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Reported literacy, media consumption and social media use as measures of relevance of Spanish as a heritage language

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Abstract

Aims and objectives: This paper explores one dimension of language maintenance among college-aged heritage speakers of Spanish (HSS) in three communities of the U.S. Midwest. The aim was to understand whether Spanish was relevant at a point in life in which they were developing their own networks away from their families. Research questions: Were reading and writing in Spanish relevant for the participants? Did they use Spanish when on social media? Did they text in Spanish? Was Spanish relevant for them when consuming content on electronic media?

Methodology: This analysis is part of a larger study on HSS in communities of recent Latino settlement. Respondents participated in an oral interview and responded to an online survey.

Data and analysis: Results presented here come from a study designed to gather data on reported interlocutors, reading and writing, electronic media consumption, and social media use. Respondents were 71 HSS between the ages of 19 and 29. Results were compared with two control groups: 23 L2 speakers and 24 native speakers attending the same schools. Higher relevance was assumed when an event was reported closest to the moment of response. Reading and writing were classified as school, personal interest, employment, other. Relevance as related to social media, music, and internet use was determined by reported frequency.

Findings: Highest relevance was reported for texting and listening to music; lowest was reported for consumption of internet content. Results for texting, social media and personal interest reading/ writing suggest that for these speakers Spanish was viable for accrual of bonding social capital. Reading/writing reports suggest that for many, Spanish was also viable to attain specific academic goals. Environmental pressures to shift are evidenced in the uses not (or barely) reported: reading/ writing related to work, religion and daily living, and consumption of internet content.

Originality: This paper focuses on maintenance of relevance of a heritage language in the first stage of adult life.

Implications: Results suggest that in using Spanish, respondents were not bound by physical context or immediate availability of interlocutors, but by their perceptions of viability.

Keywords: Heritage speakers, language maintenance, Spanish, literacy, social media, Midwest

Introduction

This paper explores one dimension of Spanish-language maintenance in a group of college-aged heritage speakers in three communities of the U.S. Midwest.¹ For the purposes of the present analysis, 71 heritage speakers of Spanish between the ages of 19 and 29 were asked to report type and frequency of their reading and writing in Spanish, consumption of Spanish-language electronic media, and use on social media. Participants were attending university in three communities with low vitality for Spanish,² and were developing their own personal and professional networks outside the domain of the family.

The role of texting, social media, and music as domains for the maintenance and reproduction of heritage/minority languages is an increasingly important and still under-researched topic.³ Reasons for focusing on young adults are both collective and individual. At a community level, survival of a minority language depends mainly on the second generation (Fishman, 1991; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002). In their study of young Welsh/English bilinguals, Cunliffe, Morris, and Prys (2013), for example, argue that the teenage years are critical for the development of speaker attitudes, and that using a minority language during this period can affect continued use later in life, as well as choices related to intergenerational transmission (p. 341).

In their five-year ethnographic study of Native American youth language practices, McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol, and Zepeda (2013) highlight the role of young adults in the process of minority language revitalization and transmission. The authors describe two themes that emerged in their interviews with members of this cohort: young adult self-perceptions of being “in the middle,” “between older language users and adolescents with less native-language exposure and ability,” and a sense of “responsibility for helping secure the linguistic and cultural futures of their communities” (p. 39). At an individual level, late adolescence and early adulthood represent an important period for linguistic and psychological development. Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, and Espinoza (2008) call this period *emerging adulthood* (following Arnett, 2004), and note that:

Two important developmental challenges faced by emerging adults include that of identity achievement and the development of intimacy. Although the search for identity begins during adolescence [...] emerging adults, particularly those in the western world, are still grappling with some aspects of their identities, such as their vocational/career, religious, and ethnic identities [...] In addition, they seek to establish intimacy via interconnections with friends and romantic partners, as well as relatives and family members. (p. 422)

Investigating the use of the family language by second-generation young adults necessitates that we tease apart the concept of maintenance in three interrelated but distinct dimensions: *maintenance of motivation*,⁴ *maintenance of skills*, and *maintenance of relevance*. This discussion centers on the latter. Borrowing from Velázquez, Garrido, and Millán (2014), relevance of Spanish will be defined here as “reported use of the family language in everyday interactions” (p. 3). They add:

Subsumed under this definition is the assumption of viability. This is, that on the week of the study speakers were using their family language with certain interlocutors and in certain contexts because they deemed it apt, appropriate, and suitable to carry out these interactions. Relevance in everyday interactions [...] is a precondition for sustained, long-term maintenance. (p. 3)

The concept of language viability is closely related that of *social capital*. Steinfield, Ellison, and Lampe (2008) argue that differences in strength and type of social ties result in different types of capital: *Bonding social capital* – found between individuals in tightly knit and

emotionally close relationships, such as family and close friends, and *bridging social capital*—found in loose connections between individuals such as colleagues or acquaintances, who may provide useful information or new perspectives, but typically do not provide emotional support (p. 436). Velázquez et al. (2014) is an analysis of interlocutors in Spanish reported by the participants in the present study. That analysis was conducted as a way to explore whether Spanish was vested with social capital in networks beyond the space of the family. The present paper examines an additional dimension of minority language relevance: the consumption and production of meaning through reading/writing, electronic media, and social media use.

Reading and writing in Spanish

Kucer (2014) proposes a conceptual model of literacy with four dimensions: *cognitive, linguistic, social, and developmental*, which the individual must learn to “effectively, efficiently, and simultaneously control in a transactive fashion” (p. 5). When reading or writing something, bilinguals may fulfill these functions in either or both of their languages, of course, and thus we will argue here that higher relevance of Spanish can be assumed when respondent reports reflect a wider array of pragmatic functions. Another way to examine relevance of reading and writing is to classify responses according to Kucer’s typology of texts: *daily living, entertainment or recreational, spiritual, work-related, social-interactive, educational, news-related and archival-related* (p. 232).⁵

In an interesting illustration of the interrelated nature of literacy, Stewart (2014) examines the out-of-school literacy practices among four recently arrived Latina/o English language learners between the ages of 17 and 20, and finds that the most prevalent out-of-school literacy sites in which they engaged were Facebook, the workplace, and entertainment media. Importantly, Stewart notes that while these youths engaged in a wide range of sophisticated literacy practices outside of school, these were for the most part unrecognized and undervalued by the educational system (p. 365).

Use of Spanish on social media

Unlike traditional electronic media that for the most part require only passive consumption, social media⁶ presents users with the opportunity for the production and distribution of content, control of self-presentation and, importantly for the purposes of our study, “the opportunity to manage the terms of interpersonal linguistic engagement with others” (Baron, 2008, p. 84). Hill et al. (2013) argue that human interaction mediated by computing devices occurs on three levels of a sociality hierarchy: *broadcast* (e.g. Twitter); *conversational* (e.g. Skype); and *community* (e.g. Facebook groups) (p. 25). For speakers of minority languages, social media platforms afford the additional potential for increased contact with other speakers, motivation to develop skills (Cunliffe et al., 2013), reshaping of self and other perceptions (Jones, Cunliffe, & Honeycutt, 2013), reproduction of language ideologies (Wagner, 2013), revitalization, advocacy, and display of social and political positions through choice of code (Cru, 2015).

Current results on the effects of texting on overall literacy are for the most part inconclusive (Verheijen, 2013), and although there is ongoing and vigorous discussion about whether young multilingual speakers engage in online social networks as an extension of their offline speech communities (Cunliffe et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2013), or whether they create a supra-territorial cyberscape through this engagement (Johnson & Callahan, 2013), demographic data leaves little room for debate about the importance of social media in the life of young adults. As of January 2014, 89% of internet users in the United States aged 18–29 participated in one or more social networking sites, according to Pew Research Center reports.⁷ While Twitter use was significantly lower for this age group (35%), young adults were still the most common users of this online social networking service, compared to 20% of adults aged 30–49 who tweeted.

In fact, texting is the only activity where they are surpassed by another age group. In particular, by teenage girls, who seemed to *outtext* everyone else by far:

No one communicates by text messaging more than adolescent females 12–17 years old, who *average* 4050 texts per month. Boys of the same age average 2539, and to give context to this magnitude, the next highest texting average is 1630 texts per month among 18–24 year olds. (Garcia et al., 2014, p. 1)

In their survey of 1715 Facebook users aged 18–29 enrolled in two Texas universities, Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009) report four reasons to join Facebook groups given by participants: to obtain information about on- and off-campus activities; to socialize with friends; to seek self-status; and to find entertainment (p. 732). These findings echo the conclusions of Subrahmanyan et al. (2008) in a study conducted at a large urban university in California:

Emerging adults face the developmental task of establishing intimate relationships by forming and maintaining interconnections with the people in their lives. The emerging adults in our sample seemed to be using social networking sites to do just that [...] they were using social networking sites to connect with others, in particular those in their offline lives. (p. 430)

Consumption of Spanish-language electronic media

The last dimension of relevance explored in this paper is consumption of Spanish-language media. In her study of language shift among 815 Latino high school and college students in Chicago, Potowski (2004) found that positive attitudes toward Spanish and a strong preference for Spanish-language music were the only factors shown to arrest shift to English. In the present study it was hypothesized that participants would report higher levels of media consumption than either reading/ writing or use on social media, in part because of recently published national data on Latino music consumption.⁸ Additionally, the pattern reported in Suro (2004) for news consumption among Latino adults suggests that language dominance is just one of the factors involved in choice of electronic media:

It might seem that the Hispanic population is divided among those who get their news in English or in Spanish. Instead, choices of news media are much more fluid [...] many Latinos pick and choose not only among different types of news media but also the language of the media. In their choices Latinos exercise a far greater level of bilingualism than they do in reading and writing. (p. 2)

Recently, the patterns of media consumption and language choice among second-generation Latinos have been the focus of increased attention by advertisers and media companies alike. For example, a white paper published in June 2014 by the companies Nielsen, Univision, and Starcom states that, according to Nielsen consumer data, the proportion of Latino Millennials (aged 21–34) that self-identify as Spanish/English bilingual increased 73% in the past decade (p. 3), surpassing English-dominant speakers to become the largest Hispanic subgroup in this cohort (p. 11).

Finally, although she points out the lack of a clear causal relationship between minority language media consumption and vitality, Jones (2013) cites Moring and Husband (2007), and highlights seven aspects of the impact of mass media on minority language use and transmission: symbolic, economic and public presence; representational and cultural effects; exposure to language, and linguistic reconstruction (p. 62). It seems important to note here that although the advent and exponential growth of digital technologies has afforded speakers of many heritage languages in the United States the possibility of accessing electronic media in those languages, the situation of Latinos in the United States is unique in that Spanish is the only minority/heritage language with a multibillion dollar domestic market.

As one anonymous reviewer correctly points out, at a macro level, the situation of Spanish in the United States is different than that of other heritage languages because of its international position and global demographics. Spanish is indeed a global, polycentric language (Paffey, 2012; Train, 2007), whose status as a national language in Latin America and Spain makes possible the massive cultural production available to the participants in this study.

Because of its status as a minority language, however, we will argue that at an individual and community level, speakers of Spanish in the United States share much of the experience of languages with considerably lower numbers of speakers. Among some of the darker features of this experience are: lack of institutional support; intense pressures to shift to English in public and private spaces; cultural and intergenerational dislocation; monoglossic ideologies; and often, xenophobic discourses that equate speaking a language other than English with an attack on national identity.

Research questions

The research questions for the part of the study discussed in the following pages were:

1. Were reading and writing in Spanish relevant for the participants in this study?
 - Did they report reading/writing?
 - How recently?
 - What type/function of texts?
2. Did they use Spanish when engaging with social media?
3. Did they text in Spanish?
4. Was Spanish relevant for them when consuming content on electronic media?
 - Did they watch TV programs and movies in Spanish?
 - Did they listen to music in Spanish?
 - Did they access Spanish-language webpages?

Method

The present study was conducted in Lincoln, Nebraska; Macomb, Illinois; and Ypsilanti, Michigan, three communities of recent Latino settlement and low vitality for Spanish. Respondents were 71 college students aged between 19 and 29, who had grown up in a Spanish-speaking household in the United States. Median age for participants in Lincoln and Macomb was 20, and 21 for Ypsilanti.⁹ A higher percentage of female participation occurred in the three communities: 62% for Lincoln, 54% for Macomb, and 64% for Ypsilanti. Some heritage speakers had migrated to the U.S. as children, but the majority had been born in this country: 65% for Lincoln, 85% for Macomb, and 95% for Ypsilanti. Two control groups were used as a point of comparison for heritage speaker (HS) responses: 23 second language (L2) speakers who had not grown up in a Spanish-speaking household, and 24 native speakers (NS) who had been born in a community where Spanish was the majority language, and had arrived in the U.S. after the age of 18. All participants resided in one of the three communities in this study.¹⁰

Procedure and instrument

Respondents participated in an initial oral interview intended to collect data about Spanish competence, demographics, and language acquisition history. They were then asked to respond to a four-part, 39-question online survey. The interview and the survey took place on campus, in the office of one of the members of the research team. Participants could choose

to view questions in Spanish or English, and could answer using either or both.¹¹ Results reported here come from Part 1 of the larger study. This was a 12-item, fill-in-the-blank section designed to gather data on reported interlocutors, reading and writing, electronic media consumption, and social media use.

Data collection

In this part of the survey, participants were presented with seven items. The first two were related to the everyday relevance of reading and writing in Spanish. Respondents were shown the questions *What is the last thing that you read in Spanish?* and *What is the last thing that you wrote in Spanish?*¹² They were presented with a box to type in their answers. They were then asked to select one of six options: *I read/wrote it today, this week, this month, in the past year, I can't remember, and N/A.* The next two items in the survey were related to social media. The first of these was: *Do you send text messages in Spanish?* The second was: *When you use Facebook, Twitter or other social media, do you do it in Spanish?* For each item respondents were asked to mark one of four options: *Frequently, sometimes, almost never, and never.* The last three items were related to Spanish-language electronic media consumption. The first read: *What was the last TV show or movie that you watched in Spanish?* Respondents were provided with a box to type in their answers, and were asked to select one of six options: *I watched it today, this week, this month, in the past year, I can't remember, and N/A.* The last two items read: *Do you listen to music in Spanish? Do you use the internet in Spanish?* Here, they were asked to select from: *Frequently, sometimes, almost never, and never.*

Analysis

Higher relevance of reading and writing in Spanish was assumed when the literacy event was reported closest to the moment of response. Responses where the participant reported reading in Spanish but could not recall when or what they had read were counted as invalid. Reported reading and writing in Spanish were further classified in one of four domains: school, personal interest, employment, and other.

As was the case for reading and writing, higher relevance of Spanish as related to movies and television programs was assumed when consumption of media was reported closest to the moment of response. Again, responses where the participant reported watching something in Spanish but could not recall when or what were counted as invalid. Relevance of Spanish as related to use on social media, consumption of music, and internet use was determined by reported frequency. Because of the small sample size, results are presented below in simple percentages, with a detailed discussion following.

Results

Research question #1: were reading and writing in Spanish relevant for the participants in this study?

Reported relevance of literacy in Spanish was high for most participants in this study: 79% of heritage speakers and 83% of second language speakers reported reading and writing in Spanish, and could recall both what they had read and what they had written. As expected, all but one native speaker reported reading in Spanish, and 92% reported having written something in Spanish. All of them had done so on that same day or within that week. Important differences related to type/ function of texts were observed between groups.

What were they reading? Most of the reading and writing in Spanish reported by heritage and second language speakers was related to the domain of school. For heritage speakers, this included 41% of readings explicitly identified as school-related, and 16% where the respondent was enrolled in a Spanish class at the time of the study and reported reading a canonical work of literature or used the generic term “a poem.” Forty percent of readings reported by heritage speakers were classified as *personal interest*. These included news items published in online and print publications, text messages, Facebook posts and email, song lyrics, and movie subtitles. HS readings not classified as school-related or personal interest were categorized as *other* (3%). These included an informational flyer and instructions to complete a task.

Like their heritage speaker peers, most reading in Spanish reported by second language learners was school-related (58%). Unlike HS, however, L2 readings classified as personal interest (42%) included popular fiction titles not assigned in school. Among these were Harry Potter in translation, and three novels by Isabel Allende. Other readings in this category were news items, email messages and Facebook posts. In an inverse fashion, only 31% of readings in Spanish reported by native speakers were school-related, 52% were personal interest, and 17% were classified as other. This last category includes cases in which the respondent entered the topic rather than type of text (e.g. *reyes de España siglo XVI*), and literal responses that include the droll, but strictly true: *What was the last thing you read in Spanish?*

What were they writing? As stated above, most of the writing in Spanish by both heritage and second language participants was explicitly related to the domain of school (64% and 79% respectively). For HS, another 30% was classified as personal interest, 4% was related to off-campus employment, and 2% included literal responses that were classified as other. Reports of writing in Spanish by heritage speakers are noteworthy for two reasons. First, this was the only group that reported writing in Spanish at a place of employment located outside the space of the university. Second, while most personal interest writing by heritage speakers consisted of Facebook posts, text messages, and email, five HS reported having written a letter in Spanish to a relative within that month. To put this in perspective, of the remaining 113 participants in this study, only one native speaker reported writing a letter on paper.

Of all writing in Spanish reported by second language learners, 21% was classified as personal interest. This included Facebook posts, text messages, email, and two examples not reported by either heritage or native speakers: a poem and a song for church. As expected, most writing by native speakers belonged to the category of personal interest (54%). Another 32% was school-related, and 14% was classified as other. Personal interest writing reported by native speakers included Facebook posts, text messages, one letter, and two tokens of texts not reported by either heritage or second language speakers: a journal entry and a grocery list. For native speakers the category of *other* included only literal responses (e.g. *Tengo ganas de comer tacos. Quieres venir?*).¹³

Research question #2: did participants use Spanish when engaging with social media?

Reported use of Spanish on Facebook, Twitter and other social media was high. Eighty eight percent of all participants in this study reported some use of Spanish on social media. Most heritage speakers reported doing so frequently or sometimes (61%). Another 29% reported doing it rarely. Only 10% of heritage speakers reported no use of Spanish on social media. Use of Spanish on social media was only slightly higher for second language learners, who reported doing so frequently or sometimes (87%), while another 4% reported doing it rarely. Only 9% of second language learners reported not using Spanish on social media. Among native speakers, 71% reported using Spanish on social media frequently or sometimes, and another 8% only rarely. Surprisingly, 21% of native speakers reported no use of Spanish on social media.¹⁴

Research question #3: did they text in Spanish?

By far, texting and listening to music were the practices where reported relevance of Spanish was highest for all participants in this study. All native speakers and all but one heritage speaker and one second language speaker reported texting in Spanish. Importantly, however, more HS reported texting in Spanish frequently or sometimes (89%) than their L2 peers (70%). On the lower end of the relevance continuum, only 10% of heritage speakers reported hardly ever texting in Spanish. Unsurprisingly, 96% of native speakers reported texting in Spanish either frequently or sometimes.

Research question #4: was Spanish relevant for participants when consuming content on electronic media?

The answer to this last question appears to be a resolute yes for music and TV/movies, and no for consumption of internet content. Consumption of music was, without a doubt, the domain with the highest reported relevance. All participants in this study reported listening to music by Spanish-language artists. Almost all heritage speakers (91%) reported listening to music in Spanish either frequently or sometimes, and another 9% reported doing so infrequently.¹⁵ The percentage of second language and native speakers who reported listening to music in Spanish frequently or sometimes was only slightly smaller (87% and 88% respectively), with another 13% of L2 and 12% of NS who reported listening to music in Spanish only infrequently.

Overall, 79% of all participants recalled having watched a television show or movie in Spanish and were able to name what they had watched. Among the 75% of heritage speakers who were able to recall what they watched, 57% reported doing so in the week of the study, 36% in that month and 7% that year. Most commonly, heritage speakers reported watching *soap operas* (32%), followed by *movies* (28%), *news* (19%), and *soccer* (10%). Responses classified as *other* had only one or two tokens each. These included: *tabloid* and *morning talk shows*, *comedies*, *music videos*, and the name of the network *Univisión*.

Slightly more second language learners recalled watching something in Spanish and were able to name what they watched (78%), but only 33% reported having done so in the week of the study. Unlike their HS peers, most second language learners were watching *movies* (61%). Interestingly, unlike heritage and native speakers, 27% of all movies watched by second language learners were films originally produced in English and dubbed into Spanish. L2 responses classified as *other* (39%), with only 1–2 tokens, included: *soap operas*, *news*, *soccer*, *entertainment*, *drama*, and *Univisión*.

The overwhelming majority of native speakers (92%) recalled the last thing they had watched in Spanish. Most had done so in the week of the study (77%). Most commonly, they were watching *soccer/sports* (27%), *movies* (18%), and *comedies* (14%). Unlike HS and L2 reports, most native speakers were watching programs originally aired in their home country or in another Spanish-speaking country outside the U.S. Additionally, the category of *other* (41% of responses for this group) included a greater variety of programs.

In this study, the lowest degree of relevance of Spanish for heritage speakers was found in the domain of internet use. Only 31% of HS reported accessing Spanish-language webpages frequently or sometimes. Most reported doing it only rarely (46%) or not at all (23%). In contrast, a higher percentage of second language and native speakers reported accessing internet content in Spanish frequently or sometimes (60% and 75% respectively), and another 31% of L2 respondents reported accessing Spanish-language webpages only rarely or not at all (9%).

Interestingly, while results for internet use among native speakers were for the most part consistent with what could be expected in the case of international students living outside of their home country and living away from family and friends, 29% of NS reported accessing Spanish-language webpages only sometimes and another 4% reported not doing it at all.

Discussion

As described above, texting and listening to music were the practices where reported relevance of Spanish was highest for all participants in this study. With different degrees of frequency, every respondent in this study reported listening to Spanish-language artists. These results are consistent with Potowski's (2004) findings, and with national consumer data on Latino music consumption (Nielsen, 2014). Without having to do so, being told to, or gaining anything other than personal enjoyment, all participants (heritage speaker or not) listened to music in Spanish. In the specific case of heritage speakers, this finding is important for the purposes of understanding everyday relevance as related to maintenance and merits further research.

The data collected for this project are insufficient to determine what makes consumption of music in Spanish so consistently relevant. Any potential explanation will need to go beyond the obvious fact that consumption of music requires mostly receptive aural skills (as opposed to, for example, the skills involved in reading and writing in Spanish), and must include a more nuanced account that includes the role of music on identity formation, patterns of early socialization to music, content availability/portability, and the power of global music markets.

In the case of texting, by its nature and widespread use, SMS messaging offers an avenue for re-contact and experimentation with linguistic and cultural displays, even for speakers who are physically located in communities with low vitality for that language. According to Hill et al.'s (2013) sociality hierarchy, texting belongs to the category of conversational media: two persons engage in a one-on-one dialogue that requires no public identity displays. Further, texting allows for segmentation of audiences, and for the creation of mostly transitory space where orthographic conventions can be flouted, and where language (and spelling) choices become one more resource in the writer's repertoire that can be used to change tone, signal group belonging, humor, markedness, or emotional content.

Further, Velázquez et al. (2014) found that the most common interlocutors in Spanish for this group of 71 HS were older relatives (p. 8). Because of the ubiquitous presence of cell phones and the low cost of texting rates to and from Latin America, texting presents an opportunity for these young adults to keep in touch with Spanish-dominant friends and relatives in the U.S. and abroad. Most importantly in the case of college students, texting allows them to stay connected to parents, extended family, and friends, and at the same time control "the terms of interpersonal linguistic engagement" (Baron, 2008).

Overall, 68% of all participants reported some use of Spanish on social media. However, in contrast to texting, *frequent* use of Spanish on social media was lower for the three groups in this study. This difference in rates of reported texting in Spanish and reported use on social media by this generational cohort has at least two potential explanations. The first has to do with the nature of social media. In Hill et al.'s (2013) hierarchy, the type of mediated interaction that takes place on a platform such as Facebook or Google+, for example, falls into different categories (i.e. broadcast, conversational, and community), and, we will add, imposes on the user greater cognitive, linguistic, and cultural competence demands related to the production and distribution of content, control of self-presentation, displays group belonging, politeness, and collaboration. Another plausible explanation is connected to potential motivations to engage

with social media. If, as reported in previous studies, college students most often use social media to obtain information about on- and off-campus activities, to socialize with friends, to seek self-status, and to find entertainment (Park et al., 2009), and if they use social networking sites to connect with people in their offline lives (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008), it follows that the participants in this study, living in English-dominant environments, would make greater use of English to participate in collegerelevant networks on and off campus.

Reported consumption of Spanish-language television shows and movies was also high for the three groups in this study. Overall, 79% of all HS, L2, and NS respondents recalled having watched a television show or a movie in Spanish and were able to name what they watched. Most commonly, heritage speakers were watching *soap operas*, followed by *movies*, *news*, and *soccer*. Second language learners were most commonly watching *movies*, and native speakers were watching *soccer/sports*, *movies*, and *comedies*. If broadcast audiences can be understood as virtual communities of practice, results for Spanish-language music and TV/movie consumption by heritage speakers can be understood as an extension of practices learned at home and continued into young adulthood (e.g. watching soap operas).

In examining reading and writing reported by heritage speakers, the use of Kucer's (2014) typology of texts affords us a finer-grained picture of literacy practices. Most reading and writing in Spanish reported by heritage speakers was related to the domain of school. An optimistic way to interpret these results would be that these young adult bilinguals were developing their linguistic and academic skills by studying their family language in college, and were thus leveraging their social capital to develop personal capital and advanced professional skills. Another, more pessimistic view would be that for many of these respondents Spanish was relevant as a school subject, but was not the most viable language to conduct interactions beyond the classroom.

Most personal interest reading and writing reported by heritage speakers was social-interactive in nature (e.g. texts, Facebook posts, and email). Types of reading in Spanish *not* reported by the heritage speakers in this study were: recreational, spiritual, work-related, and archival-related. Types of writing in Spanish *not* reported by HS in this study were: daily living, recreational, spiritual, news-related, and archival-related. In fact, it is important to point out that only five participants in all groups reported reading a work of fiction for recreation. This finding may be a generational effect related to their overall reading patterns (i.e. were they reading for pleasure in English?); it may be related to school demands, to the type of reading material in Spanish available to them, and/or to their lack of participation in the cultural conversations of the wider Spanishspeaking world. The data for this project is inadequate to ascertain this. What should be noted, however, is that for these young adults, not reading longer works of fiction in Spanish reduces opportunities for enjoyment, and for the development of linguistic and cultural skills.

Interestingly, if the results presented in the preceding pages were expressed on a six-point scale (where a higher place on the scale would indicate a higher percentage of participants who reported engaging in a specific practice), both extremes of the scale would look the same for the three groups in this study. The upper extreme of this imaginary scale would be occupied by texting and listening to music, and the lowest by consumption of internet content in Spanish. Perhaps as a reflection of their generational cohort, for heritage speakers the three practices with highest relevance of Spanish were listening to music, texting, and use of social media. Except in the case of reading and writing, which can occur electronically or on paper, all practices surveyed were electronically mediated forms of interaction. This is to say that in using Spanish, respondents were not bound by physical context or immediate availability of interlocutors, but by their perceptions of viability. Moreover, these practices required control of different literacies and participation in different (virtual) communities of practice.

Results for texting, social media and personal interest reading/writing suggest that for these heritage speakers their family language was viable for the accrual of *bonding social capital* (Steinfeld et al., 2008). The percentage of respondents reporting school-related reading/writing suggests that for many, Spanish was also viable to attain specific academic goals. It remains to be seen, however, whether in the coming years this will translate into the use of Spanish literacy in their professional lives. Finally, environmental pressures to shift can be traced in the types of Spanish use *not* reported (or barely reported) by these heritage speakers: reading/writing related to work, religion, and daily living, and consumption of internet content. Borrowing Halliday's taxonomy of the pragmatic functions of language (1973; in Kucer, 2014, p. 28), we will also note that for these heritage speakers, Spanish was not (or not frequently) the most viable language to seek and test knowledge (*heuristic* function), to create new worlds (*imaginative* function), or to gather and communicate information (*informative* function). Future studies of language relevance among young adult Latinos will benefit from larger samples and the comparison of results from communities with different ethnolinguistic profiles.

Notes

1. This analysis is part of a larger study that examines reported use, socio-pragmatic awareness, attitudes, and phonological competence in bilinguals residing in communities of recent Latino settlement and low vitality for Spanish. Participant responses were compared with two control groups. The first included 23 second language learners (L2), and the second, 24 native speakers. All groups belonged to the same generational cohort and attended the same schools (Velázquez et al., 2014).
2. In 2011, Lincoln had a total population of 256,189, of which 6% was Latino, and 4.3% of residents over the age of five spoke Spanish at home. Macomb had a population of 19,920 (3.7% Latino), and 3.3% of residents over the age of five spoke Spanish at home. Ypsilanti had a population of 19,880 (3% Latino), and 1.8% of residents over the age of five spoke Spanish at home American Community Survey (ACS) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). For a finer-grained description of participant characteristics and the criteria by which these three communities were classified as having low vitality for Spanish, see Velázquez et al. (2014). The concept of *language vitality* is of course closely related to ethnolinguistic vitality theory, a socio-psychological approach to the study of minority language maintenance that has been used in the past three decades in the study of topics such as linguistic attitudes, intergroup relations, intercultural communication, language choice, and revitalization (Yagmur & Ehala, 2011). The concept of language vitality is referenced here in order to operationalize its opposite: communities where speakers choose to speak their family language and transmit it to their children, *despite* low status, low demography and low institutional support for Spanish.
3. The author wishes to thank one anonymous reviewer for making this point.
4. For more on U.S. young adult motivations to study their family language, see Carreira and Kagan (2011).
5. Kucer defines this as the reading and writing of materials that are saved and referred to when necessary, like birth certificates, report cards, leases, and insurance policies (p. 232). In the context of English-majority countries such as the United States, most of these would, of course, be in English.
6. The term *social media* will be understood here using Hill, Dean, and Murphy's definition: "The collection of websites and web-based systems that allow for mass interaction, conversation, and sharing among members of a network" (2013, p. 3).
7. This cohort was followed by 82% of all adults aged 30–49 who did the same.
8. Latinos/Hispanics significantly outpace the total population in their consumption of online music libraries, online music videos, and streaming audio, and are among the most enthusiastic consumers of music across a variety of genres regardless of acculturation level, according to a report by market research company Nielsen (2014).
9. Median age for second language speakers was 27 in Lincoln, 21 in Macomb, and 22 in Ypsilanti. Median age for native speakers was 26.5, 23, and 22.5, respectively.
10. A description of the other three sections of this study can be found in Velázquez et al. (2014). The two control groups were included as points of comparison for data on phonological competence, pragmatic

awareness, attitudes, and patterns of reported use of Spanish. The final sample included 75 HS. Data for the last four participants were not included here because they were collected after the present analysis was completed. Potential participants were contacted from a pool of students, former students, and members of the researchers' university-wide network.

11. As one anonymous reviewer correctly points out, the use of survey methodology has the potential to present participants with a clear-cut dichotomy between named languages, a dichotomy that need not be present in actual bilingual use. In this study, this possibility was mitigated by allowing respondents to mark "Spanish," "English," or "Both," and by providing them with text boxes in which they could type their responses in the language(s) of their preference. In contrast, and due to the online survey's internal architecture, respondents could choose in which language they preferred to view the questions at the beginning of the survey, but could not change languages once they had started.
12. All translations are mine.
13. I feel like eating tacos. Wanna come?
14. This could mean, of course, that these respondents did not use Spanish when they were on social media, or that they didn't engage with social media at all. This difference is irrelevant for our present purposes, however, because the aim of this analysis was not to examine respondents' use of social media, but their reported use of their family language.
15. The actual wording on this item was *casi nunca* (almost never).

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