Generational Divisions: Dialect Divergence in a Los Angeles-Salvadoran Household

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Parodi (2003; 2004; 2009a; 2009b; 2011) has proposed and evidenced the existence of a Los Angeles, California dialect of Spanish called Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish (LAVS). This ‘rur-urbana koiné’ is argued to be based on rural Mexican Spanish dialects but with its own unique characteristics as well. The author affirms that Latin American immigrants to the region (not only Mexicans but also Salvadorans, Hondurans, etc.) accommodate their speech to LAVS outside of the home, but maintain the use of their original dialect inside, while their children born in the region acquire solely the LAVS dialect. The present ethnographic study seeks to discover how these claims play out in natural, real-time interactions amongst the members of a Salvadoran family living in Los Angeles. Through an in-depth breakdown of both phonological (/s/-aspiration, /n/-velarization, /y/-deletion, and /y/-epenthesis) and morphosyntactic (voseo and tuteo) features of the different family members’ speech, we confirm the presence of three distinct dialects in the home: two Salvadoran (one employed by the mother, another by the father), and one ‘Angelino’, used by the children. The results thereby support Parodi’s theory that Los Angeles possesses its own dialect and speech community which are distinct from those of other varieties of Spanish.

Keywords Chicano/United States Spanish, Salvadoran Spanish, heritage language, dialect contact, terms of address (voseo/tuteo)

Introduction

It is now common knowledge that Spanish-speaking individuals make up nearly half of the population of California’s Los Angeles County and the surrounding area. Given that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans constitute the vast majority of these speakers (70 per cent, according to the 2006 American Community Survey), a series of questions emerge with regard to language variety and language usage in the region. While it is
certainly of great importance to look at the linguistic production of the major group of speakers therein, it is also essential for us to ask: how do Spanish speakers who are not of Mexican origin speak in the same area?

The answer to this seemingly simple question involves a variety of factors. Using data from various sociolinguistic interviews, Parodi (2003) was the first to propose that the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area (including Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Ventura counties) possesses its own dialect of Spanish: a ‘koiné’ which is based on, but not identical to, rural dialects of Mexican Spanish. Parodi originally called this new dialect ‘español chicoano’ or ‘Chicano Spanish’, but has since revised this label to ‘Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish’ (LAVS), following the example of research on African American Vernacular English (AAVE). This change was a necessary one due to the considerable linguistic variation that exists amongst Chicanos who live throughout the United States, not solely in Los Angeles.

The new label of LAVS was also needed given Parodi’s (2004; 2009a; 2009b; 2011) continued findings about the dialect. The author claims that working-class immigrant speakers of other dialects (e.g. Central Americans) alter their speech upon moving to the Los Angeles area, accommodating to the dialect used in the region in order to become accepted members of the Spanish-speaking speech community at large, while at the same time maintaining the use of their original dialect at home. Additionally, she affirms that the children of these speakers acquire only Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish and not the original dialect of the parents, despite the use of the latter in the home by children’s parents. As these conclusions have been arrived at via interview data, the present study seeks to investigate them by way of unstructured, naturalistic observation of a Los Angeles-Salvadoran household.

The use of a case study in the experimental design is deliberate and purposeful, as the present study seeks to provide concrete, explicit examples of a family’s internal communication, the overarching results of which can then be extrapolated to describe the linguistic realities of many speakers/families in the greater Los Angeles area and hopefully inspire further research. The conclusions help us better to understand how processes of dialect and language acquisition and change operate within homes on a larger scale in the region.

Setting and critique of the literature

As of the year 2006, 1,846,535 individuals classified as ‘Hispanic or Latino’ were living in Los Angeles County, which made them almost half of the total population of the area (48.9 per cent of the total 3,773,846 inhabitants).¹ As stated earlier, 70 per cent of those Latinos were of Mexican origin (1,276,870 individuals), while the next most numerically present group was made up of individuals of Salvadoran origin at 233,186 inhabitants, or 12.6 per cent of the total Latino population, (United States Census Bureau, 2006b; 2006c). As may be expected, this large numerical gap (70 per cent Mexican vs. 12.6 per cent Salvadoran) has several repercussions, language being

¹ United States Census Bureau, 2006a. We remind the reader, though, that ‘Hispanic or Latino’ does not necessarily denote ‘Spanish-speaking’. Additionally, there are numerous undocumented immigrants who are not included in these demographics.
no exception. Given the various dialects to which Los Angeles Salvadoran speakers can have access, how do family members interact at home? Which do they use? And with whom? Following Parodi’s model for quantifying dialectal differences, here we will take an in-depth look at the actual linguistic production of the members of a family as they communicate with one another inside the home.

Such a study is needed in the literature as Parodi seems to be the only researcher tackling this topic in Los Angeles. Other (socio-)linguistic investigations on Salvadorans in the United States (Lipski, 1988; 1989; 2000; Schreffler, 1994; Hernández, 2002; 2009; amongst others) have all focused on communities in Houston, Texas, despite the fact that Los Angeles has a considerably larger Salvadoran population than does Houston.²

Additionally, most previous research has focused on the speech of Salvadorans outside of the home. Hernández (2002), for example, claims accommodation of Salvadoran speech to Mexican Speech (measured by loss of voseo and loss of transitive uses of andar ‘to go/to carry’) by way of arranged interviews between a Mexican Spanish speaker and Salvadorans living in Houston. Other studies by Hernández and colleagues (Hernández, 2009; Aaron and Hernández, 2007) present statistically significant decreases in /n/-velarization and /s/-aspiration by Salvadorans in the same interview situation. Schreffler (1994) attempts to analyse interactions within the home and describes use of the voseo in Houston between Salvadoran siblings and from parents/grandparents to children/grandchildren. She tested her informants individually, though, by having them create conversations and dialogues while looking at a variety of pictures. While this is an interesting and valid experimental design, it does not allow us to see actual interaction amongst family members as each informant was tested in isolation, creating both sides of the invented dialogues alone.

Recent studies by Rivera-Mills (2011) and Woods and Rivera-Mills (2012) also note the lack of research on Central Americans in the (north-)western USA and tackle Honduran and Salvadoran communities in Washington, Oregon, California, and Arizona. These studies do analyse spontaneous conversation, at least in part, and claim a diminished use of voseo conjugations across generations. But, with the partial exception of these recent investigations, the great majority of the above results are from studies conducted through established interviews, surveys, or experiments. Therefore, due to the experimental design, we cannot be sure as to whether the Salvadorans interviewed, for example, had ‘Mexicanized’ their speech temporarily while talking to a Mexican speaker, or whether the ‘Mexicanized’ dialect was their normal, everyday way of speaking. Secondly, the interview process does not allow us to see each informant interact naturally with a familiar individual, for example, a friend or family member. As they are being interviewed by someone outside of their community, the register of speech will naturally be more formal than it would be in everyday casual conversation. While such experiments do yield interesting and important results, the present study focuses on natural speech inside the home amongst family members.

² Lipski (2008: 156), for example, compares data from the 1990 US Census which claimed 211,400 Salvadorans living in Los Angeles (the US city with the largest concentration) compared with only 30,800 in Houston, Texas. As of the 2006, the American Community Survey reports 67,092 Salvadorans living in Houston (7.7% of the total Latino Population), which is significantly less than the 233,186 Salvadorans living in Los Angeles (12.6% of the total Latino population).
Salvadoran vs. Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish: main features

As has already been alluded to, Central American Spanish differs greatly from the Mexican-based variety prominent in Los Angeles. This is true at both the phonological as well as morphological levels, making speakers of Salvadoran origin ideal for such a study of language and dialect accommodation and change, as any differences will be quite salient. This is precisely the reasoning behind Parodi’s selection of speakers of Salvadoran origin to test her original hypotheses about Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish.

In this section, we summarize and comment on the specific differences that Parodi (2003; 2004; 2009a; 2009b; 2009c; 2011) has noted between Salvadoran and LAVS dialects. These differences lay the foundation that will be subsequently used to analyse the spontaneous conversational data that is the core of the present investigation.

Phonology
Salvadoran Spanish, along with other Central American dialects (e.g. Honduran, Costa Rican, Panamanian, etc.), is classified as a tierras bajas dialect (Menéndez Pidal, 1962; Parodi, 2009b; 2009c). As such, it exemplifies a range of phonological characteristics which distinguish it from Mexican and other tierras altas varieties, including LAVS and other Chicano Spanish dialects. The aspects of Salvadoran speech are most famously documented in Canfield (1981) and in Lipski (1988; 1994; 2000). Of particular interest to our study are the following aspects of Salvadoran Spanish, which Parodi reports to be the most widely prevalent features of the dialect.

Aspiration of /s/ before consonants and in word-final or coda position

\[ /s/ \rightarrow [h] / \_C; \_# \]

The aspiration process converts /s/ to [h] in these contexts. This is a well-known characteristic of Salvadoran Spanish, which is immediately noticeable to speakers of non-aspirating dialects, for example, speakers of Mexican Spanish. In word-final and phrase-final position, the /s/ can also be completely deleted, especially in rapid, colloquial speech, occasionally triggering a lengthening of the preceding vowel (Parodi, 2009c). To illustrate an example, let us look at the sentence: Estoy buscando dos animales — ‘I am looking for two animals’. A standard Mexican pronunciation, as well as the pronunciation used in the LAVS dialect, would call for tense realizations of the /s/: [es.tój bus.kán.do dós a.ni.má.les]. In contrast, a Salvadoran, aspirated pronunciation would be: [eh.tój buh.kán.do dó(h) a.ni.má.łe(h)]. Given the prevalence of /s/ in everyday speech (in verb conjugations, plural formation, etc.), it is easy to realize just how salient this phonological feature is.

Lipski (1994) claims that Salvadoran Spanish has also been known to aspirate all word-initial /s/, be they post-vocalic or post-consonantal. To be more conservative in our analysis, however, we will not count these contexts as part of the general Salvadoran Spanish rule set.
Use of interdental [θ] in place of /s/

\[ /s/ \rightarrow [θ] \]

This aspect of Salvadoran speech, which, as with aspiration, also affects the realization of /s/, is centralized around Santa Ana, the country’s second largest city after the capital of San Salvador. Canfield (1981) states that this pronunciation ‘approaches [the interdental] [θ] but lacks the tenseness of that of Spain’ (54). Most importantly for our study, however, is that it is clearly distinct from the Mexican/Chicano tenser, predorso-dental [s].

**Velarization of word-final /n/ before a vowel and in phrase-final position**

\[ /n/ \rightarrow [ŋ] / _V; _# \]

This process, commonplace in the *tierras bajas* dialects of the Caribbean as well as in Andalucía, replaces alveolar /n/ with velar [ŋ] in word-final position before a vowel and in phrase-final position. Parodi affirms that this phonological process is a characteristic of Salvadoran speech that is not present in the LAVS dialect, which only velarizes /n/ before velar consonants.

**Weakening of intervocalic /y/**

\[ /y/ \rightarrow O / _V___V \]

As noted in Canfield (1981), Salvadorans weaken their pronunciation of intervocalic /y/, which, orthographically, is written as <y> or <ll> in Spanish. This process is generalized and widespread throughout the dialect, with many speakers eliminating the segment altogether in fluid speech: *ella* /é.ya/, ‘she’, easily becomes simply [é.a]. In LAVS, the weakening process does not go as far as to delete completely the /y/, as in the Salvadoran dialect, but it does debilitate to the approximate [j] as in [é.ja] (cf. Parodi, 2004).

**[y]-epenthesis between [i] and [a]**

\[ ņ \rightarrow [y] / _i__a \]

Seemingly to the contrary of the previous process, between accented [i] and [a], Salvadorans occasionally add an epenthetic [y] to ease the transition between the two vowels in hiatus (Canfield, 1981). A word or name like *María* /ma.ri.a/ can therefore become [ma.ri.ya] in this dialect, possibly an example of hypercorrection. This process is not as regular as the others discussed in this section, but it still constitutes a possibility in Salvadoran Spanish which is not part of the LAVS dialect.

**Morphology**

The morphology of Salvadoran Spanish, as well as the Spanish of neighbouring Honduras and Nicaragua, is most known for its use of *voseo* (Paez Urdaneta 1981;
Voseo denotes the use of the pronoun vos as opposed to tú (tuteo) to indicate a singular addressee and is accompanied by a distinct set of conjugations, as seen in Table 1 (adapted from the Real Academia Española).

Although the voseo does have some distinct morphology, it also shares many characteristics with the tuteo: for example, both forms of address use te as the (in-)direct object and reflexive pronouns, and tu as the possessive adjective. Moreover, the conjugations of all other tenses not listed in the Table (i.e. imperfect indicative, imperfect subjunctive, conditional) are identical for vos and for tú: vos hablabas, tú hablabas, ‘you used to speak’. Given that Spanish is a pronoun-dropping (pro-drop) language, meaning that subjects are not mandatorily overt, one must look at the entire discursive context in these troublesome cases properly to determine which pronoun is being employed at any given point.

Lipski (1988; 2000) and Quintanilla Aguilar (2009) explain that the voseo exists in El Salvador as part of a three-way system, which also includes tuteo and ustedeo (the use of usted) as possible pronouns to refer to a singular addressee. Quintanilla Aguilar claims that vos is undoubtedly the most used in daily interactions, while tú and usted are reserved for more formal situations (including educational settings and writing). Most crucially, contrary to the common misconception that vos is only used amongst the uneducated, lower classes, the author clarifies that the use of vos is generalized across all socioeconomic levels. This system is the norm of the country’s general speech community.

In LAVS, as in most Mexican dialects, we only see a two-way pronominal system which uses tú and usted. Not only is the voseo not present in LAVS, but it is also highly stigmatized. Parodi (2004; 2009a; 2011) claims that, in general, speakers of Chicano dialects seem consciously to dislike the sound of the voseo and consequently tease those who use it, especially given that it is a very frequent, salient, and recognizable speech characteristic (cf. Schreffler, 1994; Lipski, various). The difference of

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<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>COMPARISON OF TÚ AND VOS CONJUGATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>hablar ‘to speak’</strong></td>
<td><strong>comer ‘to eat’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tú</strong></td>
<td><strong>vos</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>hablas /á.blás/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterit*</td>
<td>hablaste /a.blá.ste/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>hablarás /a.blá.hár.s/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative (informal command)</td>
<td>habla /á.blá/</td>
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*Alternation in the use of tú morphology but with vos pronoun.
opinion regarding the *voseo* strongly suggests that speakers of Salvadoran Spanish and speakers of LAVS are, not surprisingly, members of distinct speech communities. That is, each of these two groups of speakers adheres to its own set of beliefs which, in turn, causes individual speakers to accept or reject various linguistic forms. In their dislike of the *voseo*, LAVS (and other Chicano Spanish) speakers are, in effect, actively rejecting a linguistic form foreign to their own speech community but native to that of Salvadorans.

The phonological and morpho-syntactic features we have compared in this section are found summarized and illustrated in the following Table 2, slightly adapted from Parodi (2004: 280–81).

### Participants

Given the differences between the Salvadoran and LAVS dialects just presented, we now turn to the focus of this study. The participant family is middle class and consists of five individuals: the father and mother, both of whom emigrated to the United States from El Salvador in their early twenties, and their three children, all of whom were born and raised in the greater Los Angeles area. The eldest daughter is twenty-three years of age, the middle daughter, eighteen, and the youngest boy, fourteen. The father speaks little English and works as the produce manager for a local supermarket. The mother’s English is at a somewhat higher level than the father’s, as demonstrated by her recent passing of the General Education Development (GED) test, and she works as a nurses’ assistant at a nearby hospital. Both parents understand English relatively well due to their twenty-five years of residence in the United States, but their production is at a lower level. The children are all students, the eldest currently in her last year of college and her brother and sister in their first and last years of public high school, respectively.

### TABLE 2

<table>
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<th>Features of Salvadoran vs. Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Rule</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>/s/-aspiration</td>
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<tr>
<td>/s/ as [θ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/n/-velarization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/y/-weakening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[y]-epenthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of <em>tuteo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of <em>voseo</em></td>
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</table>
The family lives in a region of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area with a high population of Latinos. In their specific city, Mexicans make up over 75 per cent of these Latinos while all ‘non-Mexican/non-Puerto Rican/non-Cuban Latinos’, including Salvadorans, make up less than 8 per cent, (City of Costa Mesa, 2000). Therefore, as noted earlier in our general discussion of Los Angeles, these parents work with and their children go to school with other Spanish speakers, most of whom are of Mexican descent; they are integrated with this group rather than isolated from it. Some areas of Los Angeles are more highly concentrated with primarily Salvadorans (see Pico Rivera), but in general this group tends to blend in with other ‘Latinos’, attending Mass in Spanish, shopping at local Latino markets, and so on. This family exemplifies this latter description of incorporation. Lipski (1988; 1989) and Parodi (2009a; 2011) explain that this process is often a work-related necessity. Lipski (1989: 102) also adds that most Salvadorans have had the experience of being referred to as ‘Mexican’, and most do not even attempt to correct this inaccurate label as it is normally to no avail. The participants in this study can all recall personal instances of this.

Methodology

The experimental design of this project was necessarily naturalistic as the goal was to record everyday speech in normal household interaction to compare with Parodi’s (2003; 2004; 2009a; 2009b; 2011) data, taken from interview recordings. The recordings for the present work took place during various family dinners that lasted approximately one hour and twenty minutes each, totalling several hours of spoken data. All of the immediate members of the family described in the preceding section were present for the discourse, in addition to the mother’s sister and/or brother (also born and raised in El Salvador and who came to the US in their early twenties), who occasionally joined the family for dinner; and all were happy to participate. The family was instructed simply to eat and converse as they normally do at dinnertime. Consequently, the topics of discussion focused mainly on stories and gossip from the previous few days.

One microphone was placed in the centre of the dinner table to pick up the interaction as a whole. Then, an additional microphone was fastened to each individual speaker in order to obtain a more concentrated and detailed recording of each person’s voice. Video data was occasionally recorded as well. At the final recording, some informal questions about the family’s language usage were posed. The recordings were first transcribed and subsequently analysed using Audacity (Crook et al., 2011) and Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2011).

The exact number of Salvadorans (alone) in Costa Mesa is not available in the Census demographic report. The Census provides a number and percentage for ‘Total Latino/Hispanic (of any race)’, which is then broken down into ‘Mexican’, ‘Puerto Rican’, ‘Cuban’, and ‘Other’. This is presumably the result of the fact that the majority of Latinos in the United States have their origin in one of these three groups: in the South-west, North-east, and South-east, respectively. Such a lack of individual attention only further emphasizes the explanation here that Salvadorans in this area ‘melt’ into the surrounding, more numerous Latino group (i.e. Mexicans).
Transcripts and analysis

In this section, we analyse the speech of the different members of this family by looking at specific transcripts taken from the recordings. Several pieces of speech for each speaker were analysed; those reproduced here were chosen due to their being representative the overall speech of each speaker.

Phonology

In the following transcripts, segments are bolded when they appear in a context that would call for a specifically Salvadoran pronunciation, as explained above. The phonetic symbols [η] and [h] are used to replace <n> and <s>, respectively, when such segments were pronounced as velarized or aspirated. Additionally, <l> and <y> are replaced by [j] in instances of LAVS /y/-weakening, or by [Ø] in instances of Salvadoran complete /y/-deletion. Any segments that are only bolded but not replaced by one of the aforementioned symbols were not realized according to Salvadoran norms of pronunciation, despite their being in a context that would have permitted it. This system is illustrated in the following hypothetical sentence:

   Ellos ya son amigos.
   ‘They are already friends’.

In this phrase, we see /y/-deletion and /s/-aspiration in ‘e[Ø]o[h]’, followed by /n/-velarization in ‘so[η]’. Then, in ‘amigos’, the bolded <s> indicates a phoneme /s/ that could have been aspirated according to the norms of Salvadoran phonology (i.e. phrase-final position) but was not aspirated by the speaker in this specific, hypothetical instance. Notice also that the <y> in ‘ya’ is not bolded due to it not being in a context that would license weakening in the Salvadoran dialect (i.e. intervocalic position).

Following each transcript is an English translation.

The first transcript is of the father. Here he recounts, to his eldest daughter and brother-in-law, an experience from the week prior. In the story, he and his wife went to a church they had never been to before for a relative’s baptism.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TRANSCRIPT 1: ‘Father’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02 Si a ti te miran, ‘Hola, hermana, ¿cómo e[η]s?’ Te dan la mano y e[h]te todo, va.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Y entonces[h] e[h]te, ya de[h]pués que fuimos[h] a la, a la cena, va, que fue la comida,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 va, e[h]te, a mí e[Ø]a me dijo e[h]te, ‘Dá’ e[h]te ‘Andá’ e[h]te ‘Quiero traer pupusa[h]’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 [No, la Guadaleña]. Ya, e[h]te, yo e[h]taba en la iglesia, y va [Ø]egando e[Ø]a también que quería pupusa[h], haciendo línea tambié[h]. Y sálete u[η], u[η]hermano,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 ‘Herma:::na!’ le dijo, ‘Fíjate que tengo tres hora[h] de e[h]tar aquí adentro,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 e[h]perando pupusa[h], y no puedo. . .’ Ya de, ya, el señor, e[h]te, contento, va,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 con e[Ø]a, va, que quería pupusas, que tenía hambre. Y vino e[Ø]a al señor,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 ‘Gracia[h], hermano. . .jamé:::[laughter]!’</td>
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</table>
They’re sisters of the church who are Christian and so, not knowing her, but once you’re Christian, they’re all really friendly, all of them. If they see you, ‘Hi, Sister, how are you?’ They shake your hand and everything, you know? And so, after we went to the dinner, with the food, she said to me ‘Give’ um ‘Go’ um ‘I want to bring pupusas’.5 [No, it was Guadaleña]. Um, so I was in the church, and she comes up too because she wanted pupusas too, and was waiting in line too. And out comes a, a brother, ‘Sisterrrr!’ he said to her, ‘You know I’ve been waiting in here for three hours, just waiting for pupusas, and I can’t . . .’ And um, the man, um, happy with her, you know, that he wanted pupusas, that he was hungry. And she went up to him, ‘Thank you, Brother . . . ameeeen [laughter]!’.

The father’s speech is a near textbook example of the Salvadoran dialect. He aspi-rated 31 out of 35 possible /s/ phonemes (= 89 per cent), velarized 5 out of 6 possible /n/ phonemes (= 83 per cent), and completely deleted 6 out of 6 /y/ phonemes (= 100 per cent). Additionally, in non-aspirated contexts, his realization of the /s/ resembled the interdental [], which is expected given the fact that he grew up in Santa Ana, the region of El Salvador known to have this pronunciation, before moving to the United States. It is interesting for our purposes, though, that this speaker has maintained this unique pronunciation, at least in the home, despite being away from Santa Ana for the majority of his life (over twenty-five years). This speaker does not seem to add an epenthetic [y] between [i] and [a], but we must bear in mind that this is not a completely generalized pronunciation throughout El Salvador. Therefore, the lack of this epenthesis is not necessarily indicative of a lack of Salvadoran phonology, although it could also be a sign of adaptation to Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish, which does not allow this process.

It should be stated that the instances where the speaker did not aspirate/velarize were often instances of emphasis or laughter. In line 3, for example, we would expect word-final velarization of miran ‘they see’, but this word was actually cut off due to giggling; that is, it was not the case that the /n/ was realized as alveolar rather than velar. The percentages presented here are therefore intentionally very conservative results.

The Salvadoran phonology of the father is shared by the mother, as illustrated in Transcript 2. In this interaction, after a discussion of the eldest child’s upcoming birthday, the mother explains how she used to raise money to buy birthday presents in El Salvador.

**TRANSCRIPT 2: ‘Mother and Eldest Daughter’**

01 MOTHER: Yo vendía, para comprarle su vestido a e[Ø]a, para cuando cumplier
02 año[Ø], yo iba a comprar tomate[Ø] donde lo[Ø] cortaba[Ø]. Y salía a
03 venderlo[Ø] a la[Ø] casas. Y sí, reuni, reuni como veinte y cinco
04 colone[Ø]
05 para comprarle un par de zapato[Ø] de charol negro, lo[Ø] calcetines y
06 un
07 1st CHILD: ¿Qué es charol?
08 MOTHER: Charol e[Ø] el el el el la ese material que bri[Ø]a.

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5 Pupusas are a traditional Salvadoran dish: maize flour dough tortillas filled with any combination of cheese, beans, and/or meat and served with cabbage slaw and tomato salsa.
MOTHER: So I sold, to buy her dress for her, for her birthday, I would go to where they used to cut tomatoes. And I would go out to sell them to houses. And yes, I collected, I collected about twenty-five colones to buy her a pair of black patent leather shoes, the socks . . . and a little red dress, with silk lace.

1st CHILD: What’s charol [patent leather]?
MOTHER: Charol is the the the the the the that material that is shiny. It’s leather but it’s shiny. Uh-huh, it’s charol in Spanish.

In this brief interaction, again we see high percentages of /s/-aspiration (13/17 = 77 per cent), /n/-velarization (2/2 = 100 per cent), and /y/-weakening (3/3 = 100 per cent), but a lack of /y/-epenthesis (0/1 = 0 per cent). As this speaker is not from the Santa Ana region, she differs from her husband in her use of a dorsal [s] when not aspirating, as opposed to the ceceante interdentalized [θ], which we saw in her husband’s speech in Transcript 1. Despite this difference, the mother’s dialogue is another excellent example of the Salvadoran dialect, with very minimal, if any, adaption to LAVS phonology.

Transcript 2 also gives a glimpse of the eldest daughter’s speech which contrasts sharply with that of the parents. In the following excerpt, the daughter recalls where the family used to live when she was younger in response to her aunt’s description of her new apartment complex.

TRANSCRIPT 3: ‘Eldest Daughter’

01 OK, sí. Um ... well, cuando. OK nací en Orange pero vivíamos en Costa Mesa ... um ...
02 e[n] unos apartamentos por la Victoria. Um ... eran um ... habían como uno, dos,
03 como ocho apartamentos en la área y cada apartamento tenía su parking. So era bien así,
04 bien unida la comunidad de esos edificios y hasta hoy, hoy e[n] el día,
05 tenemos comunicaciones con las personas que vivían. Todos que vivían a[j]i se
06 han movido. Um ... vivimos a[j]i por pienso que trece años, no siete años de mi vida
07 porque me recuerdo que me, nos movimos a la casa que vivimos ahorita cuando [j]o tenía
08 siete años. So, um ... pero es muy diferente vivir e[n] unos apartamentos con, donde gente
09 que, en casa solo con tu familia; tu hermano, hermana, papá y mamá. Es muy diferente.
10 Pero sí, vivíamos en apartamentos co[n], donde gente, y es ... se sintía bien porque todos
11 pasaba[n] en nuestro apartamento, so había una fiesta y todos venían por nosotros o en
12 la hora de comer, de cena, un día ... casual ... domingo, donde la gente se reúne en familia,
13 todos venían a nosotros. Y siempre pasábamos en el parque también.

Ok, yes. Um . . . well, when. OK I was born in Orange but we lived in Costa Mesa. . .um. . . in some apartments by Victoria Street. Um . . . there were . . . um . . . there were about one, two, like eight apartments in the area and each apartment had its own parking. So it was really like that, really united, the whole community of those buildings and even today, today, we are still in contact with the people that lived there. Everyone that lived there has

6 The colón (pl. colones) was the monetary unit of El Salvador until 2001 when it was replaced by the US dollar.
moved. Um ... but we lived there for, I think, thirteen years, no seven years of my life because I remember that I, we moved to the house where we live now when I was seven years old. So, um ... but it’s really different living in apartments with, where there are people that, in a house it’s just you and your family; your brother, sister, dad and mom. It’s really different. But yeah, we lived in apartments with, where there were people, and it’s . . . we felt good because everyone came by our house, so there was a party and everyone came by our place or at dinnertime, for dinner, any day . . . casual . . . Sunday, when everybody got together, everyone would come to our place. And we would always go to the park too.

In Transcript 3 of the eldest daughter, note that there is not a single instance of /s/ aspiration, despite the fact that there were nearly forty possible contexts that would have allowed it, according to Salvadoran speech rules. This 0 per cent aspiration is clearly distinct from the 89/77 per cent aspiration that we saw in the first two transcripts of the parents. Furthermore, the daughter shows no inclination to use the interdentalized [θ] in place of the dorsal [s] in the way that her father does. This could be the result not only of the daughter’s surrounding LAVS peer group, but also of the mother’s dialect, as both use the dorsal [s] (cf. Potowski, 2008).

The velarization of /n/ is slightly more complex in the speech of this individual. Four out of 14 possible contexts were velarized, totalling just under 29 per cent. Firstly, notice that this percentage is considerably lower than that of the father’s (83 per cent) and mother’s (100 per cent) speech, although not at 0 per cent as was the case with aspiration. Taking a closer look, though, while the father and mother’s output are quite systematic in terms of /n/-velarization, that of the daughter is much more sporadic. For example, lines 2 and 8 show velarization of en unos [eŋ.ú.nos] ‘in some’, but there is no velarization in line 4 bien unida [bjé.n.u.ní.da] ‘very united’, even though the phonological contexts are identical (i.e. word-final /n/ before the front, rounded vowel /u/, and even followed by another alveolar nasal). Another example of such inconsistency is seen in lines 8 and 10 with phrase-final con ‘with’: not velarized in the first instance, velarized in the second. This phonological process in the daughter’s speech therefore does not appear to follow the same strict patterning as it does in the parents’ discourse.

Breaking momentarily from our phonological discussion, there are other interesting characteristics of this speaker’s production which deserve mention as well. She makes use of English ‘filler’ words to fill gaps in the discourse: well . . ., um . . ., so . . ., etc. These are not present in the parents’ speech where, instead, we see general Spanish equivalents such as este and pues, and even Central American variations such as va (cf. Transcript 1). These substitutions in the eldest daughter’s speech are undoubtedly due to English language influence. Code-switching/transfer into English is also seen, as in line 3 parking. Finally, there are instances of incorrect agreement: habían in place of había to mean ‘there were’, and la área in place of el área ‘the area’, both of which suggest over-generalization of grammar rules and a lack of formal instruction in Spanish.  

7 It should be stated that such over-generalized agreement is prevalent amongst middle-class speakers in Latin America as well. Therefore, although not seen in the transcripts reproduced here, the parents also occasionally use habian in place of habia. We mention the usage here solely for purposes of thoroughness.
The following Transcript 4 shows the mother interacting with all three children as they discuss the transportation situation from a family event.

TRANSCRIPT 4: ‘Mother and Children’

01 1st CHILD: ¿Y fueron de la tienda a recogerlos? Oh:::
02 MOTHER: A pasarlo[ŋ] a dejar.
03 1st CHILD: Oh::: Pero el Chato dijo que él fue::
04 MOTHER: Si, un ratito.
05 2nd CHILD: Un ratito. (simultaneously with MOTHER, line 4)
06 MOTHER: Porque no tienen carro. Se le[ŋ] arruinó el segundo carro.
07 1st CHILD: Mmmm. . .pues.
08 MOTHER: A ahorita otra vez no tienen carro.
09 1st CHILD: Mmmm . .
10 MOTHER: Entonce[ŋ] él tiene que venir a recogerla a e[Ø] a todo[ŋ] los días.
11 3rd CHILD: Yeah, the car they bought like a we-two weeks ago.
majojado’.
14 1st CHILD: ¿Por qué no metiero[ŋ] a Milton?
15 MOTHER: ¡No cabía! ¡No cabía el pobre Milton[ŋ] atrás[ŋ] el baúl!
16 2nd CHILD: Y la Guechi queda en medio de los dos seats in the back.
17 1st CHILD: ¿Y la tía Cheli [j] a se fue antes?
18 ALL: ¡No!
19 2nd CHILD: ¡Fue con nosotros! She was in the jumble too!
20 3rd CHILD: We were like twenty in the car!

1st CHILD: And you all went from the store to pick them up? Oh:::
MOTHER: To drop them off.
1st CHILD: Oh::: But Shorty said that he went.
MOTHER: Yes, for a little bit.
2nd CHILD: For a little bit. (simultaneously with MOTHER, line 4)
MOTHER: Because they don’t have a car. Their second car was ruined.
1st CHILD: Mmmm . .
MOTHER: So he has to come to pick her up everyday.
3rd CHILD: Yeah, the car they bought like a we-two weeks ago.
MOTHER: Uh-huh, and we put Eric in the, in the, in behind in the trunk, and when we
got home, I said to him ‘OK, Eric, today you were a wetback’.
1st CHILD: Why didn’t you put Milton back there?
MOTHER: He wouldn’t fit! Poor Milton didn’t fit back there in the trunk!
2nd CHILD: And Guechi’s in between the two seats in the back.
1st CHILD: And Auntie Cheli already left before?
ALL: No!
2nd CHILD: She went with us! She was in the jumble too!
3rd CHILD: We were like twenty in the car!

This interaction illustrates the same percentages which we have come to expect from these participants with respect to Salvadoran phonological production: high
frequency in the parents, low frequency/non-existence in the children. An interesting
case to analyse further is that of *antes* ‘before’, as stated by the eldest child in line 18.
The pronunciation of this word demonstrates the extent to which this individual lacks
Salvadoran phonology. She produces a prolonged, tense [s] which also forces the
preceding vowel to approach schwa [ə] and weaken considerably: [án.tʰːsː]. This is
typical of LAVS, as it is in other *tierras altas* dialects (Parodi, 2003; 2004; 2009c).
What makes this case so interesting is that a native Salvadoran speaker would do the
complete opposite: weaken or even drop the /s/ through a continuation of the aspiration
process /s/ → [h] → Ø and maintain (or even elongate) a pure pronunciation of the
vowel: [án.teh] or [án.teː]. This is precisely the pronunciation used by the parents,
the divergence between the two processes being a noticeable one.

Most crucially for the present study, this excerpt confirms that the distinct phono-
logical systems present in this family’s home are constant. That is, the parents and
the children each maintain their respective dialects even when speaking to one
another as opposed to accommodating their phonology to match that of their family
member interlocutor(s). The mother continues consistently to aspirate /s/, velarize /n/,
and delete intervocalic /y/ despite dialoguing with her children who consistently do
not aspirate /s/, very rarely velarize /n/, and do not delete intervocalic /y/. And the
children continue to lack Salvadoran phonological features, opting instead for LAVS
ones, despite conversing with their mother who clearly maintains Salvadoran norms.
The fact that our results do not show any accommodation suggests that interaction
inside the home with members of the same group is distinct from interaction outside
of the home with out-group individuals (cf. Hernández, 2002; 2009; Aaron and
Hernández, 2007).

Additionally, this last interaction illustrates how heritage languages are used in
many homes. The parents speak only Spanish with the children, as does the eldest
child with the parents. The middle child then speaks a code-switching mixture of
Spanish and English with the parents (lines 17 and 20), while the third and any
subsequent children tend to speak almost exclusively in English in the home (lines 11
and 21) (cf. Hurtado and Vega, 2004). The children also speak exclusively in English
amongst themselves.

The totals and percentages for each phonological trait as expressed by the speakers
in Transcripts 1–4 are combined and reproduced in Table 3 below.

Using a One-tailed Fisher’s Exact Test confirms statistically that which we suspect
by glancing at these percentages. The mother and father are not statistically different
in terms of their usage of these features (p > 0.05 in comparing all features). The eldest
child, however, is statistically distinct in her speech (p < 0.05 in comparing rates of
aspiration, velarization, and /y/-deletion to those of both the mother and the father).
From these tests, we come to one overarching conclusion: the children, primarily the

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8 Although a complex term, ‘heritage speaker’ most often refers to an individual who at home speaks a language
different from that of the society at large. These speakers vary greatly from home to home in terms of profi-
ciency in the heritage language, but most have received formal education only in the standard language of the
country and not in the heritage language.

9 My thanks to Javier Pérez-Estrada for his assistance with the statistical methodology.
eldest daughter, have adopted the LAVS dialect’s phonology, despite the parents’ continued preservation of Salvadoran phonological norms in the home. These results from everyday, in-home interaction amongst family members correspond with Parodi’s interview analyses of Los Angeles-Salvadoran speech.

**Morphology**

Moving from phonology to morphology, recall from Table 2 that we are most interested in the use of Salvadoran *voseo* versus Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish *tuteo*. Briefly stated, the children use only *tuteo* in all Spanish-language family contexts (recall that the children speak exclusively in English with each other), while the parents use *voseo* amongst themselves, and with the mother’s sister and brother, but *tuteo* with the children. This practice is repeated throughout the family’s discourse with one another; a specific example of each is seen in (2)–(4).

**Eldest Daughter to Mother**

(2) So tú puedes ver fotos de tus amigos.

   *So you can see pictures of your friends.*

**Mother to Eldest Daughter**

(3) Y tú, ¿qué le dijiste?

   *And you, what did you tell her?*

**Mother to Sister**

(4) Ey, Cheli, ¿vos vas a ir a la pari?

   *Hey, Cheli, are you going to go to the party?*

It is somewhat expected that the parents (and their brothers and sisters) continue to use *vos* with each other in the home, as this is the norm in El Salvador, where they were all born and raised (cf. Parodi, 2003). It is interesting, though, that the parents in this family use *tú* with their children. In doing this, the former almost marks the latter’s identity as born in the United States as opposed to in El Salvador. Such pronoun differentiation within the home is a novel finding not reported in previous studies. In this respect, the parents have partially adapted to a LAVS norm as well.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>/s/-aspiration tokens</th>
<th>/s/-aspiration %</th>
<th>/n/-velarization tokens</th>
<th>/n/-velarization %</th>
<th>[y]-epenthesis tokens</th>
<th>[y]-epenthesis %</th>
<th>/y/-Deletion tokens</th>
<th>/y/-Deletion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>23/28</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>8/8</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0/3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>31/35</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>0/3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st child (eldest)</td>
<td>0/40</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5/18</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0/13</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd child</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd child (youngest)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
given that tú would not be used to address one’s children in El Salvador, where vos and/or usted are the norm (cf. Páez Urdaneta, 1981: 80; Lipski, 1988: 114).

The children use only the LAVS standard of tuteo with no inclination toward use of voseo, as Parodi also describes. We cannot be sure, from this observation, which came first: the children’s exclusive use of tuteo in all contexts or the parents’ use of tuteo with their children. That is, it is unclear whether the children, at least in part, learned to use tú because the parents treat them as tú, or whether the parents treat the children as tú because it is the only form that the children employ. Despite this uncertainty with regard to the pattern’s origin, the established system of pronoun usage in this family is quite consistent.

In the following Transcript 5, for example, the mother is explaining what her brother did at Christmas the year prior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSCRIPT 5: ‘Last Christmas’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 ¿Y sabes qué, Jandi? Luego mi hermano se fue a Las Vegas y no avisó.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Pero cuando vimos a mi hermano como una semana después, entonces le dijimos,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 ‘Que vos, tuviste que haber hablado para decir que no podías venir,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 pero vos lo que hiciste es que te fuiste a Las Vegas sin decir nada!’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And you know what, Jandi? Then my brother just decided to go to Las Vegas without telling anyone. But when we saw him like a week later, we said, ‘You, you should have said something to tell us that you wouldn’t be able to come, but you, what you did is you left to Las Vegas without even a word!’

Notice that, in this excerpt, although the mother is telling the story to her daughter, Jandi, whom she addresses as tú (sabes [sá.βe(s)]; cf. vos sabés [sa.βė(s)]), she expresses her own dialogue with vos because, within the context of the story, she is speaking to her brother, with whom she would employ voseo. This same complex convention was seen in the father’s speech in Transcript 1, switching between tú and vos depending on whose dialogue he was reproducing (that of a Salvadoran woman in line 5, or that of a Mexican man in line 8) and to whom he was directing his own speech (his brother-in-law in line 2, or his daughter in lines 3 and 8). It seems that, in this family, those who are natives from El Salvador and possibly identify more with that group elicit the use of the voseo from others with the same background, while those who are born in the United States and who identify more with the Angelino community call for the use of the tuteo.

Given that the voseo is a very marked morphological form in Los Angeles, as mentioned previously, a discussion about its usage would not be complete without reference to the speech community/communities involved. Labov (1972: 120–21, my emphasis) describes a speech community as ‘not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms’. He goes on to explain that ‘these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage’ (121). The parents appear to be maintaining their membership in the Salvadoran speech community, at least in the home, by continuing to use the voseo and by continuing to view it in a positive light. At the
same time, however, they have incorporated an increased use of tuteo in their speech as well, showing influence of the LAVS dialect and of the corresponding speech community.

The children’s exclusive use of the LAVS dialect’s tuteo, in addition to the phonological characteristics described in the previous section, reveals their primary membership in the Los Angeles speech community, even when inside their Salvadoran home. What solidifies this hypothesis, however, are the evaluative opinions that the children have about the use of the vos. When asked if they personally use it, their responses were unanimously ‘No!’, ‘Never!’, and even ‘Gross!’, accompanied by facial expressions of near disgust. One added that the use of vos just sounds plain ‘weird’.

Recall from our earlier review of Parodi’s work that Chicano/LAVS speakers openly dislike the vos in this way. Keeping in mind that opinions and belief systems help to define membership in a specific speech community, the children’s abhorrence of the use of vos is consistent not with the Salvadoran speech community to which their parents predominately belong, but rather with that of the dialect of Los Angeles.

Conclusions and suggestions for further study

This study has analysed the speech of a family of Salvadoran origin living in the greater Los Angeles area. By looking at both phonological and morpho-syntactic features of these individuals’ linguistic production, we confirm the presence of three dialects and two speech communities in the home: the children who were born and raised in Southern California speak Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish (LAVS), while their parents speak Salvadoran varieties. Our results thereby corroborate Parodi’s claims (2003; 2004; 2009a; 2009b; 2011) in that, despite over twenty-five years of residence in Los Angeles, the parents maintain their use of Salvadoran phonology and morphology in the home: high percentages of /s/-aspiration, /n/-velarization, and /y/-deletion, as well as continued use of the Salvadoran vos. The children diverge from these norms in their use of only LAVS standards in their own speech: no /s/-aspiration, very low percentages of /n/-velarization, only LAVS /y/-weakening to [j] rather than complete Salvadoran deletion, and use of only tuteo.

The incorporation of the tuteo into the home by the parents may also indicate that morphology is more easily subject to change than is phonology. The parents have increased their use of tuteo (a morphological trait), at least with their children, and yet they do not show the same level of adaption with regard to diminishing their aspiration (a phonological trait), for example.

We also examined briefly how these speech characteristics reflect membership in specific speech communities. The children’s exclusive acquisition and use of LAVS point toward their self-identification as part of that group, while the parents’ (and the mother’s siblings’) continued use of Salvadoran norms suggests their continued Salvadoran solidarity. The parents’ distinction of vos with native Salvadorans and tuteo with their children born in the United States could then also be indicative of a process of labeling identities.

As much as these results answer the general question proposed at the beginning of this study, they also give rise to new uncertainties. If speakers born and raised in Los Angeles, such as the children in our case study, are only exposed to Spanish in the
home, communicating almost exclusively in English with their Spanish-speaking friends outside of the home (and even with siblings inside the home), where do these anti-Salvadoran, pro-LAVS tendencies come from? That is, where exactly do these individuals learn to not aspirate /s/, to limit the velarization of /n/, to only weaken rather than delete /y/, and to only employ the tuteo to the complete exclusion of the voseo? Where do they acquire the belief that the voseo is ‘weird’? A more thorough description of the socialization process of Spanish-speaking children in Los Angeles is needed to expand our understanding of the origin of these individuals’ dialects as well as of their identities.

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Parodi (2003; 2004; 2009a; 2009b; 2011) propone y evidencia la existencia de un dialecto del español que es propio de la región de Los Ángeles, California. Esta ‘koiné rur-urbana’, llamada el ‘español vernáculo de Los Ángeles’ o ‘LAVS’, tiene su base en dialectos mexicanos rurales pero posee sus propias características también. La autora afirma que los inmigrantes latinoamericanos a esta región (no solo mexicanos sino también salvadoreños, hondureños, etc.) acomodan su manera de hablar al LAVS pero mantienen el uso de su dialecto original en casa, mientras que los hijos nacidos en la región adquieren únicamente el LAVS. El presente estudio etnográfico busca descubrir la manera en que estos hallazgos se manifiestan en las interacciones naturales diarias de una familia de origen salvadoreño que vive en Los Ángeles. A través de un análisis de rasgos fonológicos (aspiración de /s/, velarización de /n/, supresión de /y/ y epéntesis de /y/) y morfosintácticos (voseo y tuteo) del habla de los diferentes miembros de la familia, se confirma la presencia de tres distintos dialectos en la casa: dos salvadoreños (uno empleado por la madre, otro por el padre) y uno ‘angelino’, usado por los hijos. De ese modo, los resultados respaldan la teoría de Parodi: que Los Ángeles posee su propio dialecto y comunidad de habla que son distintos a los de otras variedades del español.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** Español chicoano/estadounidense, español salvadoreño, lengua de herencia, contacto de dialecto(s), tratamientos (voseo/tuteo)
Notes on contributor

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