

A festive background featuring a string of colorful bunting (red, blue, yellow, green) at the top. On the left, a man in a light blue shirt and a red apron stands behind a yellow food stall with a blue awning. On the right, a woman in a light blue dress with red embroidery and yellow shoes stands in front of a stall with a red awning, holding a large red gift bag. The ground is a solid orange color.

# Languages & Festivals

*\*\*Cultured Cardinals\*\**

# Meet the Team



Sharon Cheng

CS '24

Taiwan



Richard Cheung

CS '24

Hong Kong



German Enik

CS + Linguistics '22

Russia / USA



Jessica Zhang

SYMSYS '24

USA

# Domain & Motivation

## LANGUAGE + FESTIVALS

1. What we miss about home
2. Domain expertise
3. Connection to ethnicity and culture (int'l students)



# Methodology

- Teams of 2:
  - one interviewer
  - one scribe
- Cold outreach in/outside of local Palo Alto coffee shops
- Audio recorded if possible + real-time transcribing on laptop



# *Finding Interviewees*



**Verve Coffee Palo Alto   Blue Bottle Palo Alto   Coupa Cafe - Ramona**

**Non-Stanford students  
Know more than one language**

How do you  
**keep in touch**  
with your  
**native**  
**language?**

# *What We Asked*

Tell me a  
memory of  
**learning a**  
**foreign**  
**language?**

What's it like  
adapting to a  
**different**  
**language** when  
**traveling**  
**abroad?**

Do you plan for  
your **kids** to  
learn more than  
one language?  
Your **second**  
**language?**

What **festivals**  
do you **celebrate**  
in your own  
culture? How do  
you celebrate  
them?



# Our Interviewees

## Sharon & German

### 1. HK dad and Filipino mom

- a. Both children of first-gen
- b. Has a 1-year-old son

### 2. US mom \*extreme user

- a. Family has Italian descent
- b. Has a 4-year-old son
- c. Studied Classics at Harvard

\* we tried to look for adults with kids \*

## Jessica & Richard

### 1. Lady from Japan

- a. English, Japanese, Malayalam
- b. International school

### 2. Lady from Taiwan

- a. Learnt new languages when studying abroad
- b. Here on business trip



# Katie & Connor

NEWLY WEDS WITH 1 Y/O SON  
PARENTS ARE FIRST-GEN FROM ASIA

"We want our kid to learn our parents' native languages but we'll see how that goes."



INTERVIEWER: SHARON; SCRIBE: GERMAN



# Says

Learned Japanese in school and Malayalam from parents

Travelling from Ghana 2 weeks ago

Favorite holiday is Onam, an Indian holiday

Only learn basic phrases like "hi" when travelling

Moved to the US for undergrad

Partner speaks English + Japanese

On News Year's, she goes to the temple

Doesn't put in effort to learn a language before traveling

Celebrates Indian + Christian holidays more than Japanese ones

Stays in touch with Malayalam by communicating with parents + watching movies

Born in India and grew up in Japan

Relies on Google Translate in foreign countries

Sweet 16's are widely celebrated in Japan

Wants her kids to learn Japanese + Malayalam

# Thinks

Preserving Malayalam in her family is important

Passing on Japanese is essential because she and her husband both speak it

Digital translators like Google Translate suffice for helping people get around in foreign countries

Learning additional languages is always beneficial

Music + food are most memorable in celebrations

Cultural holidays should be celebrated more in foreign countries

Staying in touch with your culture(s) is invaluable

Phrases to know: "hello," "thank you," "sorry," "water"

16 is an important age in Japan and globally

Travel is an essential experience

Religious celebrations are special because they're celebrated similarly across the globe

# Does

Glances at husband when asked what languages her kids will learn

Pauses when talking about passing Malayalam onto her kids

Asks husbands which holidays are important

Moves her hands when talking about Christian holidays

Laughs when asked about learning a language before traveling

Fidgets when asked about the size of the Malayalam community in Japan

Smiles when talking about Malayalam movies + Japanese TV shows

Grins when talking about her continual relation with Malayalam

Tilts her head when asked about how long she's been in the states

Widens eyes when discussing Onum

# Feels

Content with her relationship with culture

Confident in technology's ability to help her comprehend/communicate in a foreign language

Proud of knowing multiple languages

Hopeful that her husband will support her teaching her kids Malayalam

Optimistic about staying in touch with her culture

Hopeful that Malayalam will be passed onto future generations

Puzzled about where she wants to spend the rest of her life

Excited about celebrating holidays

Happy about watching cultural shows

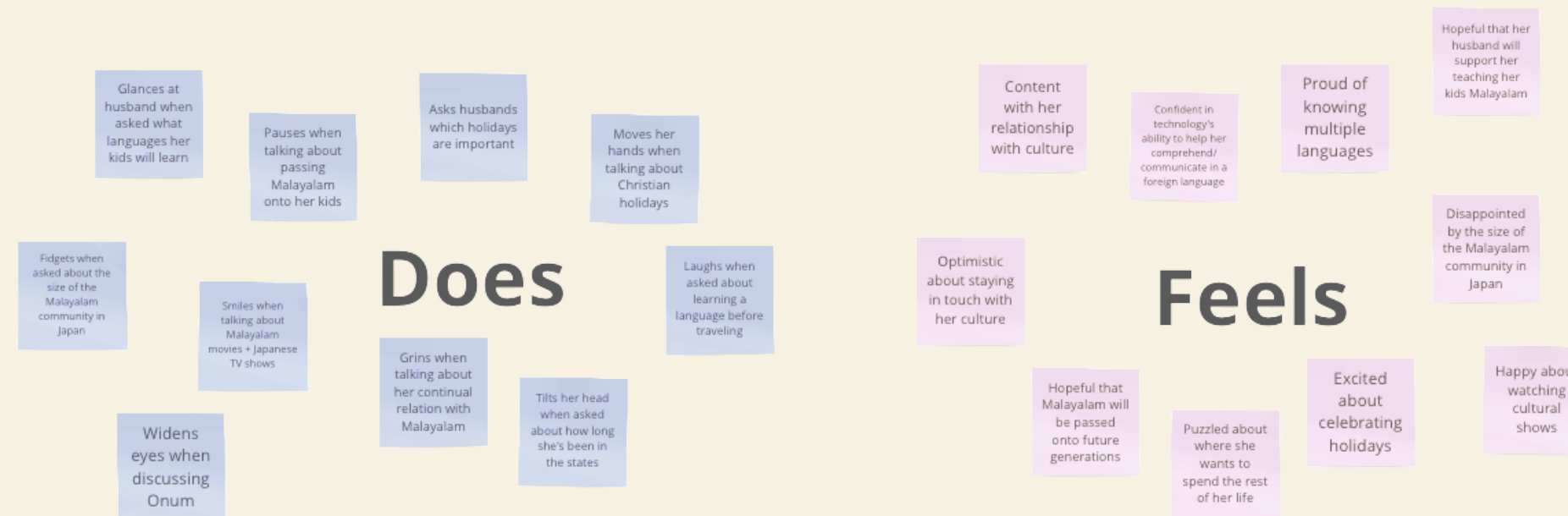
Disappointed by the size of the Malayalam community in Japan

We both can only speak / listen but not read / write our family's language



son will eventually pick up both cantonese and kampamang - both


woman looks uncomfortable when talking about christianization




Wife feels a bit sad that her son won't be exposed as much to her Filipino family (SoCal) as her husband's (NorCal)



# Insight




Due to not picking up reading and writing in their native language when growing up in the US, parents feel uncertain how to pass down their language to their child effectively.



# Need



Parents need to feel more supported and committed to the language education of their child. There has to be a structured education of reading/writing for one to effectively learn and pass down the language to others.



# Nora

FROM JAPAN

ENGLISH, JAPANESE, MALAYALAM

"I learnt and practiced Malayalam  
through films and my grandma"

INTERVIEWER: JESSICA; SCRIBE: RICHARD



# Says

we will raise our kid in a very multilingual way - both

I'm Phillipina but my family is all in SoCal so I don't often go back - wife

I only go to HK as a tourist - husband

I do not really have interest in reading or writing cantonese - husband

Because my husband's family is mostly here, my son will be exposed to Cantonese more - wife

When traveling, we look up how to say - hello, thank you, where's the restroom ha ha?

I have family in Hong Kong but I go there as a tourist instead of home - husband

I don't know Chinese characters but they are not a HINDRANCE to me - husband

my parents made me go to Chinese school when I was little...I'm still better at speaking

Phillipines was christianized, so Christmas is a huge part of my life - wife

I'm a lot more conversation in kapampang because read/write required education - wife

yes, chinese new year is the most popular celebration... that's why I like it - husband

I also remember celebrating tomb-sweeping and red egg & ginger party - husband

for me, i love chinese new year - husband

it was hard and time-consuming to seek out a kapampang school when I was little - wife

# Thinks

US is more of a home than Phillipines - wife

son will easily learn both cantonese and kampamang - both

son will know cantonese better - wife

regards US as more of a home than HK - husband

he could learn Chinese characters if he wanted to - husband

christmas matters a lot to all philipinxs - wife

lanterns are a beautiful tradition for christmas in the philipines - wife

red egg and ginger party is an important celebration - husband

conversationally proficient because grew up speaking - both

philipines has similar traditions to Spain (eg debut - quinceañera) - wife

# Does

wife looks away often

wife looks at husband

husband holds baby and cradles him

wife seems shy at the start and doesn't make eye-contact

woman looks uncomfortable when talking about christianization

wife fidgets with her mask while talking

husband covers his son's face from the sun

woman occasionally smiles softly but she mostly has a poker face

husband covers her own eyes from the sun

husband seems more comfortable and asks us about us

husband laughs a few times

husband did not want to go to Chinese school but his parent made him

# Feels

wife initially feels skeptical of us

husband feels curious toward the end

husband takes it lightheartedly that he isn't very good at writing

feel uncertain about teaching their son

husband feels confident he can learn characters

both husband and wife feel uncertain about teaching the son language

wife feels a bit sad that her son won't be exposed as much to her philipino family SoCal

both find it comical but necessary to learn 'where is the bathroom' before travel

both feel like their son's multilingualism will just 'work'

woman feels nostalgic of her own debut celebration

husband feels a bit like a foreigner in HK

Stays in touch with Malayalam by communicating with parents + watching movies

Grins when talking about her continual relation with Malayalam




Religious celebrations are special because they're celebrated similarly across the globe


Hopeful that her husband will support her teaching her kids Malayalam



# Insight




People feel like they improve the most if they regularly practice their language through daily activities naturally like conversing with family members or watching movies/TV shows.



# Need



There has to be opportunities in people's daily life that allows people to constantly practice using (ex: speaking) a language that is not in a forced way.



# San-Chang

TAIWANESE WOMAN  
LEARNT JAPANESE & SPANISH

"We learnt Japanese through  
diagrams. The teacher didn't  
speak Chinese"

INTERVIEWER: RICHARD; SCRIBE: JESSICA





# Says

Easy to forget Spanish words after learning

I used to go out for dinner or drinks with Spanish Teacher

My husband works at Apple - he uses English for Business

In Japanese, the three writing systems are hard to wrangle with for me

Husband went to non-profit organization providing 1-on-1 conversation

Japanese teacher didn't understand Chinese, so they drew diagrams instead

Grammar and tenses are harder than vocab

"Can we be interviewed in Chinese"

"Very interesting" - response to 1on1 conversation apps

I want to go to Barcelona for 3 months

I didn't try apps for learning languages

# Thinks

Language lets you learn about someone's culture

F2F conversation is needed to learn speech

Finding good teacher is super important

Not enough time to learn new languages

Lack of exposure to languages living in Taiwan

Going abroad to a university helps broaden knowledge

Immersion in language forces learning

Business English isn't too hard to acquire

Logic and diagrams effective for learning

Language learning apps aren't helpful compared to a teacher

Travel is a way to learn languages

# Does

Takes Spanish lessons during pandemic

Hangs out with Spanish teacher after class, but speaks Chinese

Looks disinterested when mentioning apps

Takes lesson twice a week

Took Japanese lessons during Uni in Tokyo

Asks her husband a lot for backup

Does not have many chances to practice new languages

Looks at each other when they're confused

Move her hands a lot when she's excited

Wants to travel to Spain to practice Spanish

# Feels

Excitement learning new languages

Connection with others when speaking their language

F2F conversation is needed to learn speech

Challenged by the amount of English used in the states

Bond with language teachers

Intimidation when speaking new language around natives

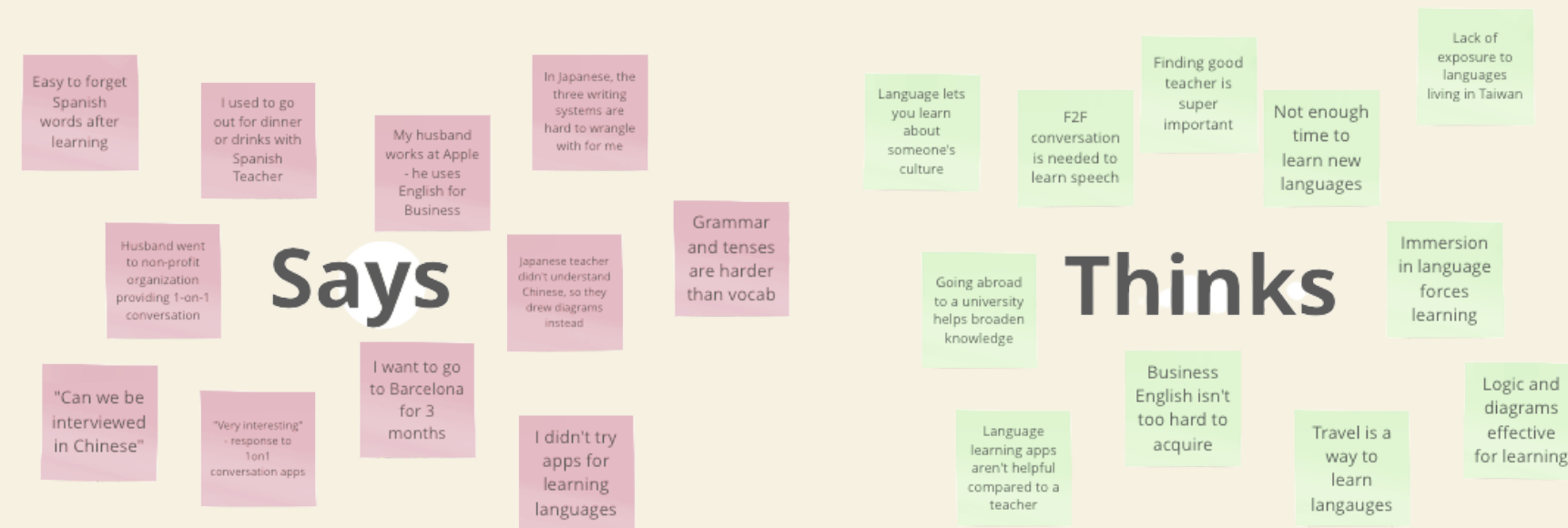
Satisfied with herself

Apps are not a good way to learn a language

Sad about not having time to learn more Spanish

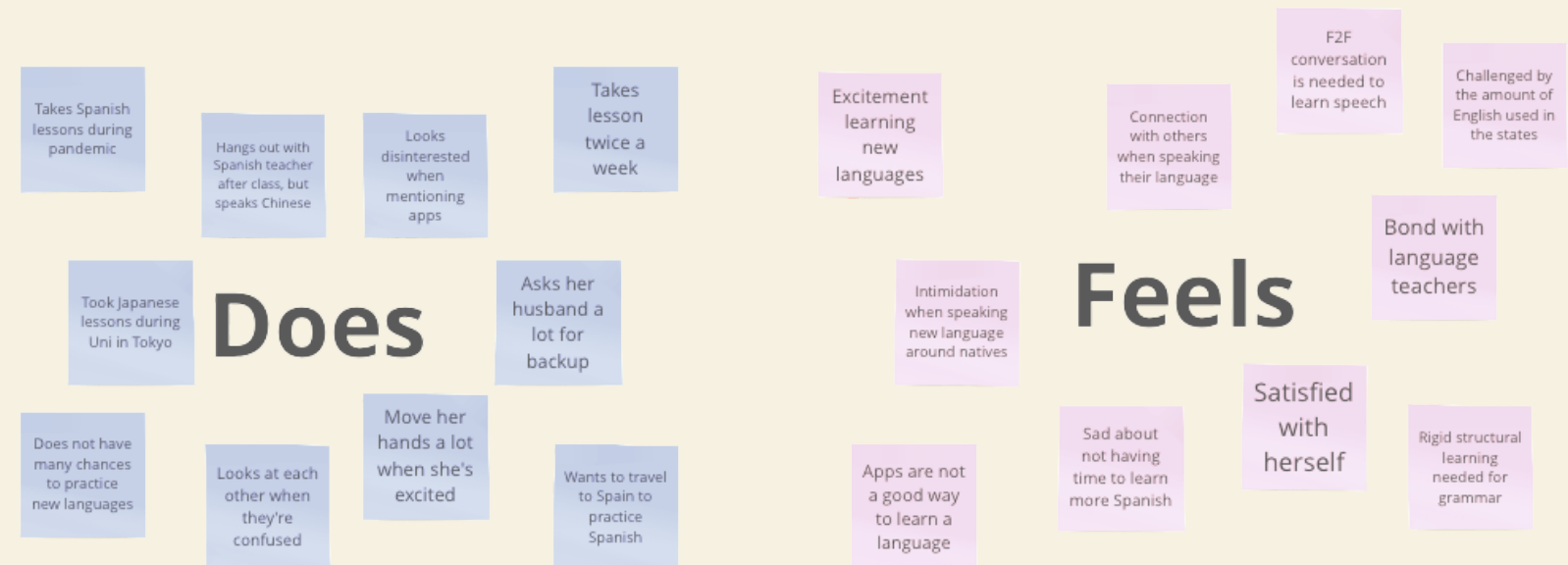
Rigid structural learning needed for grammar

I used to go out for dinner with Spanish teacher but would end up speaking Chinese



Speaking a language is harder than reading/writing


Took Spanish lessons during pandemic




Intimidation when speaking new language around natives



# Insight




People can learn new languages without having to rely on their previously learnt languages if there are good visualization (ex: diagrams) for learning new languages.



# Need



People need better visual cues or aids when learning a new language to achieve a better efficacy for learning.



# Hallie

MOM WITH 4 Y/O SON

STUDIED CLASSICS AT HARVARD UNI

**\*EXTREME USER: LATIN + GREEK READER\***

"I really love to read. Reading is the easiest way for me to learn a new language while speaking is the hardest."

INTERVIEWER: GERMAN; SCRIBE: SHARON



# Says

She studied classics at Harvard University and knows Latin and Greek.

Studied Latin bc didn't wanna follow dad's wishes to learn French

Her husband's family is also Italian and her husband speaks some Italian

Says her son John understands Spanish but he is moody and doesn't want to speak it

Her family has Italian roots but she doesn't know Italian

Would try to read signs and figure out what the signs mean when traveling to a new country

Speaking a language is hard because you're wrong all the time

Wants her 4 y/o son to learn other languages (ex: Italian) - currently learning Spanish through nanny

She loves to read (as a form of learning new languages)

Knowing Latin really helps her understand other Romance languages

Thanksgiving is her favorite holiday. She likes how free-form it is.

There isn't any specific traditional dish her family had when growing up

Most memorable bday was her first bday party with friends. Now she only celebrates her son's bday.

Sweet 16, baby showers are some memorable coming-of-age traditions she had.

# Thinks

Reading is interesting and a good way to learn languages

Trying to learn the language from the country she is traveling to is important.

Knowing Latin greatly helped her when traveling to Europe

Wants her son to learn more than one languages

Flashcards and other visual cues are the most helpful when learning a new language

Speaking might be the hardest when learning a languages

Likes how Thanksgiving is just family coming together without having too much expectations

Hard to learn a language if there's no one to speak to

Thanksgiving and Christmas are two most popular holidays in US

Can let her son learn Spanish by just interacting with their Spanish-speaking nanny.

wants to think the nanny approach is working

# Does

Looks at both of the interviewer and the note-taker

Keeps on looking at and interacting with her son

Looked down at her watch when talking about family holidays

Speaks to us but tries to let her son engage in the convo as well

Drinks water in between questions

Sat more upright and eyes became brighter when talking about **reading**

Used a lot of hand gestures when talking about how she tries to read road signs while traveling

Plays with her son whenever mentioning her son

Frowns when thinking about traditional family dishes

Looked up when thinking about memorable bday parties

Laughs when talking about defying dad's wishes in learning French

# Feels

Passionate about **reading** new languages

Loves and cares deeply about her son a lot

Constrained when given orders

Proud of knowing Latin since it is really helpful for her Europe travels

A bit nonchalant about big family holidays and traditions

Proud of her son when her son answered our question

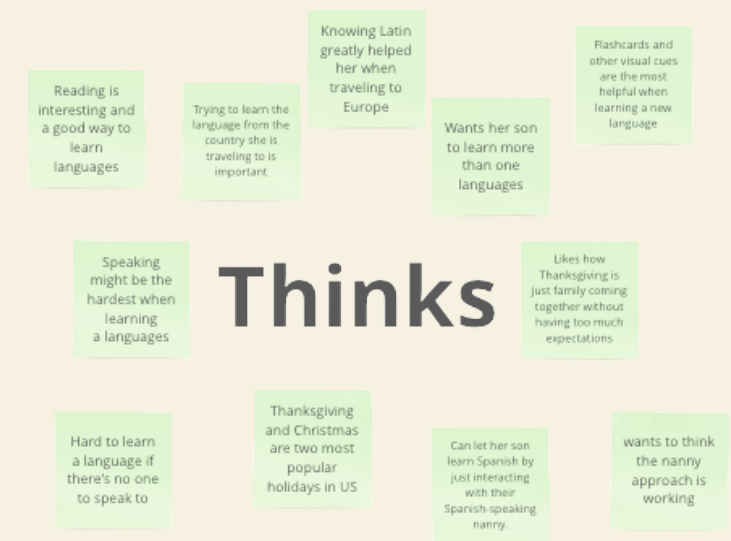
Uncertain whether the nanny approach is helping

Happy about how free Thanksgiving is compared to Christmas

Unsure how his son can learn the husband's language

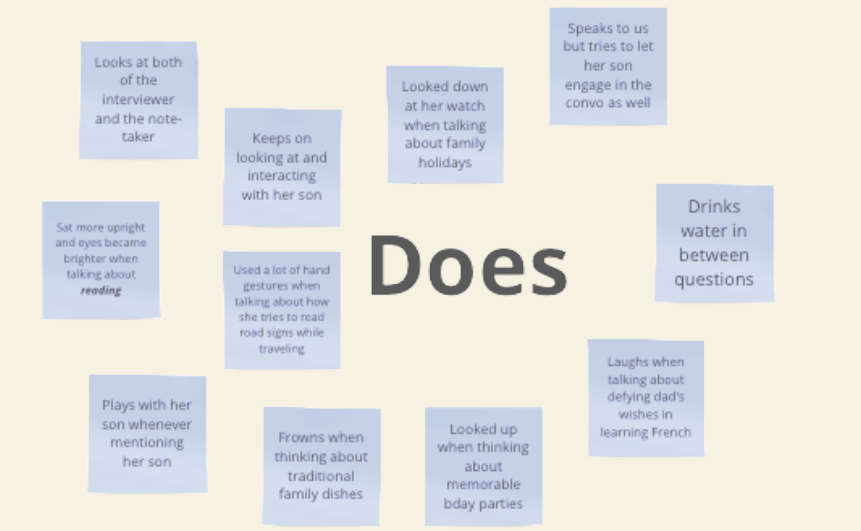
A bit pity that she can't really speak Italian

Wants her 4 y/o son to learn other languages (ex: Italian) - currently learning Spanish through nanny



Flashcards and other visual cues are the most helpful when learning a new language


Frowns when thinking about traditional family dishes




Uncertain whether the son is actually learning Spanish from nanny or not



# Insight




Even after selecting an approach to teach a language to one's child, it is difficult to track progress and understanding whether the child is learning substantially or not.



# Need



A way for parents to be more involved in the language learning process of their child and a good system to assess their children's language learning progress.





# Holistic Synthesis

We talked to 4 people of diverse linguistic backgrounds about their experiences with language and culture. Here are some common findings:





# *Holistic Synthesis – Language*

Perserving family's culture seems to not be a strong-enough motivation for people to learn their family's native language.

Parents with cultural backgrounds want their kids to be multilingual, but they are uncertain about how to best teach them.

Headline Here

Speaking a new language can feel very intimidating and is really easy to make mistakes in front of others.



# *Holistic Synthesis – Festival*

Most popular and memorable festivals often surround family and the coming-of-age process for kids (ex: baby showers or thanksgiving).

Festivals are deeply linked with culture and is one of the major ways that people keep in touch with their/their family's culture.

Headline Here

Most popular and memorable festivals often surround family and the coming-of-age process for kids (ex: baby showers or thanksgiving).



# What's Next

**Narrow down**  
**on our topic** of  
interest:  
language

Hone in on more  
**specific**  
**problems** within  
language-learning

**Brainstorm**  
**ideas** for  
addressing  
language-  
learning  
challenges

**Interview**  
more people  
from **diverse**  
**backgrounds**





*Thank you*

Don't hesitate to ask us  
any questions!

CHURCH