

Equipo editorial

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Muchas gracias a nuestro equipo de voluntarios por su apoyo con la revisión por pares.

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¡Bienvenidos!

Es con gran entusiasmo que celebramos la aparición de este primer volumen de la Revista LCL, publicación destinada a promover los proyectos y resultados de investigación de los estudiantes de posgrado de español de la Universidad de Ottawa, quienes a su vez participan objetiva y profesionalmente en el proceso editorial. En esta primera publicación, se demuestran las dos grandes líneas de investigación del Programa de español: la vertiente lingüística, en la que aparecen dos investigaciones en torno a fenómenos de adquisición y a expresiones tabú en las variedades del español, respectivamente; y la vertiente literaria y cultural, en la que figura un artículo que trata sobre afropolitanismo e identidad, y un segundo que aborda cuestiones de género en un clásico de la literatura española. Cierra el volumen una valiosa entrevista al poeta Nilton Maa.

Expresamos nuestras sinceras felicitaciones a sus autores por su excelsa contribución en la producción de los estudios hispánicos en Canadá, y al equipo editorial la Revista LCL, cuya iniciativa y labor esmerada quedan reflejadas en la calidad de este volumen.

Prof. Luis Abanto

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This first issue of the graduate student journal *Revista de literatura, cultura y lingüística* is the result of the hard work and tenacity of our graduate student authors, our peer reviewers, and our editor. In this issue, we showcase work from the three broad research areas of our Spanish program: linguistics, culture, and literature. It is a diverse exploration of topics within the field of academic Hispanic studies. We are extremely proud to have a journal that offers graduate students the opportunity to explore their research interests, particularly in the context of the global pandemic, and to gain experience in the professional world. Congratulations to all students who have their work published in this inaugural volume and in particular an enormous congratulations and thank you to the editor, Kara Cybanski, on this accomplishment.

Prof. Elena Valenzuela

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Introducción

Hace más de diez años, nuestro departamento tuvo una revista que, con el tiempo, desapareció. Después de una pandemia, años de aprendizaje virtual, y cambios a escala global significantes, estamos felices de presentarles la primera edición de la ***Revista de literatura, cultura y lingüística***, la nueva publicación graduada estudiantil del programa de español uOttawa.

La primera sección, *Lingüística*, investiga la *a personal* en la adquisición del español como lengua no-nativa y presenta un análisis de las palabras tabúes en las variedades del español. En el primer artículo se analizan datos de corpus de estudiantes del español como segunda lengua y en el siguiente se analizan datos sacados en una encuesta sociolingüística.

La segunda sección, *Literatura*, analiza dos obras de distintas épocas: *Cada día es del ladrón* (2007) y “La gitanilla” (1613). El estudio de las obras que marcan nuestro corpus global no se limita a un periodo ni un lugar específico, si no que reúne las tradiciones literarias del mundo.

La última sección, *Cultura*, presenta una entrevista del poeta tusán Nilton Maa, un actor, gestor cultural, narrador y poeta que participa activamente en promover y difundir la literatura tusán y el movimiento de arte e inmigración en Estados Unidos.

Gracias a todxs para su implicación en la realización de esta revista. ¡Feliz lectura!

Kara Cybanski & Dra Elena Valenzuela

Lingüística

A Corpus Investigation on the Acquisition of Spanish Differential Object Marking by English Advanced Late L2 Learners of Spanish

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ABSTRACT

This project examines the acquisition of Spanish Differential Object Marking (DOM) by English second language (L2) advanced late learners of Spanish and whether it is factored by two variables: number of years studying Spanish and number of months spent in a Spanish-speaking country. The distribution of Spanish DOM relates to the interpretability of certain semantic features of the direct object, the subject and the predicate (Torrego 1998; Zagona 2002), however this study focuses solely on two interpretable features of the direct object: humanness and definiteness. Seventy English L2 advanced late learners of Spanish and seventy native Spanish controls were randomly selected from the CEDEL2 Corpus (Lozano 2009) and compared in terms of frequency of use and omission rates of DOM out of approximately 32,000 words and 20,000 words, respectively. Results reveal an omission rate of nearly fifty percent by the L1 English L2 Spanish group, showing difficulty in acquiring the two most basic semantic features governing Spanish DOM regardless of the number of years speaking the language or months spent in a Spanish-speaking country.

KEYWORDS

Differential Object Marking (DOM), second language acquisition, advanced learners, corpus linguistics, humanness, definiteness

1. Introduction

A worldwide sample of 744 languages conducted by Sinnemäki (2014) reports that 223 (30%) of those languages have some form of object case marking, and in 80% of those 223 languages, object case marking is restrictive (i.e., determined by any syntactic, semantic, discursive or pragmatic factor), which suggests that “languages tend to restrict object case marking in some way but the details of this variation vary across languages more than has so far been assumed” (284). Although object case marking in certain non-romance languages are mainly triggered by one semantic feature (animacy in Croatian and Russian; definiteness in Hebrew), it is constrained by both animacy and specificity in some romance languages such as Spanish and Romanian (Parodi & Avram 2018).

This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the acquisition of Differential Object Marking (DOM; Bossong 1991) by English advanced late second language (L2) learners of Spanish. The topic seems pertinent in the present day due to an imbalance in its use between native Spanish speakers and English L2 learners of Spanish. On the one hand, certain diachronic studies (e.g., García & van Putte 1995[1987]; Company Company 2002) have documented the evolution of the *a* marker among native speakers as well as in Spanish texts such as the Bible (von Heusinger & Kaiser 2007) and found an increasing use of DOM over time (although see exceptional varieties in §3). On the other hand, some L2 studies (e.g., Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis 2007; Guijarro-Fuentes 2012) have observed the difficulties of acquiring this linguistic property among English L2 learners of Spanish of different proficiency levels. Guijarro-Fuentes (2012) even adds that, in the case of English L2 learners of Spanish, DOM “may be vulnerable to fossilization” (718), an L2 acquisition process in which an ungrammatical linguistic feature remains a permanent option in the speaker’s L2 grammar. There have also been language contact studies on L2 acquisition between DOM and non-DOM languages (e.g., L1 English learners of L2 Spanish [Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis 2007]) as well as between two romance languages with overt marking (e.g., L1 Brazilian Portuguese learners of L2 Spanish [Nediger, Pires & Guijarro-Fuentes 2017]), in which neither L1 group revealed a clear advantage with respect to acquiring Spanish DOM (Parodi & Avram 2018). This vulnerability in DOM acquisition, however, is not limited to Spanish, as DOM in other languages such as Persian (Ciovârname & Avram 2013) have also shown to be problematic in adult L2 learning.

Given the increasing language contact in North America between Spanish and English as well as the ever-increasing number of English L2 learners of Spanish, it is important to investigate linguistic features of the L2 that are distinct from those of the native language. It seems therefore appropriate to examine the L2 acquisition of DOM, a feature in Spanish (and other languages) that does not exist in English. Both languages possess a structural accusative case, but Spanish also possesses an inherent case to mark the accusative or direct object (DO) of transitive verb constructions, whereas DOs in English are not marked. To that end, we investigate the acquisition of the Spanish DOM by English late L2 learners of Spanish at an advanced proficiency level.

DOM is a highly frequent property in Spanish (native speakers use it approximately every 400 words according to this study's findings), yet it remains relatively understudied in the field of L2 acquisition. In contrast, Spanish DOM has attracted many researchers to provide a complete theoretical account of its distribution and use among native speakers, which will be discussed in the next section. DOM has also been the object of study in the Spanish of heritage speakers (Montrul & Bowles 2009; Montrul & Sánchez-Walker 2013; Perpiñán & Moreno-Villamar 2013), English-Spanish bilingual speakers (Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis 2009) and Catalan-Spanish bilingual speakers (Perpiñán 2018).

Spanish DOM is a complex property that involves the syntax-semantics as well as the syntax-discourse/pragmatic interface, which are discussed in the next section. Given that it is not a property found in the English language, the main goal of this study is to see whether English advanced late L2 learners and speakers of Spanish acquire the fundamental features of DOM after having spoken and been exposed to the language for many years and/or after having spent time abroad in a Spanish-speaking country. For these late L2 learners, there are four possible outcomes when it comes to acquiring Spanish DOM as they develop their interlanguage until they reach a steady state of the L2 grammar: 1) They fully acquire the property and use it at a near-native capacity; 2) the L2 grammar shows signs of fossilization (Franceschina 2005; Han & Odlin 2005) or variability (Tsimplici 2005), in which there remains a permanent coexistence of, and competition between, two options (DOM in Spanish and no DOM in English) within the same parameter, as explained by the Competing Grammars Hypothesis (Kroch 1994; Yang 2002; Zobl & Liceras 2006); 3) the L2 grammar is characteristic of a partial or incomplete acquisition (Montrul 2008; Montrul & Bowles 2009) of the property's features (they acquire the [\pm human] feature but not the [\pm definite] aspect of Spanish DOM, for example); and 4) the L2 grammar at the steady state does

not include any features of the property, meaning there was no acquisition of any kind during the development stages of the interlanguage. The main objective of this paper is to determine which of these outcomes is more common among English late L2 learners of Spanish.

2. Distribution of DOM in Spanish

Spanish has a DO-marking system generally governed by two parameters: the properties of the DO and the lexical semantics of the transitive verb. As a general rule, a [+human] and [+specific] DO of a transitive verb is preceded by the marker *a*, whereas marking inanimate DOs is considered by many to be ungrammatical (Pensado 1995; Delbecque 1998; Torrego Salcedo 1999; Leonetti 2004; von Heusinger & Kaiser 2011, among others). This particle or marker, known as the ‘personal *a*’, can differentiate 1) the subject from the DO in a sentence where both share similar semantic features (e.g., *María golpeó a Marco* [María hit Marco]), particularly in sentence structures where they are not separated by the verb (e.g., *Golpeó María a Marco* [María hit Marco]), and 2) specific indefinite DOs from the non-specific indefinite DOs, as we shall see in this section.

Various researchers have attempted to explain the theory and distribution of DOM in Spanish (e.g., Weissenrieder 1990; Butt & Benjamin 1994; Torrego 1998; Zagona 2002; Aissen 2003; von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003; Leonetti 2004, 2008; Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2008). In this section, we look at the two main properties regulating DOM –humanness (animacy) and definiteness (specificity)–, some counterexamples and exceptions involving these features as well as other less-known properties related to DOM such as DO topicality and personification, verb telicity and affectedness and subject agentivity.

Fundamental features of DOM in Spanish

Certain DOs in Spanish are marked or preceded by the particle *a* (1a), which is homophonous to the locative preposition *a* (1b), the preposition *a* in periphrastic constructions such as the periphrastic future (1c), the dative preposition *a* of the indirect object (1d) and particle verbs (1e), which are always accompanied by the preposition *a* regardless of the semantic features of the DO NP.

(1) a. *Viste a mi hermana.*

[DOM]

‘You saw my sister.’

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| b. <i>Viajé a México.</i> | [Locative] |
| ‘I traveled to Mexico.’ | |
| c. <i>Queremos ir a la fiesta.</i> | [Periphrastic / Directional] |
| ‘We want to go to the party.’ | |
| d. <i>Esta casa pertenece a mis padres.</i> | [Dative] |
| ‘This house belongs to my parents.’ | |
| e. <i>Llamaron al departamento.</i> | [Particle verb] |
| ‘They called the department.’ | |

There is a set of properties that determines the conditions under which Spanish accusative objects must be differentially marked by the personal *a*, also known as ‘accusative *a*’. The first property relates to the definiteness/specificity of the DO. Along with humanness, definiteness is one of the two basic requirements for the use of DOM. Definiteness of the DOs is associated with the determiner system (Croft 1988:166) and DOs are more or less definite according to the type of determiner that precedes them. According to the Definiteness Scale (Croft 1988; Aissen 2003), DOs with definite articles, demonstratives, possessives or numeral adjectives are considered definite (i.e., personal pronoun, proper noun and definite DP in scale), whereas DOs accompanied by indefinite articles, quantifiers (*muchos* ‘many’, *poco* ‘few/little’, *algunos/unos* ‘some’, etc.) and generic nouns associated with human entities are considered indefinite (i.e., indefinite DP) by the Definiteness Scale.

Definiteness Scale: personal pronoun > proper noun > definite DP > Indefinite DP

Definiteness should not, however, be confused with the specificity feature of a DO. Although definiteness is an overt manner of expressing the DO’s specificity, the latter may be expressed in a covert manner and yet interpreted as being specific. DOs are considered specific if they refer to unique entities (i.e., that are not interchangeable with others), as illustrated in (2a). In this example, *esa mujer* ‘that woman’ designates a specific individual and not any woman. In (2b) and (2c) however, the indefinite article *una* ‘a’ makes this an example of indefinite DP, but the presence of DOM turns the non-specific indefinite DP in (c) into a specific indefinite DP in (b).

(2) a. *Busco a esa mujer.*

‘I am looking for that (definite, specific) woman.’

b. *Busco a una mujer.*

‘I am looking for a (non-definite, specific) woman.’

c. *Busco una mujer.*

‘I am looking for a (non-definite, non-specific) woman.’

The fact that indefinite DOs can be interpreted as either specific or non-specific makes DOM processing more difficult for speakers than the explicitly used (in)definite feature, which is the reason why this study solely focuses on [+human, +definite] featured DOs and not [+human, +specific] ones.

The second property relates to the animacy of the DO. Animacy is represented by a scale of three different values (von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003):

Animacy Scale: Human > Animate > Inanimate

Although there is consensus in regards to DO animacy and definiteness/specificity as being the two main features governing DOM in Spanish, there is less agreement on which of the two represents the main property that conditions its use. Some have argued in favor of DO humanness/animacy (Leonetti 2004, 2008; Rodríguez-Mondoñedo, 2008) while others have defended the definiteness/specificity of the DO (Torrego 1998; Laca 2006). Some studies have included acceptability judgment tasks in which both properties are included as conditions in the marking or unmarking of DOs (Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis 2007; Guijarro-Fuentes 2012), while others have only looked at the DO’s [±human] feature in production tasks (Montrul & Bowles 2009; Montrul & Sánchez-Walker 2013; Chamorro et al. 2016).

Counterexamples, exceptions, optionality and other properties of Spanish DOM

In Spanish, DOM is obligatory for accusative objects that are [+definite, +human], as illustrated in (3a). However, we also find cases of optional DOM in which the speaker has the option of marking or leaving unmarked the DO without changing the meaning of the sentence. Animals for example, which are [-human] but [+animate] beings, may be personified or humanized

depending on the context or emotional attachment (Butt & Benjamin 1994:312; Zagona 2002:13). In (3b), the speaker has the option of marking the DO *mis perros* ‘my dogs’. Inanimate DOs such as *sierras* ‘mountains’ in (3c) and *maíz* ‘corn’ in (3d) should therefore not be differentially marked, however they can be marked in certain varieties of Spanish, such as Mexican Spanish (Company 2002; examples provided by von Heusinger & Kaiser 2005: 35).

(3) a. *Ayer visité a mis abuelos.*

**Ayer visité _ mis abuelos.*

‘Yesterday I visited my grandparents.’

b. *Quiero ver (a) mis perros.*

‘I want to see my dogs.’

c. *Vio (a) las sierras.*

‘He/She saw the mountains.’

d. *Cosecharon al/el maíz.*

‘They harvested the corn.’

In other words, DOM is required when it is [+specific] and assigned human features whereas it is not required when it is not assigned such features by the speaker. Therefore, Spanish DOM is not limited to animacy and definiteness/specificity of the accusative object.

We find other exceptions to the rule of [+human, +definite] DO where DOM is required, such as non-specific negative quantifiers (Leonetti 2008), as in (4a), and sentences in which both the subject and the object are inanimate (Zubizarreta 1994; Zagona 2002), as in (4b), so as to avoid ambiguity in the interpretation of the sentence. Some linguists have also suggested other factors involved in DOM: Telicity of the predicate (Torrego 1998), where DOM is used following a [+telic] verb (i.e., of realization or accomplishment) to mark an [+animate] DO that need not be definite nor specific, as in (4c), and optional when the verb is [-telic], as in (4d); agentivity (Torrego 1998), which states that the DO is marked when the subject of the sentence is [+agentive], as in (4e), and left unmarked when [-agentive], as in (4f); and finally, affectedness of the predicate (Torrego 1998; von Heusinger & Kaiser 2011), where an [+animate] direct object is marked if affected by the verb either by a change of physical and/or psychological state or by a change of location, as in (4g), and optionally marked when [-affected], as in (4h).

- (4) a. *No vi **a** nadie.*
 ‘I did not see anyone.’
- b. *La calma precede **a** la tormenta.*
 ‘The calm precedes the storm.’
- c. *La policía encarceló **a** varios ladrones.*
 ‘The police imprisoned several thieves.’
- d. *La policía escondió (**a**) varios ladrones.*
 ‘The police hid several thieves.’
- e. *El herido reclamaba **a** un médico.*
 ‘The wounded man was calling for a doctor.’
- f. *La situación reclamaba ***a** un médico.*
 ‘The situation called for a doctor.’
- g. *El guardia mató **a** un prisionero.*
 ‘The guard killed a prisoner.’
- h. *El guardia vió (**a**) un prisionero.*
 ‘The guard saw a prisoner.’

Table 1 provides a list of properties related to the use or optional use of DOM according to three sources: Butt & Benjamin (1994), Torrego (1998) and Zagona (2002). There is an agreement between the authors on three occasions: differentially marked when the DO is [+human, +specific] and when the subject is [+agentive] with a [+human] DO, and optionally marked when the DO is an animal or [+animate]. However, similar to the debate mentioned above between animacy and specificity as the main property governing DOM, there does not seem to be a consensus on when a DO should or should not be marked in any other event.

Table 1. Subject, verb and object properties governing the use of DOM as per three different sources (a = DOM, (a) = optional; ? = no mention).

	Butt & Benjamin (1994)	Torrego (1998)	Zagona (2002)
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[+human], [+specific] DO	a	a	a
Animal / [+animate] DO	(a)	(a)	(a)
[+agentive] Subject, [+human] DO	a	a	a
[+affected] DO	?	a	?
[-affected] DO	?	(a)	?
[+telic] verb, [+animate] DO	?	a	?
[-telic] verb, [+animate] DO	?	(a)	?
Personification	a	?	a

We also find cases where optional marking is not entirely clear. According to Laguna Campos (2004: 530), if the verb’s transitivity requires both a DO and an indirect object (IO) as complements to complete its semantic meaning, and the DO is [+animate], the DO is “usually” unmarked in order to avoid repetition, as in (5). In this example, the ditransitive verb *entregar* ‘to deliver’ needs two internal arguments. The first argument *los niños* ‘the children’, which is the DO of the verb, identifies what or whom is being delivered. The second argument *sus padres* ‘their parents’, the IO and recipient of the object, determines to what or whom the object is being delivered. Since marking IOs is mandatory, DOM in a ditransitive structure is not necessary.

(5) *Entregaron (a) los niños a sus padres.*

‘They delivered the children to their parents’

The presence of marker *a* is not always required with [+human, +definite] DOs. This apparent optionality is regulated by the intricate system that marks certain DOs in Spanish. Although the main factor determining DOM is the referential status of the DO (Bossong 1991; Aissen 2003), there are many constraints in regards to its use, some of which are not entirely clear in the literature (Torrego 1998; Zagona 2002; Leonetti 2004). For the purpose of this study, we will limit our analysis to transitive verb constructions with [+human, +definite] DOs.

3. Previous Studies

This section provides a summary of three different categories of previous studies on the acquisition and variation of DOM. The first category is represented by the lone study written on DOM acquisition by monolingual Spanish children under three years of age (Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2008), the second category includes five investigations on the variation in the use of DOM by speakers of different Spanish dialects (Lunn 2002; Alfaraz 2011; Balasch 2011; Stroobant, n.d.; Hoff 2018) and the third and final category presents three studies on the acquisition of DOM by English L2 speakers of Spanish (Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis 2007, 2009; Guijarro-Fuentes 2012).

Acquisition of DOM by L1 Spanish children

Rodríguez-Mondoñedo (2008) observed the spontaneous production of four L1 Spanish children (age range 0;9-3;0) from the longitudinal databases available in CHILDES (MacWhinney 2000). He examined syntactic structures with mandatory DOM (i.e., human pronoun, human proper noun, animate non-human pronoun, human definite, animate non-human proper noun and human specific non-definite) and mandatory non-marking (i.e., human non-specific, inanimate definite, animate non-specific, inanimate specific non-definite and inanimate non-specific). The study's findings showed that these four children mastered DOM production before the age of 3 (only 17 errors out of a total of 990 objects; 9 errors of omission and 8 of commission). This constitutes an accuracy rate of 98.38% before reaching three years of age. Rodríguez-Mondoñedo also analysed the recordings of two additional children from two databases (Romero and Serra/Sole databases, respectively). No errors were found in these two additional databases, although this may be because they are considerably smaller and consequently the number of objects is also smaller than in the other four databases. Although the number of participants in this study was low (as is the case in most child language studies of longitudinal corpora), Rodríguez-Mondoñedo's results demonstrate that L1 Spanish children master some of the features (i.e., specificity and animacy) which constraint the distribution of personal *a* with direct objects almost error free and at a young age.

DOM in different varieties of Spanish

A few studies have been conducted on different dialects of Caribbean Spanish. While observing the Dominican dialect, Lunn (2002) discovered an absence of accusative object marking in expected *a*-marked contexts. The author argued that this divergence from the norm in the use of DOM was a sign of change and variable processes, which was later substantiated by Bullock & Toribio's (2009) study of rural Dominican Spanish in the Cibao region. In an effort to replicate Lunn's findings in another Caribbean dialect, Alfaraz (2011) wanted to see if a similar change was occurring in the use of DOM in Cuban Spanish. Results from a real-time comparison of two groups of adult speakers from the 1960s and 1990s revealed "differences at the two time periods and a tendency toward absence of the marker in the 1990s" (229), which the author suggested was evidence that this decreasing use of DOM was a change in progress in the Cuban dialect.

Balasch (2011) used the variationist perspective (Labov, 1969) to study the different contexts in which the variation between marked and unmarked DOs is possible based on a sample of 50,000 words from *Corpus de Mérida*, Venezuela (Domínguez & Mora 1995) and 79,000 from *Corpus del habla culta de Madrid*, Spain (Esgueva & Cantarero 1981). She wondered if various factors such as DO definiteness, specificity, topicality and grammatical number influencing the presence or absence of DOM was identical in Mérida (Venezuela) and Madrid (Spain), and empirical results showed that while contextual conditioning of DOM is identical between both regions, overall DOs are marked significantly more in Madrid. She also found that "there is a broad domain in vernacular oral Spanish in which *a*+DO and \emptyset +DO are used interchangeably" (113). This was illustrated by examples (6) and (7) extracted from the corpora.

(6) a. *Conocí a la que es mi esposa ahora antes de empezar la visita médica.*

'I met my current wife before I started working as a medical visitor.'

b. [usted] *no llegó... a conocer... \emptyset ese... teniente L. que era de la radio.*

'you did not get to meet that lieutenant L. who was part of the radio station staff.'

(7) a. *ya tengo que estar esperando al autobús que, por cierto, tarda un montón.*

'I already have to be waiting for the bus which, by the way, takes a while to arrive.'

b. *este año la llevé a ver \emptyset los monumentos en la iglesia.*

'this year I took her to see the monuments in the church.'

Stroobant (n.d.) compared the use of DOM in European and Mexican Spanish. Given that the marking of inanimate non-human DOs in American Spanish varieties was previously signalled by numerous authors (e.g., Company 2002; von Heusinger & Kaiser 2005; García García 2007), Stroobant predicted more instances of DOM with inanimate DOs in Mexican Spanish than in European Spanish. She performed a synchronic investigation using the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA) and extracted 200 relevant examples for analysis. The prediction was not borne out, however, as no significant difference was found in the number of DOM commissions with inanimate DOs between European and Mexican Spanish speakers, and the author mentions the scarcity of the data as a possible explanation. That being said, she did find cases of DOM that argue against more traditional approaches which focus on semantic properties of the DO and the predicate; that animacy and definiteness/specificity of the DO are not exclusive parameters for DOM and that Delbecque's (2002) alternative constructional approach. Delbecque argues for two transitive frames when the direct object is marked rather than one construal with two realizations (i.e., the unidirectional subject/actor and object/goal relation in the unmarked transitive construal becomes a bidirectional one in which both the subject and object both carry out the action, as the object of the sentence fulfils both Goal and Attributor thematic roles at the same time and the subject acts as both thematic roles Actor and Carrier simultaneously). This provides a more complete explanation of the use of DOM with inanimate DOs. Delbecque (2002:92) used the following example to differentiate the bidirectional chain of causality (8b) from the unidirectional Actor-Goal relationship (8a) between the sentence subject and object.

- (8) a. *Pedro* (Actor) *vio de repente* Ø *la motocicleta* (Goal) *y se decidió a comprarla*.
 b. *Pedro* (Actor+Carrier) *vio de repente a la motocicleta* (Goal+Attributor) *y se decidió a comprarla*.
 'Pedro suddenly saw the motorcycle and decided to buy it.'

It is worth noting here that Stroobant's study focused on the marking of inanimate DOs, whereas this study looked solely at [+human, +definite] accusative NPs.

Finally, Hoff (2018) examined different discursive and syntactic factors conditioning DOM of inanimate DOs in Argentinian Spanish. He used an online questionnaire that included 16 contextualized discourse items recorded by native speakers of the Argentinian variety. Using a 5-

point Likert scale, 140 Argentinian Spanish speakers judged the acceptability of the 16 items. The conditions included definiteness, (di)transitive constructions and topicality (i.e., pre-/post-verbal position and referential distance). Hoff's findings showed that in 10 of the 16 discourse items, participant ratings yielded no significant difference between marked and unmarked DOs. Hoff argued that this constituted evidence that these 140 participants from Argentina were, to an extent, uninfluenced by DOM.

While the variety of Spanish DOM use observed in these studies yielded interesting data, they remain beyond the scope of the current project. However, they are worth mentioning because although we know all the subjects of this study have been learning and acquiring Spanish, and many among them have spent time in a Spanish speaking country, we have no knowledge of the Spanish variety that has been used as exposure in the homeland (i.e., the variety or varieties used by the instructor(s), family members or friends) nor the country in which they have stayed. It is therefore possible that some participants were exposed to a Spanish dialect in which the *a* marker was sometimes absent (Caribbean and Cuban dialects) or to a variety in which DO marking and non-marking are used interchangeably (Venezuelan dialect), or even to a variety in which inanimate DO marking is a frequent occurrence (Argentinian and other American Spanish dialects). This fact will be mentioned again in the discussion section of this paper to explain in part the lack of DO marking found in the results section.

Acquisition of DOM by English L2 speakers of Spanish

In this final subsection, we look at four studies that have shown significant differences in the acquisition of DOM between native speakers and late (adult/teenage) English L2 speakers of Spanish.

In 2007, Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis observed the acquisition of Spanish DOM by a group of 22 English L2 learners of Spanish of different levels of proficiency and compared them with a Spanish control group of 14 monolinguals. The authors used a Context-Matching Acceptability Judgment Task, which contained six conditions that combined direct object, subject and verb features ([+animate, +specific DO], [-animate, +/-specific DO], [+animate, -specific DO], [stative or activity verb, +human subject], [stative or activity verb, -human subject] and [accomplishment verb, +/-human subject]). Participants were asked to read sentences such as (9a)

and (9b) preceded by short background stories, which provided the "appropriate context that made the experimental sentences acceptable or not acceptable" (75).

- (9) a. *Pedro no tiene tiempo para hacer las tareas de la casa, pues trabaja más de 40 horas a la semana. Un día, Pedro le pregunta a su madre sobre su mujer de la limpieza: Busco tu mujer de la limpieza, ¿sabes dónde Luisa vive ahora?* (not acceptable)

'Pedro does not have time to do the housework because he works more than 40 hours per week. One day, Pedro asks his mother about her cleaner.

I'm looking for your cleaner. Do you know where Luisa lives?'

- b. *Theo está de vacaciones en el Canadá. Me escribe un mensaje diciéndome lo que hizo a penas llegó. Dice: Ayer visité el Museo de Arte Contemporáneo.* (acceptable)

'Theo is on holiday in Canada. He wrote a text message telling me what he did when he arrived. He said: Yesterday I visited the Contemporary Art Museum.'

Results revealed significant differences between native speakers and L2 learners regardless of proficiency, as well as more errors of omission than commission by the L2 learners. In other words, these L2 Spanish learners show difficulty in acquiring structures involving the syntax-semantics and syntax-discourse interface, making it developmentally unstable and vulnerable to language attrition. That being said, some of the speakers with advanced proficiency showed sensitivity to less complex conditions, providing evidence that interface phenomena is acquirable. Given the multiple levels of complexity of the distribution of Spanish DOM, these results support the claim that external interfaces –syntax-discourse in the case of the DO's referentiality– are more problematic to acquire even at advanced stages of L2 development than the animacy feature located between syntax and semantics, an internal interface (White 2008; Sorace & Serratrice 2009).

Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis (2009) looked at whether internal (typological similarity) and external factors (language contact and input type) affect interface vulnerability in the acquisition of DOM by adult late bilinguals. They compared 18 Catalan-Spanish bilinguals who used Spanish and were exposed to naturalistic input in both languages daily, with 16 English-Spanish bilinguals who had acquired Spanish in a classroom setting and received limited Spanish input given that it was a minority language in the linguistic environment. The authors predicted that both groups

should acquire DOM in Spanish with the same level of difficulty as Catalan and English do not possess inherent case, but that the Catalan-Spanish bilingual speakers might perform better than their English-Spanish bilingual counterparts due to more typological similarity and language contact (exposure) between Catalan and Spanish, and a more natural acquisition setting. Participants performed an Elicited Production Completion task that included the same six conditions mentioned above in which a blank was to be either filled with object marker ‘a’ or left blank. An example of one of the experimental items is seen in (10).

(10) *Juan persigue ___ los presos que se han fugado de la cárcel.*

‘Juan chases ___ the prisoners that have run away from the prison.’

The results showed more evidence to support the lack of DOM acquisition in L2 learners and adult bilinguals. They also concluded that factors such as language setting and type of exposure could be relevant in the acquisition of Spanish DOM.

Guijarro-Fuentes (2012) later analysed DOM acquisition to explore the predictions of the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis (Lardiere 2008, 2009). Considering the lack of mapping of interpretable features corresponding to Spanish DOM in the Determiner Phrase in English, the author argued that this redeployment of the DO’s interpretable features may be problematic to English L2 speakers of Spanish, and consequently may prolong and/or complicate the acquisition process. Based on the results of a sentence-level Completion and Acceptability Judgment Task (like the ones previously mentioned) of 49 English L2 learners of Spanish in a classroom setting of three different proficiency levels (advanced, high intermediate and low intermediate), Guijarro-Fuentes’ research demonstrates that some interpretable features are attainable (i.e., animacy and specificity) for advanced speakers, while other involved features related to the predicate (i.e., accomplishment/achievement and stative/activity verbs) and the subject (i.e., [\pm human]) may be less accessible and subject to developmental processes.

To summarize, contrary to the native Spanish-speaking children who seem to master DOM with [+animate, +specific] DO DPs before the age of three (Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2008), these studies by Guijarro-Fuentes et al. show that L2 Spanish learners and adult English-Spanish bilinguals display difficulty in acquiring DOM in Spanish.

4. Second Language Acquisition Hypotheses

In this section, we discuss three hypotheses on second language acquisition that apply to English adult L2 learners of Spanish. These are the Interface Hypothesis (Tsimplici & Sorace 2006; Sorace 2011), the Interpretability Hypothesis (Tsimplici & Dimitrakopoulou 2007) and the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis (FRH; Lardiere 2008, 2009; Slabakova 2009).

The Interface Hypothesis was first proposed by Tsimplici & Sorace (2006) as a new indicator of potential crosslinguistic influence. The authors looked at the locus of certain L2 properties in order to observe the difficulty of acquiring such properties and distinguished external interfaces (where the syntax interfaces with other cognitive domains) from the internal ones (where only formal properties of the grammar are implicated). They found that near-native L2 speakers, child bilinguals and heritage speakers alike present “protracted indeterminacy” (Perpiñán 2018:2) in L2 structures that involve an external interface such as syntax-semantics and syntax-pragmatics/discourse (see examples in Tsimplici & Sorace 2006; Valenzuela 2006; Sorace & Filiaci 2006; Sorace & Serratrice 2009), but that L2 structures requiring purely syntactic processing remain fairly stable. According to this hypothesis, Spanish DOM, a property at the syntax-semantics (for the [\pm human] animacy feature) and syntax-pragmatics (for the [\pm definite] referentiality feature) is therefore considered an unstable property that is vulnerable to fossilization when learned and acquired by English late L2 learners of Spanish.

Moving on to Tsimplici & Dimitrakopoulou’s Interpretability Hypothesis, the authors state that uninterpretable features of the L2 are inaccessible to late L2 learners as they are susceptible to critical period constraints, but that interpretable features “are accessible to the L2 learner, even if L2 differs from the native language” (Tsimplici & Dimitrakopoulou 2007: 224). English late L2 learners of Spanish should therefore be able to acquire the target property similarly to native speakers given that the same uninterpretable feature –structural case– is selected in both English and Spanish, and that interpretable features such as [\pm humanness] and [\pm definiteness] are, according to this hypothesis, accessible to the L2 learners, “moving from structural case marking corresponding to English to the inherent case marking in Spanish” (Guijarro-Fuentes 2012: 705).

Finally, Lardiere’s Feature Reassembly Hypothesis (FRH) also projects Spanish DOM to be an acquirable property for English late L2 learners of Spanish since English also possesses the relevant semantic features. In Spanish grammar, we have seen that DOM represents positive semantic values like [+human] and [+definite] in the functional projections of direct object DPs.

In English grammar, there are also different values for animacy between pronouns like ‘he/she’ (human/animate) and ‘it’ (inanimate) and between determiners ‘the’ (definite) and ‘a’ (indefinite). As these two interpretable semantic features involved in DOM are also present in English, albeit used in a different way (i.e., without phonological realization in English), DOM should be an acquirable linguistic property of Spanish grammar by L2 learners. That being said, English L2 learners need to tease apart these relevant semantic features from the way they are used in the L1 and the L2, and reassemble them from the way they are conditioned and (not) realized in English to the way they are conditioned and realized through DOM in Spanish.

When considering these three hypotheses, there is an explanation for whether or not English advanced late L2 learners of Spanish acquire Spanish DOM. If Tsimplici & Sorace’s Interface Hypothesis is supported by the data, it is then expected that these late learners show signs of vulnerability to fossilization following the difficulty in acquiring a property at the syntax-semantics and syntax-pragmatics interfaces. On the other hand, near-native use of Spanish DOM by English advanced late L2 learners of Spanish would support Tsimplici & Dimitrakopoulou’s Interpretability Hypothesis as well as Lardiere’s Feature Reassembly Hypothesis. It is also true that if the learners do not demonstrate native-like use of DOM in the corpora data, support is found for the FRH especially given that interpretation is not tested herein. These hypotheses however do not make explicit claims about type (naturalistic vs formal) nor quantity of input. The following section outlines the specific context of the present study and extend the hypotheses to make predictions for this new data set.

5. Present Study

This is a corpus-based research project on the acquisition of DOM by English advanced late L2 learners of Spanish. The main objectives of this study are guided by the following three research questions:

1. Do English advanced late L2 speakers of Spanish show similar frequency of use and omission rates of DOM with [+human, +definite] DOs as native Spanish speakers?

As previously mentioned in §3, if Tsimplici & Sorace’s Interface Hypothesis applies in this case, it is then expected that these late learners show signs of vulnerability to fossilization after acquiring with difficulty a property at both the syntax-semantics and syntax-discourse interfaces. On the other hand, near-native use of Spanish DOM by English advanced late L2 learners of Spanish

would mean that these learners were able to reassemble from English to Spanish interpretable features such as humanness and definiteness in order to mark certain DOs, which in turn would support Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou's Interpretability Hypothesis as well as Lardiere's Feature Reassembly Hypothesis.

2. Does the number of years learning and speaking Spanish have a significant effect on the rates of frequency of use and omission rates of DOM among English advanced late L2 speakers of Spanish?
3. Does the number of months spent in a Spanish-speaking country have a significant effect on frequency of use and omission rates of DOM among English advanced late L2 speakers of Spanish?

For these two variables in question (i.e., years learning/speaking Spanish and months spent in a Spanish-speaking country), it is expected that both be positively correlated with frequency of use of DOM and negatively correlated with DOM omission rates: The more time L2 Spanish speakers spend learning and using the language and with more exposure to naturalistic input (frequency of use among native speakers is roughly once every 400 words whereas omission almost never occurs), the more they become familiar with this commonly used DP structure in Spanish and incorporate it in their L2 grammar.

These questions have led to the present, original study on the acquisition of DOM by English L2 advanced speakers of Spanish as, to the author's knowledge, no corpus-based research on DOM acquisition by adult English L2 learners of Spanish has been published. Whereas Guijarro-Fuentes et al's previously mentioned studies included experimental items from a Completion or Acceptability Judgment Task in their methodology, the present study examined written production data to observe the use of Spanish DOM by L2 speakers. Finally, new variables such as number of years learning/using Spanish and months spent in a Spanish-speaking country were used to shed more light on DOM acquisition and its possible vulnerability to fossilization.

6. Methodology

Data Source

The *Corpus Escrito del Español como L2* (L2 Spanish Written Corpus; Lozano 2009, 2020; Lozano & Mendikoetxea 2013) follows the Open Data Science philosophy in that it is a publicly available and freely downloadable corpus. It is licensed under a Creative Commons license in

Spain and has been publicly funded over the past fifteen years by several research project grants from the Spanish government. The project is directed by Cristóbal Lozano of the University of Granada (Spain) and totals over 1,100,000 words by approximately 4,400 participants. A quarter of all participants are native Spanish speakers while the rest are L2 learners of Spanish with different first languages (English, German, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, Russian, Japanese, Chinese or Arabic). The corpus contains mostly written language and some spoken language in the form of an interview. Advanced search filters include ‘L1’, ‘Proficiency’ (both test score and self-assessed), ‘Age of exposure to Spanish’, ‘Years learning Spanish’ and ‘Months abroad’ (in a Spanish-speaking country).

The corpus has some drawbacks and limitations. For any L2 learner of Spanish, there is no knowledge of gender, nationality, the Spanish acquisition or learning setting (i.e., whether Spanish was learned implicitly or explicitly, formally or informally, etc.) or, for those who stayed abroad, in which Spanish-speaking country they stayed. The data presented in the results section therefore assumes a standard distribution of DOM. Lastly, each participant had to write a text in Spanish of around 500 words on one theme from the following list: ‘Region where you live’, ‘Famous person’, ‘Film’, ‘Last year holidays’, ‘Future plans’, ‘Recent trip’, ‘An experience’, ‘Terrorism’, ‘Anti-smoking law’, ‘Gay couples’, ‘Marijuana legalization’ and ‘Immigration’. As some of these themes yielded more DOM tokens than others, both the L1 Spanish and the L2 Spanish groups in this study had matching numbers for each theme, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of themes among the L2Spanish and L1Spanish speaker groups.

	L2 Spanish learners	L1 Spanish
1. Region where you live	1	1
2. Famous person	3	3
3. Film	22	22
4. Last year holidays	4	4
5. Future plans	9	9
6. Recent trip	3	3
7. An experience	6	6
8. Terrorism	1	1

9. Anti-smoking law	1	1
10. Gay couples	16	16
11. Marijuana legalization	1	1
12. Immigration	3	3

Participants

At the time of writing, the corpus included a total 1,931 English L2 learners of Spanish, of which 426 corresponded with the following L2 language background profile: lower/upper advanced proficiency, 80% score or higher on the Spanish placement test, self-assessed proficiency of four or more out of six, age at onset of learning Spanish between ten and twenty (to avoid the inclusion of simultaneous bilinguals or early sequential bilinguals), and two or more years learning Spanish. Of those 426, seventy participants were randomly selected, yielding a total of 31,817 words (~450 per participant) for data analysis. This group, which we will refer to as ‘L2SP’, had an average age of 23.6 (SD=10.14, range=17;66), an average proficiency score of 87.8% (SD=3.73, range=83.7;95.3), an average of 6.4 years learning Spanish (SD=3.74, range=2;23) and an average age of exposure to Spanish of 13.9 (SD=2.79, range=6;20). Twenty-nine of the seventy participants (41%) had not spent any time abroad, twenty-five (36%) had spent between one and six months, twelve (17%) between six months and a year, and four (6%) had spent more than a year in a Spanish-speaking country.

The native Spanish-speaking control group, which we will refer to as ‘L1SP’, also consisted of seventy randomly selected participants out of 1,281 (although not the same degree of randomness as the L2SP group since the former had to match the latter in terms of theme distribution) who wrote a total of 19,619 words (~280 per participant). This group has an average age of 22.1 (SD=5.43, range=15;32) and are from different countries: Spain (37), Mexico (25), Argentina (4), Venezuela (2), Ecuador (1) and Dominican Republic (1).

Coding and exclusion protocol

Written texts by all 140 participants (70 in each group) were read by the author. The objects considered were accusative in the verb-object word order. The generalization used to determine whether a particular accusative object was target- or non-target-like follows the baseline distribution of DOM in Spanish as stated in (11).

(11) Spanish displays marked objects when the direct object is both [+human] and [+definite].

Cases that could have been considered optional (e.g., [-human], [+animate] and [+definite]) were therefore not included in the analysis.

Each accusative object was added in one of two categories: All marked [+human, +definite] accusative objects were considered grammatical tokens and cases of frequency of use (12a), whereas all unmarked [+human, +definite] accusative objects were considered ungrammatical tokens and computed as cases of omission (12b). Both marker forms *a* and *al* (the contraction of *a* and *el* in Spanish) were included, as in (12c-d).

(12) a. *El viaje fue mi divertido y conocimos a Mickey Mouse.*

[en_wr_37_18_7_7_SMH]

'The trip was very fun and we met Mickey Mouse.'

b. **No podía esperar a conocer _ Mickey Mouse.* [en_wr_37_18_7_7_SMH]

'I could not wait to meet Mickey Mouse.'

c. *El anciano, bastante molesto, acoge al muchacho.* [es_wr_32_3_AI]

d. *El anciano, bastante molesto, acoge a los muchachos.*

'The old man, quite annoyed, welcomes the boy/boys.'

Excluded from the analysis were cases of dative *a* (e.g., *pertenecer a* 'to belong to', *contribuir a* 'to contribute to', *aplicar a* 'to apply to', *enfrentarse a* 'to confront'), locative *a* (e.g., *ir a* 'to go to', *llevar a* 'to take to', *disparar a* 'to shoot at', *viajar a* 'to travel to') and particle verbs (*ayudar a* 'to help', *beneficiar a* 'to benefit', *llamar a* 'to call', *saludar a* 'to greet/salute'). Accusative objects in the form of bare nouns, as in (13), were also excluded.

(13) *Creo que los gays tienen el mismo derecho que cualquier pareja para casarse y adoptar (a*) niños.* [es_wr_28_10_EN]

'I believe gays have the same right as any couple to marry and adopt children.'

Lastly, certain verbs in Spanish like *tener* ‘to have’ and *querer* ‘to want’ represent particular cases. Verbs *querer* ‘to want’ and *querer a* ‘to love/to care for’ carry different meanings, and when they precede a [+human, +specific] direct object, it is unclear which of the two meanings is used, as in (14a). Therefore, all accusative objects preceded by the verb *querer (a)* were excluded. Existential verbs such as *tener* are rarely followed by DOM (although see Pensado, 1995: 35 for an example) unless it conjugated in a past tense and expresses the meaning ‘to give birth to’, as in (14b), or the accusative object is followed by a relative clause that adds to the specificity of the object, as in (14c), in which case DOM is optional. Also worth mentioning is the fact that *tener* can be accompanied by a non-referential direct object as being part of a complex predicate rather than an argument (Cano Aguilar 1981; Thompson 1997; Traugott 1999), as in (14d). Since the main interest of this study is to observe the acquisition of DOM by English L2 learners of Spanish based on [+human, +definite] semantic features of the direct object, all accusative objects preceded by the verb *tener* were excluded.

(14) a. *Ella quiere a ese hombre.*

‘She wants/loves/cares for that man.’

b. *Tuve a mi bebé y no puedo bajar de peso.*

**Tuve _ mi bebé y no puedo bajar de peso.*

‘I gave birth to my baby and I cannot lose weight.’

c. *Tener (a) una persona que me quiera y poder estar con él por el resto de mi vida sería lo máximo.* [es_wr_15_5_XM]

‘Having someone who loves me and being able to be with him for the rest of my life would be the best.’

d. *Tener novia es un poco esclavizarse y limitar la actividad de uno.* [Balasch, 2011: 115]

**Tener a novia es un poco esclavizarse y limitar la actividad de uno.*

‘To have a girlfriend is time consuming and it limits the activities one usually does.’

7. Results

We found a total of 162 contexts of obligatory DO marking, as shown under columns 'DOM' and 'No DOM' in Table 3. Out of these contexts, 53 were marked and 56 were left unmarked by the L2SP group, while 49 were marked and 4 unmarked by the L1SP group. The L2SP group marked a [+human, +definite] DO 53 times in nearly 32,000 words, yielding a production rate of DOM approximately every 600 words. The L1SP group marked a [+human, +definite] DO 49 times in over 19,500 words (~ every 400 words). In approximately 1,200 words, the L2SP group would use DOM twice whereas the L1SP speakers would mark the DO three times, however this difference was not significant enough to reject the null hypothesis.

In the omission rates is where we find the discrepancy between the two groups of speakers. For the L2SP group, only 48.6% of the [+human, +definite] DOs were marked, yielding an omission rate of 51.4%. In other words, approximately one out of two [+human, +definite] DOs is left unmarked. The L1SP group, on the other hand, marked 92.5% of their DOs, leaving an omission rate of only 7.5%. In this case, the difference was significant enough to reject the null hypothesis.

A first independent-samples t-test was conducted to see if the L2SP speakers and the L1SP speakers differed on omission rates and frequency of use of DOM. An examination of the data indicated that these are normally distributed –some data were skewed and contained outliers– however variances were similar (frequency of use: 1.16, omission: 1.39) between both groups. For the omission rates test (L2SP mean = .8, sd = 1.58, N = 70; L1SP mean = .06, sd = .23, N = 70), the 95% CI for the difference in means is .38, 1.12 ($t = 3.9$, $p = <.001$, $df = 138$). The null hypothesis that the true difference in omission rate means was zero is rejected. For the frequency of use test (L2SP mean = .76, sd = 1.17, N = 70; L1SP mean = .7, sd = .98, N = 70), the 95% CI for the difference in means is -.31, .42 ($t = .31$, $p = .76$, $df = 138$). The null hypothesis that the true difference in frequency of use means was zero could not be rejected.

Table 3. Distribution of DOM among L2SP and L1SP speakers.

Group	Total Words	DOM	No DOM
L2SP	31817	53	56

A final independent-samples t-test was conducted to see if L2SP speakers who had spent no time abroad and those who had spent four or more months in a Spanish-speaking country differed on omission rates and frequency of use of DOM. For the omission rates test (0 months group mean = 1.07, sd = 2.14, N = 29; 4+ months group mean = .54, sd = .81, N = 26), the 95% CI for the difference in means is -.36, 1.42 ($t = 1.19, p = .239, df = 53$), thereby showing no significant difference in means between those who had spent time abroad and those who had not. For the frequency of use test (0 months group mean = .59, sd = 1.09, N = 29; 4+ months group mean = 1, sd = 1.3, N = 26), the 95% CI for the difference in means is -1.06, .23 ($t = -1.29, p = .203, df = 53$), again showing no significant difference between the two groups.

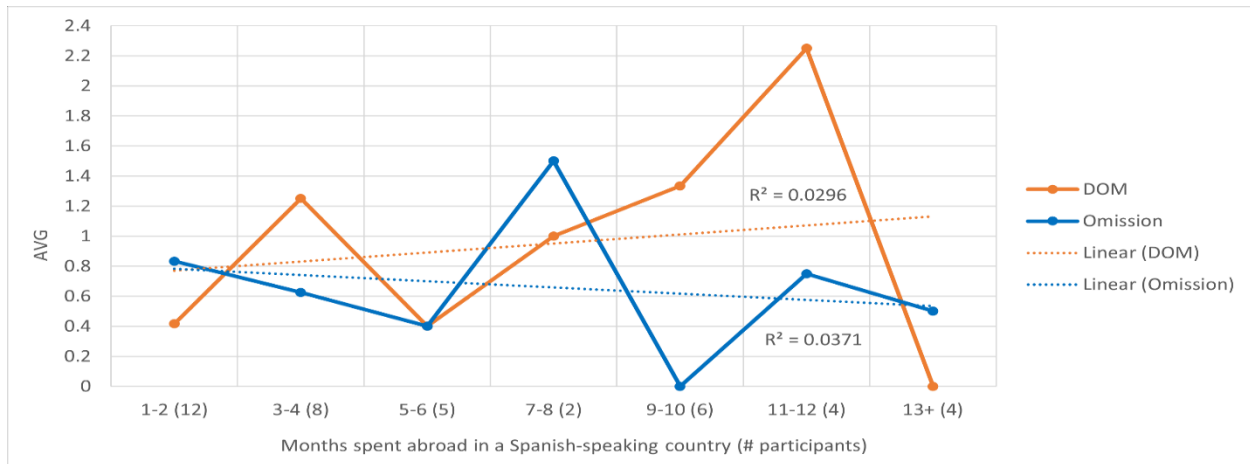
We now look at the relationships (or lack thereof) between the two variables in question – years speaking Spanish and months spent in a Spanish-speaking country– and the average rates of DOM frequency of use and omission by the L2SP speaker group. Table 4 shows the distributions of DOM frequency of use and omission rates (in number and in average) in accordance with the number of months spent abroad (left part of the table) and the number of years speaking Spanish (right part of the table). These two distributions are illustrated by Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 4. Distribution of DOM frequency of use and omission rates by L2SP speakers according to months spent abroad (left) and years speaking Spanish (right).

Months (part.)	DOM (#)	DOM (avg)	No DOM (#)	No DOM (avg)	Years (part.)	DOM (#)	DOM (avg)	No DOM (#)	No DOM (avg)
1-2 (12)	5	0.4	10	0.8	2-3 (16)	2	0.1	7	0.4
3-4 (8)	10	1.3	5	0.6	4-5 (14)	22	1.6	22	1.6
5-6 (5)	2	0.4	2	0.4	6-7 (21)	12	0.6	18	1
7-8 (2)	2	1	3	1.5	8-9 (10)	10	1	5	0.5
9-10 (6)	8	1.3	0	0	10-11 (3)	2	0.7	1	0.3
11-12 (4)	9	2.3	3	0.75	12-13 (3)	4	1.3	2	0.7
13+ (4)	0	0	2	0.5	14+ (3)	1	0.3	1	0.3

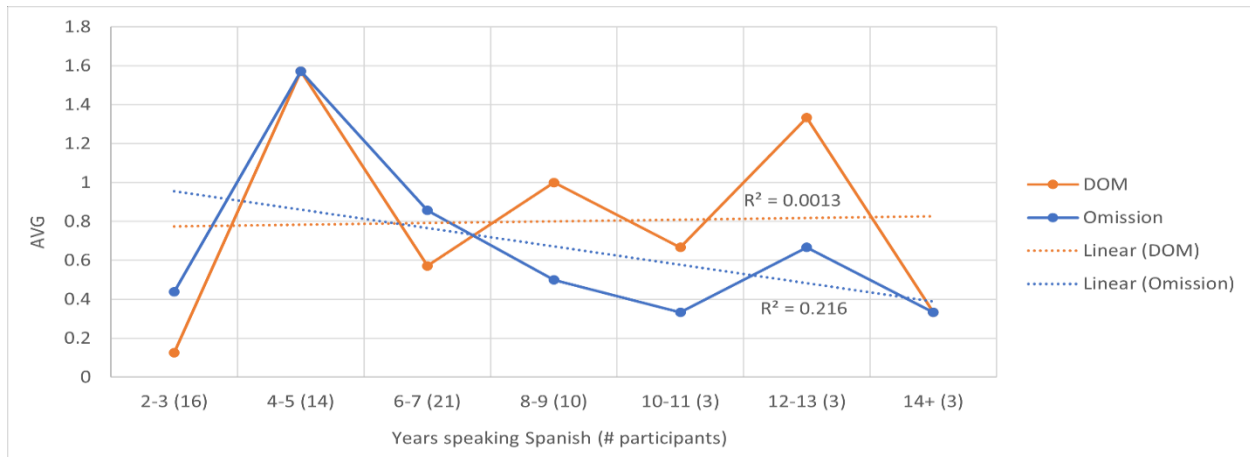
For months spent in a Spanish-speaking country, there is a positive correlation with average DOM frequency of use and a negative correlation with average DOM omission rates, although both correlation coefficients are not reliable. A two-tailed Pearson's r correlation between months abroad and average DOM frequency of use found a small effect size as well as wide confidence intervals (95% CI: .69, 1.23, $r = .053$, $N = 70$, $R^2 = 2.96\%$). The same test between months abroad and average DOM omission rates also showed a small effect size and even wider confidence intervals (95% CI: .28, 1.02, $r = .079$, $N = 70$, $R^2 = 3.71\%$). Neither of the correlations were significant.

Figure 1. Relationship between average rates of DOM frequency of use and omission by the L2SP group and number of months spent in a Spanish-speaking country.



With respect to years speaking Spanish, a two-tailed Pearson's r correlation between years speaking Spanish and average DOM frequency of use found an almost non-existing effect size (95% CI: .53, 1.08, $r = .079$, $N = 70$, $R^2 = 0.13\%$). However, the same test between months abroad and average DOM omission rates found a rather large effect, albeit with wide confidence intervals (95% CI: .32, 1.06, $r = .039$, $N = 70$, $R^2 = 21.6\%$). Once again, neither of the correlations were significant.

Figure 2. Relationship between average rates of DOM frequency of use and omission by the L2SP group and number of years speaking Spanish.



Looking a little deeper into DOM inconsistency by L2SP speakers, we find in Table 5 the distribution of participants among ten different categories of different DOM frequency of use and omission: DOM used twice or less ('DOM (2-)'), used three or more times ('DOM (3+)'), omitted twice or less ('No DOM (2-)'), omitted three or more times ('No DOM (3+)'), used twice or less with [-animate] DOs ('DOM [inanim.]'), a combination of both DOM and omission within the same text ('DOM + No DOM'), a combination of both DOM and DOM with [-animate] DOs ('DOM + DOM [inanim.]'), a combination of both omission and DOM with [-animate] DOs ('No DOM + DOM [inanim.]'), a combination of all three types of tokens ('DOM + No DOM + DOM [inanim.]') and finally, no tokens at all.

Table 5. Distribution of participants by category of DOM usage.

Category	L2SP	L1SP
DOM (2-)	13	28
DOM (3+)	3	2
No DOM (2-)	17	1
No DOM (3+)	2	0
DOM [inanim.]	4	1
DOM + No DOM	8	3

DOM + DOM [inanim.]	2	0
No DOM + DOM [inanim.]	1	0
DOM + No DOM + DOM [inanim.]	2	0
No TOKENS	18	35

We notice in the previous table that there is at least one speaker from the L2SP group in every category, with a total of 13 speakers (18.5%) using a combination of different uses of DOM and/or omission in the same text and ultimately showing a lack of consistency. Meanwhile, only 3 L1SP speakers (4.2%) used DOM at least once and omitted the marker only once in the same text, showing more consistency in its usage. Nearly seven out of ten L2SP speakers either did not use the marker (25.7%), omitted the marker on two occasions or less (24.3%) or used DOM on two occasions or less (18.6%). In the L1SP group, half the speakers did not use the structure (50%) and 40% used DOM on two or less occasions. The main difference separating these two groups lies in the ‘NO DOM (2-)’ category: nearly a quarter of L2SP speakers only omitted the marker twice or less compared to only one speaker from the L1SP group.

Some of the more inconsistent uses of DOM were produced in texts written by participants who had been speaking Spanish for several years and/or had been exposed to naturalistic input while spending time abroad. In Table 6, we can see that the two participants that produced a combination of all three types of DOM tokens (EN_WR_38_20_7_3_AMK and EN_WR_37_18_7_7_SMH, highlighted in red below) had been speaking Spanish for seven years, and one of them had spent 3.5 months in a Spanish-speaking country. Another three participants (highlighted in pink below) who had been speaking Spanish for about five years (two of them had also spent time abroad) both marked and left unmarked a [+human, +definite] DO on more than one occasion.

Table 6. Inconsistency in DOM among certain L2SP speakers.

Participants (13)	Years speaking SPA	Months abroad	DOM	No DOM	DOM [inanim. DO]
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EN_WR_41_19_4.5_3_AEM	4.5	4	3	2	0
EN_WR_39_22_10_10 EMC	10	4	0	1	1
EN_WR_38_20_7_3 AMK	7	3.5	2	1	1
EN_WR_38_19_5_10 LRR	5	8	2	3	0
EN_WR_38_19_6_3 AEM	6	0	1	0	1
EN_WR_37_21_8_3 CMS	8	2	3	1	0
EN_WR_39_24_5_7 WC	5	4	1	1	0
EN_WR_37_18_7_7 SMH	7	0	1	2	1
EN_WR_40_22_9_7 EH	9	12	3	1	0
EN_WR_36_20_5_4 SEG	5	0	1	2	0
EN_WR_36_19_5_3 MWB	5	0	4	10	0
EN_WR_36_18_8_5 JSB	8	0	1	1	0
EN_WR_39_23_6_10 MF	6	12	1	0	1

Tables 7 and 8 below present the distribution of DOM by the five L2SP speakers who had spent the most years speaking Spanish and the five who had spent the most months in a Spanish-speaking country, respectively. For years speaking the language, two out of the five participants only omitted the ‘a’ marker after having spoken Spanish for seventeen and twelve years. In terms of months abroad, the participants fared worse: three out of the five, who had spent five years, two years, and eleven months in a Spanish-speaking country, did not mark the [+human, +definite] DO.

Table 7. DOM distribution of L2SP speakers having spent the most years speaking Spanish.

Participants	Years	DOM	NO DOM	DOM [inanim. DO]
EN_WR_40_37_23_3_CJD	23	1	0	0

EN_WR_39_33_17_10_DRO	17	0	1	0
EN_WR_40_20_13_10_SJF	13	2	0	1
EN_WR_36_19_12_3_EC	12	0	1	0
EN_WR_37_22_12_8_VH	12	2	0	0

Table 8. DOM distribution of L2SP speakers with the most months spent in a Spanish-speaking country.

Participants	Months	DOM	NO DOM	DOM [inanim. DO]
EN_WR_37_31_3_9_HMVR	60	0	1	0
EN_WR_36_25_2_12_CDH	24	0	1	0
EN_WR_39_23_6_10_MF	12	1	0	1
EN_WR_39_24_6_10_OGP	12	5	0	0
EN_WR_36_48_4_10_BN	11	0	2	0

8. Discussion

This study had as its main goal to examine the status of Spanish DOM by English advanced late L2 learners of Spanish and answering the three research questions listed in §5. This section discusses the results from the previous section and their relevance for current discussions on the acquisition of Spanish DOM by late L2 learners.

The first research question asked whether these L2 Spanish speakers show similar DOM frequency of use and omission rates with [+human, +definite] DOs as native Spanish speakers, for which the null hypothesis is that the frequency of use and omission of DOM is identical between both groups. The second research question asked whether the number of years learning/speaking Spanish is a significant factor on the frequency of use and omission of DOM among the L2SP group. The third research question is similar to the second but asks rather if the number of months spent in a Spanish-speaking country is a potential variable. For both the second and third research questions, the null hypothesis is that there is no relationship significant enough to explain these frequencies of use and omission.

Based on the production and omission rates presented at the beginning of the Results section, we can answer the first research question: English advanced L2 Spanish speakers show similar frequency of use of DOM with [+human, +definite] DOs as native Spanish speakers, but significantly different DOM omission rates with the same type of DO.

These results resemble those found by Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis (2007) in that both studies found significant differences between native speakers and L2 learners as well as more errors of omission than commission by the L2 learners (no commission errors were found in the present study). However, some of the speakers with advanced proficiency Guijarro-Fuentes & Marinis' study showed sensitivity to less complex conditions whereas advanced learners from the present study showed mixed results, ranging from some consistently marking [+human, +definite] DOs to others consistently leaving them unmarked.

We now move on to research questions (2) and (3). In terms of years learning and speaking the language, a minor negative correlation effect was found with DOM omission rates, meaning that the more years the L2SP spend speaking Spanish, the less they omit the marker with [+human, +definite] DOs. Meanwhile, the correlation effect between the variable and frequency of use of DOM is almost nonexistent, meaning these speakers used DOM at a certain frequency regardless of the number of years speaking Spanish.

For months spent in a Spanish-speaking country, no correlation effect was found for neither frequency of use nor omission rates of DOM among the L2SP speakers. This means that regardless of the number of months spent abroad, this shows no impact on the number of occasions these speakers mark [+human, +definite] DOs or leave them unmarked.

We can now answer the second and third research questions. The number of months spent abroad is not a significant factor in the frequency of use and omission rates of DOM among the L2SP group. The number of years learning and speaking Spanish, however, represents a minor factor influencing the rates of DOM omission among the same group of speakers, but not in the variance of frequency of use of DOM. Therefore, the two predictions that both variables be positively correlated with frequency of use and negatively correlated with omission rates are not borne out.

These findings partly support Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou's Interpretability Hypothesis as well as Lardiere's FRH in that English late L2 learners of Spanish show similar frequency of use of DOM as the L1SP control group. At the same time, the omission rate by the L2SP speakers

provide more evidence of Tsimpli & Sorace's Interface Hypothesis in that any property of a second language at an interface makes the acquisition process that much more difficult, especially for adult learners.

Is it possible to tease apart whether the data constitute evidence of fossilization, adult incomplete L2 acquisition of the fundamental features of DOM, or no acquisition at all? First, twenty of the seventy L2SP speakers (or 27.4%) only omitted DOM an average of 1.5 times (sd = 1). They averaged 6.55 years (sd = 3.72) of speaking Spanish as well as 5.95 months (sd = 13.92) abroad. This subgroup of L2 speakers have clearly not acquired the features of the DO conditioning DOM, regardless of spending several years speaking the language or spending time abroad.

The distinction between fossilization and adult incomplete L2 acquisition however is not so straightforward. Fossilization implies incorrect linguistic features as a permanent part of the speaker's L2 endstate grammar, especially when not learned as a young child which is the case for these late learners, whereas adult incomplete L2 acquisition refers to learners who have yet to reach the endstate grammar of their L2. This same distinction lies in the difference in status between 'L2 speaker' and 'L2 learner'. When does a learner become a speaker? One can argue that we are constantly learning a language, whether it be the L1, L2 or Ln, however an L2 learner can also simultaneously be a speaker in that he/she has the necessary communicative skills to understand and be understood by others all the while using a native-like grammar. Therefore, the distinction between fossilization (Han & Odlin 2005) and adult incomplete L2 acquisition (Montrul 2008) can only be made by knowing the type of explicit input that was formally and informally taught to these L2 speakers, for which we have no knowledge.

Although we cannot make this qualitative distinction due to the drawbacks of the corpus, we can try to make it quantitatively. Let us assume that those who had spent three years or less learning/speaking Spanish are still developing their interlanguage and represent the 'adult interlanguage acquisition' subgroup, while those who had spent eight years or more speaking the language have reached a steady state of the L2 grammar, are speaking more than they are learning and represent the subgroup 'vulnerable to fossilization'. The participants fitting either subgroup profile are listed in Table 9.

Table 9. DOM distribution of L2SP speakers divided into subgroups 'Adult incomplete L2 acquisition' and 'vulnerable to fossilization'.

1. ADULT INTERLANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Participants (16)	Years SPA	Months abroad	DOM	No DOM
EN_WR_36_17_3_4_ER	3	0	0	0
EN_WR_36_18_2_5_KW	2	0	0	2
EN_WR_36_18_3_5_LAS	3	1	0	0
EN_WR_36_20_2_4_MMT	2	0	0	0
EN_WR_36_20_2_6_CG	2	1.5	0	0
EN_WR_36_20_3_7_HW	3	0	0	0
EN_WR_36_25_2_12_CDH	2	24	0	1
EN_WR_37_18_3_2_TAHI	3	1	1	0
EN_WR_37_19_3_5_CH	3	2	0	1
EN_WR_37_22_2_3_DH	2	0	0	0
EN_WR_37_31_3_9_HMVR	3	60	0	1
EN_WR_38_17_3_2_JTSB	3	0	0	1
EN_WR_39_19_2_10_SLK	2	9	1	0
EN_WR_39_25_2_3_ACC	2	7	0	0
EN_WR_40_18_2_12_LLC	2	0	0	0
EN_WR_40_28_3_12_CEN	3	0	0	1

2. VULNERABLE TO FOSSILIZATION

Participants (18)	Years SPA	Months abroad	DOM	No DOM
EN_WR_36_18_8_5_JSB	8	0	1	0
EN_WR_36_18_8_5_NB	8	0	0	0
EN_WR_36_19_12_3_EC	12	0	0	2
EN_WR_36_19_9_4_DMH	9	5	2	0
EN_WR_37_20_8_6_SAL	8	0	0	0

EN_WR_36_21_8_5_SS	8	4	1	0
EN_WR_36_21_9_10_JKK	9	2	0	1
EN_WR_37_17_9_2_CJR	9	10	0	0
EN_WR_37_19_9_10_CDN	9	0	0	1
EN_WR_37_21_8_3_CMS	8	2	3	1
EN_WR_37_22_12_8_VH	12	9	2	0
EN_WR_39_22_10_10 EMC	10	4	0	1
EN_WR_39_33_17_10_DRO	17	1.5	0	1
EN_WR_40_20_13_10_SJF	13	0	2	0
EN_WR_39_25_10_10_JAU	10	6	0	0
EN_WR_40_25_11_10_JAS	11	10	2	0
EN_WR_40_37_23_3_CJD	23	1	1	0
EN_WR_40_57_15_3_SME	15	150	0	0

Starting with the adult interlanguage acquisition subgroup, we notice that half of these participants did not use any structure with a [+human, +definite] DO. This can be a case of either DOM structure avoidance or no acquisition at all. What is certain is that six participants omitted the marker (highlighted in red), which leans more towards no acquisition of DOM rather than acquisition of certain features or certain structures. Two participants used DOM correctly after having learned Spanish for two-three years, which leads us to believe that it is possible for English L2 learners of Spanish to acquire DOM.

Moving on to the subgroup vulnerable to fossilization, we notice that over a third of these participants show signs of DOM acquisition (highlighted in blue) as they marked [+human, +definite] DOs in a consistent manner, five participants omitted the *a* marker and five others did not use the construction in question. There is one participant (EN_WR_37_21_8_3_CMS), however, that both marked and unmarked at least one [+human, +definite] DO. The sentences in question are shown in (15).

(15) a. En el disco, Christina conoce **a** Peter, un hombre simpático.

‘At the club, Christina meets Peter, a nice man.’

- b. ellas van al baño y encuentran _ la novia.
'they go to the ladies room and find the girlfriend.'
- c. Antes de que ellas pueden salir, Peter reconoce a Christina
'Before they can leave, Peter recognizes Christina'
- d. Encuentran a Peter, durmiendo en el patio con flores en las manos.
'They find Peter, sleeping in the yard with flowers in his hands.'

The participant seems to have acquired DOM for proper nouns 'Peter' and 'Christina' in sentences (a), (c) and (d) were marked, but the DP *la novia* 'the girlfriend' was left unmarked, meaning the use of DOM has not been fully acquired by this participant after learning/speaking Spanish for eight years learning/speaking Spanish and having spent two months abroad. Therefore, the acquisition of DOM by English advanced late L2 Spanish speakers is vulnerable to fossilization, however adult partial/incomplete acquisition or no acquisition at all seem to be more likely scenarios for English late L2 Spanish learners and speakers.

Although this project did not provide an in-depth analysis of DP type, the distinction between (un)marked proper nouns and other DP types was not as salient as that shown by the participant mentioned in the previous paragraph: Out of all 108 [+human, +definite] DO DP tokens written by the L2SP group, the number of marked proper nouns (16) was identical with that of unmarked ones (16), and in similar fashion, the number of marked DPs that were not proper nouns (37) was just short of those that were left unmarked (39). This means that omission rates were not dependent on DP type, but a larger corpus with more tokens would be necessary to be able to draw more solid conclusions.

A final discussion point concerns the total number of (un)marked DOM tokens. The number of tokens per participant is low and over a quarter (27%) of participants in the L2SP group have not produced any instances of the structure requiring DOM, or even where DOM is optional. This may be due to participants resorting to avoidance strategies for not knowing whether the DO should be marked or not, but there is no way to prove this. Again, a larger corpus with more tokens would provide stronger conclusions in terms of DOM acquisition among English L2 advanced late learners of Spanish.

9. Conclusions

This paper attempted to contribute to the understanding of the acquisition of Spanish DOM by English advanced late L2 learners of Spanish. Given the complexity of this property at the syntactic-semantic interface and the fact that it is not used in English, the goal was to see if these L2 speakers acquired DOM after any number of years speaking the language and/or any number of months spent in a Spanish-speaking country, and whether it is included at some point in the learner's grammar. Results from the analysis of data from the CEDEL2 corpus reveal that regardless of how long L2SP speakers have spent learning and speaking Spanish or how much time they have spent abroad, most of these speakers either leave all [+human, +definite] DOs unmarked, show DOM inconsistency by marking some DOs while leaving others unmarked or do not use this structure at all. Overall, only one fifth of L2SP participants used DOM consistently.

Both the number of years speaking Spanish and of months spent in a Spanish-speaking country are two variables that do not seem to help English advanced L2 Spanish speakers with the acquisition of DOM. Overall, it seems as though the L2SP group is at a stage where DOM is optional, which could end up being a permanent, fossilized stage. Considering the two main shortcomings of this study –it included the written texts of few participants and did not carry out an item per item analysis–, it would be of interest for future research projects to investigate the individual cases to find out whether there is a type of DP that tends to be unmarked (e.g., proper nouns, plural DPs, DPs belonging to a specific semantic type, DOs occurring in a specific position, DOs related to a certain type of transitive verb, etc.). It would also be relevant to compare the results of this study with those of other L2 learners of Spanish with a different L1 or L1 English learners of other languages that also use DOM. Finally, it is perhaps the quality of formal instruction rather than the quantity and type of input that should be investigated in order to shed more light on the reasons or causes that could explain why Spanish DOM is not always (completely) incorporated in English advanced late learners' L2 grammar.

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11. APPENDICES

L2SP speakers	
a) DOM – [+human, +definite] DO DPs	
1	Roberts se anima a Stiles a solicitar a Yale para cursar la ley.
2	hay días en que la gente puede ir en el campo en el estadio, y los jugadores les visitan a los enfermos en los hospitales.
3	Bond le mata a Dimitrios y impide la explosión.
4	Eva Green interpreta a Vesper Lynd , una mujer que trabaja por la tesorería del gobierno de Inglaterra y finge ser la esposa de Bond cuando los dos están en Montenegro.
5	Mata a Le Chifre , y permite que Vesper y Bond salen.
6	Vesper da el dinero al hombre, y otros hombres con el primer hombre agarran a Vesper .
7	Él me cogió de la universidad, en el medio de la ruta de donde él con su novia, y visitamos a nuestros padres durante tres días, para las fiestas y (¡Qué pena!) para ayudarles con trabajos de la casa.
8	El día después, arreglamos las cosas y fuimos a Virginia para visitar a nuestro tío .
9	Era una experiencia muy buena; conocí a muchos amigos nuevos y todos tienen metas como míos.
10	Conozco a mucha gente que no es contenta y ellos no quieren trabajar ni hacer nada y a mi, esta vida no es ideal.
11	En su Universidad encontró a su esposa para la primera vez cuando estudiaba.
12	El viaje fue mi divertido y conocimos a Mickey Mouse!
13	Nunca olvidaré este día que conocí a Mary .
14	En el disco, Christina conoce a Peter , un hombre simpático.
15	Antes de que ellas pueden salir, Peter reconoce a Christina y se da cuenta de que tiene sentimientos para ella, también.
16	Encuentran a Peter , dormiendo en el patio con flores en los manos.
17	La policía detuvo a Francisco Javier López Peña , alias 'Thierry', considerado como el 'número uno' del aparato militar y político de la organización terrorista.

18	"Thierry' había sustituido en el liderazgo etarra a José Antonio Urrutikoetxea , 'Josu Ternera'.
19	Es más, conocimos a unos Brasileños que nos introdujeron a partes interesantes de la ciudad.
20	si los padres son hombres, mujeres, o una mujer y un hombre, la que es importante es que el niño tiene una buena vida con padres que quiere a los niños .
21	Aunque yo no le conozca, creo que si Dios no le gustan los matrimonios gays, el puede castigar a las personas después de la muerte y no es una responsabilidad de los humanos.
22	Sam aprendió tocar los tambores para impresionar a la chica .
23	La película empieza con la cobertura (de noticias reales de 1972) de los asesinatos de los Israelis, y como el gobierno israeli empezó a organizar miembros del Mossad en grupos para cazar y matar a la gente responsables por el acto de terrorismo.
24	Cuando entraron, conocieron al otro general que era director del teatro antes de empezar la guerra.
25	Por el fin, vimos a Paulino y Gustavete a la tumba de Carmela.
26	Parece que todos ya tienen su grupo, y no tienen tantas ganas de pescar a la rubiecita que pasa por ahí y que el próximo semestre ni va a estar.
27	Bueno, el Diego también me presentó a muchos de sus amigos , y algunos nos hacemos amigos, pero casi siempre me sentía como alguien de afuera, la persona que no puede compartir mucho.
28	Echaba de menos a muchas de mis amigas de mi universidad en los Estados Unidos y pensaba mucho en la soledad que experimentaba allí en Chile.
29	Pero, cuando la familia le invita a la hija también, no es obvio porque la trabajadora todavía no quiere venir.
30	Los gays y lesbianas puedan cuidar a los niños también, porque tienen amor que quieren dar, y este deseo es el más importante en tener hijos.
31	Yo creo que es más importante respetar a la gente , y asegurar que la minoría tenga protección del gobierno.

32	A mi lo que me gustaria subrayar y tratar de entender es el punto de vista de los radicales mashurmanos y cristianos que vean al matrimonio gay como algo terrible para nuestra sociedad.
33	Este es el grupo minoria, la iglesia, la que ataca a los inocentes parejas gay que solo quieren obtener los mismos derechos como sus amigos heterosexuales.
34	Esto es lo que tenemos que eliminar, no la creanza, pero la gente que forma sectos para didictar a los demas.
35	Al pensar en esto, me trae a los paises no occidentales como Iran por ejemplo que tratan a los homosexuales con un brutalidad increíble, asasinando a la gente gay por que no se conforman a su ideologia heterogenia.
36	Al pensar en esto, me trae a los paises no occidentales como Iran por ejemplo que tratan a los homosexuales con un brutalidad increíble, asasinando a la gente gay por que no se conforman a su ideologia heterogenia.
37	Laura y su esposo comienzan a perder la esperanza de encontrar a Simón.
38	Un medio le hipnotiza a la otra media , quien luego pasa por los cuartos de la casa, oyendo las voces de unos niños.
39	Si esa persona cria hijos, su manera de vivir afecta a estos ninos.
40	El gobierno debe hacer lo correcto y las leyes deben agradar a Dios Omnipotente.
41	Aunque no conozco a los otros actores , les reconozco de otras películas de Almodóvar.
42	Me parece que a él le gusta emplear a las mismas personas en sus cintas.
43	A principios de la película, su hijo mata a su "padre" (es padre sólo por casamiento, no es no padre biológica), porque él la violó.
44	Sin embargo, encuentra a su otra hija y vive con ella bajo la pretensión que sea rusa, una desconocida.
45	Amor es amor, entre las parejas y también entre los padres y los niños, y la cosa más importante en el matrimonio y la adopción es el amar al marido y también a los hijos.
46	Amor es amor, entre las parejas y también entre los padres y los niños, y la cosa más importante en el matrimonio y la adopción es el amar al marido y también a los hijos.

47	He visto la película La otra conquista que trata de ver con lo que pasó después de que Cortés conquistó a los Aztecas .
48	Conozco a muchas parejas gay en la universidad que tiene niños adoptados o naturales.
49	Ellos tampoco deberían ser padres; sin embargo, la sociedad los permite criar a sus niños .
50	Además, la sociedad tiene la responsabilidad de enseñar a toda persona como criar bien a los niños , por lo menos si piensa tenerlos.
51	Su hermana le ayuda a encontrar un trabajo a una iglesia y allí conoce a algunas mujeres fuertes con quienes Pilar empieza a desarrollar sus propias opiniones, fuera de su esposo.
52	Como si no sea bastante, él le empuja a ella , desnuda, al balcón y cierra la puerta.
53	Luego él le permite entrar y está a punto de pegar a ella cuando ella me da de miedo.
b) No DOM – [+human, +definite] DO DPs	
54	Tengo amigos que yo conocí en la escuela y en los deportes y en las fiestas, y si yo saldría de mi país yo perderé tal vez _ estas personas , porque hay mucho de ellos y yo no puedo mantener contacto con todos ellos.
55	Yo amo muy fuerte _ mi familia y sería muy difícil para mí de no tenerla alrededor de mí cuando me necesita.
56	Para empezar, el grupo consigó _ nuevos jugadores que les encantó jugar el deporte y no se preocupaban sobre el dinero.
57	Hicieron los cálculos y idearon nuevas tecnologías para el cohete que cargó _ Neil Armstrong y Buzz Aldrin a la luna.
58	Hicieron los cálculos y idearon nuevas tecnologías para el cohete que cargó Neil Armstrong y _ Buzz Aldrin a la luna.
59	La misión de Bond le trae a las Bahamas, donde encuentra _ Dimitrios , un hombre rico con una esposa bonita.
60	Bond sigue _ Dimitrios a Miami, donde los terroristas están tratando de explotar un avión nuevo en el aeropuerto internacional de Miami.
61	Luego, Le Chifre secuestra _ Vesper .
62	Bond va a rescatar _ ella , pero él está capturado por Le Chifre.
63	Le Chifre tortura _ Bond hasta Señor White, otro hombre implicado con los terroristas, entra.

64	Bond, un poco suspicioso, sigue _ Vesper a una plaza donde ella encuentra el hombre que estaba mirando Bond y Vesper en el góndola.
65	Bond, un poco suspicioso, sigue Vesper a una plaza donde ella encuentra el hombre que estaba mirando Bond y Vesper en el góndola.
66	Bond, un poco suspicioso, sigue Vesper a una plaza donde ella encuentra el hombre que estaba mirando _ Bond y Vesper en el góndola.
67	Bond, un poco suspicioso, sigue Vesper a una plaza donde ella encuentra el hombre que estaba mirando Bond y _ Vesper en el góndola.
68	Bond encuentra _ Vesper , y ella se le disculpa, se cerra en el ascensor, y se ahoga.
69	Bond finalmente saca _ Vesper fuera del ascensor y le trae al exterior de la canal, pero ella está muerto.
70	Cada semana iba al hospital para ver _ los médicos y aprender como es una carrera en la medicina.
71	Después del programa mi familia y yo fuimos a Haití para visitar _ mis abuelos y mis primos.
72	Después del programa mi familia y yo fuimos a Haití para visitar mis abuelos y _ mis primos .
73	Hay un gran diferencia entre los niños pequenos y los adultos pequeños, y creo que prefiero _ los jovenes mas que los estudiantes mayores
74	La habilidad de un padre o un madre para criarlos _ sus niños no está afectada por sus preferencias sexuales.
75	Muchas de estas personas dejan _ sus familias para venir solas y al llegar, agarran un trabajo.
76	Pero la constitución de los Estados Unidos dice que la religión y el estado deben separarse, y si el matrimónio es del iglésia y la unión civil es del estado, bueno las iglésias pueden casar _ las parejas que quieren casar
77	Al mismo tiempo, el estado puede unir _ dos personas que dicen, nosotros queremos unirnos en frente del ley, y tenir una vida juntos.
78	Con suerte, encontré _ la persona perfecta para mí antes de graduar de la universidad.
79	Lyra va con ella pero antes de ir no puede encontrar _ Roger y el maestro del colegio da a Lyra un "brújula dorada", que dice la verdad.

80	Viajan al norte del mundo, y en sus viajes encuentran un orso polar, Iorik Byrnisson y deviene el amigo de Lyra y le ayuda con sus enemigos y encontrar _ los niños que han desaparecidos.
81	Estas chicas fueron muy populares y Janice y Damien odiaron _ estas chicas .
82	Regina pensó que Cady fue bonita y entonces ella invitó _ Cady a ser un miembro.
83	El principal trató de parar _ las chicas y entonces, él formó un grupo de todas las chicas en el gimnasio.
84	No podía esperar a conocer _ Mickey Mouse y todas de sus amigos.
85	No podía esperar a conocer Mickey Mouse y _ todas de sus amigos .
86	Esta ayuda mucho con entender _ la gente y por lo tanto el mundo.
87	Si pueden amar el hijo , debemos prometer, no minimar el número de padres buenos.
88	Ya que vemos _ los padres que causen mucho dano a sus hijos, no son homosexuales pero no son buenos padres.
89	Al principio de la película el actor Eric Bana quiso a ayudar el gobierno de Israel a matar _ los hombres quienes planean el ataque en los deportistas en los juegos olimpicos.
90	Era interesante en la película porque durante el ataque, Speilberg utilizaban noticias a informar _ la gente del progreso del ataque en los deportista.
91	Cuando las noticias dan la información incorrecta que dice que los árabes fueron muertos, Speilberg mostró _ las familias de los árabes llorando y las familias de los deportistas como alegres.
92	En la película, hay cinco hombres de Israel quienes pagaron a matar _ los líderes árabes que sea responsable por el ataque y muertos de los deportistas.
93	Los hombres matan _ cinco o seis personas en la lista pero después de los matan ellos empiezan a preguntar porque esto es necesario.
94	Antes de ir a la iglesia, ellas van al baño y encuentran _ la novia .
95	Pero matan _ menos personas qué el tabaco y el alcohol.
96	Otro hombre interupta y finalmente los dos están llevado a la compuesta #12 donde el padre ata _ su hijo con una cuerda al perno incrustado en la roca de la pared.
97	Fue aquí que se encontró _ su amigo Stephen Merchant (que ahora contribuye al diálogo para la serie), y dondó empezó su viaje a la television.

98	Mis padres no les gustaban los corridos pero no sabía porque hasta que miré _ los toreros matando los toros.
99	en Los Estados Unidos 50% de matrimonios terminan por divorcio y muchos niños tienen padres que viven en ciudades o estados diferentes no pueden ver _ los dos padres con frecuencia.
100	No soy psicologo pero creo que un niño necesita _ buenos padres .
101	No soy religiosa y no conozco _ Dios y por eso, no entiendo lo que quiere.
102	Por el fin, vimos a Paulino y _ Gustavete a la tumba de Carmela.
103	Con la legalización de matrimonio gay, los niños de las parejas gay ahora tienen estatus legal con los dos padres, y es mucho más fácil cuidar _ los niños con participación igual de los dos padres.
104	En cuestión de adoptarse _ los niños es otro problema que es fácil de resolver.
105	Toledo fue el primer lugar donde vería yo _ la gente española .
106	Yo creo que todos países deben educar _ sus niños en otras culturas y promover la integración.
107	En mi opinión, él falta confianza y por eso tiene que dominar _ su mujer .
108	Él quita de un tirón su chaqueta y vestido, mientras ella le grita, y después él quita de un tirón sus medias y ropa interior, todo el tiempo él está gritando que ahora el mundo pueda ver _ ella como ella quiere.
c) DOM – [-animate, +definite] DO DPs	
109	La compañía decide que quiere filmar en Bolivia a pesar del hecho que Cristóbal Colón nunca visitó a Bolivia porque Bolivia es el lugar más barato para filmar.
110	Visité a otras ciudades durante mi viaje.
111	Pasa los días en el sol, escuchando a las canciones de los pájaros, y mirando el sol desapareciendo en la mar.
112	Miré a la regla .
113	Recientemente, vi a una película , se llama "Love Actually".
114	Pero, el soldado vio a la bandera republicana en su coche y los tomó al general.

115	Me parece que su motivación no es defender a la biblia , pero defender contra cosas que no les parecen "normal."
116	Decían que hay que respetar a esta tradición .
117	Los achuar han sido capaces de mantener fuera de su territorio a las empresas petroleras .

L1SP Speakers

a) DOM – [+human, +definite] DO DPs

1	Estaba yo muy iluzionada de ir a México a visitar mis abuelitos y a mis primos , pero a mi abuelita le tocó ir a México por dos semanas, y en esas dos semanas mis papas tuvieron tambien sus vacaciones para estar con nosotros.
2	En Ecuador, yo visite a toda mi familia que vive ahí.
3	Mis padres nacieron en Ecuador y por eso ellos me llevan casi todos los veranos, no quieren que yo crezca sin conocer a toda mi familia .
4	Por ahora no pienso casarme algun dia, y si algun dia si llego a casarme es por que realmente amo a esa persona y si voy a poder aguantarla por el resto de mi vida.
5	Lo que mas me gustaba de este viaje era que yo ya conocía a todas las personas que iban ir al viaje porque todos eramos estudiantes de la misma escuela.
6	Las familias conservadoras pensarán en esto como una locura, reafirmando que el hombre fue creado para casarse con una mujer y viceversa, cayendo en el desgastado error de que cada persona puede elegir su propio camino y escoger a la persona que realmente quiere siempre que sea de diferente sexo.
7	Los niños creserán a amar a sus padres sean ya dos mamás o dos papás.
8	Un dia despues del trabajo, como dia normal llego a su casa, beso a su esposa y saludo a su hermosa bebe.
9	Se ducho, y al salir del baño se encontro a su mujer tirada en el piso desmallada.
10	EN esas carreras para ganar tienes que descalificar a los demas .
11	La unica manera de lograrlo es matando a los demas .
12	El personaje principal sale de la carcel y busca a su niña se va con su compañero de carreras a miami.

13	Tomar decisiones inteligentes al entrar a la universidad para poder enfocarme en mis estudios por que mi mayor anelo es poder sacar a mis padres adelante pero sobre todo sacarlos del trabajo.
14	Despues embejezer con mi esposa y vivir para ver a mis hijos .
15	El intenta traerle una alegría porque ella sufre de una enfermedad que no recuerda nada de su pasado ni aun a su propia familia .
16	Bueno, eso tardo unos 30 minutos pero así conocimos a mucha gente del crucero.
17	También, esa noche fuimos a un restaurante y vimos a el presentador de Access Hollywood con su mujer (o una chica que llevaba mucho maquillaje y rompa muy inapropiada).
18	Sin embargo, desde el punto de vista bio-darwnisita, es decir, preguntándonos por qué se han declinado por esa tendencia y la relación con nuestra esencia animal, la evolución escoge a los individuos más adaptados para la reproducción.
19	El debate comienza no en la opinión de si una pareja gay puede o no criar a un hijo, sino que aparece cuando intervienen otras personas, unas terceras personas, que se pueden considerar la "sociedad", personas ajenas a esa familia (como padres, maestros, compañeros de clase, conocidos, etc.) que pueden no considerar a esos hijos de gays como "normales" y los pueden discriminar por ello.
20	Para llegar ahi tiene que desalojar a los seres que habitan ahi, por lo cual tambien han entrenado y educado a una persona que pueda hacerse pasar por uno de ellos para que pueda convencerlos para que cambien de hogar.
21	Después de eso me empezaron a regañar mucho a esconder las cosas de la casa: comida, papel, shampoo, jabón, entre otras cosas, cuando ellos solo me llevaban dos o tres veces al año a ver a mis papás y solo me llevaban por unas cuantas horas.
22	Lo único que aun lamento a día de hoy es que la Iglesia Católica no sea capaz de tratar a estas personas , porque ante todo son personas, con la misma igualdad que al resto de sus hijos permitindoles su unión ante Dios.
23	Todas las personas deberíamos poder adoptar, no creo que ser homosexual o no sea un problema para el niño acogido por la familia, ya que existen familias formadas por un sólo padre o una sólo madre que han sacado adelante al niño .

24	El tuvo muchos problemas con el vocalista Axel Rose y optaron por separar a la banda y buscar nuevos horizontes en el mundo de la música.
25	Cuando esta banda se separo el invito al guitarrista y al bajista de la misma a realizar un nuevo proyecto.
26	Cuando esta banda se separo el invito al guitarrista y al bajista de la misma a realizar un nuevo proyecto.
27	¿A qué se debe si no que ahora la sanidad pública no vaya a atender a los inmigrantes ?
28	El final de la película es bastante dramático ya que uno de los protagonistas se suiciden y el profesor es expulsado del centro ya que le acusaban de haber empujado al antiguo alumno ha no obedecer a su padre y que finalmente acabe de ese modo.
29	está claro que quien desee fumar no tendra ningún inconveniente en situarse en una zona para fumadores, mientras tanto las personas que no fumen o que les molesten el olor y el humo del tabaco podran tener acceso a zonas libres de humos y así mantenemos a ambas partes contentas.
30	Seguidamente, me gustaría comentar la gran actuación de los actores de la película, destacando a Matthew Maccgonagueh , que el año anterior se llevo un muy merecido Óscar por su interpretación en Dallas Buyers Club.
31	En tercer y último lugar la cobardía y soberbia de Hitler que al haber matado a millones y millones de judíos en campos de concentración (concretamente a seis millones) acaba con su vida disparandose con una pistola en la sien.
32	En tercer y último lugar la cobardía y soberbia de Hitler que al haber matado a millones y millones de judíos en campos de concentración (concretamente a seis millones) acaba con su vida disparandose con una pistola en la sien.
33	Tras una impactante escena donde el hermano intenta ahorcar al periodista , la pirata descubre el paradero de la joven, que consiguió huir a Australia, ahora convertida en una mujer de mediana edad.
34	La forma que utiliza la madrastra para alejarse a la muchacha del príncipe es a través de un conjuro que hace que ella sea expulsada del reino para enviarla al mundo de los humanos, en el cual le ocurren miles de inconvenientes hasta q conoce a un joven apuesto.

35	Luego de varios inconvenientes el joven también descubre que ama a la muchacha y se besan sellando su amor por siempre.
36	Jack Nicholson soborna desde pequeño a Matt Damon dándole dinero por pequeñas tareas como por ejemplo lavar coches.
37	Donde por supuesto que quedan relegadas las familias diversas que existen en México: mujeres solteras que crían solas a sus hijos .
38	La verdad si la pase muy bien pero en realidad el desfile me dejó mucho que desear ya que cada año tenemos la misma celebración en Merida Yucatan Mexico y los carros alegóricos son muy coloridos y muy bonitos y la gente va a ver los carros y a las personas famosas que están en ellos.
39	Lo que si está muy divertido es caminar por la Bourbon Street con los amigos tomando cerveza y viendo a la gente pasar disfrazados de cualquier cosa que pueda ser graciosa y demasiado loco.
40	El mejor amigo es un joven de color, también adicto a la heroína, que tiene la ambición de superar la sensación de pobreza que le quedó de su infancia y que está un poco obsesionado con enorgullecer a su madre , ya muerta.
41	Tolerancia para entender al distinto , al otro, y no ese miedo de encerrarnos en nuestra visión heterosexual del mundo.
42	Tolerancia para entender al distinto, al otro , y no ese miedo de encerrarnos en nuestra visión heterosexual del mundo.
43	Para colmo, la madre era testigo de todo lo que su novio le hacía a la niña y había llegado incluso a ver en ella a una competidora por el amor del canalla que tenía por novio, lo que había provocado que ella también acabara maltratando a su propia hija , convirtiendo su vida en un auténtico infierno.
44	En ella se nos presenta la historia de un anciano que conoce al amor de su vida siendo niño y se nos muestra cómo vive esta pareja su amor.
45	El anciano, bastante molesto, acoge al muchacho .
46	Finalmente, el anciano y el muchacho salvan a la criatura y la familia de esta del malvado explorador y regresan a la ciudad.

47	El viaje ha sacado al hombre de su tristeza y su soledad y descubre que aún le quedan muchas "aventuras" por vivir.
48	El drama se desatará cuando se ve amenazada por otra tribu extranjera, que captura a algunos de sus miembros y los lleva prisioneros ante el jefe de la gran tribu.
49	La película incluye muchas fantasmadas difíciles de creer aunque estas contribuyen de forma determinante a mantener al espectador con la mirada fija en la pantalla sin ganas de pestañear por si se pierde algún detalle importante.
b) No DOM – [+human, +definite] DO DPs	
50	Estaba yo muy iluzionada de ir a México a visitar _ mis abuelitos y a mis primos, pero a mi abuelita le tocó ir a México por dos semanas, y en esas dos semanas mis papas tuvieron tambien sus vacaciones para estar con nosotros.
51	También, vimos la misma noche el novio de Ana Obregón!
52	Fui un par de días para visitar _ la familia que tengo allí y de paso planeamos ir un día a Londres.
53	Finalmente, el anciano y el muchacho salvan a la criatura y _ la familia de esta del malvado explorador y regresan a la ciudad.
c) DOM – [-animate, +definite] DO DPs	
54	De esta forma, destruyes a la criminalidad asociada a la venta de la droga. [Venezuelan Spanish]

The Offensiveness of Taboo Words and Expressions Across Spanish Varieties

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory, descriptive study investigated how native speakers from different varieties of Spanish rated the perceived offensiveness of 113 Spanish taboo expressions. The aim was to use these ratings to gain a better understanding of which expressions are perceived as the most offensive in each variety and to see if there are similarities among the varieties. It was also of interest to see if any of these expressions were considered to be the ‘most offensive’ in all varieties, as has been found in English. The results show that the perceived offensiveness varied greatly among the varieties of Spanish represented, yet *hijo de puta*, *tu puta madre*, and *puta* were found to be among the most highly offensive expressions in all varieties.

KEYWORDS

Spanish swearing, swearing, swear word offensiveness, palabrotas, palabras ofensivas, lenguaje soez

1. Introduction

The ever-growing field of study on swearing has advanced in many languages in recent years, including a fair amount of research on taboo words and expressions (henceforth TWEs) in Spanish. Despite this growth, to the best of our knowledge, there has been no research completed on the perceived offensiveness of TWEs used in different varieties of Spanish and comparing this perceived offensiveness by speakers of various Spanish varieties. This gap, together with studies indicating the most offensive TWEs in English (Beers Fägersten, 2007, 2012; Dewaele, 2017; among others), and the discrepancies found in the use and offensiveness of TWEs between two variants of English (Dewaele, 2015), were the main catalysts for this study.

The main objective of this exploratory and preliminary study was to better understand which TWEs are perceived as the most offensive in various Spanish varieties.¹ Additionally, although the many cultural differences within the Spanish-speaking world can be seen in the types of expressions used (sacrilege versus insults directed at matriarchal figures, for example) or their frequency in casual conversation, this study also aimed to determine if there are specific TWEs that transcend these differences, as has been found in English (Dewaele, 2015).

2. Background

2.1. Swearing and Taboo Words and Expressions

Swearing can be broadly defined to include the use of profanities, vulgarities, sexual terms, racial epithets, and other insults whose sociopragmatic rules differ across linguistic communities and whose use and semantic and conceptual representations vary based on context, register, in-group membership, as well as the gender, age, and/or language of the speakers (Janschewitz, 2008; Jay, 1992, 2000; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; among others). Words and expressions act as TWEs when they refer to something that is “taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture, which should not be interpreted literally, and which can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes” (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990, p. 51). While there tends to be an emphasis on the emotive aspect of TWEs’ non-literal meanings, the involvement of a nonliteral meaning does not alone make a word or expression taboo and some are understood to be offensive as “their use, whether literal or not,

¹This study aimed to find which TWEs are used and considered offensive rather than attempting to answer how, when, and/or why they are used or viewed this way, as this can be attributed to a wide variety of influences including sociolinguistic variation and the sociopragmatic elements of culture, religion, history, etc. and are beyond the scope of this study.

signals an attitude or stance on the part of the speaker” (Moore, 2012, p. 175). Although TWEs also inject “a succinct emotional component into social interaction” (Jay, 2000, 2009, as cited in Dewaele, 2015, p. 309), they do not necessarily make an interaction negative or unfavourable. Studies have found that the majority of swearing is linked to positive social bonding between friends and can be an intimacy marker indicating in-group membership or creating feelings of rapport amongst speakers (Jay, 1992, 2000; Stenström, 2020; among others).

2.2. Swearing in English

Many studies investigating swearing in English have produced lists of the most offensive expressions and the most frequently used (Beers Fägersten, 2007, 2012; Dewaele 2015, 2017; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Stenström, 2006; among others). These lists have often turned out to be the same and show a “swearing paradox” (Beers Fägersten, 2007, p. 16), highlighting the fact that swearing is a frequently-occurring yet highly-offensive speech behaviour.

Focusing on the use of individual TWEs, although Jay (1992) found that the speech style and situation in which an expression is used affects if it is considered to be taboo or not, Beers Fägersten (2007, 2012) found that all native-English participants rated the expressions *cunt*, *motherfucker*, *fuck*, and *bitch* (among others) to be the most highly offensive. Furthermore, when investigating the offensive ratings of TWEs by native and non-native speakers, the word *cunt* was the “only word LX [non-native speakers] significantly underestimated the offensiveness of, possibly because LX users were unaware that *cunt* was in a league of its own: it is not just any red flag word but a ‘double-red’ one” (Dewaele, 2017, pp. 73–74).

2.2.1. Swearing Across Variants of English

Of particular interest for this current study was Dewaele’s (2015) article which reported the frequency of use, understanding (semantic and conceptual representations), and perceived offensiveness of TWEs by native speakers of different variants of English. Although there were no significant differences found in the frequency of swearing overall between native British English and American English speakers, there were differences found in the frequency of use of individual expressions. Furthermore, despite many being rated equally by both varieties, Dewaele found that there was “no complete conceptual equivalence between our British and American users of English for over half of the emotion-laden words” (p. 335). This was interpreted “as evidence

of differences in semantic and conceptual representations of these words in both variants of English” (p. 309), which have led to bi-dialectal blunders by speakers using expressions that were seemingly harmless or less offensive in their variant than that of their interlocutor's. Dewaele states that these findings are important as “until now research on conceptual equivalence has focused on different languages, rather than different variants of the same language” (p. 26).

2.3. Swearing in Spanish

Many studies on Spanish TWEs have been carried out on their use in discussions on politeness and phatic use or on the type of taboo expressions used in spontaneous speech by speakers of different genders or age groups in Peninsular Spanish (Acuña Ferreira, 2021; Bernal, 2008; Igualada Belchí, 1996; Mitkova, 2007; Rundblom, 2013; Stenström, 2006; among others), and various Latin American varieties (Curcó, 1998; Galindo, 1999; Stenström, 2020; Ramírez Gelbes & Estrada, 2003; among others).

When looking at the use of TWEs by teenage girls in England and Spain, Stenström (2006), found that *joder* occurred almost as frequently as its English equivalent *fuck* “despite the fact that *fuck* not only appears in more forms but is also used for more functions” (p. 135). These findings lead to the conclusion that *joder* has more or less lost its sense of taboo in this variety and that its “meaning is so watered down that the girls no longer feel it is obscene” (p.132). Stenström further notes that the top five taboo words used – *joder*, *coño*, *puto/puta*, *mierda*, *cagar* – have all “undergone semantic bleaching and pragmatic strengthening with the consequence that their original meaning has more or less disappeared and new pragmatic meanings have evolved owing to their frequent use in casual conversation” (p. 132) and that *coño*, in particular, had changed from a once “extremely offensive vocative to an accepted intensifier” (p. 281).

Similar findings in other studies (Acuña Ferreira, 2021; Mitkova, 2007; Ramírez Gelbes & Estrada, 2003; Stenström, 2020; among others) also show that teens and young adults use “terms of endearment whose direct meanings are offensive” (Mitkova, 2007, p. 5) when referring to friends, including *cabrón*, *capullo*, and *maricón* in Spain, *gilipollas* and *huevo* in Chile, and *boludo/boluda* in Argentina. These expressions were used so often by the participants with their friends that they had developed into pragmatic markers and can be seen, along with *hijo de puta* and *puta*, as “*vocativos cariñosos*” [affectionate vocatives] (Rodríguez González, 2002, p. 48), showing intimacy among friends or as inoffensive terms if uttered at no particular individual.

Considering the numerous varieties of Spanish, it is unsurprising that the TWEs found in the aforementioned studies varied greatly. Due to cultural and dialectal differences, the use, meaning, and offensiveness of TWEs can be vastly different throughout the Spanish-speaking world. This was highlighted in the New York Times when it was noted that “while the meaning of certain Spanish words could be indecent or sexually provocative depending on their context or on the nationality of the speaker, there are many words that are indecent no matter what version of Spanish” is used and that there are “ambiguous words that may mean, for example, an insect in most Spanish-speaking countries but is terminology for the male reproductive organ in Puerto Rico...” (Subervi, 2014).

The sociopragmatic use and understanding of TWEs in a particular variety may be inferred or compared, although cautiously, by looking at their existence or lack thereof across varieties and by their definitions as noted in various reference materials. Examples of this include *fishfica*, which is considered offensive in Ecuador, yet unheard of in many other varieties; *capullo*, which is offensive in many varieties yet a term of endearment in some parts of Colombia; and the verb *coger*, which has non-offensive meanings in Peninsular Spanish (*to grab, to take, to catch, to board*), yet means *to fuck* in most other varieties.

Given the many discrepancies in meaning and offensiveness of the numerous TWEs found throughout the Spanish-speaking world, this study aimed to fill the gap in the current research by investigating their perceived offensiveness in various variants of Spanish from which to build on in future research.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the aforementioned objectives, the research questions for this study were:

1. What are the most offensive taboo expressions in Spanish?
2. How does the offensiveness of these expressions vary by variety?
3. Is there an expression that is highly offensive in all varieties?

The hypotheses were that the most offensive TWEs would be those that refer to one’s mother, specifically *hijo de puta, me cago en la madre que te parió*, and *tu puta madre* and that the levels of offensiveness would vary greatly by variety, as some of the expressions may be unfamiliar to the participants or have non-offensive meanings in their variety. It was also predicted

that there would be multiple expressions that would be offensive in all varieties, mainly *hijo de puta*, *puta*, and *tu puta madre*.

3.2. Data Collection

Data was collected through an anonymous, online questionnaire via snowball sampling through various social media platforms. This anonymity was stressed in an attempt to limit social desirability bias regarding linguistic behaviour that may be seen as taboo.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, following socio-bibliographical questions, participants were asked to provide the TWE they use the most and the TWE they find to be the most offensive (these questions were open-ended and no examples or prompts were given). Participants were then presented with 113 TWEs in alphabetical order, each accompanied by a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not offensive*; 3 = *offensive*; 5 = *very offensive*). As many expressions are non-existent or have non-offensive meanings in different varieties, participants were also presented with two additional options: '*I do not know this expression*' and '*This expression does not have an offensive meaning in my variety*'. As the offensiveness of TWEs can also vary depending on the context, in an attempt to have the most neutral context possible, they were asked to rate the TWEs based on the context of '*If someone in the street yelled _____, how offensive would it be to you?*'. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were also asked to provide which of the 113 TWEs they found to be the most offensive.

The list of TWEs was developed by informal brainstorming sessions with friends and family discussing all the TWEs we use or have heard before, using the aforementioned studies as well as compilations by Sanmartín Sáez (2003), Celdrán Gomáriz (1995), and Burke (1991) as guides. Informal searches were also conducted on forums in which speakers of numerous varieties used TWEs in anonymous, informal written conversations. Expressions were included from as many varieties as possible and in the cases of very similar expressions, such as *vete a la mierda*, *anda a la mierda*, and *ándate a la mierda*, only one was selected.²

3.3. Participants

²*Hijo de puta* and *hijueputa* were listed as separate items as they are mutually exclusive in some varieties. This was not done, however, with *conchetumadre*, *concha de tu madre*, and *concha tu madre*; *culeado*, *culiado*, and *culeao*; or *güevón* and *hüevón* as these are generally seen as orthographic or phonetic variations with the same meaning.

The 70 participants (71.43% female, 28.58% male) were between the ages of 18 and 64 and all reported Spanish to be their native and only or dominant language. They were divided based on the areas they reported living in (no participants reported having lived in multiple, Spanish-speaking locations during their lifetime).³ Based on this classification, there were 36 (51.43%) from Spain; 11 (15.71%) from Mexico; nine (12.85%) from Colombia; eight (11.43%) from Chile; four (5.71%) from Ecuador; and two (2.86%) from Argentina.⁴

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of coding the Likert-scale responses and calculating the average rating for each TE. Any responses including the two additional options noted earlier were not included when calculating the averages, although none of the TWEs with an average rating of 4.00 or higher for each country included one of these responses; all participants from a particular country either knew the offensive TWE or did not. The open-ended responses were also coded and calculated for the frequency by country and overall.

4. Results

4.1. Results From Open-Ended Questions

The responses to the three open-ended questions are presented overall, with the results by country shown within. The results are shown in descending order of frequency, with those with equal frequencies listed in alphabetical order.

When asked to provide the TWE they use most often, the participants listed 23 different expressions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Expressions Used Most Often

Expression	Participants (Country*)	Expression	Participants (Country)
Joder	17 (Sp)	Me cago en la puta	2 (Sp)
Coño	6 (Sp)	Puta madre	2 (Mx)

³As there is no clear consensus on how to best divide the numerous varieties of Spanish, following studies on lexical variation and dialectology, this study presents the results in terms of *country* (similar to Dewaele, 2015).

⁴It is important to note that as the numbers of participants from each country varied greatly, these findings cannot be used to draw conclusions or comparisons. They are nevertheless presented to provide findings that can be built upon in future research. This, along with the small number of Spanish varieties represented, are acknowledged as limitations of this study and aim to be amplified in future research.

Hijo de puta	6 (3 Sp, 2 Ch, 1 Ar)	Boludo/a ⁵	1 (Ar)
Puta	6 (1 Sp, 2 Co, 1 Ch, 2 Ec)	Capullo	1 (Sp)
Mierda	5 (2 Sp, 2 Ch, 1 Ec)	Carajo	1 (Sp)
Cabrón	3 (2 Sp, 1 Mx)	Chingar	1 (Mx)
Güevón	3 (1 Co, 1 Ch, 1 Ec)	Gilipollas	1 (Sp)
Pinche	3 (Mx)	Malparido	1 (Co)
Chingada	2 (Mx)	Pendejo	1 (Mx)
Cojones	2 (Sp)	Putada	1 (Sp)
Concha de tu madre	2 (Ch)	Verga	1 (Mx)
Hijueputa	2 (Co)		

*(Sp) = Spain, (Mx) = Mexico, (Co) = Colombia, (Ch) = Chile, (Ec) = Ecuador, (Ar) = Argentina

There were many differences among countries with not one expression reported to be used by participants from all six countries (although *hijo de puta*, *güevón*, and *mierda* were reported by three countries and *puta* by four). When looking at the countries individually, *joder* and *coño* were reported to be used most often by the participants from Spain. Participants from Mexico reported using *pinche* the most, whereas those from Colombia reported using *hijueputa* and *puta* most often. *Concha de tu madre* and *hijo de puta* were reported most by those from Chile, *puta* by those from Ecuador, and *boludo/a* and *hijo de puta* from those from Argentina.

When asked for the expression they consider to be the most offensive out of the ones they are familiar with, 25 different answers were given, with *hijo de puta* provided the most, as displayed in Table 2.⁶

Table 2

Most Offensive Known Expressions

Expression	Frequency (Country*)	Expression, cont.	Frequency (Country)
Hijo de puta	19 (14 S, 4 Co, 1 Ar)	Concha de tu puta madre	1 (Sp)
Hija de puta	6 (4 Sp, 2 Ar)	Hijo de la gran puta	1 (Sp)
Malparido	5 (4 Co, 1 Ch)	Hijo de perra	1 (Ch)
Pendejo	5 (4 Mx, 1 Co)	Hijo de tu puta madre	1 (Mx)
Concha de tu madre	4 (Ch)	Jodete	1 (Mx)
Me cago en tu puta madre	4 (Sp)	Me cago en Dios	1 (Sp)
Puta	3 (2 Sp, 1 Mx)	Me cago en la ostia	1 (Sp)
Chinga tu madre	2 (Mx)	Me cago en la virgen	1 (Sp)
Culero	2 (Mx)	Que te den por culo	1 (Sp)
Mamaverga	2 (Ec)	Tu puta madre	1 (Sp)
Maricón	2 (1 S, 1 C)	Weón culeado	1 (Ch)
Me cago en tus muertos	2 (Sp)	Zorra	1 (Sp)
Verga	2 (Ec)		

*(Sp) = Spain, (Mx) = Mexico, (Co) = Colombia, (Ch) = Chile, (Ec) = Ecuador, (Ar) = Argentina

⁵The term *boludo/a* (indicating both the masculine and feminine versions of this expression) was provided as such by the participant.

⁶*Hija de puta* was not included in this study but will be in future research as, based on this result, it clearly has different semantic and conceptual representations compared to *hijo de puta*.

At the end of the questionnaire, the participants provided 19 expressions they felt to be the most offensive from the list of 113. The answers were similar to those provided at the beginning of the questionnaire, with some slight differences, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Most Offensive Expressions From List

Expression	Frequency (Country)*	Expression, cont.	Frequency (Country)
Hijo de puta	13 (11 Sp, 1 Mx, 1 Co)	Chupa pollas	1 (Sp)
Tu puta madre	11 (7 Sp, 1 Mx, 1 Co, 2 Ch)	Concha de tu puta madre	1 (Sp)
Puta	10 (4 Sp, 2 Mx, 2 Co, 2 Ec)	Imbécil	1 (Ch)
Malparido	5 (1 Mx, 4 Co)	Pendejo	1 (Mx)
Zorra	5 (3 Sp, 1 Ch, 1 Ec)	Pinche perra	1 (Mx)
Maricón	4 (3 Sp, 1 Ch)	Que te den por culo	1 (Ch)
Me cago en la madre que te parió	4 (1 Sp, 1 Ch, 1 Ec, 1 Ar)	Que te folle un pez	1 (Sp)
Vete a la verga	4 (Mx)	Verga	1 (Ar)
Me cago en tu puta madre	3 (2 Sp, 1 Ch)	Vete a tomar por culo	1 (Sp)
Puta madre	2 (1 Sp, 1 Co)		

*(Sp) = Spain, (Mx) = Mexico, (Co) = Colombia, (Ch) = Chile, (Ec) = Ecuador, (Ar) = Argentina

Although there was a variety of TWEs listed, *hijo de puta*, *tu puta madre*, and *puta* were the most frequent, listed by 18.57%, 15.71%, and 14.29% of the participants, respectively.

4.2. Results from Likert Scale Questions

Due to the large number of TWEs included, only those that received an average rating of 4.00 (out of 5) or higher are shown. The TWEs are listed in descending order of the average rating, and those with equal ratings are listed in alphabetical order.

When looking at the most offensive TWEs by all participants (i.e. no participants indicated that they did not know the expression or that it did not have an offensive meaning in their country), as shown in Table 4, eight TWEs were given an average rating of 4.00 or higher, with *hijo de puta* rated as the most offensive.

Table 4

Most Offensive Expressions - All Participants

Expression	Rating	Expression, cont.	Rating
Hijo de puta	4.53	Me cago en la madre que te parió	4.22
Puta	4.36	Zorra	4.13
Tu puta madre	4.36	Maricón	4.04
Perra	4.24	Que te den por culo	4.00

When looking at the TWEs with an average rating of 4.00 or higher by all countries represented, six were considered to be the most offensive, with *hijo de puta* receiving the highest rating. The remaining are shown in Table 5 in descending order of the overall average offensive rating.

Table 5*Most Offensive Expressions - All Countries*

Expression	Rating	Expression, cont.	Rating
Hijo de puta	4.56	Me cago en la madre que te parió	4.36
Tu puta madre	4.50	Perra	4.26
Puta	4.40	Que te den por culo	4.01

When comparing the most offensive TWEs by all participants (Table 4) versus by all countries (Table 5), *zorra* was rated offensive by only three of the six countries (excluding Mexico, Chile, and Argentina); and *maricón* was rated offensive by only two countries (excluding Mexico, Chile, Ecuador, and Argentina).

The following results show the most offensive TWEs for participants from each country, in descending order of the countries with the most participants to the fewest.

A total of eight TWEs were rated an average of 4.00 or higher by the 36 participants from Spain, as shown in Table 6, with the most offensive being *hijo de puta*, the only one to receive a rating above 4.50.

Table 6*Most Offensive Expressions - Spain*

Expression	Rating	Expression, cont.	Rating
Hijo de puta	4.53	Tu puta madre	4.25
Puta	4.42	Me cago en la madre que te parió	4.17
Maricón	4.33	Perra	4.14
Zorra	4.31	Que te den por culo	4.00

The 11 participants from Mexico rated 11 TWEs with an average 4.00 or higher, with the most offensive being *pinche puto*, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7*Most Offensive Expressions - Mexico*

Expression	Rating	Expression, cont.	Rating
Pinche puto	4.81	Pinche perra	4.36
Vete a la verga	4.72	Puta	4.18
Chinga tu madre	4.55	Me cago en la madre que te parió	4.09
Hijo de puta	4.55	Me cago en la puta	4.09
Tu puta madre	4.45	Vete a la mierda	4.09
Perra	4.36		

The nine participants from Colombia rated 15 TWEs an average of 4.00 or higher, shown in Table 8, with the most offensive being *hijo de puta*, *hijueputa*, and *malparido*.

Table 8*Most Offensive Expressions - Colombia*

Expression	Rating	Expression, cont.	Rating
Hijo de puta	4.78	Puta	4.44
Hijueputa	4.78	Vete a la mierda	4.44
Malparido	4.78	Comemierda	4.22
Me cago en la madre que te parió	4.67	Me cago en la puta	4.22
Perra	4.67	Maricón	4.11
Tu puta madre	4.67	Cabrón	4.00
Que te den por culo	4.56	Cabrona	4.00
Zorra	4.56		

Eight TWEs were rated an average of 4.00 or higher by the eight participants from Chile, as shown in Table 9. *Concha de tu madre*, *culeado*, and *hijo de puta* were rated as the most offensive, although none had an average rating of higher than 4.25.

Table 9*Most Offensive Expressions - Chile*

Expression	Rating	Expression, cont.	Rating
Concha de tu madre	4.25	Hijueputa	4.13
Culeado	4.25	Perra	4.13
Hijo de puta	4.25	Puta	4.13
Ándate a la concha de tu madre	4.13	Tu puta madre	4.13

The four participants from Ecuador rated 11 TWEs an average of 4.00 or higher, as shown in Table 10, with the four most offensive being *me cago en la madre que te parió*, *que te den por culo*, *tu puta madre*, and *vete a la verga*.

Table 10*Most Offensive Expressions - Ecuador*

Expression	Rating	Expression, cont.	Rating
Me cago en la madre que te parió	4.50	Perra	4.25
Que te den por culo	4.50	Puta	4.25
Tu puta madre	4.50	Puto	4.25
Vete a la verga	4.50	Zorra	4.25
Careverga	4.25	Me cago en la puta	4.00
Hijo de puta	4.25		

Twenty-one TWEs were rated 4.00 or higher by the two participants from Argentina, including 10 that received an average rating of 5.00, as shown in Table 11.⁷

⁷It is important to reiterate that these results are not comparable given the limited number of participants. The two participants from Argentina also had the same socio-biographical information, the only variety of speakers with this type of participant homogeneity.

Table 11*Most Offensive Expressions - Argentina*

Expression	Rating	Expression, cont.	Rating
Ándate a la concha de tu madre	5.00	Concha de tu madre	4.50
Cabeza de pija	5.00	Lameculos	4.50
Hijo de puta	5.00	Pelotudo	4.50
Hijueputa	5.00	Puto	4.50
Malparido	5.00	Que te jodan	4.50
Mal cogida	5.00	Trola	4.50
Me cago en la madre que te parió	5.00	Verga	4.50
Putá	5.00	Anda a cagar	4.00
Tu puta madre	5.00	Comemierda	4.00
Vete a la mierda	5.00	Perra	4.00
Coger	4.50		

As can be seen by the individual country results, although the highest rated TWEs varied by country with very country-specific TWEs being included in each, such as *concha de tu madre* and *culeado* in Chile or *pinche puto* and *chinga tu madre* in Mexico, *hijo de puta* and *tu puta madre* were consistently rated as some of the most highly offensive TWEs by all countries.

5. Discussion

As shown by the results, all three hypotheses were confirmed. Confirming that the most offensive TWEs would be those that refer to one's mother, three of the top TWEs considered to be the most offensive by all participants and across all varieties were *hijo/a de puta*, *tu puta madre*, and *me cago en la madre que te parió*. This was also seen in the individual country results as *hijueputa*, *chinga tu madre*, *conch de tu madre*, and *ándate a la concha de tu madre* were also rated amongst the most highly offensive TWEs in the specific countries in which they are used. This is further confirmed as, although not prompted to do so, in addition to listing a single TWE when asked for the most offensive TWE from the list, several participants also wrote comments such as "cualquiera quien insulte a la progenitora" [any that insult the mother], "cualquiera en la que se deje mal a la madre de la otra persona" [any that speak ill of the other person's mother], and "todas las que tienen que ver con la madre" [all that have to do with the mother].

Although not surprising, this confirmation of the offensiveness of expressions related to one's mother sheds light upon the importance of and respect towards the mother figure in Spanish-

speaking cultures.⁸ This sociocultural difference is further highlighted when comparing these to those found to be the most offensive in English as their English equivalents or translations (*son of a bitch, your whore of a mother, etc.*) are either not used or were not considered to be highly offensive by English speakers (Beers Fägersten, 2007; Dewaele, 2015, 2017; among others).

The second hypothesis that the offensiveness of many TWEs would vary greatly between the different varieties, particularly the most offensive ones, was also confirmed. When looking at the differences in the most offensive TWEs, *que te follen, me cago en Dios, and gilipollas* were only rated as very offensive by the participants from Spain and not any of the other varieties represented. This was also true for the TWEs provided at the beginning of the questionnaire as expressions starting with *me cago en...* were only provided by participants from Spain. In contrast, participants from Spain were the only ones to neither provide nor rate *hijueputa* as offensive, a TWE found to be offensive in most of the Latin American countries represented.

Similarly, participants from Mexico were the only ones to include *vete a la chingada, chingada* and *chinga*, as well as *pinche puto* and *pinche pendejo*. An interesting note on the rating of the offensiveness by the participants from Mexico is that the TWEs with the added adjective *pinche* (*pinche puto, pinche perra, pinche pendejo*) were rated higher than the same TWE without. This finding is similar to the groupings of TWEs by Mitkova (2007), who included expressions that stand out for their emphatic and hyperbolic character when used to evaluate objects or situations that have negative connotations. This difference is also a point of interest for future research as similar findings were noted in Beers Fägersten (2007) with the English word *fucking* when used as an adjectival or adverbial intensifier.

The overall results from Colombia, Chile, and Ecuador were similar when compared to Spain or Mexico, however, *cabrón, cabrona, bastardo, carechimba, güevón, and maldito* were only reported as offensive by speakers from Colombia, *pinche perra* and *culeado* by those from Chile, and *ándate a la chucha* and *careverga* by those from Ecuador. Argentina reported the most differences with *cabeza de pija, malparido, mal cogida, coger, pelotudo, trola, anda a cagar, carajo, and boludo*. Additionally, *conchetumadre* and *ándate a la concha de tu madre* were only reported as offensive by participants from Chile and Argentina, and *marica* by those from Spain

⁸Also of note is the high rate of inclusion of derogatory references towards females and homosexuals. These are interesting topics for future research as the sociocultural meanings behind these findings require a much more in-depth exploration that goes beyond the scope of this study.

and Argentina. Interestingly, none of the 113 TWEs were rated as all *not offensive* or as *very offensive* by all participants. This variation between the dialects is an important finding as not only is the variety of expressions used quite vast, but the offensiveness rating among varieties was notably higher for some TWEs. This echoes Dewaele's (2015) findings in English and also indicates the lack of conceptual equivalence between the Spanish varieties represented for many of the TWEs.

The third hypothesis that there would be multiple expressions that would be offensive in all regions/varieties was also confirmed as, although rated in a slightly different order, *hijo de puta*, *tu puta madre*, and *puta* were found to be the most offensive TWEs across all varieties represented and were found within all the results from each of the countries.

Finally, although not part of the objectives of this study, the swearing paradox (Beers Fägersten, 2007) can be seen in these results as, although the results varied, those TWEs found to be the most offensive were also among those that were reported to have been used most often.

6. Conclusions

Although the results presented can only be considered as exploratory and preliminary findings due to the unbalanced number of participants from each country represented and the low number of Spanish-speaking countries represented overall, they nevertheless provide an interesting and solid basis from which to base future research.

The data collected yielded results that are of interest for more in-depth investigations on the semantic and conceptual representations of the TWEs and can be seen as a step towards understanding the spectrum of TWEs in Spanish and can be used to selectively reduce the amount in order to conduct such research. Furthermore, an in-depth look into the sociolinguistic and sociocultural differences influencing the variations found is also of interest for future research.

Additionally, not only are these results useful to the growth of the field of TWEs in general, but they also provide important sociocultural and sociopragmatic information that have real-world applications within the vast Spanish-speaking world, including language instruction and cultural sensitivity training for native and non-native Spanish speakers to avoid any so-called bi-dialectal blunders as noted earlier.

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Literatura

Afropolitanismo e identidad en *Cada día es del ladrón* de Teju Cole

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RESUMEN

En este trabajo propongo, en primer lugar, leer *Cada día es el del ladrón* bajo la luz del concepto de afropolitanismo de Tayie Selasi. En segundo lugar, analizaré la idea de identidad cultural e híbrida para entender y ubicar mejor la mirada del narrador que, como un péndulo, se mueve entre dos culturas.

PALABRAS CLAVE

afropolitanismo, corrupción, entre-medio cultural, cultura híbrida

En la novela *Cada día es del ladrón* (2007), del escritor nigeriano Teju Cole, se presenta Lagos, la mayor ciudad del país y la segunda más poblada de África, a través de la mirada de un residente de psiquiatría que ha regresado a la ciudad donde nació después de quince años. La novela es el producto de las entradas del blog del autor, que ya está cerrado⁹. Es por eso que cada capítulo puede leerse como una pequeña crónica en la que se analiza una parte de la realidad de Lagos y Nigeria.

Un hecho importante, que pondrá en evidencia la identidad del narrador, son los actos de corrupción que observa en Lagos. A partir de esta mirada, él empieza a comparar lo que ocurre en Nigeria, su cultura natal, con lo que él cree es lo correcto, y que son los estándares y cánones que ha adquirido en otra cultura. Así, la corrupción es el vehículo que introduce al narrador en las disquisiciones que se dirigirán al cuestionamiento de su identidad. Por ello, en un primer momento, analizaré la corrupción –y los conflictos morales que crea– desde la perspectiva de los lagosenses –de cómo la afrontan y viven con ella en su vida cotidiana– para pasar después al punto de vista del mismo narrador que, finalmente, más allá de los conflictos morales que se le plantean, solo ve una salida para Nigeria, o para el continente africano, en las manifestaciones culturales/artísticas. Por último, examinaré cómo esta mirada hacia la realidad que encuentra el narrador y su defensa hacia lo cultural/artístico, genera también en él un replantearse su identidad que, además, se problematiza por el hecho de que su madre sea blanca. Para esta parte, además del marco general de la noción de afropolitanismo, me apoyaré en los conceptos de indiferencia moral de Victoria Camps, de identidad cultural en un contexto diaspórico de Stuart Hall y de lo que Homi Bhabha llama el “entre-medio” de la cultura.

Aproximación teórica: afropolitanismo e identidad

En la mirada y actitud del narrador de la novela, se presentan las características que Tayie Sealsi menciona en su ensayo sobre la diáspora africana, específicamente sobre la generación posterior a las migraciones de los sesentas y setentas del siglo pasado. Según Ángela Suárez, Selasi ha derivado el neologismo de la idea de cosmopolitismo y “presents it as a conceptual tool for referring to members of the most recent generation of culturally hybrid, internationally mobile, and highly educated Afrodiasporians settled in different cities across the globe. She also makes it

⁹ *Cada día es del ladrón* es la primera novela de Teju Cole. Fue publicada en 2007 por Cassava Republic Press y en 2014 fue reeditada por Faber & Faber en Reino Unido y, ese mismo año, por Random House en Estados Unidos. En 2016 apareció la reedición en español por la editorial Acanalado.

clear that these “Africans of the world”, rather than being, in conventional parlance, “citizens of the world”, are “multilocal” – at home in different parts of the global north, while at the same time having a special bond with at least one place in Africa” (791). Además, hay tres dimensiones, según Selasi, en las que los afropolitanos deben formar su identidad: a) en lo nacional: a diferencia de sus padres, no pueden reclamar un país como suyo, por lo que deben definir cuál es la relación que tienen con el lugar que habitan; b) en lo racial: ya que muchos de ellos tienen padres de culturas diferentes, la forma en que ven la raza es una cuestión más política; y, finalmente, c) en lo cultural, que pasa por aceptar la complejidad y variedad de lo que se llama “cultura africana”.

Como la corrupción es uno de los puntos centrales sobre los que se posa la mirada aguda del narrador y, aunque no haga juicios morales explícitos, sus elucubraciones ponen al lector en relación directa con el sentido ético que se desprende de dichos actos. De acuerdo a esto, ya que la corrupción y la desidia son de alguna manera generalizados a tal punto que no se ven, o no se quieren ver, lo que se hace evidente en la sociedad descrita por el narrador, es lo que, siguiendo a la filósofa Victoria Camps, podemos llamar indiferencia moral. Aunque en su artículo, “La indiferencia moral en la época mediática”, su intención es poner de manifiesto cómo los medios de comunicación pueden a la vez sacudir y mantener la indiferencia moral, su enfoque es útil para analizar cómo se describe en la novela la relación entre la corrupción y la ciudadanía¹⁰. Camps sostiene que entre el consumismo generado por los medios y la indiferencia del laicismo se “ha producido un tipo de individuo que sólo acierta a mostrar interés por lo que le concierne muy personalmente y reacciona con total indiferencia ante lo que ocurre en general y las formas en que se le narra lo ocurrido” (17). Así, lo que pondría de manifiesto la conducta moral, no serían los grandes acontecimientos, “sino la cotidianidad, la capacidad de responder habitualmente, es decir, por la fuerza de la costumbre, a todo aquello que demanda un mínimo discernimiento moral” (18). Con esto, Camps argumenta que el indiferente moral es aquella persona que se interesa solo por su beneficio personal y, sobre todo, ha internalizado de tal manera ese actuar que es parte de su vida cotidiana, por lo que no la pone en cuestión.

Por otro lado, además de la perspectiva afropolitna, el narrador de la novela se ubica en un lugar complejo que podríamos entender como en disputa. Es el espacio al que Homi Bhabha llama

¹⁰ Se trata del discurso pronunciado por la profesora Victoria Camps como lección inaugural del curso 2006-2007 de Radio ECCA. Por la proximidad de la fecha de publicación de *Cada día es del ladrón* (2007), no es posible que Teju Cole haya tenido conocimiento de este.

“el entre-medio de la cultura” (“El entre-medio de la cultura” 96), un lugar “desconcertantemente parecido y diferente” (96). Es el espacio que ha resultado de las migraciones modernas, en la que los grupos que se desplazaron llevaron consigo solo una parte de su cultura por lo que la cultura que se desarrolla en el nuevo lugar será al mismo tiempo parecida y diferente de la original. Hacia lo que apunta Bhabha es a no pensar en esas narrativas que ven la cultura como lo esencial y originario, sino a “centrarse en esos momentos o procesos que se producen en la articulación de las diferencias culturales” (El lugar de la cultura, 18) y que son, precisamente, esos lugares “entre-medio”, que “proveen el terreno para elaborar estrategias de identidad (selfhood) (singular o comunitaria) que inician nuevos signos de identidad, y sitios innovadores de colaboración y cuestionamiento, en el acto de definir la idea misma de sociedad” (18).

Stuart Hall coincide en este punto cuando sostiene que se debería entender la identidad como algo no concluido, “deberíamos pensar en la identidad como una “producción” que nunca está completa, sino que siempre está en proceso y se constituye dentro de la representación, y nunca fuera de ella” (349). En este sentido, del análisis de una nueva tendencia cinematográfica en el Caribe, cuyo tema central es el sujeto negro y la identidad cultural, Stuart Hall se pregunta ¿quién es este nuevo sujeto y desde dónde se habla de él? Lo que pretende en su artículo es indagar sobre “el tema de identidad cultural y representación” (349). Su propuesta es que hay dos formas de pensar la identidad cultural. La primera es la que llama cultura compartida, algo así como “un verdadero sí mismo [one true self] colectivo” (349), pero que está como oculto dentro de otros sí mismos algo más superficiales o que han sido impuestos de manera artificial. Dentro de este marco, lo que reflejan las identidades culturales es esa historia común y ciertos códigos culturales, que se constituyen en “marcos de referencia y significados estables e inmutables y continuos” (350). Es el fondo estable compartido, pero esto no quiere decir que sea inamovible, sino que se le puede representar como un redescubrimiento. Por eso esta idea de identidad cultural fue importante en las luchas poscoloniales y sirvió como fuente para culturas marginadas. Este mirar esa historia común y conectar ciertos puntos, implica cicatrizar heridas del pasado. La segunda forma de pensar la identidad es la que admite que “también hay puntos críticos de diferencia profunda y significativa” (351), que terminan constituyendo aquello en lo que nos hemos convertido. Son “las rupturas y discontinuidades” (351) que forman la singularidad (del Caribe). Aquí la identidad pertenece al futuro (“llegar a ser”) y al pasado (“ser”). En este segundo sentido, la identidad no existe como estando más allá, o trascendiendo “el lugar, el tiempo, la historia y la cultura” (351),

más bien, al venir de un lugar, tiene historia y por lo mismo, está en constante transformación. No se trata de recuperar el pasado para darle sentido al presente, sino que “las identidades son los nombres que les damos a las diferentes formas en las que estamos posicionados, y dentro de las que nosotros mismos nos posicionamos, a través de las narrativas del pasado” (351). Lo traumático de la experiencia colonial solo se puede entender desde esta posición.

El encuentro con Lagos

La razón del regreso a Lagos del narrador no queda clara. Por momentos parece un viaje nostálgico de reconocimiento, como si se deslizara la posibilidad de volver definitivamente. Pero también, y esto lo veremos al analizar la identidad, da a entender que el regreso para él es imposible. En todo caso, esa ambigüedad le da a su mirada una distancia y objetividad que se expresan en una prosa elegante y reflexiva. En concordancia con esto, Isabel Soto señala: “Methodologically and stylistically, *Every Day* recalls – or prefigures – *Open City* in its controlled language and paratactical narration of events; its insistence on the visual (such as an intertextual reliance on black and white photographs or western paintings) as well as the corporeal as an alternative means of telling and “tracing out a story”; and what may be described as Cole’s stylistic trademark, a judicious avoidance of the explicit or the manifest, whether it be the narrator’s racial identity, details of his troubled family background, or traumatic events” (372). De esa manera, con menciones que parecen inocuas y meditaciones profundas, el narrador nos lleva por su tierra natal como un guía que pone énfasis en los lugares más sórdidos, los que normalmente no se mostrarían, para ir dando su punto de vista y, finalmente, para plantear lo que cree sería la mejor manera de mirar África.

La primera vez que Cole presenta la corrupción nigeriana en la novela, es en el consulado en Estados Unidos. Allí el narrador se encuentra con la habilidad de los funcionarios para, a través de una cédula, aprovecharse de la burocracia y sacar una ventaja personal (que seguramente un porcentaje es para el cónsul), haciendo pagar un monto extra a los usuarios. Aunque el protagonista ya estaba preparado mentalmente para este tipo de situaciones, jamás se le había ocurrido que pudieran ocurrir desde el consulado.

A partir de ahí, ya en Lagos, los actos de corrupción se suceden casi sin interrupción, como dice el narrador, “a los cuarenta y cinco minutos de dejar el aeropuerto ya me he encontrado con tres ejemplos claros de corrupción” (20), que van desde el oficial que revisa el equipaje en el aeropuerto, o en el peaje al salir de este, donde los conductores pagan menos pero no reciben un

comprobante porque el dinero es para el funcionario del peaje, o los policías que se esconden en una esquina estratégica para detener automovilistas. Pero el narrador no solo nos muestra cómo la corrupción se escabulle por los intersticios de la legalidad, o los pequeños espacios que dejan las normas, o en los lugares que están escondidos, a la sombra, sino que también muestra cómo funciona en las instituciones. Efectivamente, cuando el narrador visita el Museo Nacional se encuentra con una institución que funciona por inercia. De “la gloria de la arqueología y la historia del arte nigerianas” (68), como se lamenta, no encuentra nada. Los bronceos Ife, las placas y figuras de azófar de Benín, las terracotas nok, las vasijas igbo, ukwu, que él conoce y que están en museos de todo el mundo, no aparecen por ningún lado. Sospecha que el Museo se ha convertido en sinecura de algunos funcionarios en los regímenes militares de los ochentas¹¹.

Si nos detenemos en estos hechos, vemos que reflejan la indiferencia moral planteada por Camps, pues es evidente que esta actitud frente a la corrupción implica que se haya hecho parte de la vida, es más, ha creado una especie de sentido práctico en las personas. Como observa el narrador, “Justamente porque todo el mundo toma un atajo nada funciona, y así la única manera de lograr hacer algo es tomar un atajo más” (23). A la coima se la llama propina, porque así no solo se la relativiza, sino que se la hace pasar como algo positivo, pues una propina es algo que se da voluntariamente por un servicio. De esta manera, corruptor y corrompido están convencidos de su buen accionar.

La normalización de este problema, el que sirva para salir de un apuro, o que reporte beneficios personales, ha hecho de Lagos un lugar difícil para vivir, un lugar donde a ojos del narrador “prolifera la venalidad, y lo más desgarrador es la atmósfera de derrota, de impotencia” (65). En ese sentido, la novela está llena de situaciones en las que podemos ver cómo la corrupción se ha vuelto un hábito. El siguiente ejemplo es ilustrativo. Cuando el narrador va con un amigo a comprar gasolina y es estafado con el precio por la vendedora, al mostrar este su molestia, el amigo lo anima a no agobiarse: “Es lo que hay” (86), dice, aludiendo a que la realidad es así y no va a cambiar porque él se moleste. No tenían alternativa. “Las cosas son así, ella tenía que llevarse su parte. Nos ahorra el problema de la propina” (86). Esa manera “práctica” de enfocar el problema,

¹¹ Efectivamente, el narrador menciona cómo las autoridades coloniales, durante los siglos XIX y XX, se llevaron piezas de arte a sus respectivas capitales. Así como también, hasta antes de los regímenes militares, cuán ricos habían sido los museos nigerianos bajo la curaduría de los arqueólogos Frank Wilson y John Wallace, británicos ambos. O, cómo había sido manejado el Museo Nacional bajo la dirección del historiador del arte Udoh Udoh.

donde el dinero es “un lubricante social” (21), alimenta el ethos de las personas y estas acaban internalizándolo.

No obstante, esta normalización y aceptación de la corrupción también crea violencia. En Lagos no es raro ver linchamientos de ladrones comunes en las calles, no importa que sean niños, y lo más probable es que entre los linchadores haya personas que ese mismo día hayan cometido un acto de corrupción. Por eso es común que los delincuentes también se vean así mismos actuando dentro de lo aceptable e, incluso, dentro de lo justo, como los pandilleros que amenazan al narrador y a su familia cuando están descargando un contenedor. “Vosotros os habéis hecho ricos y nosotros también queremos hacernos ricos” (93), les dicen, porque para ellos es correcto conseguir dinero cobrando cupos o confiscando mercancía y, más aún, se ven así mismos justificados porque también ayudan a los políticos a ganar elecciones.

Por otro lado, ese ambiente de inseguridad y desidia en el que se vive en Lagos, se representa de manera adecuada en una frase que el narrador dice escuchar a menudo, aunque no especifica si se trata de un proverbio nigeriano: “Idea l’a need”, que significa que solo se necesita una idea general de las cosas, que no hay que empantanarse en los detalles. Por ejemplo, si el cinturón de seguridad del coche no funciona, solo hay que colocárselo de tal forma que parezca que funciona. Para qué hacerse problemas. Es la normalización de lo hecho a medias, no es necesario ir más allá pues basta con una idea o concepto general, lo que conduce a una especie de conformismo para continuar en el mismo estado sin buscar una solución.

Además, todo esto ocurre en una sociedad estratificada que también se nota en el episodio en el que el narrador va a comprar gasolina con su amigo y este habla con la vendedora usando “un registro coloquial que anula las diferencias sociales” (86) para conseguir que los atiendan bien. Aunque el ejemplo más claro es cuando el narrador quiere ir a la isla de Lagos en danfo, el transporte local, y su tía trata de convencerlo para que no lo haga: “te guste o no, Estados Unidos te ha ablandado” (35), asegura ella aludiendo a lo peligroso que puede ser el transporte público. Pero en el fondo no se trata solo de seguridad, es algo más profundo que muestra una sociedad jerarquizada. De lo que se trata, apunta el narrador, es “de mantener tensas las líneas de privilegio” (35), de no verse como uno de la masa.

La corrupción y el comportamiento de los lagosenses que refleja la novela desde la mirada del narrador, también le afectan a él, pues, evidentemente, le llevan a actuar y, sobre todo, a plantearse su identidad y sentido de pertenencia. Su primer día en Lagos, cuando está de camino a

casa con sus tíos, y ha sido testigo de los ya mencionados tres actos de corrupción en menos de cuarenta y cinco minutos, se dice a sí mismo que su preocupación por lo que pasa “es un lujo que pueden darse muy pocos. Para muchos nigerianos, dar y recibir sobornos, untos, dinero de extorsión o limosnas -las categorías son fluidas- no son actos que se piensen en términos morales. Son cosas que se consideran molestias menores u oportunidades. Es una manera de que las cosas se hagan” (21). Pero en ese momento parece haber olvidado lo que ocurrió en el consulado. Él había decidido que no pagaría el soborno, pero el razonamiento del hombre que estaba sentado a su lado cuando le pregunta: “¿No te interesa más tu viaje que demostrar lo que piensas?” (12), le demuestra que no tiene alternativa y, aunque esté convencido de que esa “complicidad negligente” (12) sea lo que ha hundido a Lagos, paga el soborno. Y es esa “complicidad” lo que describe Victoria Camps en su artículo. Él está consciente y no solo es capaz de darse cuenta del hecho, de llevar a cabo el razonamiento y el juicio morales, sino que también lo dice, intenta protestar con el acto de no pagar la cédula que implica el soborno. ¿Se puede decir que ha sido una víctima? El interés personal, su viaje, que se supone era necesario, se impone ante sus principios. Como dice Victoria Camps, ha primado lo que le concierne solo personalmente aunque sepa que no es lo correcto.

La identidad y el hogar

Estos actos a los que no está acostumbrado, pero sobre todo la manera como las personas los afrontan, volviéndolos parte de su vida cotidiana, le crean al narrador un conflicto de identidad. Esa mirada distante y objetiva que muestra los hechos, ha empezado a cuestionar el sentido de pertenencia y la idea del hogar. El protagonista siente que ha regresado como extranjero porque está seguro de que ha “asimilado ciertos supuestos de la vida en una democracia occidental” (21), como la idea de legalidad que, como va quedando claro, en Lagos es bastante relativa. En ese sentido, Cordula Lemke asegura que el narrador “has become alienated in a way that he can only look at his home country in a distanced and unsympathetic manner. His home country is presented as a heaven for thieves where petty crime thrives on moral indifference. In the eyes of the narrator, the citizens of Lagos get what they deserve” (80). Interpretación que apunta al conflicto de identidad, pero asumiendo que el narrador no se identifica con su ciudad natal, que se ha alienado; lo cual, desde la perspectiva que se plantea en este trabajo, no es del todo cierto, pues al asegurar que ha adquirido principios occidentales, no está dirigiendo sus pensamientos hacia las diferencias entre ambas culturas, sino que, más bien, los dirige hacia el conflicto que le generan a él. Y esa es

una de las razones por las que desde un inicio él toma distancia de su ciudad natal. Solo en una ocasión desliza la idea de la búsqueda del origen, cuando está en el Museo Nacional y ve a dos turistas brasileros y se apena por ellos, venir de tan lejos “en busca de la herencia y encontrarse con esto” (70), piensa mientras los mira. Con esto nos está diciendo que él no es parte de esa búsqueda, para él, que su origen esté o no en África, no le parece relevante. Además, como se mencionó anteriormente, un hecho que contribuye a ello, es que la gente no lo ve como del lugar, piensan que es un igbo, o un oyinbo¹² (blanco).

Por otro lado, el narrador, claro ejemplo de afropolitano, aunque no sea hijo de las generaciones de quienes emigraron durante los sesentas y setentas, además de coincidir cronológicamente con ellas, calza en una de las características que menciona Selasi, la de relacionar un lugar del continente africano con su “sentido del yo”, lo que puede ser un país, una ciudad, o incluso “la cocina de una tía”. En efecto, lo único que él puede relacionar con su yo y con la idea del hogar son dos lugares. El primero es el Museo Nacional, pues según él, quien “vive lejos de su hogar tiene algo a lo que aferrarse” y ese es el lugar que él tiene en la memoria (58). El segundo es el paradero del transporte público, donde, según él, “convergen las energías de la vida de Lagos: creativa, malevolente, ambigua” (36), por lo que se convierte en el mejor espacio “para averiguar qué es lo que añoraba todas las veces en que añoraba el hogar” (36).

Así pues, en palabras de Suárez Rodríguez: “His return visit thus seems to be the result of a certain homesickness – a need to get back to the place of origin due to challenges of belonging in exile that is typical of diasporic consciousness, even in his privileged status as an Afropolitan.” (793). Pero también, aunque sea cierto que la añoranza lo ha llevado de vuelta, está seguro que no pertenece a África, esto lo vemos cuando visita a su expareja y se pregunta, pensando en Lagos, “por qué he venido, por qué he elegido otra vez recuperar lo imposible” (108). Es por eso que, en una de sus reflexiones, asegura que la palabra hogar le “sabe a comida extranjera” (137).

De acuerdo a este razonamiento, el narrador de Cole, como migrante que ha llevado a otra cultura algo de la original y, a la vez, ha adquirido algo de la nueva, ve su identidad complicada en el momento en el que ambas se juntan. Y más aún cuando las compara y quiere formar parte de una de las dos, lo que no será posible pues hay una especie de ambigüedad, o de lucha, porque él está ubicado, siguiendo a Homi Bhabha, en el espacio en disputa que es el “entre-medio” cultural,

¹² Aunque el narrador es parco dando detalles biográficos, cuando recuerda a su madre menciona “su rostro y su color pálido” (104).

el lugar que tiene algo de la cultura original y de aquella en la que se ha asentado, “el tejido contaminado pero conectivo entre culturas” (96), pero que al mismo tiempo también es “imposibilidad de la inclusividad de la cultura y límite entre ellas” (96), lo que tiene como consecuencia la formación de una identidad híbrida.

En ese sentido, una de las visitas que hace el narrador en sus caminatas es reveladora, puesto que deja ver cuál es su postura frente a la situación problemática en la que ve a Nigeria y, también, da luces sobre su sentido de pertenencia. Se trata de la visita al Centro Muson (Musical Society of Nigeria), y no es casual que en la novela Cole sitúe este episodio en el capítulo siguiente (el 15) al de la visita al Museo Nacional, pues lo que busca es contraponer la desidia de las instituciones estatales con la vitalidad de las privadas. En el Centro Muson, que está muy bien organizado, la cultura está “viva y en forma” (75). Los alumnos deben tener los instrumentos que quieren aprender, los profesores extranjeros son mucho más caros que los nacionales, pero lo fundamental para el narrador es que funciona bien y así como los “lugares como el Museo Nacional matan el deseo de vivir aquí, instituciones como el Centro Muson la reavivan” (79). Aunque es evidente que la desigualdad social se refleja también en el arte, algo que para el narrador parece no resultar relevante, el arte en todas sus manifestaciones representa para él la salida para Nigeria.

Se puede decir que la concepción valorativa que tiene de la vida el narrador es estética, algo que está en resonancia con la educación de un afropolitano. Cuando ve actos de corrupción, de violencia, o la desidia de los pobladores, lo que en el fondo está mirando es material literario. Su distancia narrativa no es solo una objetividad de turista, o de un testigo que no pertenece al lugar, es la del artista. “De todos lados vuelan hacia mí narraciones” (61), piensa cuando está recordando los hechos que ha visto. Y eso mismo le hace pensar en escritores como John Updike que, según él, habría ganado el Premio Nobel de haber vivido en Nigeria. Pero no se trata solo de su admiración hacia el arte, se trata más bien de su propuesta. Para el narrador, “Los signos vitales más convincentes” (79) que ve en su país “se relacionan con la práctica de las artes” (79). Es el arte, la cultura, la que ubicará a Nigeria como parte del mundo y la que la devolverá a su lugar en la cultura universal. La idea, o sensación, que tiene cada vez que vuelve a Lagos, de entrar a un lugar infernal, desaparece porque surge la esperanza cuando piensa en el arte, y más precisamente en aquellos que se dedican a él en Lagos, esos “pocos que nadan con fuerza a contracorriente” (79). En este sentido, Cole sigue la misma estrategia que al comparar el Museo Nacional con el Centro Muson, cuando en el capítulo 21 compara una librería en la que los originales están de

muestra y solo se vende piratería, con la tienda Jazzhole. La descripción de esta tienda, que no solo es una organizada librería, sino también sello discográfico y editorial, es similar a la del Centro Muson. El narrador define al dueño como parte “de esa estirpe rara pero tenaz de innovadores culturales nigerianos” (112), que le devuelven la esperanza cada vez que vuelve a Lagos y le hacen olvidar la sensación de que está entrando en un infierno. Aunque Nigeria sea “un medio hostil para la vida de la mente” (41), asegura que siente “un nuevo respeto por los que logran realizar aquí alguna clase de trabajo creativo” (64). Hacia esto mismo apunta la autora nigeriana Chimamanda Adichie en “*The Danger of a Single Story*”, cuando habla del peligro de un solo discurso, esto es, el tener una sola visión sobre una realidad, en este caso de África, porque resulta en la creación de estereotipos. La escritora enfatiza en ese sentido la importancia del arte y la cultura, preguntándose qué pasaría si las personas que se han formado ya una idea del continente africano, supieran, por ejemplo, del trabajo de personas como su editor, Mukta Bakaray, que dejó su trabajo en un banco para fundar una editorial porque creía que en Nigeria no se leía porque no había qué leer, no porque la gente no quisiera, o si supieran de la música contemporánea nigeriana, cantada en inglés, pidgin, igbo y yoruba¹³.

En *Cada día es del ladrón*, esa mirada sobre África desde diferentes perspectivas coincide con la propuesta de Chimamanda. Esa perspectiva es lo esperanzador y, sobre todo, la solución. Desde su punto de vista de afropolitano, no son los habitantes de Lagos –quienes están más ocupados en sobrevivir– ni mucho menos los políticos, quienes van a darle un nuevo rostro a Nigeria, esto solo lo harán quienes se dedican al arte, quienes pueden, como el arte ausente en el Museo Nacional, darle un estatus de universalidad. Lo que está en consonancia con la primera idea de identidad cultural sugerida por Stuart Hall quien, siguiendo a Fanon, asegura que esta significa mirar hacia atrás, a ese pasado colonial que, “debido a una clase de lógica perversa” (350), tergiversa el pasado del pueblo oprimido. “En ningún momento debemos sobreestimar o abandonar la importancia del acto de redescubrimiento imaginativo en que se produce esta concepción de una identidad esencial redescubierta” (350), argumenta enseguida, pues aquello que se ha redescubierto, como los ejemplos que pone del Caribe, han sido esenciales en la formación de importantes movimientos sociales.

¹³ Ella menciona más ejemplos en diferentes áreas como el derecho, la medicina o los medios de comunicación. Aquí solo indico lo que tiene que ver con la propuesta de Cole.

Con esta consideración del arte como el elemento que situará a Nigeria y al continente africano dentro de la cultura global, una vez más, de acuerdo con la descripción de Selasi, podemos definir al narrador como un afropolitano porque, primero, aunque se vincule afectivamente con un lugar de África, su interés no es local y, segundo, porque su visión de la vida y de pertenencia va más allá de las fronteras. Sin embargo, aunque asegure que la realidad de Nigeria sea infinitamente superior en el sentido cultural/artístico, eso no es suficiente para pensar en mudarse: temas prácticos como la desventaja económica, su trabajo en Estados Unidos, o su desarrollo profesional, no se lo permitirían. Aunque el material sea abundante para la creatividad y, aunque de hecho haya gente que se dedica a ello, lo que hay es “escasez de amparo creativo” (64) y él no está dispuesto a arriesgarse, en ese sentido prefiere la comodidad que le brinda occidente. “Decido que me gusta demasiado mi tranquilidad como para tontear con problemas ajenos. No volveré a vivir en Lagos. De ninguna manera. No me importa que haya un millón de historias por contar, tampoco me importa si esto es una contribución más a la atmósfera de derrota” (65), se dice. Lo cual, a la luz de los conceptos de afropolitanismo, identidad cultural e hibridez, no debe interpretarse como indiferencia ni desarraigo por la “tierra natal”, pues él ya pertenece a un lugar.

Como ha quedado claro, el narrador es un buen representante de la idea de afropolitanismo ya que, finalmente, no se restringe a una identidad africana, solo se identifica con determinados lugares y recuerdos; pero tampoco la descarta, él se siente parte de lo africano desde el punto de vista artístico, mientras que occidente es parte de su identidad desde un punto de vista institucional, desde los principios en los que se ha fundado la cultura occidental. Por otro lado, el choque con esta realidad, hace que el narrador se plantee el problema de la identidad que, como vimos bajo la luz de Bhabha y Hall, es una identidad híbrida que, en cuanto a su propuesta sobre el arte, se ubica dentro de lo que Hall llama “cultura compartida” o “verdadero sí mismo” que, al ser revisitado, da luces sobre la identidad. Por eso, y es lo más importante para el narrador, está seguro que solo las manifestaciones artísticas pondrán a África en el lugar que le corresponde.

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Chaste, Moral, Discerning: Gender Expectations in “La gitanilla” by Cervantes

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ABSTRACT

Through a careful analysis of the protagonist of Cervantes’ “La gitanilla”, this paper will outline the expectations of womanhood imposed on 17th century females by both the Spaniards and the marginalized nomads, acting in accordance with their patriarchal desires. We will begin by assessing the impact of physical beauty and character; then we will highlight the unparalleled virtue that separates the protagonist from her Roma community. Finally, we will explore the confines of the patriarchy and the few scenes in which Preciosa tests the limits of her sex.

KEYWORDS

La gitanilla, Cervantes, feminine virtue, Gypsies, patriarchy, gender expectations

While Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra is most celebrated for his magnum opus *Don Quixote* (1609), the author's *Novelas ejemplares* (1613) cannot be ignored in the reconstruction of 17th century perceptions of gender, ethnicity, and power dynamics. The first of the tales in the *Novelas*, "La gitanilla"—translated to English as "The Novel of the Little Gypsy Girl"—follows a 15-year-old Gypsy whose beauty and grace know no bounds.¹ More virtuous than a typical Gypsy, Preciosa (for such is her name) is so perfect that even a well-respected man of knightly origins renounces his upbringing to join Preciosa's caravan and prove to her that they belong together.² Only at the end of the story is it revealed that the Gypsy girl is in fact the kidnapped daughter of Spanish city officials, and her unrivalled purity suddenly makes sense; now, she can happily marry her knightly lover with the blessing of two esteemed families, free from prejudice or judgement.³

"La gitanilla" is the subject of many scholarly articles, notably in comparative literature (see Kátia Sherman, Ruth Fine, Maria Soledad Arredondo) and in theatrical studies (see Elena Villa Fernández de Castro, Victoria Pineda, Julián Jesús Pérez Fernández). David A. Boruchoff and Xabier Granja Ibarreche, among others, focus on Cervantes and his celebrated *Novelas ejemplares* as well—these sources will allow for a comparative approach rooted in feminist discourse. This paper will also engage with themes of marriage, virtue, and the male gaze to attempt to prove that "La gitanilla" illustrates, from a male point of view, the expectations of womanhood imposed on 17th century females in its idealization of Preciosa by the Spaniards and the marginalized nomads, who both represent the desires of the patriarchy. This paper will first analyse the descriptions of Preciosa's character and appearance and how her radiance impacts other characters. Then, it will expound how she is not like the other Gypsies due to her unparalleled virtue. Finally, it will explore the confines of the patriarchy and the few scenes in which Preciosa tests the limits of her sex.

First of all, the protagonist is, plainly put, attractive. Only 15, Preciosa is a whirlwind of grace and beauty, outshining all the other girls in her caravan. In fact, "Preciosa shone among them like the light of a torch among other, lesser lights" (Cervantes 22). Her face has no blemishes, her hands are smooth, she is young and pure, and she is a talented dancer and singer (11). All of this

¹ This paper will use the term "gypsy" to engage with the perceptions of said group in Cervantes's time. Nowadays, other terms such as Roma are more accepted than the connotative "gypsy".

² Preciosa means precious in Spanish.

³ While the lover's name is Don Juan de Cárcamo, when he joins the Gypsies at Preciosa's request, he adopts the name Andrés Caballero, and we will refer to him as such.

is, of course, described by a male author. Studies in social sciences such as Ewa Glapka's show that men impact the "construction of female beauty" through what she calls the male gaze; she also highlights the "relationship between the beauty and male heterosexual looking" (88). Indeed, men of all ages watch Preciosa and comment on her magnificence; she is the portrait of innocence, little more than a child. This is actually a recurring theme in literature and media across time and space: the infantilization of women and the fetishization of girls demonstrate that many men are interested in younger females because they are untouched and fall prey to unequal power dynamics.⁴ While Cervantes does not present any predatory male characters, even the innocent bantering of Preciosa and her male spectators can be interpreted as unrequited desire, especially since the protagonist is so young.⁵ Of course, with time, perceptions of appropriate relationships have changed—from a 17th century point of view, her age would likely not strike the reader in the same way.

Moreover, Preciosa is not only beautiful in appearance but also in character. When she dances, for example, "the charm of Preciosa [is] so great that little by little the eyes of everyone who [looks] at her [succumbs] to love" (Cervantes 12). Preciosa's impact on those around her is flagrant; anyone she meets, man or woman, is awestruck by this angelic creature and cannot help but compliment her. The Deputy Mayor's wife and her entourage, for example, are immediately taken by her: "And so everyone hurried toward her: some ladies embraced her, others looked at her, some blessed her, others praised her. Doña Clara said: 'This really is hair of gold! These really are emerald eyes!'" (Cervantes 22). In the same scene, an ageing squire exclaims, "By God, the Gypsy girl is so pretty that if she were made of silver or sugar icing she couldn't be better!" (22).

⁴ According to Harriet Hustis, in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), for example, sordid protagonist "Humbert's inscription and interpretation of pre-pubescent girls as 'nymphets' ... [functions] as a form of sexual conscription" leading to his "helpless seduction" (11). In "La gitanilla", men like Andrés, Preciosa's future husband, are also helpless once they meet the Gypsy girl—she is young and innocent, not intending to seduce but doing so nonetheless. Michele Meek states that Kim Morrissey's *Poems for Men Who Dream of Lolita* "suggests that these poems are specifically addressed to the 'men who dream of Lolita.' ... this evocation also includes Nabokov and all male readers who derive aesthetic bliss from the story of Lolita" (157-158). Nabokov himself identifies aesthetic bliss as the goal of the novel and defines it as "a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm" (qtd. in Meek 153). Meek and many other feminist scholars propose that this is a trap made to draw away from interpreting *Lolita* as the victim. *Lolita*, then, was written for this male audience—to please them and allow them to fantasize without consequence. We argue that Cervantes, too, wrote for male readers, depicting Preciosa as the epitome of male desire.

⁵ A study on young South African women proposes that "the male gaze has produced and continues to reproduce 'a univocal model for the female body'" (Glapka 88), meaning that men's preference for a certain type of female impacts not only how women compare themselves to this model, but also which women have a higher status within the patriarchal hierarchy. Cervantes would then be contributing to this model through his construction of the perfect Preciosa.

Preciosa's beauty is coveted both by her lover and her gypsy grandmother. Andrés is prone to jealousy, and imagines any man staring at her does so "because Preciosa's great beauty [attracts] all eyes" (Cervantes 46).⁶ While at first at odds with Clemente, a page and poet in disguise who stumbles upon the Gypsy caravan, soon the two men bond over their Spaniard origins and their admiration of Preciosa.⁷ They even compose a song to celebrate her splendour. Consider this stanza by Clemente:

Where the extreme of beauty does attend,
and wherever Preciosa
hastens with every extreme of goodness
and beautiful purity
all in a single creature,
no human wit can begin to praise her
that does not touch on divine,
on high, on rare, on grave, on perfect grace. (Cervantes 54-55)

Preciosa is superhuman; her "extreme beauty" and "extreme of goodness" are incomparable, and she cannot even be described in human terms—she is divine, rare, and perfect. Andrés, too, sings her praises: "beauty is the least of her virtues, / delicate treasure *of mine*, / the crown of grace, the honor of spirit" (Cervantes 55, emphasis added). Though Andrés and Preciosa had agreed to exist independently of each other and enter an equal relationship after two years, Andrés already claims ownership of this great treasure. But he is not the only one who feels entitled to Preciosa; from the first page, Cervantes shows the Gypsy grandmother coveting the beautiful girl. She "knew the treasure she had in her granddaughter" (11)—again, the use of the word *treasure*. Once Preciosa started attracting attention, "the old Gypsy woman, ... watched over her like Argos, afraid that someone would steal away the girl she called her granddaughter" (14). Like a pile of gold or an expensive necklace, Preciosa is sought after and, to a degree, objectified.

Her beauty and charm give her a certain power, and though only 15, Preciosa is well aware of this fact. Adrián Sáez underlines the "juego constante entre la decencia («honestidad») y la libertad («desenvoltura»), por el que la hermosura y la gracia naturales de la gitanilla Preciosa

⁶ This comes back to the notion of the male gaze and its relationship to desire.

⁷ Clemente is wary about revealing his identity, claiming to be a local businessman travelling to Our Lady of la Peña de Francia, because he was involved in a crime in the town where he first met Preciosa while working as a page. He had also given her poetry.

despiertan amores y deseos que ella ... se preocupa por tener a raya y gestionar en su favor (como en el caso de los amoríos de Andrés)” (68). Beauty is a key factor in Preciosa’s elevated status within the patriarchy because it gives her influence over men, flipping the power dynamic—or supposedly doing so. Consider the passage in which Andrés refuses a mule, choosing instead to walk beside Preciosa while she rides. Cervantes describes how “she was delighted to see how she had triumphed over her gallant squire” (44). But the sentence continues: “and [Andrés] was similarly delighted to find himself next to the one he had made *mistress of his will*” (44, emphasis added). According to Sáez, the “casta doncella” has only “poder simbólico” (76); this is the case for Preciosa, who believes she has somehow conquered Andrés. But the latter is confident that he is still in control as per the gender hierarchy—his *will* is ultimately obeyed. Upon first meeting Clemente, while pretending to be Preciosa’s brother, Andrés says that she “is subject to whatever [he wishes] to do with her” (Cervantes 49), and when Clemente mentions that he has a lot of money with him, Andrés jumps to the conclusion that “carrying so much money could only be for conquering or buying the woman he loved”, Preciosa (49). Again and again, Andrés’s innermost thoughts reveal that he does not see the Gypsy girl as an equal or intends to wait two years to get to know her as a sister; he has already claimed her and decided her fate because he sees women as something that can be purchased and owned. Regardless of how independent or modern Preciosa might be, she has no real effect on gender inequality in her society.

Second of all, while Preciosa is described as the *crème de la crème* of the Gypsy world, her qualities extend beyond the confines of ethnicity; she is in fact “the most extraordinary dancer in all of Gypsydom, and the most beautiful and discerning girl that one could find, not only among the Gypsies but also all those girls renowned for their beauty and good judgment” (Cervantes 11). While generally presented as a compliment, comparing Preciosa to other Gypsies only reinforces negative stereotypes surrounding the ethnic Other. Cervantes does not shy away from prejudice towards Gypsies; in fact, the first sentence of “La gitanilla” is “It seems that Gypsies were born into the world only to be thieves” (11). Thievery, trickery, and witchcraft are explicitly shown as traits inherent to the Gypsies, even to Preciosa. Even their linguistic differences—for example, ““Do you, Theñoreth, with to give me a tip?” said Preciosa who, as a Gypsy, spoke with a lisp, which is a trick of theirs, and not natural” (18)—serve only to emphasize their Otherness. Even Clemente, before he joins the Gypsy caravan, hands Preciosa a poem he wrote in which he claims, “... all the women of your / nation are witches but your spells / are the most powerful and real”

(20).⁸ Again and again, Preciosa is referred to as “the beautiful Gypsy girl” (33), for these are defining characteristics: ethnicity and physical appearance. While the former creates prejudice and evokes the socio-political hierarchy of the time, the latter serves to contradict these notions by proving that, even as a Gypsy, Preciosa is beautiful. Often, someone will respond to this backhanded compliment by adding something like “the most beautiful creature ever seen” (33). How could a lowly Gypsy be so beautiful? Simple: for one, she is not truly a Gypsy, and for two, she is the most virtuous girl Cervantes could imagine. According to Wendell, Preciosa is among the “heroines out of Byzantine romance” who are “morally superior to their straightened circumstances, who demonstrate beauty, wisdom and verbal acuity, and who manage to preserve their virginity intact for marriage” (179). She is special because she rises above her Gypsy condition in terms of physical features and character. Her beauty is often contrasted with her origins in the page’s poetry: “Among poor folk and Gypsy camps / how did such beauty come to be?” (Cervantes 20). “What a shame this child is a Gypsy” (14), says a spectator during one of her dances. Therefore, Cervantes presents his protagonist as the only exception to the rule, and by the end of the story, we know that she is not actually a Gypsy, meaning that there is no exception after all.

Furthermore, Preciosa is not like other Gypsy girls, or even Spanish girls for that matter. This is made evident by Juana Carducha, “seventeen or eighteen, [and] rather more brazen than beautiful” (Cervantes 57). After seeing the Gypsies dancing, she is “seized by the devil and [falls] in love with Andrés” (57). Andrés is afraid to be alone with her because he feels that “even without the bonds of matrimony she would willingly give herself to him” (58), and though he is a morally superior man whose will must be obeyed, he does not wish to risk being around “the opportunity the devil had offered him” (57-58). In contrast to Juana, Preciosa seems even more virtuous, and in contrast to the other Gypsies, she is far more honourable. Even the grandmother is characterized as conniving and greedy: when Preciosa asks her to refuse Andrés’s offer of money, she says, “You want me to turn down a hundred escudos of golden gold that can be sewn into the gathers of a petticoat worth less than two reales and kept there like a landholding someone has in the pastures

⁸ Other examples include when the Deputy Mayor says, “These Gypsy women have the devil inside them!” (Cervantes 26); or when the narrator criticizes Preciosa for making Andrés jealous (though it is in fact he who makes assumptions), saying “even though very beautiful, she was, after all, a Gypsy” (44).

of Extremadura?” (30).⁹ Clearly Preciosa is not greedy like her grandmother. But what is most important is, without a doubt, her virtue.

Third of all, still today, women are held to different standards for sexual “purity” than men. In the *caballero* era, the focus on honour and virtue was even greater.¹⁰ Cervantes focuses on Preciosa’s virtue from the very beginning: “she was somewhat bold, but not in a manner that would reveal any kind of immodesty. On the contrary, along with her cleverness, she was so virtuous that in her presence no Gypsy woman, old or young, dared to sing lascivious songs or say indecent words” (Cervantes 11).¹¹ Cervantes would have lived through what scholars now identify as an “early modern Spanish society . . . almost obsessed with preserving female chastity and its concomitant social concern, male and female honor” especially among the elite (Poska 135). Fray Luis de León wrote that “a woman’s chastity . . . is the basis upon which the whole edifice [of the perfect wife] is founded” (qtd. in Poska 136). Allyson Poska adds that “women derive their honor from the preservation of their chastity and male honor is dependent on their ability to maintain the chastity of the women in their care” (138). Overall, chastity—purity—is crucial, and who could be more pure than Preciosa herself? Throughout “La gitanilla”, she gives lengthy speeches about propriety (“Poetry is a beautiful maiden, chaste, moral, discerning, intelligent, modest, who remains within the limits of the highest discretion” [32]), her own virtue (“Perhaps there is one among us who values her discretion and truthfulness as much as the most admirable man in this room” [35]), and the importance of virginity:

The flower of virginity is one that, as much as possible, should not be offended even in the imagination. When the rose is cut from the rosebush, how quickly and easily does it wither! One man touches it, another smells it, yet another pulls off its petals, and finally, it crumbles in rough hands. If you, Señor, have come only for this prize, you will not carry it away except attached to the bonds and ties of matrimony; for if virginity is to bend down, it will be for

⁹ While this line implies that Gypsies hoard their money in duplicitous ways, the previous sentence, “And besides, I don’t want to be responsible for Gypsy women losing the reputation they’ve had for centuries for being greedy and shrewd” (Cervantes 30), serves to show that the Gypsies themselves acknowledge and take pride in their nefarious reputation.

¹⁰ In her comparison of “La gitanilla” and the Bible, Ruth Fine highlights the “campos semánticos correspondientes a la sabiduría, la virtud, el amor, la libertad y, de modo general, la normativa que la Biblia despliega en relación a la conducta del hombre para con el hombre y con Dios” that appear in both (378).

¹¹ In fact, “Preciosa did not allow the girls in her company to sing indecent songs, and she never sang them either; and many people noticed this and thought very highly of her” (Cervantes 14).

this holy yoke; for then it would not mean losing it but using it in festivities that promise joyous gains. (28)

Poska underlines that “Spaniards authored two of the period’s most widely read conduct books, *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1524) by Juan Luis Vives and *The Perfect Wife* (1583) by Fray Luis de León” (136). With paragraphs highlighting the significance of purity like the one spouted by Preciosa, Cervantes could easily join the ranks of Vives and de León in his prescription of female behaviour. In addition to being pure, this angelic girl is also humble (“Pretty, I do think I’m that, but as beautiful as they say, I wouldn’t think so” [Cervantes 33]) and never gives reason to doubt her purity (54).¹² Even the grandmother notes that Preciosa has “enough discretion for everything” (27). And while the patriarchy is to blame for the hyperfocus on potential sexual misconduct, it is also culpable of creating the dangerous situations in which a woman risks losing her honour.

Victim-blaming, a sort of buzzword for the MeToo movement, dates back much further than we tend to acknowledge. Even in Cervantes’s era, females were at fault for losing their purity, regardless of how it happened. Xabier Granja Ibarreche states that “women seduced by false promises of marriage could be prosecuted by their own families for staining the familial honor” (3), while “a rape might also be concluded by marriage” (2); Poska adds that “Failure to maintain one’s chastity not only permanently damaged a woman’s reputation, but could lead to her death as the only means for her family to restore their honor” (137).¹³ In summary: men could lie and/or

¹² In her response to Clemente and Andrés’s song, Preciosa composes these verses:

In this amorous enterprise
where I while away love, amused,
I deem my good fortune greater
if I’m modest, not beautiful.
The one that is the humblest plant
if she keeps her climb unswerving,
through grace or because of nature
ascends straight up to the heavens. (56, emphasis added)

Preciosa, who has every reason to be boastful of her talents, beauty, and charm, chooses instead to be humble—or rather, Cervantes chooses to depict her as such. This ties into the contemporary notion of women being more attractive if they do not realize they are pretty. One need only think of songs like One Direction’s *What Makes You Beautiful* (with lyrics such as “You don’t know you’re beautiful / that’s what makes you beautiful”) or U2’s *Get on Your Boots* (“You don’t know how beautiful you are”) to see that many men draw pleasure and/or satisfaction from having the power to validate women’s appearance, especially considering how important beauty is to the patriarchy.

¹³ Starting on page 11, we will analyse Cervantes’s potential feminist critique of the patriarchy; but by having female characters in some of his *Novelas ejemplares* suffer sexual violence at the hands of male characters who are never punished, we are left doubting his understanding of the root problems women face. Granja Ibarreche gives an example from “La fuerza de la sangre”: “Instead of chastising the lascivious behavior through which Rodolfo sexually

abuse women and still be blameless for the decrease in the woman's value (a value established by none other than the men). Women today walk with their keys between their fingers; women in the 17th century also took precautionary measures. Renato Barahona confirms that "women had every reason to be concerned about being followed, watched, and set upon, particularly when alone and in isolated places" (qtd. in Granja Ibarreche 3). Indeed, one of Preciosa's Gypsy comrades, Cristina, says that she does not "intend to go where there are so many men" (Cervantes 19). Preciosa responds that "the woman who's determined to be upright succeeds even in the midst of an army of soldiers" and urges her friends inside where a group of *caballeros* awaits (19). Through his protagonist, Cervantes assigns the responsibility of remaining virtuous to the woman only—the implications of the danger of rape in this scene are no exception. Jumping back to the 21st century, victims of sexual assault are often asked what they did (what clothes they were wearing, how much they drank...) to bring the violence upon them. Instead of holding men accountable for their crimes, women as far back as the 1600s have been taught that it is their job to stay pure.

Cervantes's expectations of women are reflected in the male characters he creates; he builds a perfect angel in Preciosa and showers this child with attention, yet she remains virtuous and modest. Regardless of the author's intentions, the patriarchy dictates the ideals of femininity, virginity, sexuality, and marriage, and Cervantes's writing only emphasizes these expectations. Though two contrasting cultures, both the Spaniards and the Gypsies hold their women to certain standards. The latter's notions of womanhood is particularly apparent in the scene during which Andrés becomes a Gypsy and an old man explains what their culture believes about these key values. He begins by saying: "This girl, who is the cream of all the beautiful Gypsy girls ... we give to you as your wife or your lover; as far as that's concerned, you can do whatever you choose" (Cervantes 40)—already, we ascertain that the Gypsies see women as a sort of property. Then, the old man warns against adultery (but clarifies that there is "a good deal of incest" in their community [40]), explains that they kill their wives and bury them in the mountains if they cheat, and justifies divorce from one's wife if one develops a taste for younger women (40).¹⁴ Whether these are stereotypes about Gypsies or criticisms of the patriarchy in general, the impact is the same... in this society, the man comes out on top. But Preciosa, standing her ground in spite of the

victimizes Leocadia, Cervantes rewards him with a morally admirable woman who has been deprived of choice on the matter if she wants her reputation restored" (3).

¹⁴ This "solution" to female adultery is not unique to the Gypsies but rather appears across time and many countries.

old man's sexist speech, reiterates her rules for Andrés: "Since these honorable legislators have determined by means of their laws that I am yours, and as yours they have given me to you, I have determined by means of the law of my will, which is the strongest of all, that I do not wish to be yours except on the conditions we both agreed to before you came here ... These gentlemen can certainly give you my body, but not my soul" (41-42). Preciosa's body is not her own in the sense that someone else can award it or restrict it. Andrés has already made several possessive comments about the Gypsy girl, and when Preciosa's father realizes she will soon marry, he says, "when she is married she will not be ours but her husband's" (63). The protagonist goes from belonging to the Gypsy caravan, to being Andrés's (or so he believes), to devoting herself to her real parents' wishes, and finally to being Andrés's property once more. This is perhaps due to the aforementioned bourgeois notion that "male honor is dependent on their ability to maintain the chastity of the women in their care" (Poska 138); for this reason, a woman must be in the care of a man, like Preciosa with the Gypsy men, her father, and Andrés. If this conviction was commonplace among Spanish nobility, then Cervantes would certainly have experienced and written it into his work, even unconsciously. To be virtuous, then, and to embody the ideal woman of 17th century male desire, Preciosa must always belong to a man.

Last of all, while Preciosa is undoubtedly in a patriarchal world, several scholars prove that Cervantes includes "a plot of upward female mobility" (Smith 165) in "La gitanilla" that serves to embody what Granja Ibarreche calls "the rapid expansion of courtly ideals in Spain" and the perception of women as agents that emerged in the late 16th and early 17th centuries" (1). The scholar also puts forward an analysis of Cervantes's feminism, focusing on the author's "representations of femininity [that] make visible the flaws he identified in his patriarchal society's treatment of women" (1).¹⁵ In his study of Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre" and "Las dos doncellas", Granja Ibarreche proposes that "the apparent antifeminism with which women are treated is intended to convey, through the use of irony, a hidden, opposite message" highlighting how women are victims of patriarchy (1).

It is difficult to know whether Cervantes was indeed intending to parody the society in which he lived and, if so, to what degree he understood the impact of the patriarchy on women,

¹⁵ Though applying 21st century notions of feminism to Cervantes is an anachronism, since "La gitanilla" reflects the advancements in the status of women, we will use the term "feminist" to represent said changes even in Cervantes's era.

himself being a benefactor within the system. Regardless, Preciosa definitely exemplifies female mobility through her wisdom and independence. She is not afraid to speak up for herself or prove that she is intelligent in her own right. When a gentleman asks her, “Who taught you that, *girl*?” (Cervantes 21, emphasis added) in regards to a remark she says about love, Preciosa responds:

Who has to teach it to me? ... Don't I have a soul in my body? Aren't I fifteen years old? I'm not maimed, or crippled, or a fool ... no Gypsy woman is stupid. ... Do you see these girls, my companions, who keep quiet and look like idiots? Well, put your fingers in their mouths and feel their wisdom teeth, and you'll see what you shall see. There's no girl of twelve who doesn't know what you know at twenty-five, because she has had the devil and experience for her teachers and mentors, and they teach in an hour what you may learn in a year.” (21)

While the gentleman seeks to invalidate her knowledge first by asking her whose opinion she is imitating and second by calling her “girl”, Preciosa’s retort astonishes her listeners and encourages them to give her more than 30 reales in tips (which the grandmother pockets).¹⁶ Another instance in which Preciosa proves her wit is when she talks to the Deputy and his wife about finances and bribes, saying, “Look, Señora, I’ve heard it said (and though I’m a girl, I know it’s nothing good) ...” (Cervantes 25). The topic of conversation matters less than her interjection, *and though I’m a girl*. Is Cervantes criticizing how his society limits women’s access to knowledge and diminishes their contributions? Or does he agree that Preciosa being a girl generally mean she knows less, except in this case? Either way, it is likely because of her beauty and purity that Preciosa is even allowed (by fellow characters and by the author) to say such things to men older than herself—a marginal character *not* redeemed by the same attributes would be presented as deviant rather than clever.¹⁷

When it comes to love and relationships, Preciosa is not only wise but also shows self-determination. As a response to the poems by Andrés and Clemente, the Gypsy girl comes up with her own verses, among which are the following lines: “Not having your love or esteem / causes me no sorrow at all, / for I intend to fabricate my own luck, / my own good fortune” (Cervantes 56). Though by the end of the novella Preciosa and Andrés do marry, at this point she gives no

¹⁶ This same incredulity appears in Cervantes’s other works as well; while “early modern society did not expect to find [a concurrent power of the intellect and will] in its younger and especially female members ... this prejudice is not shared by Cervantes’s narrators but instead is always attributed to specific characters in his works” (Boruchoff 473). In this case, the men Preciosa encounters, nameless caballeros and city officials alike, have this perspective.

¹⁷ Cervantes himself identifies the “privilege of beauty that brings, grudgingly and unwillingly, the most liberated will to [a woman’s] feet” (44) in “La gitanilla.”

importance to love and no indication that she must depend on a man. Her rules for Andrés also show her modern way of thinking:

First, I have to know whether you are who you say; then, this truth confirmed, you must leave your parents' house and move to our encampments, and putting on the clothes of a Gypsy, spend two years in our schools, and during that time I shall find out about your character, and you will find out about mine; after this, if you are satisfied with me and I with you, I shall give myself as your wife; but until then I must be your sister in our dealings with each other, as well as your humble servant. ... If, under these conditions, you wish to join our militia as a soldier, the decision is in your hands, for if any of these conditions is missing, you will not touch a finger of mine. (28)

Preciosa is empowered by the criteria she sets out for her lover. She asks him to abandon his status and narrow ways of thinking; she decides that he must spend two years learning about Gypsy culture and getting to know her as a person, not a partner; and she sets an ultimatum—if he does not comply, she will not be his. This scene is indeed indicative of women's rise in society in spite of the “traditional juxtaposition of masculine idealization and feminine subjugation” that Cervantes includes in his *Novellas ejemplares* (Granja Ibarreche 2).

But the author cannot seem to maintain this feminist subversion until the end of the piece. In fact, Preciosa faints from shock during the climax of the plot (Cervantes 59) and marries Andrés immediately (rather than waiting for two years) in the resolution. What happened to her strict ideals? It is likely due to what Granja Ibarreche identifies as Cervantes depending “upon matrimony as an antidote to return to social order” in two other works from the same collection (3). With a rapid twist of fate, Andrés resumes being a Spanish knight and Preciosa is revealed to be a Spaniard herself—they marry right away (“The city celebrated ... with illuminations, bullfights, and mock battles on the day of the betrothal” [Cervantes 67]), to the delight of their parents. Wendell Smith analyses this joyous culmination to the story: “The crossed trajectories of Andrés and Preciosa seem to be, on the surface of it, the meaning of Preciosa's uncharacteristic acquiescence to the marriage wishes of her new-found parents, the ‘silence of Preciosa’ at the end of the tale” (174). While Smith disagrees with Carolyn Koch's identification of the “impossibility of speech within a return to the center of power from the margins, which transforms Preciosa from subversively using silence to being silenced” (Smith 175), we argue that Preciosa does indeed lose

her self-determination when she transforms into Costanza, daughter of Spanish officials.¹⁸ Once a headstrong Gypsy girl, Preciosa later tells mother that she has “no will other than what her parents might desire” (Cervantes 65), like a proper Spanish woman should. In fact, the last line of dialogue we see from the protagonist is at the start of page 64—the last four pages of the novel do not directly include her voice. Perhaps, then, the underlying message is one of progress—women are gaining ground, but have yet to escape the limits of patriarchy and societal norms.¹⁹ Is this what Cervantes intended? How much was a parody crafted thanks to his burgeoning feminist awareness, and how much was the author simply reiterating the belief system of his society?

In conclusion, “La gitanilla” heavily relies on Cervantes’ 17th century perspective concerning notions of femininity and expectations of purity. The protagonist exists to satisfy a male fantasy—the perfect young woman, honourable and beautiful (and in the end, not even a Gypsy). By examining how the author describes Preciosa and her impact on others, especially in terms of virtue, we gain a better understanding of the patriarchal values of Cervantes’s era and the beginnings of modern thoughts in regards to women’s place in society. This story leaves us to wonder how much the *Novelas ejemplares* and other literary works, with their explicit moral codes, influenced beliefs and actions in the early modern period in Spain.

¹⁸ Smith proposes instead that this is simply another example of Preciosa choosing to be silent, a trait that defines the Gypsy experience: “the defining characteristic of being a gypsy is the ability to suffer torture in silence” (167). The scholar states that the “idea that Preciosa simply gives up, or is silenced, when she becomes Costanza does not recognize that Cervantes gives us reason to believe that the moment of her silence is also the moment when Preciosa is most fully acting as a gypsy, and suggests that the silence of Preciosa at the end is not a change of character but a deliberate stratagem” (175).

¹⁹ David Boruchoff adds that Preciosa submits “to the combined weight of nobility and patriarchy” (475). Honour, of course, is of “paramount importance” to Spanish nobility as is reflected in “La fuerza de la sangre” (467) and, we might add, in “La gitanilla.”

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Cultura

Entrevista al poeta tusán Nilton Maa

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Nilton Maa (Lima, 1988) es un actor, gestor cultural, narrador y poeta tusán radicado en Estados Unidos.¹ Fue finalista en el concurso de poesía *El mar*, organizado por la embajada de Taipei en Perú (2011) y obtuvo el segundo lugar en el concurso de microrrelatos *La cruda brevedad, literatura en tiempos de colapso* (2020), organizado por la revista literaria *La ninfa Eco*. Entre sus obras se cuentan la novela *Imperio de sombras* (2020) y el poemario *Mientras caen mis hojas* (2021). Asimismo, se encuentra próximo a publicar, a fines de febrero, su segunda novela, *Cuando muere la niebla*. Como gestor cultural se ha dedicado a promover y difundir la literatura tusán a través del canal de YouTube *Presencia Oriental* y el podcast *Poesía Tusán*. Además, recientemente ha organizado el conversatorio sobre arte e inmigración *Voces del Silencio* en colaboración con el Museo de Queens en Nueva York.

Manuel Zelada es estudiante doctoral en la Universidad de Ottawa, y tiene una maestría en Filosofía y una licenciatura en Lingüística Hispánica por la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP). Sus áreas de interés son la Lingüística y Literatura Queer con especial atención al área andina, la Lingüística y Literatura Digital y la Filosofía del Lenguaje. Sobre estos temas ha realizado diversos artículos y ponencias. Manuel ha trabajado para el Ministerio de Educación del Perú, la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, la Universidad de Wisconsin-Milwaukee, entre otras instituciones. Asimismo, es miembro de la Sección de Archivos de LASA, la Asociación Canadiense de Estudios sobre Latinoamérica y Caribe, y el Grupo de Investigación Hermes sobre Filosofía Contemporánea de la PUCP.

¹ Persona de ascendencia china nacida en Perú.

Manuel Zelada: Hace poco, has organizado un conversatorio sobre arte e inmigración. Siendo tu padre un inmigrante en Perú, siendo tú mismo un inmigrante en Estados Unidos, yo quisiera preguntarte si hay alguna relación entre la migración, la identidad y tu obra.

Nilton Maa: Creo que el mundo está lleno de personas que son migrantes, especialmente en el Perú, donde somos descendientes de otras culturas, de otros espacios y otras realidades. Yo no creo que los espacios determinados por la política, por el lenguaje o por otros factores. Actualmente, además, la tecnología, por ejemplo, el Internet y las redes sociales, han hecho que las fronteras se vean más cortas y que no sea tan difícil poder ubicarnos o pensar en que podamos ubicarnos en cualquier parte del mundo.

Desde mi desde mi trabajo literario, el tema de la migración está siempre presente y no solamente porque mi padre sea migrante, también porque vengo de una familia peruana que emigró desde el Ande hacia la capital y al mismo tiempo esta familia tiene una ascendencia española de muchos años atrás, durante la Guerra del Pacífico. Entonces, yo creo que toda la historia del mundo está relacionada con la migración y es en este sentido que yo he construido también mi identidad. En un principio, esta estaba muy dividida debido a los pocos referentes que yo tenía acerca de la comunidad china dentro de mi información personal, ya que mi papá murió cuando yo era un niño y él no hablaba español, entonces nuestras limitaciones eran bastante grandes a pesar de compartir la misma sangre: no podíamos tener una comunicación muy amplia y básicamente una vez que falleció yo crecí con mi familia peruana. Eso género como un vacío dentro de mí y al mismo tiempo me sentía un poco diferente a los demás, a mi propia familia, por cómo me veía físicamente, por cómo la gente me miraba. Era completamente distinto a otras personas de mi casa.

Con el paso del tiempo he venido buscando esa parte mía, que me hacía falta, esos vacíos que se encontraban completamente nebulosos, que no sabía cómo expresar bien, pero sabía que estaban ahí: que tenía una voz y no sabía simplemente como dejarla fluir. Creo que esta búsqueda personal es lo que me ha tomado mucho más tiempo para poder decidirme realmente a trabajar en la palabra y también me ha dado la voz para poder realizar todos los trabajos que vengo el día de hoy uno de los de los trabajos de cráneos he podido realizar.

Manuel Zelada: En muchos de tus poemas, la familia y la infancia son temas recurrentes. Por eso, quería preguntarte qué significa crecer con esta doble herencia, tusán y andina, en el Perú.

Nilton Maa: Bueno, en el transcurso del tiempo, he ido descubriendo o me he ido identificando mas con una u otra. Creo que el tema de mi tusanidad está muy ligado a la imagen que yo tengo de mi padre. Yo no siento China como si fuese mi país creo que nunca voy a tener la posibilidad de hacerlo. Me he dado cuenta que soy muy peruano; entonces, básicamente está relacionada con la idea de mi padre. Pero hay que considerar también que China ha sufrido cambios abruptos durante los últimos años que han hecho que el país no sea el mismo que el que los inmigrantes dejaron: son situaciones, lugares y cosas que ya no existen. De algún modo, me motiva el poder hacer de la memoria de mi padre algo importante dentro de mi vida y al mismo tiempo también tengo imagen muy fuerte de mi abuela, que es una mujer andina quechuahablante, una mujer trabajadora.²

Entonces, hay una idea muy fuerte y muy arraigada en la memoria, de todas las personas que conforman y familia, y estoy seguro de que es la misma historia de muchas otras personas que han migrado (desde dentro y fuera del país) para buscar una vida mejor. Creo que lo que a mí me ata a esa nostalgia de este dolor que sigue allí, son estos espacios en los que de alguna manera me he quedado también atrapado, estos mini dolores, pérdidas constantes, los espacios difíciles, los horizontes agrestes, las diversas voces positivas y negativas que aún me hablan. Aunque creo que lo puedes ver en mi poesía, pero no es lo mismo en mi trabajo narrativo. Bueno, es algo que tendrán que decidir mis lectores.

Manuel Zelada: Al respecto de tu narrativa, tu primer libro, *Imperio de sombras*, fue una novela fantástica y sus protagonistas son mujeres. ¿En tu segunda novela, *Cuando muere la niebla*, hay una continuidad con este género, con la fantasía?

Nilton Maa: *Imperio de sombras* es completamente distinta a *Cuando muere la niebla*. En este caso es una novela que lo que hace es interpelar al lector respecto de las ausencias físicas y educativos que viven los adolescentes de distritos populosos de Lima, como yo. En concreto, narra la muerte del cabecilla de una pandilla de adolescentes y cómo esta muerte impacta en seis personajes y los impulsa realizar diferentes acciones. Entonces, la novela relata una muerte desde seis puntos de vista diferentes y creo que eso es lo interesante.

² Cuya lengua materna es el quechua, lengua originaria del área andina.

Me es muy interesante poder narrar desde lo que yo he vivido en un ambiente real: la casa que se menciona es mi casa, las calles donde transcurre la historia son en las que yo jugaba. Las situaciones son mías y he querido también realizar una crítica. Al final de cuentas, todos somos criticados por cosas que de repente ni siquiera tuvimos la oportunidad de aprender, por no tener mejores opciones. Aunque es una crítica muy pequeña desde un punto de vista muy personal, para mí es importante hacerla porque no quería dejar en el silencio esta parte de mi vida.

Manuel Zelada: Hasta ahora hemos hablado de las identidades culturales y las identidades de clase. Yo quisiera añadir un elemento más: el género. ¿Como persona LGBTQ+ qué significa para ti crecer en el Perú? ¿Qué significa escribir desde esa posición?

Nilton Maa: Yo creo que ha sido algo difícil en mi vida como probablemente ha podido ser difícil para muchas otras personas. Por muchos años no aceptaba que me podían gustar los hombres antes de decidirme a explorar esa parte mía. Pero este proceso ha sido importante para que yo pueda comenzar a crear con libertad; he tenido que aceptarlo e interiorizar mi identidad: tratar de quitarme este disfraz que llevas encima y que cada día tienes que mostrar para no sentir cierta vergüenza, porque el tener vergüenza de ti mismo es algo que te carcome día a día y no te permite ser feliz. Sin embargo, no nos enseñan en el colegio, cómo aprender a aceptarnos. Todo lo contrario, nos enseñan cuáles son los límites de la sociedad en los cuales tenemos que vivir. Y es lo que me pasó a mí. Claro, hoy yo me siento muy feliz con mi con mi propia aceptación. Hoy no tengo vergüenza. Por eso, me gustaría por ejemplo poder comenzar a crear personajes que puedan estar más relacionados con esta parte mía, iniciar un nuevo trabajo literario donde ahondar un poco más al respecto. Por eso, vengo realizando una investigación en Perú basada en la vida underground en Lima, de los diferentes colectivos e identidades, y me gustaría poder también continuar con esto en la ciudad de Nueva York. Me gustaría poder crear un espacio seguro no solamente para mí, sino para todas las personas que se puedan sentir identificadas con mi trabajo literario.

Manuel Zelada: Genial, justo quería preguntarte sobre la literatura. ¿Cómo llega a ti y qué rol tiene bueno?

Nilton Maa: Pienso que la literatura para mí es completamente sanadora. Hay ciertas cosas que llevo almacenadas y que me es muy difícil expresar de manera hablada, y creo que soy mucho más fluido escribiendo que hablando. Entonces, la literatura me permite conectar con mis emociones.

A veces después de haber escrito algo me pregunto si es algo bueno y creo que, si lo es, es porque lo que dije es realmente eso que tengo dentro. Probablemente, antes de escribirlo no lo podría identificar con tanta facilidad, pero cuando me leo digo: sí, realmente esto es lo que yo tengo dentro. Eso me ayuda: poder reconocermé a un nivel más profundo, poder mejorar y aprender de mí mismo, y eso es lo que me empuja también a seguir escribiendo.

Manuel Zelada: Volviendo a la tusanidad, ¿qué significa para ti hablar de una o unas literaturas tusán? ¿Qué características o experiencias comunes las unifican y cuáles las diversifican?

Nilton Maa: La comunidad tusán tiene 172 años de migración China en Perú. Las primeras personas que llegaron de China llegaron en condiciones de semi-esclavitud y después de muchos años recién han podido construir lo que el día de hoy es la fuerte comunidad tusán en Perú. Pero, a diferencia de otras comunidades como la japonesa, no se les ha dado la oportunidad de difundir y fomentar muchas de sus expresiones artísticas.

Respecto de la literatura, en la literatura peruana se hablaba de los chinos, pero se hablaba de los chinos como algo grotesco o algo gracioso. Se hablaba del chino bajo la mirada del subalterno, desde arriba hacia abajo y nosotros éramos lo exótico. No teníamos una voz que nos pudiese representar. Y las pocas voces que había eran desconocidas, por ejemplo, Pedro Sulen (Lima, 1889-1925), que es uno de los primeros intelectuales de nuestra comunidad: mitad chino y mitad peruano. A pesar de ello él ha trabajado más el tema del indigenismo.

Hay que recordar también esta barrera del idioma, de estar al otro lado del mundo, con un alfabeto, y una manera de escribir y hablar completamente distintas, con fonemas diferentes a los que nosotros ni siquiera nos podemos acercar. Eso nos ha llevado a que incluso dentro de nuestro núcleo familiar entre padres e hijos no podamos comunicarnos y crezcamos como completos desconocidos. En mi caso, yo me siento muy arraigado a mi tierra, me siento muy arraigado a mi idioma. El español es un idioma que a mí me encanta, me parece rico en expresión, me parece un idioma que me permite decir las cosas como realmente las siento, pero es porque he crecido más ligado a la familia de mi madre, que es peruana.

Bueno, también tenemos a la poeta Sui Yun Wong (Loreto, 1955), que es una poeta amazónica tusán. Con ella y, poco después, Julia Wong (Chepén, 1965) y otros escritores, se comenzaron realmente a dar los pasos más fuertes en pro de la construcción de lo que significa la literatura tusán y estoy hablándote de no hace mucho tiempo, o sea, las dos siguen vivas y creando.

Hay que considerar que son de una generación completamente distinta, que ha tenido que vivir el paso de la escritura a mano en cuadernos a la computadora, de no saber lo que significa la conectividad o el Internet y evolucionar.

Creo que los textos tusán más profundos son los que llevan este esta especie de dolor causado por las diferencias, por la xenofobia y el hecho de no sentirte parte de un lugar, de no sentir que algo es realmente tuyo. Hay un tema con el desarraigo muy fuerte en los textos en general y creo que atraviesa a muchos escritores tusán aunque no necesariamente hablen de su tusanidad, como Julio Villanueva Chang (Lima, 1967).

Personalmente, es algo de lo que a mí me gusta hablar muchísimo porque me ha costado también un buen tiempo entender que la única patria que tengo es el Perú a pesar de renegar tanto de ello y de haber estado con gente que me decía que me regrese a mi país: ahora sé que estoy en mi país. Recuerdo que una vez coordiné un recital de poesía y lo pusieron como recital de poesía asiática y tuve que pedir que corrigiesen el nombre, porque yo no podía presentar a artistas peruanos como escritores asiáticos. En realidad, el trabajo que nosotros realizamos no corresponde a la voz del inmigrante asiático, pero es difícil convencer y convencerte de que tienes derecho a un espacio dentro de esta territorialidad. Quizás a una comunidad, más allá del territorio, porque no quiero hablar de territorio, no me gustan las fronteras, pero si hablar de nuestra comunidad como peruanos.

Creo que es importante llegar al punto en el cual nosotros dejemos de ser vistos como extranjeros. Creo que eso es responsabilidad de todos: de la comunidad tusán y de la comunidad peruana en general. Por eso, te digo que el desarraigo y la xenofobia, los dolores, las penas y ausencias son básicamente cosas comunes a la literatura tusán y que la hacen muy intimista. Tú mismo me dices que mi poesía está relacionada a temas familiares y es cierto porque creo que el espacio más problemático, donde saltan estos problemas, es el espacio familiar en la infancia. El niño no entiende por qué lo miran tanto en la calle, por qué le dicen ciertas cosas, y eso es básicamente lo que nos separa, lo que nos hace conscientes de la diferencia y la discriminación.

Por eso, creo que la literatura tusán toca esos temas y nos enseña se puede hablar de cultura sin necesidad de caer en la discriminación. Es importante que estas nuevas generaciones entiendan también poco a poco que todos compartimos un espacio dentro de este planeta y tenemos que aprender a respetar nuestras culturas y diferencias. Entonces, es importante hacerlas visibles y ese es parte del trabajo de nosotros los artistas.

Información

DEPARTAMENTO DE LENGUAS Y LITERATURAS MODERNAS



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Siendo el español el segundo idioma más hablado en América, el mundo hispano— ~400 millones de hablantes y 21 países en los que el español es una lengua oficial—tiene una rica herencia y una importante influencia cultural y literaria. Esto significa que los estudios de posgrado especializados en lingüística, literaturas y culturas españolas se están convirtiendo en una necesidad. Nuestro programa ayuda a desarrollar experiencia en una de las culturas más ricas, interesantes, e importantes del planeta.

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