal. If we consider that the norm is "an accepted standard or way of behaving or doing things that most people agree with" (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 2008, p. 966), then, according to this participant, foreign names are deviations from that standard, that is, Spanish origin. Although informants are not indeed aware of whether names have Christian roots or not, this respondent dares to establish a connection between non-familiarity and non-Christianity. Her view is mistaken in a sense, though, because in the majority of European languages, over half of the conventional forenames come from Christianity (Hanks et al. [1990] 2006), including Spain and England. As explained previously, Spain has a devotion to the Holy Family and their names (Albaigès [1995] 1998). It would have been more accurate on the part of participant 95 to have said Catholic instead of Christian because, although Catholicism is a branch of Christianity, the former is associated more strongly with Spain and not Britain (Hanks et al. [1990] 2006). However, the respondent is right in the sense that Jennifer does not have Christian roots. Jennifer is "of Celtic (Arthurian) origin, a Cornish form of the name of King Arthur's unfaithful *Guinevere*" (Hanks et al. [1990] 2006, p. 141, emphasis added).

In Leeds and surrounding areas, constant comments, 21, to be more specific, are found in relation to Jessica being "an ever-present name in England" (e.g., participant 81). In fact, this name is "apparently of Shakespearean origin" (Hanks et al. [1990] 2006, p. 142), and, according to Faure ([2002] 2007), it is an English name. As can be shown here, there is

still an overwhelming number of English-speaking people who like ever-present names (Hanks et al. [1990] 2006). The positive view of Jessica is evidenced by it being the name of many participants from the metropolitan district of Leeds in Arboleda (2015), although its frequency position in the ranking of first or full names is not one of the highest in her study. In England, we also find two similar comments regarding the name Amanda, as it seems that participants feel the name belongs to them: "Amanda is a name from my country" (e.g., participant 14).

On the other hand, although the frequency is very low (only two respondents), participants of Polish origin in the metropolitan district of Leeds prefer the name Victoria (rather than the pet form Vicky). Participant 200 states, "I like Victoria more than Vicky. In Poland we are not keen on pet forms. The spelling is familiar to me". The point is that *Wiktoria*, the forename in Polish, resembles Victoria in English, and, therefore, it is more familiar. This name is often employed without pet forms in Poland, and, when used, forms such as *Wika* or *Wiktorka* arise (Sosiński 2004), which do not resemble Vicky. It appears that, despite living permanently in Leeds and surrounding districts, this participant shows a tendency to choose the syllable pattern permitted in her language, an inclination also shown by English-speaking preschoolers (Messer 1967). Ullmann (1962, p. 42) explains that "it is common knowledge that words borrowed from a foreign language are often adapted to the phonetic structure of the receiving idiom". This is in line with O'Sullivan et al. (1988), who claim that certain candidates in an election won as a result of their names being familiar and having the same ethnic origin as the voters. Nonetheless, the reaction from participant 200 in our study would not be consistent with what some immigrant families do in England: changing their original name to another one or using the original name with a different pronunciation that would be more typical of the host country where they now live (Salahuddin 1999). We must note that after the French Revolution (1789–1799), Poles, among others, began to spread across Yorkshire in England (Baring-Gould 1910).

The three respondents who have Scottish origins in Leeds and its surroundings only like the option Bill (rather than Will or even William): "We prefer Bill rather than Will or William". This makes sense in that the Scottish *Uilleam* has Bill as a pet form, used together with *Billie* or *Willie* (Rampantscotland n.d.) (the other options proposed in this study are not considered). Bill Clinton, for instance, has a Scottish origin. It must not be forgotten that in the nineteenth century, there was already an increasing influence of names from Scotland, although sometimes, this is difficult to identify given that the name already had a history in England. In the 1950s, Scotland was the most notable source of new names in England, although little has been explored about forenames in terms of their origin in Scotland (Redmonds 2004).

On the other hand, although experience tells us, as Spanish people, that there are not many bearers of the forename Marcelo in Murcia and districts, it is true that it has recently become more familiar a name due to the increased presence of Hispanic Americans, amongst whom Marcelo is a common name, on Spanish television. In participant 64's own words and those of 15 informants, "Me gusta el nombre de Marcelo; parece Argentino" ("I like the name Marcelo; it looks Argentinian"). Valentine et al. (1996) give the examples of *Michio Yamato* or *Natalia Todorova*, as, when hearing them, it is assumed that the bearers of these names are of Japanese and Slavic origin, respectively. Nonetheless, on certain occasions, names are frequent in more than one culture; e.g., *Anne Sinclair* can be found in both France and Britain, and this is even more applicable in the case of Marcelo, a name that is common among Hispanic Americans but can perfectly fit in among Spanish people, too. In fact, the results obtained here look positive, and they may point to a good future for the name in our country. We should highlight the soap operas on Spanish television in which Marcelo is found as a name: well-known actors such as Marcelo Buquet or the main character in *Bella Calamidades*, Marcelo Machado. Other examples are the Chilean TV presenter and singer Marcelo Hernández, the Brazilian footballer in Real Madrid, mentioned by participant 17 ("El nombre me recuerda al futbolista del Real Madrid" ("The

name reminds me of the footballer in Real Madrid")) or the Chilean football players Marcelo Díaz or Marcelo Salas.

In the metropolitan district of Leeds, Tanya elicits comments related to its origin: "It is like Russian or Ukranian to me" (participant 39). Hanks et al. ([1990] 2006) confirm that Tanya is a "Russian pet form of Tatiana" (p. 257). Names such as *Olga, Tamara, Natasha, Nikita* and *Maxim* from Russia have been borrowed by English-speaking countries since the late 19th century (Dunkling 1977).

Also, in England, participant 94 refers to sound, self-identity, origin and the related name (Louis and Maurice) in the following remark: "I like the French Louis; my name, Maurice, also sounds French". Maybe the phenomenon proposed by Nuttin (1985), the name-letter effect, in which the letters present in a person's name are more attractive to that person, could be extended to its sound, too. Whereas the pronunciation is /luːɪs/ in for the English form, Lewis, which is much more common in Britain, it is /luːi/ in the French name, Louis. On the other hand, as for the positive view of French in the case of British participants, 10 respondents highlight the French origin of the name version Louis from Lewis and like it (we need to remember the influence of the Norman Conquest). In many cases, French names became Anglicised (e.g., *Rolle* became *Raoul*) (Baring-Gould 1910).

Hanks et al. ([1990] 2006) claim that Antonella is a modern feminine form of *Anton* (a variant of *Anthony*), now common in English-speaking countries. Many websites, however (e.g., HGM Network 2009), suggest that Antonella is the Italian variant of Antonia. One of the Spanish respondents (participant 35) states that "Antonella es un nombre italiano" ("Antonella is an Italian name").

Regarding the name Aida, participant 77, together with five other informants, states, "Me recuerda al compositor Giuseppe Verdi por su ópera *Aida* y de ahí a Italia" ("It reminds me of the composer Giuseppe Verdi because of his opera *Aida* and, from there, to Italy"). This name is said to have Italian origins, although also Arabic ones, with its meaning being "returning, visitor" (Salahuddin 1999, p. 243).

Participant 188 in the municipal district of Leeds likes Ramona because of its origin: "My husband has Italian relatives, so I have become familiarised with this name". Despite Ramona being a Spanish name, there may be reasons for associating Ramona with Italy rather than Spain: the similarity in sound to *Romina* (note Romina Power, the Italian singer), the famous portrait by the Italian painter Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, the common origin of both Italian and Spanish (Romance languages) or the familiarity of this name due to celebrities such as the Romanian-Italian actress, singer and politician Ramona Badescu or the actress Ramona Milano, who comes from an Italian family.

The name Michaela yields positive comments in England as well. Hence, participant 85, who likes it, makes a remark in relation to the possible origin of the name: "It sounds Italian; I like its musical rhythm". It makes sense in that, as claimed by Nichol (2011), -ella is an Italian suffix. Note, for example, the Italian name *Donatella* (from *Donato*). Names such as *Angelo* or *Angela, Aniello* or *Aniella*, and *Raffaele* or *Raffaella* are well-known Italian names (Hanks et al. [1990] 2006). Michaela is the "Latinate feminine form of Michael" (p. 194), and Italian comes from Latin. Rhythm in music pleases our ears (García-Yebra [1982] 1989). Music is related to sound (see Appendix B for the list of all the names analysed in each metropolitan district together with the participants' quotations).

7. Conclusions

To conclude, it has been observed that for 14 out of 15 of the forenames listed (93% of the participants), references were made to their origins (see Figure 2). As Malinowski ([1923] 1946) and Hofstede ([1980] 2001) point out, language is linked to culture, and they must be studied together.
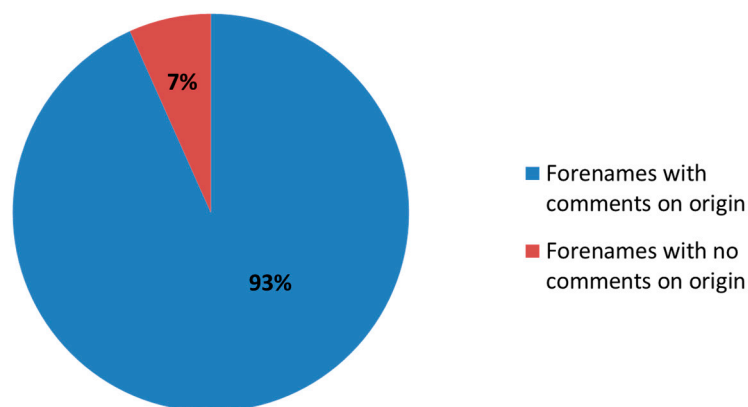
Figure 2. Presence of the variable origin among participants' comments on forenames.

If we compare Murcia and Leeds, that is, Spain and the United Kingdom, respectively, we observe that 8 out of 15 names, i.e., more than half of the names presented, have comments in relation to their origins. Leeds is closely followed by Murcia, with 6 out of 15 names (meaning 40%) (see Figures 3 and 4).
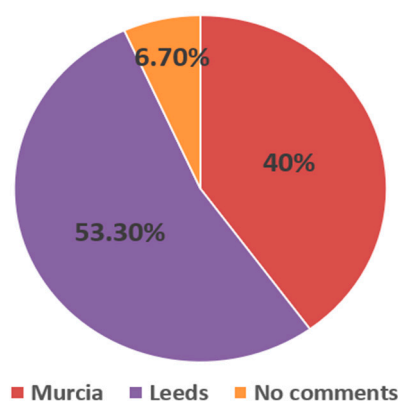

Figure 3. Presence of the variable origin among participants' comments on forenames (in terms of metropolitan district).
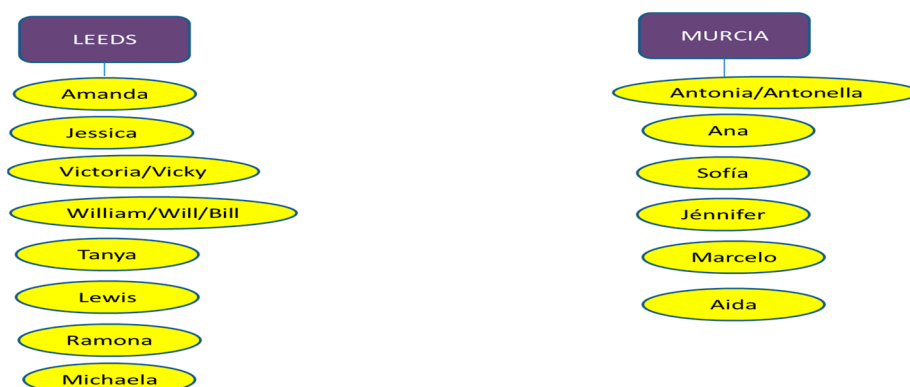
Figure 4. Forenames with comments on origin (in terms of metropolitan district).

It is of note that when speaking about fashion, for the same meaning, whereas Spanish participants frequently use *traditional*, English respondents employ *ever-present*. The different words reflect different ways of approaching the same phenomenon. When the name has existed in that country for a long time, Spanish people talk about tradition, and English people seem to avoid that word. The *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2008) explains that *traditional* means "following or belonging to the customs or ways of behaving

that have continued in a group of people or society for a long time without changing" (p. 1544). The fact that Spain went through a dictatorship for many years (Tusell 1999), with democracy being established in the 1970s (Albaigès [1995] 1998), while in England, freedom has a longer history, may have contributed to a more "conservative" lexis on the part of Spain.

The way of referring to self-identity is different in the metropolitan districts of Murcia and Leeds. Whereas our informants from Leeds and its surroundings make recurrent use of the first-person singular possessive determiner, i.e., *my* ("my country"), our respondents in the municipal district of Murcia do not seem to be so self-referential, as there are no instances as such, but they rather use the first-person plural possessive pronoun, i.e., *ours*. The employment of the first-person singular (more than the plural form) may reinforce ideas of ethnocentrism and monolinguocentrism, which involve privileging one language, in this case, English, over another (Enfield 2000). In this respect, Russell (1991) adds that psychologists are interested in all people and not just those who speak English. Whorf considers that there is no reason for English people to be ethnocentric because their language is not the only logical one. If English people are so self-centred about their language, which may enhance their self-confidence, they may also be self-centred about a linguistic aspect such as names, theirs in particular. If comparing the two metropolitan districts, we can surmise that Spaniards give more importance to names as part of their identity as a people. This makes sense since, during the 21st century, with the rise of globalisation, it is believed that in Britain, the sense of belonging is being lost (SIRC 2007). On the other hand, the explicitness and directness of the Spanish language are reflected in the use of words or expressions such as *invading*, *foreign*, *a name from out there*, etc., which contrasts with the mitigations and political correctness in English (Levine 2010), which may also underline the interest of Spaniards in names as part of identity.

Comments regarding international origins are more frequently found among our English informants' comments (Polish, Russian/Ukrainian, French, etc.) than among our Spanish participants, although cases can also be found for the latter (Hispanic American) and other examples that are common in both England and Spain (Italian). This makes sense since contemporary Britain is said to be multicultural (Mustad and Langeland n.d.), and there are more foreign respondents among the Leeds participants. The tendency of Spanish participants is to mention Hispanic American origins (e.g., Ecuador or Argentina). Hispanic America shares its language, Spanish, and many Hispanic Americans live in Spain (in fact, there were some informants of Hispanic American origin).

It would be a good idea to pay attention to other sociodemographic and academic factors of informants, such as gender, age or educational background, in each of the municipal districts for a broader view of the variable examined, origin. It would also be of interest for future studies to include a larger sample of male names in order to reach solid conclusions as to differences between genders.

Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRES

SPANISH

Estimado/a Sr/a:

Mi nombre es Inmaculada Arboleda. Soy profesora de la Universidad de Murcia. Estamos realizando una investigación sobre las reacciones de las personas ante nombres, en concreto, sus connotaciones de origen. Su colaboración es muy importante para que llevemos a cabo el estudio. Aunque el cuestionario está por escrito, se hará como entrevista. No hay respuestas correctas ya que hay preguntas sobre sus opiniones. Puede añadir todos los comentarios que quiera contestando dichas preguntas. Responderemos a todas las dudas que puedan surgir durante la entrevista. No llevará más de 5 minutos cumplimentarla y esperamos que le resulte amena pues se trata de un tema muy popular en nuestra vida diaria. El anonimato y confidencialidad están garantizados. Le reiteramos nuestro agradecimiento más sincero por su colaboración. Facilito mi dirección de correo a continuación en caso de que esté interesado en obtener más datos acerca de la investigación o conocer los resultados del estudio; e-mail: inma.arboleda@um.es

▽Marque y añada sus datos personales:

Lugar usual de residencia:

- Municipio de Murcia
- Municipio de Leeds

Origen

- Español ☐
- Español de Murcia y pedanías ☐
- Español de fuera de Murcia y pedanías (por ej. Cataluña, Valencia, etc.) ☐
- Español con padres extranjeros ☐
- Explica brevemente (por ej., madre brasileña, padre irlandés):
  _____
- Otro origen
- ¿Cuál? _____

1. Por favor haga comentarios respecto a sus preferencias y/o origen de los nombres (cuando lo considere oportuno) en los siguientes grupos de nombres o nombres individuales:
   - Guillermo-Guille-Willy
   - Victoria-Vicky
   - Antonia-Antonella
   - Ana
   - Micaela
   - Tania
   - Sofía
   - Jénnifer
   - Aida
   - Ramona
   - Jéssica
   - Amanda
   - Luis
   - Marcelo
   - Christian
   - ……….

ENGLISH:

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Inmaculada Arboleda. I work as a lecturer at the University of Murcia. We are carrying out a research project on the reactions of people to forenames, in particular, their religious connotations. Your collaboration is very important for us to be able to conduct the study. Although the questionnaire is written, it will be done as an interview. There are no correct answers, as these are questions about your opinions. You can add all the comments you like answering those questions. We will answer any doubts that may arise during the interview. It will take no longer than 5 min to complete and we hope you will find it enjoyable as this is a very popular topic in everyday life. Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed. We reiterate our sincere thanks to you for your collaboration. Below, my email account is included in case you are interested in receiving further information about this research or in knowing the results of the study; e-mail: inma.arboleda@um.es

∇Tick and add your personal data:

Usual place of residence:

- Metropolitan district of Murcia ☐
- Metropolitan district of Leeds ☐

Origin

- English ☐

English from Leeds and districts ☐
English from outside Leeds and districts (Newcastle, London, etc.) ☐
English with non-English relatives ☐
Explain briefly (e.g., Brazilian mother, Irish father):
_____

- Other origin ☐

Which one? _____

1. Please make comments regarding your preferences and/or origin of the names (when you consider it necessary) in the following groups of names or isolated names:
   - William-Will-Bill
   - Victoria-Vicky
   - Antonia-Antonella
   - Anna
   - Michaela
   - Tanya
   - Sophia
   - Jennifer
   - Aida
   - Ramona
   - Jessica
   - Amanda
   - Louis
   - Marcel
   - Christian

Appendix B
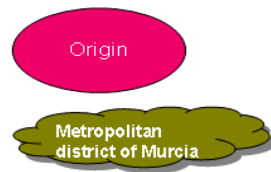
- — "Antonella is not a name of ours".
- — "I just like Antonia because it is more Spanish and traditional".
- — "I just like the name Ana because it is Spanish".
- — "I like Sofía due to its Greek origins and meaning: wisdom and also because I feel it as ours: our Queen is called that and a good friend too".
- — (Jénnifer) "A name from out there".
- — (Jénnifer) "Foreign names are invading us; I like normal names: those which are Christian and are familiar to us".
- — "The name Marcelo looks Argentinian".
- — (Marcelo) "The name reminds me of the footballer in Real Madrid".

- — (Jessica) "An ever-present name in England".
- — "Amanda is a name from my country".
- — "I like Victoria. In Poland we are not keen on pet forms. The spelling is familiar to me".
- — "We prefer Bill rather than Will or William".
- — (Tanya) "It is like Russian or Ukranian to me".
- — "I like the French Louis; my name, Maurice, also sounds French".
- — "Antonella is an Italian name".
- — "It reminds me of the composer Giuseppe Verdi because of his opera Aida and, from there, to Italy".
- — (Ramona) "My husband has Italian relatives, so I have become familiarised with this name".
- — (Michaela) "It sounds Italian; I like its musical rhythm".

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