

Use of *Voseo* and Latino Identity: An Intergenerational Study of Hondurans and Salvadorans in the Western Region of the U.S.

Susana V. Rivera-Mills
Oregon State University

1. Introduction

Sociolinguistic studies that explore Central American *voseo* are few and represent different historical and social frameworks. As this population in the United States increases, researchers have begun to take interest, not only in distinguishing features such as the *voseo*, but in Central American Spanish as a whole, and as an additional Spanish variety of the United States. According to Lipski, “el perfil dialectológico del español estadounidense es un mosaico que representa la presencia hispánica original, así como las vías de migración posterior” (Lipski 2002:2). As more immigrants from *voseo* regions enter the United States each year, Spanish varieties in the U.S. are continuously integrating these diverse varieties and variations into the existing U.S. Spanish.

Studies that look at the *voseo* and Central American Spanish have been sporadic with brief mentions in general descriptions of Central American Spanish (Alvar, 1980) or phonological studies (Canfield 1960, Lipski 1988, 1994, 2008); there have also been a couple of morphological studies (Kany 1963, Schreffler 1989), and studies that analyze specific features such as *voseo* (Lipski 1988, Scheffler 1994) within a Salvadoran community, but not in an intergenerational context. Recently, a renewed interest in Central American Spanish has produced additional research about Spanish in Central America (Benavides 2003, Castro 2000, Kapovic 2007, Quintanilla 2009).

Despite renewed interest in this variety of Spanish, sociolinguistic and dialectological studies of *voseo* use by Central Americans residing in the U.S. are few considering the socio-historical and cultural value that this form of address holds. In particular, there is a research lacuna with respect to studies that look at Salvadoran and Honduran *voseo*—a testimony of cultural pride and linguistic resistance. Given the few studies in current sociolinguistic research, the purpose of the present study is to explore the use of the *voseo* in an intergenerational context, from first to third generation Salvadorans and first and second generation Hondurans residing in the western region of the United States. Within a sociolinguistic framework, two specific areas are explored: the maintenance or loss of the second-person singular pronoun *vos* with its appropriate verb form, and where maintained, its sociolinguistic use as it relates to Central American identity. The use of the pronoun *vos* is studied in combination with the pronouns *Tú* and *Usted* in order to determine its level of maintenance or loss in an intergenerational context.

1.1. Background of *voseo*

The term *voseo* is used to recognize a preference for the second-person singular pronoun *vos*, with its appropriate verb forms over the *tú* forms. *Vos* is considered a familiar and even intimate form of address among Salvadorans and Hondurans. Even today, the use of *vos* in these countries continues to be one of the linguistic features that distinguishes this variety of Spanish from the Spanish spoken in other Latin American countries. Paez Urdaneta (1981) proposes the following grammatical framework for the Salvadoran *voseo* which also applies to Honduran *voseo*:

| <u>Tense/Mood</u> | <u>1st conj.</u> | <u>2nd conj.</u> | <u>3rd conj.</u> |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Present | tomás | comés | vivís |
| Preterit | tomastes | comistes | vivistes |
| Future | tomarés ¹ | comerés | vivirés |
| Imperative | tomá | comé | viví |

Lipski (1988:102) proposes a similar paradigm for Central American *voseo* with the addition of the present subjunctive and the corrected form of the future tense for the first conjugation as follows:

| <u>Tense/Mood</u> | <u>1st conj.</u> | <u>2nd conj.</u> | <u>3rd conj.</u> |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Present | tomás | comés | vivís |
| Preterit | tomastes | comistes | vivistes |
| Future | tomarás | comerés | vivirés |
| Imperative | tomá | comé | viví |
| Pres. Subj. | tomés | comás | vivás |

As can be seen, *voseo* entails a change in the syllabic stress of conjugated verb forms, from the regular penultimate stress as in tú **tomás** > to the stress on the last syllable as in *vos tomás*. In cases where there is a stem changing verb, monothongization occurs as in tú tienes > *vos tenés*; in monosyllabic forms, a retention of the vowel occurs as in the imperative ven > **vení**. In the present study, observations and analyses were done predominantly with the present tense, though some examples of imperatives are also used.

In addition to the basic morphological aspects of the *voseo*, other studies have examined morphosyntactic dimensions. Benavides (2003) and Kapovic (2007) revise and propose three types of *voseo* that build on Paez Urdaneta (1981): *el voseo nominal*, which refers to the use of the pronoun *vos* with the conjugations of the pronoun *tú* (e.g., *vos tomas, vos comes, vos vives*); *el voseo verbal*, which is the use of the pronoun *tú* with verbal conjugations of the pronoun *vos* (e.g., *tú tomás, tú comés, tú vivís*); and *el voseo pronominal y verbal*, which confirms the paradigm as proposed by Paez Urdaneta where the pronoun *vos* is used with its corresponding conjugations (e.g., *vos tomás, vos comés, vos vivís*). According to Lipski (1988:13), the corresponding clitic is *te* (e.g., *sentáte, ponéte, vestíte*), while the tonic form used is *vos* (e.g., *esto es para vos*).

In a sociolinguistic context, Lipski's (1988) study has shown negative linguistic attitudes toward the use of *voseo*. Additional studies of *voseo* have confirmed socioeconomic class distinctions in the use of *voseo*, as well as gender distinctions (Rivera-Mills 2000). More recently Hernández (2002), in his study of *voseo* among Salvadorans in Houston, has found strong accommodation patterns by Salvadorans when interacting with Mexican speakers. He hypothesizes that part of this accommodation is due to negative Mexican perceptions toward the Salvadoran variety. In spite of these findings, as Lipski (1988) states, *vos* remains the pronoun of maximum familiarity and solidarity, while *usted* expresses distance and respect. *Tú*, when used, corresponds to an intermediate level, expressing familiarity, but not *confianza* or deep trust. This is confirmed by Kapovic (2007:80) who states that *el tuteo salvadoreño* "significa amistad pero sin la confianza que requiere el *vos*." In other words, there is no doubt that the *voseo* remains a distinguishing feature of Salvadoran Spanish. Certainly among working class Salvadorans the pronoun is used frequently and without distinction. In Honduras, the pronoun *tú* is seen predominantly in the media and among those who have lived in the U.S. or have had contact with others who do not use the *voseo*. Benavides states that the *voseo* in Honduras "es de uso generalizado en el tratamiento familiar, informal y familiar, en todas las clases sociales" (2003:618).

Benavides (1993), Castro (2000), Lipski (2000), Micheau (1991) y Ridenour (2004) point out that the phenomenon of the *voseo* that is observed in Central America and to a certain extent in the United States can be organized as a three-tiered system, as proposed by Pinkerton (1986) and Baumel-Schreffler (1995), in which *tú* serves as an intermediate step between *vos* and *usted*. Castro (2000:20-71) elaborates on this concept of a three-tiered system by categorizing the basic uses of each pronoun in Honduras as follows:

¹ In my own observations and experience the future of the 1st conjugation should be *tomarás*.

| <i>Vos</i> | <i>Tú</i> | <i>USTED</i> |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Vos</i> of solidarity | 1. As written form of <i>vos</i> | 1. <i>Usted</i> of distance |
| 2. <i>Vos</i> of <i>confianza</i> | 2. <i>Tú</i> of sophistication | 2. <i>Usted</i> of respect |
| 3. <i>Vos</i> of undue <i>confianza</i> | 3. <i>Tú</i> as intermediate | 3. <i>Usted</i> to differ social class |
| 4. <i>Vos</i> of offense | 4. <i>Tú</i> of accommodation | 4. <i>Usted</i> of deference |
| 5. <i>Vos</i> of aggression | 5. <i>Tú</i> as hypercorrection | 5. <i>Usted</i> of sarcasm |
| 6. <i>Vos</i> of anger | | 6. <i>Usted</i> of anger |
| 7. <i>Vos</i> of intimacy | | 7. <i>Usted</i> of intimacy |
| 8. <i>Vos</i> derogatory | | 8. <i>Usted</i> of <i>cariño</i> |
| 9. <i>Vos</i> impersonal manner | | 9. <i>Usted</i> of persuasion |

Many of these uses have been confirmed for Salvadoran Spanish as well (e.g., Hernández 2002, 2009), and are observed in some of the findings for the present study.

1.2. *Voseo* in the United States

With respect to *voseo* among Salvadorans and Hondurans in the United States, few researchers have carried out studies of this phenomenon (e.g., Lipski 1988, Schreffler 1994, Hernández 2002, Rivera-Mills 2000, 2002). Lipski (1988) notes that Hondurans in the U.S. are integrating the pronoun *tú* into their daily linguistic repertoire, particularly when addressing members of other non-*voseantes* Spanish speaking groups in the U.S. Hernández (2002) finds a high level of *voseo* among first generation Salvadorans, confirming findings by Rivera-Mills (2002) which reflect the native *voseo* found in El Salvador.

In addition to the frequency of use, the *voseo* also holds many implications for Central American identity in the United States. According to Lipski (1989:106) “once in the United States, Salvadorans become instantly aware of the use of *vos* as an ethnolinguistic identifier of Central American origin”. There is little doubt, as will be seen in the present study, that *vos* is a marked feature for Central American identity. Lipski (1989:99) continues to elaborate that upon arrival to the United States, Salvadorans are faced with one of the following incompatible options: “the retention of linguistic and cultural identity as Salvadorans, partial or total merging with the predominant Hispanic community of Mexican origin, or rejection of Salvadoran/Hispanic identity in favor of Anglo-American cultural, linguistic, and social patterns”. The present study points to various levels of linguistic accommodation. In interpersonal situations such as those in which the participants are involved, *voseo* can be used to convey information about in-groups and out-groups in terms of identity and a sense of belonging. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), initially known as speech accommodation theory, was first developed by Giles in the early seventies in order to explain how individuals manage certain aspects of interpersonal communication. It was originally conceptualized to address complex socio-psychological issues of language choices (Giles & Powesland, 1975). Over the years, this theory has been expanded and integrated into the area of sociolinguistics and, with various scholars, Giles has elaborated and revised the theory in varying directions (Giles & Edwards 1983; Giles 1984; Coupland & Giles 1988; Harwood & Giles 2005; Giles, Reid & Harwood 2010; Giles, Coupland & Oatley 2010). It is in this context of Spanish varieties in contact and languages in contact (Spanish/English), that issues surrounding Central American identity surface and interface with the complexities of language maintenance and shift. The present study will now explore these complex aspects of the *voseo* in the United States.

2. Methodology

Eighty-five participants representing first, second and third generation Salvadorans and first and second generation Hondurans living in the United States were interviewed using traditional sociolinguistic interviews, surveys and questionnaires which contained questions about use of *voseo* with specific people and in specific domains, attitudinal questions, questions regarding identity issues, and grammaticality/acceptability judgments. These instruments incorporate aspects of other studies such as Ridenour (2004) and Rivera-Mills (2000). Additional questions were uniquely designed in order to obtain in depth information about issues of identity. Of the 85 participants interviewed 40 belonged to the first

generation, 30 to the second generation and 15 to the third generation. All first generation participants have resided in the United States for at least ten years and arrived directly from El Salvador or Honduras. Second generation participants were defined as those who had immigrated with their parents as children (before age 15) or had been born in the U.S. to first generation parents, and represented Salvadoran and Honduran descent. For second generation, age 15 was the cut-off age chosen due to studies such as Veltman (2000:71) in which he states that “...the abandonment of Spanish is a negligible phenomenon among immigrants who arrived in the United States when they were at least 15 years old”. This finding makes this particular age appropriate as a cut-off age between first and second generation participants in that those arriving in the U.S. before age 15 would have begun to experience the language shift process. Third generation participants were defined as being born in the U.S. and children of a second generation Salvadoran—all third generation participants were of Salvadoran descent. The age of first generation participants ranged from 19 to 84, second generation participants ranged from 23 to 48, and third generation participants ranged in age from 12 to 19. Fifty of the participants are female and 35 are male. All third generation participants are male.

Participants were given a survey as a starting point, in which they were asked which pronoun (*vos*, *tú*, *usted*) he/she used in specific domains and with specific people. This was then followed with face-to-face interviews in which a questionnaire was used to determine issues related to identity and linguistic attitudes, and expand on the initial survey. These interviews were conducted by the researcher, who is a bilingual second-generation Salvadoran, in the home of the participants, and in the language chosen by the participant. In addition to the survey and the questionnaire-based interviews, observations and recordings of spontaneous conversations were made in various homes during gatherings of different groups of participants. The data from these observations of spontaneous conversations was analyzed separately and it appears in Table 2. Lastly, participants were asked to rate a series of 15 statements as acceptable or not acceptable use of *voseo*. These statements were taken from popular Salvadoran children books used in both El Salvador and Honduras. In addition, statements made by third generation Salvadorans in spontaneous conversation were also included as part of the acceptability statements. All participants were recruited from the western states of Washington, Oregon, California and Arizona, and represent a convenient sample. Initial recruitment was done through key members of the community and pre-established relationships, and then the sample was expanded via a social networking approach in which one individual would refer the researcher to another individual of Salvadoran or Honduran descent. Recruitment and data collection took place over the course of five years. Given the relatively recent arrival of this population in the United States, the recruitment of third generation Salvadorans proved to be particularly difficult. Third generation Hondurans were not found, perhaps because of the recent arrival of this population to the U.S. It is hoped that follow up studies will focus on gathering data from these generations.

3. Initial Findings and Observations

3.1. Frequency and Reported Use

Five years ago I conducted an initial study that examined Salvadoran *voseo* among first generation Salvadorans in the U.S. and Salvadorans living in El Salvador. I have used the results, regarding use and frequency of *voseo*, of this initial study as a comparative base for the present study. Furthermore Hernández' (2002) study of *voseo* in Houston among Salvadorans, also establishes usage for Salvadorans living in El Salvador that will be considered *native voseo*. The data from both of these studies serve as a comparative base for the present study. It is important to note that similar comparative data is not available for Hondurans residing in the U.S., making the present data on Hondurans a seminal contribution.

In terms of frequency of reported use in specific domains Table 1 shows the data reported by first and second generation participants. The data was not divided between first and second generation participants because differences found in the overall usage of pronouns by these groups were not significant in these specific domains.

As can be seen from Table 1, the first finding that emerges is the almost binary usage of *vos* and *usted* by Honduran participants. Significant use of *tú* is not as present and limited mostly to public domains and use in prayers to God. Meanwhile the Salvadoran participants clearly display the use of all three pronouns confirming the three-tiered system initially proposed by Pinkerton (1986) and Baumel-Schreffler (1995). In both cases, *vos* is still the clear preference for domains that reflect more intimacy or *confianza*.

Table 1. Reported Pronominal Use in Specific Domains by First and Second Generation

| Domains | Salvadorans (G1 & G2) | | | Hondurans (G1 & G2) | | | Salvadorans & Hondurans (G1 & G2) | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------|---------------------|-----|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| | Vos | Tú | Ud. | Vos | Tú | Ud. | Vos | Tú | Ud. |
| Family | | | | | | | | | |
| Older brothers | <u>75%</u> | 25% | - | <u>100%</u> | - | - | <u>85%</u> | 15% | - |
| Younger brothers | <u>100%</u> | - | - | <u>100%</u> | - | - | <u>100%</u> | - | - |
| Older sisters | <u>48%</u> | 40% | 12% | <u>71%</u> | - | 29% | <u>55%</u> | 20% | 25% |
| Younger sisters | <u>68%</u> | 22% | 10% | <u>100%</u> | - | - | <u>86%</u> | 7% | 7% |
| Parents | <u>15%</u> | 10% | <u>75%</u> | 5% | - | <u>95%</u> | 10% | 6% | <u>84%</u> |
| Spouse in public | 10% | <u>90%</u> | - | <u>57%</u> | 43% | - | 35% | <u>65%</u> | - |
| Spouse in private | <u>85%</u> | 15% | - | <u>72%</u> | 28% | - | <u>79%</u> | 21% | - |
| Children | 10% | <u>69%</u> | 21% | <u>67%</u> | 8% | 25% | <u>42%</u> | <u>36%</u> | 22% |
| Grandparents | 5% | - | 95% | - | - | 100% | 3% | - | 97% |
| Younger relatives | 80% | 10% | 10% | 90% | - | 10% | 85% | 5% | 10% |
| Older relatives | 44% | 10% | 46% | 40% | - | 60% | 42% | 5% | 53% |
| Known people | | | | | | | | | |
| Close friends of same gender | <u>60%</u> | 10% | <u>30%</u> | <u>90%</u> | 10% | - | <u>75%</u> | 10% | 15% |
| Close friends of opposite gender | <u>56%</u> | <u>34%</u> | 10% | <u>80%</u> | 10% | 10% | <u>68%</u> | 22% | 10% |
| Boyfriend/Girlfriend in public | 30% | <u>60%</u> | 10% | <u>56%</u> | 44% | - | 40% | <u>50%</u> | 10% |
| Boyfriend/Girlfriend in private | <u>60%</u> | 40% | - | <u>78%</u> | 22% | - | <u>70%</u> | 30% | - |
| Friends of same sex | <u>40%</u> | 40% | 20% | 30% | 10% | <u>60%</u> | 35% | 25% | <u>40%</u> |
| Friends of opposite sex | 30% | <u>50%</u> | 20% | 20% | 20% | <u>60%</u> | 25% | 35% | <u>40%</u> |
| Unknown people | | | | | | | | | |
| Male children | <u>70%</u> | 10% | 20% | <u>60%</u> | 20% | 20% | <u>65%</u> | 15% | 20% |
| Female children | <u>50%</u> | 30% | 20% | <u>50%</u> | 20% | 30% | <u>50%</u> | 25% | 25% |
| Younger waiter | 10% | <u>50%</u> | 40% | <u>40%</u> | 20% | <u>40%</u> | 25% | 35% | <u>40%</u> |
| Younger cashier | 10% | 30% | <u>60%</u> | <u>40%</u> | 20% | <u>40%</u> | 20% | 25% | <u>55%</u> |
| Others | - | - | 100% | - | - | 100% | - | - | 100% |
| Work | | | | | | | | | |
| Older employee | - | 22% | <u>78%</u> | - | 10% | <u>90%</u> | - | 21% | <u>79%</u> |
| Younger employee | 11% | 33% | <u>56%</u> | 34% | 10% | <u>56%</u> | 22% | 22% | <u>56%</u> |
| Others | - | - | <u>100%</u> | - | - | <u>100%</u> | - | - | <u>100%</u> |
| Others | | | | | | | | | |
| Pet | <u>50%</u> | 40% | 10% | <u>70%</u> | 10% | 20% | <u>60%</u> | 25% | 15% |
| Guard dog | 40% | <u>50%</u> | 10% | <u>80%</u> | 10% | 10% | <u>50%</u> | 30% | 20% |
| Saints | 14% | 29% | <u>57%</u> | - | - | <u>100%</u> | 10% | 20% | <u>70%</u> |
| God or divine entity | 11% | <u>56%</u> | 33% | - | 44% | <u>56%</u> | 5% | <u>50%</u> | 45% |
| The Virgin | - | 43% | <u>57%</u> | - | - | <u>100%</u> | - | 38% | <u>62%</u> |

In the family domain among Salvadorans and Hondurans, there is a preference for the *voseo* to address brothers and sisters. However, one should note that in a few cases, Salvadorans opted for the use of *tuteo* when addressing older brothers (25%) and older sisters (40%), as well as with younger sisters (22%). Some gender issues could be at play in this preference, however that would not explain the usage with older

brothers, unless it is a case in which the *tú* is being used as the *vos* pronoun as indicated in the pronoun categorization by Castro (2000).

The present data did not point to any conclusive evidence on the variable of gender. Hondurans, on the other hand, did not opt for *tuteo* with siblings indicating a strong preference for *voseo*. When addressing parents both groups showed a preference for *usted* (84%), in a few cases of Salvadorans the reported use of *vos* was the preference (15%) and even less so among Hondurans (5%).

An interesting finding can be seen in the forms of address used among spouses particularly as the usage relates to public versus private domains. The Salvadoran participants showed a tendency to use *tuteo* with their spouses when in public (90%), but prefer to use *voseo* in private (85%). Honduran participants showed a higher preference for *voseo* with their spouses while in public (57%) and in private (72%). Again showing more of a binary distribution between *voseo* and *ustedeo* among Hondurans, where as Salvadorans seem to make use of the complete three-tiered system. The same preference emerges among Salvadorans when addressing girlfriends/boyfriends, in that 60% opted for the use of *tú* in public while preferring *vos* (60%) in private; whereas Hondurans show a preference for *vos* in both public and private domains.

When addressing people with whom the participants were acquainted, a similar pattern between Hondurans and Salvadorans emerged. With trusted friends of the same sex, Salvadorans report a preference for *vos* (60%) but also a preference for *usted* (30%), while Hondurans opted for *voseo* (90%). Hondurans also indicated a preference for *voseo* when addressing trusted friends of the opposite sex (80%), while Salvadorans reported a preference for *voseo* (56%) but also incorporate the *tuteo* (34%). Though there is an obvious preference for the use of *vos* in this domain, again we see the Honduran participants using *voseo* and *ustedeo*, while Salvadoran participants incorporate all three pronouns. The presence of *tuteo* among Hondurans in this domain may be due to considerations of ethnicity of interlocutors, since participants reside in communities that are predominantly Mexican-American. Lastly, it is important to note that in the domain of *others*, the findings reflect forms of address that seem to elicit or favor particular pronoun usage, such as the imperative *voseo* with pets, and a tendency for *tuteo* or *ustedeo* with deities (Hernández, 2007).

This general pattern repeats itself in all other domains, with Honduran participants predominantly reporting a preference for *vos* or *usted* while Salvadorans show an additional distinction in their domains by incorporating the use of *tú* in certain sociolinguistic contexts. Generally speaking, and in these domains, first and second generation Hondurans do not show a significant accommodation of *tuteo* into their Spanish variety, compared to native use, nor do they show significant differences in usage between first and second generation. First generation Salvadorans use the *tuteo* in a way that is reflective of the native use, and not necessarily as an accommodation to U.S. Spanish. However, differences in generation appear when analyzing the data according to frequency of pronoun use in spontaneous conversation. In this context, an interesting pattern emerges among second and third generation Salvadorans:

Table 2. Intergenerational Pronominal Usage in Spontaneous Conversation

| Pronominal usage | Salvadorans (Hernández, 2000) | Salvadorans 1 st generation (present study) | Salvadorans & Hondurans, 1 st generation (present study) | Salvadorans & Hondurans, 2 nd generation (present study) | Salvadorans 3 rd generation (present study) |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Voseo</i> | 142 88.2% | 197 72% | 605 82% | 73 25% | 103 39% ² |
| <i>Tuteo</i> | 19 11.8% | 78 28% | 133 18% | 215 75% | 158 61% |

As can be seen in Table 2, there is a high reported use of *voseo* among Salvadoran speakers and certainly when both first generation Salvadorans and Hondurans are grouped together. Hernández in the Houston study notes that this “high use of *voseo* among speakers in El Salvador is surprising for two reasons. First, even though *voseo* is the preferred pronominal form of address in El Salvador, it has sustained ample opposition from more traditionalist views, which consider its use as a vulgar and uneducated form (Lipski 1988:103)...Second, although the traditionalist view has not caused the eradication of *voseo*, linguistic attitudes have materialized into linguistic insecurity when Salvadorans come

² This number does not represent the traditional use of the pronoun. Third generation Hondurans were not found and therefore were not included in this study.

in contact with speakers of other Spanish varieties (Lipski 1988:103)”.

Findings of both the present and previous study contradict part of these conclusions. The high reported use of *voseo* among Salvadorans living in El Salvador or of first generation Salvadorans living in the U.S. is not surprising, as the data indicate. Indeed my initial study found that *voseo* is used categorically with specific people under specific circumstances and is further delineated when variables such as gender and socioeconomic class are taken into consideration. In addition, Salvadoran family networks are complex and the use of pronominal forms distinguish the closeness of the relationship as well as the social hierarchy of the individuals involved. Although there are differences in the frequency of *voseo* with respect to socioeconomic class, all social classes in El Salvador use it and further research needs to be done in order to determine the specific sociolinguistic parameters that are involved in Salvadoran *voseo*.

The linguistic insecurities observed by Hernández (2002) were also noticed in the present study when participants came into contact with speakers of other Spanish varieties. This insecurity increased and was most apparent among second-generation Salvadoran participants who show an increased use of *tuteo* and diminished use of the *voseo*. Second-generation Salvadoran participants used the *voseo* strictly with other Salvadorans and only in the home environment. When these participants came into contact with Mexicans, they immediately switched to *tuteo* even in their own home environment. The linguistic insecurity increased when participants found themselves in a contact situation. Many of them would mix the verb form with the pronoun use, using the *vos* form of the verb with the pronoun *tú* as in *Tú tenés mucha familia aquí?* though the opposite was not observed, that is, mixing the *tú* verb form with the pronoun *vos*. When participants were asked about this phenomenon, (the accommodation in a contact situation) they said that most people do not understand them when they use the *vos*, and felt that they did not know the person well enough to address them using *vos*. This use of the *voseo* verbal provides participants with an additional option in forms of address, and confirms the need for a relationship of deep trust when using *voseo* both in the U.S. and in El Salvador.

The situation among third generation Salvadoran participants is a bit more complicated. As can be seen from the table above, at first glance, the use of *voseo* appears to increase when compared with the second-generation. However, this finding is deceiving. Though the frequency of the pronoun use in spontaneous conversation increases, the use represents the use of the pronoun by itself, without the verb form to accompany it.

Examples (from recorded spontaneous conversations):

1. George tiene mi dinero, *vos*.
2. *Vos*, ¿por qué no te compras unos zapatos nuevos?
3. *Vos* vienes a la fiesta conmigo.
4. ¿Puedes ver la televisión *vos*?
5. *Vos* no te olvides de la fiesta.

During the interviews and during recorded observations of spontaneous conversations, not a single case occurred in which a third generation participant used the *vos* form of the verb along with the pronoun. Third generation participants used the *vos* indiscriminantly during spontaneous conversations, whether in a contact situation with other varieties of Spanish (e.g., Mexican) or among themselves. It is important to note that this phenomenon was only observed among male third-generation participants. However, given the small sample of third-generation participants, additional analyses and studies need to be made to account for this usage. In addition, unlike second generation participants who limit use of *voseo* for the home environment, third generation participants will use it in any environment as long as two or more, of what seems to be a core group, are gathered. This innovative use of the pronoun *vos* is reminiscent of a vocative use, such as the South American “che” or even the English “dude.” The latter particularly is appropriate among this male cohort of teenage participants, given the observed use of “dude” during spontaneous conversations with non-Spanish speaking friends. Additional research is certainly required to further explore this phenomenon.

3.2. Grammaticality/Acceptability Statements

In addition to frequency and reported use of *voseo*, participants were shown 15 examples of *voseo* use. These examples were taken from Central American children’s books, and some were taken from the

recordings of speech samples from third-generation participants in the present study. The findings are shown in Table 3 below.

The table shows participants' responses with respect to the acceptability of statements in which *voseo* was used. Among first and second generation participants, all the statements that were taken out of the children's books were considered 100% acceptable; however, variation in acceptability occurred among the statements that reflected third-generation usage. The highest percentage of unacceptability among second generation participants was found in statements that mixed the pronoun *vos* with the *tú* form of the verb, as in statements #8, #12 and #15.

Almost the opposite is true among third generation participants. The linguistic insecurity of this group occurred with statements that were taken from the children's books, demonstrating a general lack of knowledge within this group with respect to native usage of *voseo*. The highest percentage of acceptability among this group occurred, as could be expected, with the statements that had been taken from their own speech samples. The only exceptions to this observation would be statements #11 and #13. With statement #11 it is possible that the participants focused on the overt use of the pronoun *vos*, and thus found it acceptable. In the case of #13, though this is an example of native usage, there is not any variation of the verb form, therefore, it is possible that third generation participants were not aware of any specific variation in this sample, and again were focusing on the overt use of the pronoun.

Table 3. Acceptability Statements by Generation

| Statements | 1 st Generation | | | 2 nd Generation | | | 3 rd Generation (Salvadorans only) | | |
|------------|----------------------------|------|---|----------------------------|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|
| | Yes | No | ? | Yes | No | ? | Yes | No | ? |
| 1 | 100% | | | 100% | | | 40% | 20% | 40% |
| 2 | 70% | 30% | | 55% | 25% | 20% | 67% | 10% | 23% |
| 3 | 100% | | | 100% | | | 34% | 16% | 50% |
| 4 | 15% | 85% | | 30% | 70% | | 100% | | |
| 5 | 100% | | | 100% | | | 53% | 17% | 30% |
| 6 | | 100% | | 85% | 15% | | 100% | | |
| 7 | 100% | | | 100% | | | 80% | | 20% |
| 8 | 16% | 84% | | 15% | 85% | | 100% | | |
| 9 | 100% | | | 100% | | | 80% | 10% | 10% |
| 10 | 10% | 90% | | 95% | | 5% | 100% | | |
| 11 | 100% | | | 100% | | | 100% | | |
| 12 | | 100% | | 20% | 80% | | 100% | | |
| 13 | 90% | 10% | | 100% | | | 100% | | |
| 14 | 85% | 15% | | 80% | | 20% | 100% | | |
| 15 | | 100% | | 15% | 85% | | 80% | | 20% |

Acceptability statements:

1. No hija, quiero decir que no podés venir con nosotros.
2. Sos tremenda, ¿verdad *vos*?
3. ¡Oíme Alfredo! Tenés que poner atención.
4. *Vos* mirá, ahí estaba Lola.
5. ¿Y entonces....? ¿*vos* quién sos?
6. No, *vos*.
7. Hey *vos*, niña despertá, ¿qué estás haciendo aquí?
8. ¿Vienes mañana, *vos*?
9. *Vos* definitivamente me recordás a alguien.
10. Hey *vos*.
11. Mirá *vos*, ¿qué vamos a hacer?
12. Puedes ver, *vos*.
13. No *vos*, ¿cómo vas a creer eso?

14. *Vos*.....
 15. Toma *vos*, aquí tienes el dinero.

Though results of grammaticality judgments can be confounded by socio-educational variables. The overall patterns confirm a definite loss of the native *voseo* usage, particularly among third generation participants.

3.3. Linguistic Attitudes and Identity

The most revealing results with respect to linguistic accommodation are those found in the data regarding attitudes and issues of identity. In the area of attitudes, three specific questions demonstrated aspects of linguistic accommodation. When participants were asked: ¿En los EE.UU., sigue usted usando *vos* y con quién? many reported not using *vos* much outside of the home. One 19 year old Honduran made the following comment:

“A [un hondureño] la primera vez que lo vi y me dijo que era hondureño me sentí en confianza so le dije *vos* porque tengo años tiempo de no hablar con alguien en la confianza como hablaba back home tú me entiendes” (hondureño, 1^{ra} G, 19 años).

Another participant reported:

“Sí, en los EE.UU., las raras veces que conocí a un salvadoreño en la universidad que era de El Salvador, y con el usaba el *vos*, pero los otros eran de Panamá, o de Bolivia, o de Sudamérica, o de España, y con ellos no use el *vos*, de vez en cuando, pero solamente para distinguir que yo era de otro país, con ellos era de usted o de tú” (salvadoreño, 2^{da} G, 33 años).

As can be seen by these comments the *voseo* in these cases serves two purposes, one of establishing solidarity among Central Americans, while at the same time distinguishing Salvadoran or Honduran identity from others. The second question in this category posed to participants was: ¿Lo usa [*voseo*] con personas que no están acostumbradas a usarlo? Y ¿por qué?. This question elicited different responses. Some felt comfortable using the pronoun with others outsider of their own group while others felt uncomfortable using it with outsiders. Four participants explain the following:

“Entonces estoy usándolo con ellos [mexicanos], o sea, lo estoy usando y ellos saben también que es mi manera de hablar, los respeto y todo pero así hablo” (hondureño, 1^{ra} G, 48 años).

“Si es a este nivel de confianza, lo uso con mexicanos, ecuatorianos y colombianos” (salvadoreño, 1^{ra} G, 30 años).

“No, muchas veces porque la gente de otras culturas tienden a hacer chiste del *vos*, lo nota extraño” (hondureño, 1^{ra} G, 42 años).

“No, no lo uso y a veces por haberlo usado, ellos solo se ríen, yo creo que en las mentes de ellos les pasa algo tal vez que, de donde sacaste esta palabra o no tienes educación, pero a mí no me interesa lo que dicen ellos” (salvadoreña, 1^{ra} G, 24 años).

Yet again, these comments reflect a sense of a separate identity that distinguishes in-group solidarity from people considered to be outsiders. Some participants accommodate to the *tuteo*, others refrain from using the *voseo* altogether, and others continue to use it as a way of establishing and distinguishing their identity from others. Data from the last question: Cuando escucha a alguien usando *vos* en los EE.UU. ¿qué piensa?, confirms what has already been observed previously. A second generation Salvadoran responds:

“Yo pienso que es, representa hasta donde hemos llegado verdad geográficamente, y también es parte de la historia de los EE.UU., yo lo comparo con la larga historia de otras culturas que vienen a este país a mejorar su vida, verdad, la de su familia, aprender y formar parte de la fabric, the social fabric de este país, yo lo veo como parte de la historia” (salvadoreño, 2^{da} G, 24 años).

Many participants mentioned that when they hear *voseo* they automatically think that the person using it is either Honduran or Salvadoran or from a Central American country. Overall, the results of this section point to five themes that emerged from all the comments participants made about identity and the *voseo*. They appear below with additional comments from participants:

1. *Voseo* vs. *Tuteo*: To become part of the community
 “Para no quedar mal y para integrar al grupo” (hondureña, 36 años).

 “Cuando llegué acá, adapté ciertos modos de hablar y actuar como mexicano sólo porque estaba, había recién llegado, quería aceptación” (hondureño, 22 años).

 “Talvez para acomodarse a donde estén. Para no sentir tan diferente, para ser parte de la gran corriente de la mayoría de personas” (hondureño, 51 años).
2. *Voseo* vs. *Tuteo*: To avoid feeling uncomfortable or judged
 “La gente de otras culturas tienden de hacer chiste del *vos*. Lo notan extraño, les da risa, entonces cambio a usar *vos* por usted o tú dependiendo de la situación” (hondureño, 42 años).

 “Como los mexicanos porque no sé, a veces se enojan que uno hable así, pero, a veces tratan de discriminarte y todo pero no importa, pienso que se creen como machistas” (salvadoreño, 26 años).
3. *Voseo* vs. *Tuteo*: The influence of the Mexican population
 “Son primeramente los mexicanos que viven aquí y cuando uno se asocia con gente que no habla como los salvadoreños es más fácil hablar como ellos” (salvadoreño, 33 años, 2^{da} generación).

 “Aquí donde vivo yo es más que todo tratar a la gente de tú puesto que hay una mayoría de mexicanos y los mexicanos tutean más que *vosean* y yo creo que por eso se ha perdido un poquito el *voseo* en esta parte de los Estados Unidos” (hondureña, 37 años).
4. *Voseo* vs. *Tuteo*: The influence of languages in contact
 “Por eso mucha gente habla Spanglish, con gente de aquí ya que sean hondureños o latinos creo que nos hablamos más en inglés pero creo que también depende porque yo tengo unos amigos que están aquí pero ellos prefieren hablar en español, entonces, les hablo en español” (hondureño, 22 años).

 “No porque la mayoría casi no saben porque vienen de El Salvador acá y aprenden inglés, entonces pierden el lenguaje de allá porque quieren tratar de, pues, cómo se dice, hacerse americanos” (salvadoreña, 23 años, 2^{da} generación).
5. *Voseo* vs. *Tuteo*: Identity
 “El tú es como un “mask”, verdá, que uno usa y el *voseo* es más como que, *you know*, *natural*, íntimo. Es raro ser el único que dice *vos*. Se siente raro” (salvadoreño, 24 años, 2^{da} generación).

 “Me siento bien incomoda estar usando el tú. Me siento como que esa no soy yo” (hondureña, 36 años).

 “Cuando uso tú no me siento que soy yo, que estoy tratando de implantar un nuevo patrón en mi mente y en mi costumbre” (hondureño, 48 años).

Participants frequently reported on the conflict they feel when having to opt for *tuteo* at times when they would use *voseo*, and how this would affect their sense of being and identity. Zentella (2007:27-28), summarizes this conflict in a powerful way by stating:

Guatemalans and other Central Americans with civil war experiences too painful to recall and feeling swamped in heavily Mexican communities suffer devoicing, ‘como hablar en silencio’ (Lavadenz, 2005). Many learn to become American by first becoming Mexican in the ways they speak in public, although they may honor their *voseo* verbs at home.

The data reviewed in this study certainly confirms the opposition between public and private domains of use.

4. Summary and Conclusions

Several conclusions can be gathered from the data of the present study. First, there is an apparent shift of *voseo* to *tuteo* from first to third generation. Particularly in the strict linguistic sense of using appropriate pronouns with appropriate verb forms as in the native use of the *voseo*. Second, there is a change in the use of the *voseo* within each generation and also distinctions between Honduran *voseo* and Salvadoran *voseo*. First generation has native *voseo* in its full morphologically appropriate forms, with little linguistic insecurity, and follow the sociolinguistic modes of *voseo* that have been established to date in Central American countries. Second generation limits itself to use of *voseo* at home, accommodates using *tuteo* when in a contact situation, particularly in public domains, and has a higher level of linguistic insecurity, which may or may not be related to linguistic attitudes toward *voseo*. However, although a shift is taking place in the frequency of use, second generation participants are still using *voseo* in the same strict linguistic sense as that used by the first generation. Third generation has reinterpreted the native use of the *voseo*. They show a lack of familiarity with the appropriate verb forms, as in the native use, but at the same time they are well aware that the pronoun, *vos*, is a distinguishing feature of the Spanish that their family speaks. They also know that when they use it they attract the attention of other Spanish speakers, and the use of the pronoun separates them from non-Salvadorans while at the same time identifying them with their own Salvadoran community group. It can be postulated that third generation participants are using the pronoun to establish solidarity in their group and also as a type of identity marker. In addition, in my informal observations of this group, I noticed that when they spoke English there was a high occurrence of the word *dude*.

For example:

1. Yeah/no Dude
2. Do you have any money, Dude?
3. Dude look at that.....

If one compares this use to the samples of *voseo* by the same group, a similar pattern emerges in both languages with *vos* and *dude*. A study with a discursive analytical approach would prove valuable with this group.

In terms of distinguishing uses of *voseo* by Hondurans and Salvadorans, the findings point to a three-tiered use of pronominal pronouns by Salvadorans and to a binary use of *vos* and *usted* by Hondurans. The only exceptions among Honduran participants are found in public domains where they show a tendency to accommodate *tú* into their speech, even when interacting with family members such as a spouse. At the time of this study, it is difficult to present comparative conclusions regarding Hondurans, given that no other study has examined pronominal use and linguistic attitudes by Hondurans living in the United States. As such, the present study represents an initial attempt to research the sociolinguistics of this population.

With respect to issues of identity and linguistic attitudes, there is little doubt that the *voseo* is closely tied to Honduran and Salvadoran identity across generations. More than that, it seems to be tied to Central American identity as a distinguishing feature that reinforces solidarity within the Central American group and marks a difference between others considered to be from outside the group (e.g., Mexican Americans). Despite the linguistic shift that takes place from first generation to third generation, the participants, regardless of age, connect the *voseo* to a very specific heritage.

As the Central American population continues to grow and integrate itself within Mexican-American established communities, it is important to examine in depth the sociolinguistic variables affecting inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic interactions. Given that the majority of this recently arrived population resides in

areas of Southern California (e.g., Los Angeles), this is a particularly fertile ground for such studies. It is hoped that the present study will be used as a basic comparative model to see if similar patterns are found in other areas, and specifically how these patterns change from generation to generation. As one participant stated, “En El Salvador, [el vos] ya adquirió el estatus de representar la identidad cultural del país”. As such, it is possible that this linguistic feature will continue to be a transnational feature that will be integrated into the many varieties of Spanish in the U.S. and continue to be seen as a definite identity marker for Central Americans.

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