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METAPHOR IN SPANISH L2 AND HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS' SPEECH: HOW DOES IT COMPARE?

Summary. One way in which language practitioners and researchers have furthered our understanding of heritage language learners' linguistic abilities has been to compare them to L2 learners. The current study implemented this modality and examined metaphoric competence. This is one area in learners' overall linguistic competence that provides them with access to the concepts and models of the language community and facilitates mediation during communitive tasks (Lantolf, 1999). Participants (n=16) in this study were heritage language learners and L2 learners enrolled in an advanced conversation class in Spanish. They completed an oral portfolio assignment which consisted of regularly engaging in conversation with a Spanish native speaker and recording their interactions. The analysis of their unscripted conversations included the identification of metaphoric samples and the calculation of metaphoric density. Findings revealed that learners produced what were termed true metaphors (original constructions), light metaphors (metaphoric constructions that are already established in the language), and transfer metaphors (constructions resulting from contact with the English language). Comparisons between L2 learners and heritage language learners did not reveal significant differences, which suggests that in the area of metaphoric competence these learners are more similar than not.

Keywords: metaphor; Spanish; L2 learners; heritage language learner; oral portfolio.

Introduction

In the United States, the term *heritage language* refers to a non-English language not taught in school, be it an immigrant or an endangered indigenous language with which people experience a personal connection (Valdés, 2001). For example, Spanish, which is the focus of this investigation, constitutes the heritage language for Americans of Hispanic ancestry. In the language education setting, the term *heritage language learner* (HLL) describes an individual who was "raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (Valdés 2000, as cited in Valdés, 2001, p. 2). HLLs' history and linguistic background differentiate them from more traditional language learners who speak English as their first language and learn the second language (L2L), in this study Spanish, primarily via classroom instruction.

Despite their differences, HLLs and L2Ls often share the same language classroom which presents different outcomes for each learner' type; e.g., the specific linguistic needs of HLLs are not met because instruction is geared towards L2Ls while L2Ls feel intimidated by HLLs' proficiency (Kagan & Dillon, 2004; Mazzocco, 1996; Valdés, 1995). In part, the problem is rooted in budgetary and enrollment constrains, which force these two populations into the same learning setting (Bowles, 2011; Potowski, 2002). Perhaps, though, most problematic is the fact that views about the adequate application of theories to classroom practices regarding heritage language teaching and learning have often been inconsistent (Valdés, 2001). Moreover, despite the attention that the teaching of heritage languages has gained in the last 30 years, appropriate pedagogical tools have been slow to emerge in comparison to the fast pace in which HLLs have populated language classrooms. These constrains often result in inadequate instruction adaptation for these learners.

One way in which language researchers have furthered our understanding of HLLs' linguistic abilities and needs, particularly as they share the language classroom with L2Ls, has been to compare these two populations, which is the modality implemented in the current study. For example, in the grammatical arena, Montrul (2012) examined gender agreement in an oral production task and found that HLLs presented higher-incidence of native-like abilities than L2Ls. Regarding the sound system, HLLs sound more native-like than L2Ls (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Fairclough (2011), describing the lexicon, posited that most HLLs have a wider vocabulary than L2Ls, particularly in more informal semantic domains such as home, family, and everyday activities; however, L2Ls appear to have an advantage over HLLs in formal vocabulary and higher registers (Beaudreu, Ducar, & Potowski, 2014).

As noted by Kondo-Brown (2005, p. 564), it is essential to continue to understand the linguistic similarities and differences in HLLs and L2Ls as this knowledge is key to the strategic and appropriate development of curriculum for programs that have both types of learners. The current investigation contributes to this body of research by exploring metaphor in the speech of Spanish HLLs and L2Ls. Metaphor refers to relations of substitution and similarity in language construction where "one thing is seen in terms of another

and the role of the interpreter is to identify points of similarity" (Littlemore, 2009, p. 95). As explained by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphor is not only ubiquitous in everyday language, but also in our thoughts and actions since our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphoric (p. 3). Lakoff and Johnson exemplified the intricate relationship between action, language, and thought with the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, which gives rise to such expressions as 'He *shot down* all my arguments' and 'Your claim is *indefensible*.' These statements demonstrate that, although there is no physical battle, the things we do and say in an argument are partially constructed on what we understand by war.

While the topic of metaphor has received attention in the L2 learning field (Hijazo-Gascón, 2011; Littlemore, 2001; Littlemore & Low, 2006a, 2006b), it is not clear how pervasive metaphor is in the language of HLLs or how it unfolds. Therefore, the current study responds to this gap in the literature by exploring metaphors in the speech of HLLs and comparing it to that of their L2 peers. In this research, HLLs and L2Ls were enrolled in an advanced Spanish conversation class. Data for analysis were collected from one of the course assignments: an oral portfolio, where each learner met with a Spanish native speaker several times during the semester to engage in conversation. Their interactions were recorded and analyzed.

The next sections address, first, the theoretical constructs relevant to this research on metaphor and, second, current literature on metaphor in L2Ls and HLLs. This is followed by the research questions that guided this study.

Symbolic Mediation and Metaphor

In sociocultural theory, mediation is the process through which humans make use of concepts, activities, and culturally-constructed artifacts; e.g., gestures, rituals, and metaphors, to exert control and change the world around them. In doing so, they change themselves and their mental activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This study focuses on one culturally-constructed artifact, metaphor, which is viewed from two perspectives: *linguistic metaphor* and *conceptual metaphor*. In cognitive linguistics, a linguistic metaphor represents a known linguistic expression that appears in a new context with a new meaning. Conceptual metaphors embody "a system of cognitive mappings that structure

an abstract concept by projecting particular similarities from the source domain to the target domain" (Lantolf & Bobrova, 2014, p. 49). For instance, the linguistic metaphor 'winter has arrived' explains time passing as a traveling entity, thus connecting the domains TIME and TRAVELING. The relationship between these domains is manifested in the conceptual metaphor TIME ELAPSING IS TRAVELING.

Because culture shapes language, Lantolf (1999) argues that learning the culture of another language includes appropriating their cultural models (i.e., the shared cognitive schemas in a community), including conceptual metaphors. As mentioned before, metaphors, as culturally-constructed tools, can then be employed in the mediation process resulting from communicative activity; therein, their importance in language learning (Lantolf, 1999).

However, it has been questioned whether L2Ls are indeed capable of learning the cultural models of the L2 and thus interpret and produce metaphors (Valeva, 1996). HLLs, on the other hand, were raised between two languages and cultures, and later enter the language classroom where they might be exposed to yet more (unfamiliar or new) cultural models (Kagan, 2012). As a result, L2Ls and HLLs living in the U.S., with their diverse language learning backgrounds, might have in common the cultural models of the shared dominant language, English, but have varying degrees of control and understanding of metaphor in Spanish.

The next section reviews the topic of metaphor in L2 learners and HLLs. Although no prior investigations inquire into the topic of metaphor in Spanish HLLs in the United States, the discussion turns to studies on metaphor and memory, and language creativity, which set a background for the current research.

Metaphor in the Language of L2 and Heritage Language Learners

In the L2 field, models of linguistic competence (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972) describe the various components that make up competence. As observed by Littlemore and Low (2006a), despite the usefulness of these models in language learning and teaching, they have promoted little interest in metaphor. For instance, in their discussion of Bachman's (1990) model,

which includes grammatical competence (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, phonology), textual competence (e.g., cohesion), illocutionary competence (e.g., ideational and manipulative functions), and sociolinguistic competence (e.g., understanding variation, cultural references, and figures of speech), they observe that sociolinguistic competence alludes to metaphor. However, Littlemore and Low emphasize that learners need more than an understanding of cultural references and figurative language; rather, they need to appropriate the target culture and its cultural models, and control conceptual and linguistic metaphor. Nevertheless, language teaching materials usually do not go beyond the inclusion of a few idiomatic expressions (Littlemore & Low, 2006a, p. 268) and foster an artificial dichotomy between language and culture, which ignores the unbreakable connection between them (Lantolf, 2006).

The outcomes of insufficient or inappropriate understanding of metaphor are evident in real language use contexts. Littlemore (2001) investigated how international students with advanced proficiency in English interpreted metaphorical expressions used by lecturers (in English) during class instruction. Findings revealed that students misinterpreted metaphorical language, which led to erroneous conclusions regarding the lecturers' stances. In the analysis of corpus data, Alejo (2008, as cited in Littlemore, 2009) found that highly proficient English learners living in an English-speaking environment used significantly fewer metaphorical expressions than native speakers; their limited samples also relied on models of the first language. Indeed, Danesi (1993) observed that non-native speakers avoid using metaphorical expressions and prefer relying on literal meaning. This might occur for several reasons: learners have not identified metaphor in the authentic language they are exposed to, or they have a passive understanding of metaphor that has not transferred to active language production, perhaps because they do not feel confident to do so (Littlemore, 2009).

Regarding Spanish HLLs, there has been a dearth of research on semantic phenomena in this population (Rakhilina, Vyrenkova, & Polinsky, 2016). Exceptions include research on figurative language and memory and language processing. In the study by Harris, Tebbe, Leka, Garcia, and Erramouspe (1999), Spanish-English bilinguals in the United States were asked to recall sentential metaphors and similes in English and Spanish. It explored

questions on language use (e.g., hearing a sentence in one language but recalling it in the other) and the pattern of switching in recalling from one figurative form to another (e.g., hearing a metaphor and recalling a simile). The authors concluded that neither language nor figurative form played a significant role in the task. In McGhee Nelson (1992), non-fluent Spanish-English bilinguals were assigned to three interventions: translating sentences, copying sentences and counting consonants and vowels, and recalling items from either the translation or copying and counting tasks. Regarding translations, there was no evidence of performance being more or less accurate for metaphoric and non-metaphorical items. The author observed that when learners encounter figurative expressions, their processing was automatic, meaning that they did not rely on literal meaning. In addition, those engaged in translation tasks performed better in the recall task than those in the counting task, perhaps as a result of the manner in which content was processed during the translation exercise. All in all, these investigations, although shedding light on how bilinguals perform metaphor-based tasks in lab settings, provide scant information on how bilinguals utilize metaphor in everyday language.

Other investigations on figurative language in bilinguals have turned to the *linguistic creativity* construct. From a cognitive perspective, linguistic creativity is the ability to make new meanings and the subsequent re-creation and re-interpretation of such meanings by interlocutors. Metaphor is one mechanism employed in linguistic creativity, which is manifested in all domains of language, including vocabulary and grammar, and results in ways that may eventually become conventionalized and engrained in the language (Zawada, 2006, p. 235). Rakhilina, Vyrenkova, and Polinsky (2016) investigated linguistic creativity in Russian HLLs who were English-dominant. Language data consisted of a learner corpus. The analysis compared heritage language samples to those of native speakers with the purpose of identifying deviations, which were tagged as improper lexical items or grammatical or phrasal constructions. Findings reveal that, first, although it had been expected that HLLs would rely on calquing (direct translations from the dominant to the heritage language), they created phrases on their own when unable to locate a Russian expression that met their semantic intention. Second, in avoiding calquing, HLLs utilized other mechanisms to create new expressions:

compositional structures (where the meaning of the whole is derived from the meaning of its parts and the way they are syntactically combined), conceptual structures (understanding linguistic expressions in context by also applying word knowledge and pragmatic considerations), and semi-calquing (newly created expressions that rely on the two linguistic systems available to the speaker).

In regards to compositional structures, Rakhilina, Vyrenkova, and Polinsky found that when HLLs deconstruct complex constructions by breaking the structure into simpler semantic items, problems arise if the language's way of expressing the concept entails non-compositional elements and does not correspond to a clear universal pattern. Idioms are one such instance where HLLs can erroneously implement this mechanism. Overreliance on conceptual structures results in new formations different to specific phrases in either the heritage or dominant language. The authors also compared HLLs' to L2Ls' performance and concluded that HLLs present greater linguistic creativity. L2Ls rely on calques in greater numbers than HLLs and mostly copy them from the L1, thus demonstrating no awareness for the target language's semantics.

Onysko (2016) compared creativity between bilinguals and monolinguals in a meaning interpretation activity of invented compounds (e.g., weather + body part as in 'cloud neck'). The study focused on three main groups: Māori-English bilinguals, bilinguals who spoke a language other than Māori, and English monolinguals. The data analysis distinguished associative strategies and figurative processes. Associative strategies included literal vs. figurative interpretation (i.e., the linguistic unit's basic meaning coheres or not with its context); analogical interpretation (i.e., the interpretation does not result from the interaction of constituents but the association of items in the speaker's lexical network); and interpretations built on personal and loose associations, including the notion that compounds referred to technical names (jargon). Figurative processes comprised generalizations, metonymic chains, metonymies, personification, image metaphors and conceptual metaphors, where the first two items constitute variations of metonymy while personification, image metaphors, and conceptual metaphors are built on metaphorical mappings. Although it had been hypothesized that because of bilinguals' divergent thinking, a sign of linguistic creativity, they would demonstrate higher rates of metaphorical associations than monolinguals,

results failed to demonstrate a significant difference in associative strategies and figurative meaning between groups.

In summary, it is important to continue making sense of the language learning skills and needs of L2Ls and HLLs that can shape the language curriculum and teaching practices (Kondo-Brown, 2008).

Although prior investigations have studied these populations from various perspectives (e.g., Kondo-Brown, 2005; Lynch, 2008; Montrul, 2012), there is scarce information on how they compare in terms of metaphoric language. Because of the ubiquity of metaphor in every-day language and its central role in mediation of mental development, the study of metaphor is warranted. Particularly important to the study of metaphor is to uncover how metaphoric language emerges in the spontaneous speech of HLLs and L2s, rather than in fictitious tasks that deny the "messy reality of metaphor use" (Gibbs, 2010, p. 6).

Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate metaphoric language in spontaneous discourse in Spanish HLLs and L2Ls; the questions that guided this investigation were: (1) What type of metaphoric language do Spanish HLLs and L2Ls produce in spontaneous speech? and (2) How pervasive is metaphor in their spontaneous speech?

Method

Gibbs (2010) proposed tenets for metaphor research, including(a) research that is not limited to the analysis of certain types of metaphor; (b) analyses that are based on real world language and not on made up and decontextualized items; (c) a wider research scope that includes different languages and cultures; and (d) the examination of diverse situations such as metaphor use in different bilingual contexts. These propositions have shaped the current investigation. Here, the analysis of metaphor is deductive and not concentrated on predetermined types of metaphor; data for analysis originate in naturalistic exchanges; and, the language of interest is U.S. Spanish, particularly as utilized by Spanish L2Ls and HLLs.

Participants

Sixteen students enrolled in two advanced Spanish conversation courses in a state university located in the Midwest in the United States participated in this research. There were 12 females and four males, aged 19–30; nine were HLLs and seven were L2Ls. HLLs had either been born in the United States or had arrived before the age of five.

Participants' proficiency in Spanish was determined via the DELE proficiency test, a reliable assessment tool for both L2Ls and HLLs (Montrul, 2010). The test includes 50 possible points; a score between 40 and 50 suggests advanced proficiency, 30 to 49 represents intermediate proficiency, and 1 to 29 signals low proficiency. Table 1 accounts for participants, their linguistic background, and Spanish proficiency level.

Table 1.

Participants' profiles

Participant pseudonym	Linguistic Background	Spanish Proficiency
01	HLL	Intermediate
02	L2L	Intermediate
03	HLL	Advanced
04	HLL	Advanced
05	L2L	Intermediate
06	HLL	Intermediate
07	HLL	Advanced
08	HLL	Intermediate
09	L2L	Intermediate
10	L2L	Intermediate
11	L2L	Intermediate
12	HLL	Advanced
13	HLL	Intermediate
14	HLL	Advanced
15	L2L	Intermediate
16	L2L	Intermediate

Data Collection

As part of the course, students completed an oral portfolio activity that consisted of four meetings (outside of class) with a Spanish native speaker. Each time, students and their interlocutors engaged in conversation for (at least) 15 minutes. For the first three meetings, the instructor (and researcher) assigned a theme and provided four or five sample questions that guided each exchange. During the first meeting, students and their conversation partners shared general information about each other, during the second meeting they talked about food, and in their third meeting they told anecdotes from their childhood. The theme for the last meeting was expectations, plans, and dreams for the future. It included no sample questions. Transcripts for participants' fourth exchange comprise the data for analysis.

Participants' conversation partners were Spanish native speakers aged 20 to 65. They were from various origins, including Mexico, Peru, and Puerto Rico, and had been identified by learners themselves. They were participants' coworkers, relatives, friends, and neighbors. The speech of these individuals is not analyzed in the present study.

Data Analysis

Two questions guided this research, the first points to the identification of metaphoric language in the spontaneous speech of L2Ls and HLLs, and the second, to the comparison of metaphor production for these two groups. Thus, the first step in the analysis called for the identification of metaphors as "expressions in language that have the potential to be understood metaphorically" (Cameron, 2008, p. 198).

Cameron (2003) describes necessary conditions for the identification of metaphors: (a) the presence of a Vehicle term or source domain (which is different from the domain of the surrounding context or Topic) that presents a meaning distinct from their basic sense and is incongruous with the surrounding context (Cameron, 2008) and (b) the incongruity derived from a Vehicle term can be resolved by transferring meaning from the Vehicle to the Topic (Cameron, 2003).

The second step in the analysis consisted of an exploration of the types of metaphors that had been identified for each learner type. Here, no preconceived categories were imposed on the data, rather, categories emerged naturally from the analysis. Next, density was calculated by dividing the number of linguistic metaphors as represented by the Vehicle term by the number of words in the transcript (after removing non-talk items) produced by the participant (Cameron, 2008).

For the purpose of establishing trustworthiness in the qualitative analysis, several techniques were implemented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, the data were parsed for analysis at two different points in time over four months. Second, the analysis was conducted by the researcher (and author) and a second rater, who worked on the data separately and then compared and discussed their findings. Prior to beginning their separate analyses, they had met and discussed the definition of metaphor as introduced in the present study and carried out a practice analysis together that helped narrow down the analysis parameters to meaningful metaphors (Low, 1999). The second rater is a professor of Spanish literature and culture. Both the rater and the researcher are Spanish native speakers and have lived in the U.S. for close to 20 years.

An example of the analysis follows where the Vehicle term is underlined within the immediate context provided by the speaker. A translation into English comes next, as well as a discussion of the items' figurative meaning in the conversation. Because it is not possible to assert with certainty what conceptual metaphors speakers have in mind (Cameron & Low, 1999; Cameron, 2008), the analysis includes a potential conceptual metaphor driving the expression. The participant's ID is noted in parentheses.

> **Item**: *Cada persona tiene página blanca al comienzo de su vida* (02).
> **English translation**: Every person has a white page at the beginning of his/her life.
> **Context**: The interlocutors are discussing gender equality and feminism. The speaker discusses the idea that people are shaped by the culture and society they are born in in opposition to inherent features derived from their genetic composition.
> **Figurative meaning**: The expression implies that individuals have the freedom to decide how they will conduct their lives. Everybody starts with a blank/clean slate.

(Potential) conceptual metaphor: LIFE IS A BOOK. The linguistic expression of having a 'white page' appears to be supported by a conceptual metaphor that exists in both English and Spanish: LIFE IS A BOOK. Syntactically speaking though, Spanish presents the expression *página en blanco* or, literally, 'page in white.' This meaning more closely aligns with the idea of having a 'blank page,' where the adjective 'blank' signifies emptiness rather than color. Although the expression presents syntactical interference from English, the interlocutors appear to share the conceptual metaphor that connects the domains LIFE and BOOK, which facilitates comprehension.

Results

The initial identification and analysis of Vehicle terms found in participants' speech led the researcher and rater to a three-item categorization, namely, *true metaphors*, *light metaphors*, and *transfer metaphors*. Next, each category is defined and further exemplified.

True Metaphors

True metaphors present an incongruous connection between the Vehicle and the context. In discourse, the expression is activated and proceeds metaphorically depending upon the individuals' background knowledge and the context surrounding the particular and shared talk event. Examples follow, the first from an HLL and the second from an L2L.

> **Item**: *Navegas por la vida* (14).
> **English translation**: You navigate through life.
> **Context**: The learner speaks of his upcoming graduation, future plans, and making decisions regarding employment, graduate school, and romantic relationships.
> **Figurative meaning**: Going through life and dealing with various events, making decisions at each step of the way.

(Potential) conceptual metaphor: LIFE IS AN OCEAN. The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS AN OCEAN explains the use of the maritime term *navegar* (to navigate) in this context. This conceptualization exists in both English and

Spanish, from which multiple linguistic expressions derive, e.g., people can encounter rough seas or sail through life. In the example above, the speaker uses the term to signify moving from one life event to the next. Meaning is made clear in the shared context between interlocutors.

In the next example, an L2L makes a lexical choice that contributes intensity and emotion to her speech as she talks about segregation in her town.

> **Item:** *Hicieron una carretera y eso pasó, y partió el norte y el sur* (02)
> **English translation:** They made a highway and that went through, and split the north and south.
> **Context:** The participant started the conversation by saying that she wanted to talk about segregation in the city to see what her interlocutor thought about it. Her interlocutor was not aware of the historical context that led to the current situation in their hometown. The participant explained redlining and other historical moves, including the construction of a highway, that divided and isolated communities of color and impacted their access to education and home ownership.
> **Figurative meaning:** The decision to build a highway that divided the north and the south of the city had the underlying purpose of dividing the community. The verb *partir* (in the sense of to crack or to split) contributes an emotional intensity to the participant's discourse that other verbs such as *dividir* (to divide) might not have.

(Potential) contextual metaphor: RACIAL DISCRIMINATION DIVIDES PEOPLE. In this sample, a city cannot be physically split, which gives incongruity to the verb choice for *partir*. However, this lexical choice contributes meaning and communicates the speaker's disapproval of the practice.

Light Metaphors

Light metaphors encompass expressions that are not entirely novel as they (or similar expressions) can be found in the dictionary. (For this purpose, the Real Academia Española dictionary was consulted). These expressions can be relative to the speech community norms and there is no incongruity apparent to producers or receivers. The next items exemplify light metaphors, the first by an HLL and the second by an L2L.

> **Item**: *Personas mayores han soñado y cumplido* (01).
> **Translation:** Older people have dreamed and fulfilled.
> **Context:** The participant and her interlocutor speak of future plans.
> **Figurative meaning**: To dream refers to the design of future projects that are hoped or wished for.

(Potential) conceptual metaphor: GOALS ARE DREAMS. The conceptual metaphor GOALS ARE DREAMS appears to drive the utterance. 'To dream,' in the sense of fantasizing or having expectations that will not be met, is not a novel expression in English or Spanish, and exists in dictionary entries containing the verb *soñar*as in *soñar despierto* or 'dreaming awake.' The next item is from an L2L; she employs the adverb *rápido* (fast) to describe the pace of life.

> **Item**: La vida no es muy rápida (05).
> **Translation:** Life is not very fast.
> **Context:** The participant asked her interlocutor to compare life in the U.S. to her hometown.
> **Figurative meaning**: As the interlocutor describes life at home, the participant interjected that life in the state where they currently reside is not fast, meaning that is not busy or hectic as in other larger and more crowded places.

(Potential) conceptual metaphor: LIFE IS A RACE. Although time cannot change its pace, the adjective *rápido* (fast) is used here and in other expressions, in both English and Spanish, to signify that something is busy, intense, or even efficient. Such expressions include *comida rápida* (fast food) or *vía rápida* (express lane or highway).

Transfer Metaphors

Transfer metaphors denote incongruities that appear to arise from errors and blending discourse worlds for the language learner. These expressions originate in lexical accessibility problems encountered by the participants rather than deliberate choices. They are not true linguistic metaphors. Examples follow:

> **Item:** *Cambio como de otro mundo, o como de otra frontera* (03).

> **Translation:** Change from another world, or from another frontier.
> **Context:** The participant inquired about his interlocutor's arrival in the U.S. and his reaction upon finding a completely different way of life.
> **Figurative meaning**: 'Frontier' signifies that which is unexplored or unknown.

In this example, the complete utterance is made up of, first, a light metaphor, *de otro mundo* or 'from another world,' which describes something uncommon or unfamiliar. This is followed by a transfer metaphor that results from the use of the term *frontera* (frontier). The participant equates the transfer metaphor's meaning to that of the first (light) metaphor in his utterance.

The metaphoricity built in the term *frontera* results from a transfer from English, where the noun *frontier* refers to uncharted territories and the historical pursue of land by European settlers in North America. In English, several expressions exist such as 'science at the frontier,' which points to the boundaries of scientific knowledge and moving beyond them in a constant state of exploration. In Spanish, the term *frontera* can be used metaphorically to signify a limit, as seen in the expression '*su codicia no tiene fronteras'* (his greed has no limit). Thus, in this example by the learner, the term in question carries metaphorical significance in English (FRONTIERS ARE THE LIMIT TO ONE'S KNOWLEDGE) but this conceptualization is not shared in Spanish. Regardless, the use of the item in Spanish was most likely comprehended by the interlocutor as intended thanks to the metaphor that preceded it, '*como de otro mundo*.'

The transfer metaphor that follows was produced by an L2 learner. Unlike the previous item where the term had a metaphoric use in English that the participant attempted to regurgitate in Spanish, the item that follows results from a lexical limitation and does not suggest any metaphoricity to the word choice.

> **Item**: *Yo gané mi certificado* (15).
> **Translation**: I gained my certification.
> **Context**: The speaker talks about having completed coursework at a community college.
> **Figurative meaning**: In Spanish, the collocation of *ganar* in connection with an educational accomplishment might suggest, to an interlocutor lacking English as a background, that

> the deed had an element of luck to it. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the verb *ganar* in the context presented here is positive in connection to having achieved something.

In this sample, the dissonance and incongruity of the Vehicle term arises from the speaker's incorrect lexical choice. The verb *ganar* can be variously utilized in the contexts of earning a salary, winning a contest, gaining control over a territory, or even achieving something. However, in connection with a certificate, possible collocations in Spanish include *obtener* ('to obtain') or *completar* ('to complete'). Yet, the incongruity did not appear to create misunderstanding. This is perhaps because comprehension of the speaker's utterance is supported by the bilingual context shared with the interlocutor.

Metaphoric Density in the Speech of L2 and Heritage Language Learners

As a next step in the analysis, a tally was performed for the three categories discussed before: true metaphors, light metaphors, and transfer metaphors. Table 2 provides these counts and also reports the total number of words produced by each participant. Non-talk items were eliminated from this count. In expressions composed by more than one item (as in the example provided before *tener página blanca* or 'having a blank page'), only one item was accounted for, that is, the Vehicle term driving the expression.

Table 2.

Metaphor count

Participant	True Metaphor	Light Metaphor	Transfer Metaphor	Word Count
01	10		2	791
02	7	9	3	1112
03	2	11	2	601
04	2	3	2	809
05	1	5		580
06		2		576
07	2	4		672
08	1	3	2	658
09				468

Participant	True Metaphor	Light Metaphor	Transfer Metaphor	Word Count
10	1	5	2	571
11		2		196
12	1	11	3	756
13		1	1	441
14	4	10	3	928
15	1	1	3	653
16		3		390

In answering the second research question on how ubiquitous linguistic metaphors were in the language of the participants, metaphoric density was calculated by dividing true and light metaphors by the number of talk-items produced by the speaker. That number was multiplied by 100 in order to make an index that is more readily usable. The index in Table 3 can be read as the number of metaphors per 100 words.

Table 3.

Metaphoric density

Participant	Density Index
01	1.2642
02	1.4388
03	2.1631
04	0.6180
05	1.0345
06	0.3472
07	0.8929
08	0.6079
09	0.0000
10	1.0508
11	1.0204
12	1.5873
13	0.2268
14	1.5086
15	0.3063
16	0.7692

On average, HLLs produced 1.02 per 100 words (STD = .648) and L2Ls produced .80 (STD = .493). A t-test was run in order to see if there was a difference between those two means (t (14) = .748, p = .467), but it revealed no significant difference between the groups (perhaps the low number of participants contributed to this result). Therefore, these findings suggest that there is no difference in the production of metaphor for HLLs and L2Ls.

Lastly, it is worth noting that participants produced a handful of other tropes, including metonymy (the mention of a part for a whole), personification (attaching human characteristics to a non-human object), and frozen metaphors (idioms or sayings), but these were not included in the current analysis.

Discussion

Prior literature on language learning in HLLs and L2Ls has accounted for differences and similarities between these two populations. The current investigation sought to contribute to this body of literature by exploring metaphor in the spontaneous speech of Spanish HLLs and L2Ls. The first research question called for the identification of metaphoric language in discourse. An initial analysis led to three categories: *true metaphors*, *light metaphors*, and *transfer metaphors*. True metaphors present incongruity between the Vehicle term and the context, but individuals' knowledge and common background allow the metaphor to proceed successfully in the exchange. Light metaphors share the same basic qualities of true metaphors but differ in their degree of novelty or perceived incongruity since they (or comparable expressions) already exist in the language and, as a result, are better known in the speech community. Lastly, transfer metaphors present incongruities, but these appear to originate in lexical accessibility problems rather than metaphor per se. Thus, only true metaphors and light metaphors are truly metaphoric.

The emergence of true metaphors and light metaphors suggests that learners possess some degree of metaphoric competence. On the other hand, transfer metaphors allude to English models and semantics, not shared in Spanish, that learners bring into their speech as a result of contact. These findings agree with Rakhilina, Vyrenkova, and Polinsky (2016) who found that

HLLs and L2Ls rely on English mechanisms in producing creative language in the heritage or second language. However, the authors also found that HLLs were more creative than L2Ls, and that L2Ls relied more on calques from the L1. Overall, in this study, no difference was observed between L2Ls and HLLs in their metaphoric production

As a next step in the analysis, metaphoric density was calculated based on the occurrence of true and light metaphors. In general, light metaphors were more recurrent than true metaphors. This is not surprising since metaphoric constructions require novelty, for which they are rare in spontaneous speech (Cameron, 2008). The comparison of true and light metaphors showed that HLLs produced approximately 10 metaphors every 1000 words, and L2Ls averaged 8 every 1000 words. Findings revealed no significant difference between groups, which suggests that HLLs and L2Ls were more similar than not in terms of metaphoric language production. Perhaps this similarity can be explained in participants' having more socially in common, as a group, than not. After all, they were university students, belonged to the same age group, and were peers in language classes for the Spanish minor or major at the same institution, among other commonalities. As noted by Low (1999, p. 61), social groupings have metaphoric similarities, just as it occurs with the use of key terms in specific fields.

Moreover, metaphoric density indicated how frequent metaphor was in these HLLs and L2Ls' spontaneous talk. Prior research on metaphoric density in native speakers of English reported that it varies across discourse type. For instance, Cameron (2008) observed that reconciliation talk presented 100 metaphors for 1000 words, doctor-patient talk included 55 per 1000 words, and classroom talk averaged 27 metaphors per 1000 words. Cameron (2003) noted that college lectures included 20 metaphors and 60 in teacher talk per 1000 words. With 10 or fewer metaphors per 1000 words in this study, it would appear that HLLs and L2Ls do not produce large numbers of metaphoric language in informal and spontaneous speech. This finding is in line with Littlemore (2009) and Danesi (1993) who found that learners, even those of advanced proficiency, avoid using metaphorical senses of words and rely on literal uses.

In summary, this study suggests that in the area of metaphoric competence, HLLs and L2Ls produce similar types and amounts of metaphoric

language. Perhaps, one way to explain this outcome is found in the reality of blended cultures for Spanish learners living in the U.S. where they are exposed to multiple Spanish cultural models coexisting with English ones (even for L2Ls for whom this occurs primarily through formal instruction, where they come in contact with HLLs and instructors from various origins). From this perspective, participants in this study are not limited in their control of metaphor in Spanish, quite the opposite, their behaviors are coherent with the culture they are part of while living and learning Spanish in the U.S.

Several pedagogical implications are drawn from these findings. As reported in other studies, and further substantiated in the current investigation, metaphoric language is not frequent in language learner's speech and is affected by the L1 or dominant language. In regards to production, Littlemore (2009) argued that the absence of metaphoric language can be targeted by assisting learners in noticing metaphor and supporting them in changing their passive understanding of metaphor into a productive ability through guided practice. This primary understanding of metaphor in discourse can take place in the classroom setting, where learners can be guided in drawing meaning from the discourse setting, culture and social knowledge. As part of developing metaphoric awareness, learners can also become cognizant of common pitfalls that result from transferring concepts from English (as seen with the occurrence of transfer metaphors).

Once learners have achieved metaphoric awareness and a passive understanding of metaphor in language, they can use the classroom as a safe setting where they can incorporate metaphor in their speech and be mentored by the instructor and collaborate with each other. Here, it is important to mention that language teaching materials usually do not go beyond the inclusion of a few idiomatic expressions (Littlemore & Low, 2006, p. 268); therefore, instructors might need to adapt their teaching materials to include the topic of metaphor. Lantolf and Bobrova (2014) and Bobrova and Lantolf (2012), for instance, provide valuable guidance on the pedagogy of teaching metaphor.

Conclusion

Metaphoric competence is an integral part of a learner's overall linguistic competence. It provides learners with access to the concepts and models of a community and makes mediation possible during communitive tasks (Lantolf, 1999). Prior investigations on metaphor have found that L2Ls struggle to interpret and produce metaphors in the L2 (Valeva, 1996), even after living abroad (Irujo, 1986). HLLs, on the other hand, are exposed to two languages and cultures, and later might encounter yet more cultural models in the language classroom (Kagan, 2012). This investigation compared linguistic metaphors in the informal and spontaneous speech of HLLs and L2Ls during an oral portfolio task. Findings indicated that HLLS and L2Ls produced similar types of metaphors and in similar quantities, thus suggesting that in this area of linguistic competence, HLLs and L2Ls are similar.

While findings from this study shed light on metaphoric competence in a group of HLLs and L2Ls, there are limitations that need to be considered. First, the study included a small sample size. Having a larger sample size can provide more robust results in the calculation of metaphoric density. Second, in attempting to capture metaphor in spontaneous discourse, learners were not assigned a topic of conversation. As a consequence, topics ranged from every-day conversation to hypothetical and abstract subjects. As seen in Cameron (2008), conversation topics play a role in metaphor density: concrete and literal topics trigger fewer metaphors than more abstract topics.

Future studies on metaphoric production for HLLs and L2Ls are needed in order to understand the full range of these learners' metaphoric competence. For instance, a future study could compare metaphoric production in HLLs and L2Ls to that of native speakers of Spanish living in the United States and examine how much learners pick up from their interlocutors in terms of metaphoric meanings. Moreover, HLLs are not a homogenous group. The participants in this research had arrived in the U.S. as young children or were born in the country. A future study could explore how metaphoric competence varies in HLLs with different linguistic backgrounds and experiences with the Spanish language. Finally, it would be worth exploring the Vehicle terms employed by HLLs and L2Ls in order to determine if there are differences between groups in terms of word categories.

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METAFORA ISPANŲ L2 IR PAVELDĖTOS KALBOS BESIMOKANČIŲJŲ ŠNEKOJE: KUO JI SKIRIASI?

Santrauka. Vienas būdas, kaip kalbų praktikai ir tyrinėtojai prisidėjo prie mūsų supratimo apie paveldėtos kalbos besimokančiųjų lingvistinius gebėjimus, buvo jų palyginimas su L2 besimokančiaisiais. Pastarasis modalumas buvo pritaikytas ir šiame tyrime, nagrinėjančiame metaforines kompetencijas. Tai viena bendros besimokančiųjų lingvistinės kompetencijos sritis, kuri suteikia jiems prieigą prie kalbos bendruomenės koncepcijų ir modelių bei palengvina tarpininkavimą komunikacinių užduočių metu (Lantolf, 1999). Šio tyrimo dalyviai (n=16) buvo paveldėtos kalbos besimokantieji bei L2 besimokantieji, lankantys pažangius pokalbių ispanų kalba kursus. Jie įvykdė užduotį žodžiu, skirtą žodiniam portfolio (angl. *oral portfolio assignment*), kurią sudarė nuolatinis pokalbio palaikymas su gimtakalbiu ispanu ir jų pokalbių įrašai. Iš anksto nesutartų pokalbių analizė apėmė ir metaforų pavyzdžių identifikavimą bei metaforinio tankio apskaičiavimą. Buvo nustatyta, jog besimokantieji kūrė taip vadinamas tikras metaforas (originalias konstrukcijas), lengvas metaforas (metaforines konstrukcijas, kurios jau buvo nusistovėjusios kalboje) ir perkeltas metaforas (konstrukcijas, atsiradusias dėl kontakto su anglų kalba). L2 ir paveldėtos kalbos besimokančiųjų palyginimai neatskleidė ženklių skirtumų, o tai suponuoja, jog metaforinės kompetencijos srityje šie besimokantieji yra labiau panašūs, nei skirtingi.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: metafora; ispanų kalba; L2 besimokantieji; paveldėtos kalbos besimokantieji; portfolio.