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Spanish Language Use Among Hispanic Bilinguals: The Role of the Mother Tongue in the Formation of Cultural Identity

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Oral Presentation O4.3

**SPANISH LANGUAGE USE AMONG HISPANIC BILINGUALS: THE ROLE OF THE
MOTHER TONGUE IN THE FORMATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY**

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Sociolinguistic studies on minority languages often cite the relationship between language use and cultural identity, asserting that the maintenance of one's mother tongue contributes to that individual's sense of self and of community. The present study examines this relationship, and theorizes that a higher level of minority-language use (in this case, Spanish) is conducive to a stronger sense of belonging and identity within the minority community. A 30-question survey was distributed to 15-20 bilingual Hispanic employees at State Farm Insurance, a predominantly white workplace setting, in Bloomington, Illinois. This case study provides a focused insight into the arena of minority identity. The findings of this study indicate a positive correlation between one's level of Spanish use and his/her sense of belonging to, and identity within, the larger Hispanic community.