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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the connections between the oral genres displayed by Gitano (also known as Gypsies or Romani) children and adults during religious instruction classes of an Evangelist Church and the writings produced by Gitano children in a computer after-school program of the same community. Subjects were Gitano children (n=30), ages 5-13 years old, residing in a small city in Spain. Results are discussed in two strands of assumptions related to gypsy culture and theoretical insights into the study of literacy and discourse. On one side, previous portraits of Gitano culture as exclusively oral need to be revised in line with a more social and situated perspective on literacy. On the other side, results serve to critically examine dominant explanations regarding the educational failure of Gitano children, an argument that highlights the importance of engaging intra-textual linguistic analysis with discussions of the social and institutional orders. (Contains 61 references, 2 tables, 6 examples, and 8 notes.) (Author/BT)

RELIGIOUS GENRES, ENTEXTUALIZATION AND LITERACY IN *GITANO* CHILDREN

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the connections between the oral genres displayed by *Gitano* children and adults during religious instruction classes of an Evangelist Church and the writings produced by Gitano children in a computer after-school program of the same community. Our results are discussed in relation to two strands of received assumptions regarding Gypsy culture and recent theoretical insights in the study of literacy and discourse. On one hand, previous portraits of Gitano culture as exclusively oral need to be revised, in line with a more social and situated perspective on literacy. On the other hand, our results serve to critically examine dominant explanations regarding the educational failure of Gitano children, an argument that highlights the importance of engaging intra-textual linguistic analysis with discussions of the social and institutional orders.

Keywords

Entextualization – Vernacular Literacy – Ethnography of Communication – Romani - Spain

Introduction

Recent approaches and contexts in the study of literacy

For a number of years we have had available a well developed approach to the study of literacy as social practice. This perspective has criticized traditional accounts of literacy and literacy acquisition as a unitary phenomena with clearly established social and cognitive consequences. Stemming from work in the Ethnography of Communication (e.g. Schieffelin and Gilmore 1984), The New Literacy Studies (e.g. Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000) and neo-Vygotskian socio-cultural theory (e.g. Scribner and Cole 1981) an alternative portrait has been established regarding the nature of literacy. From these perspectives, literacy is better characterized taking into consideration at least the six traits that Barton and Hamilton (2000) have recently summarized: (a) literacy should be understood as a social practice embedded and to be studied in specific social events; (b) there are different literacy practices associated with different domains of life; (c) power relationships and social institutions make some domains and literacy practices more visible and influential than others; (d) literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in larger cultural practices; (e) literacy is historically situated; (f) thus, literacy practices change and new forms are appropriated through daily sense making.

Both contributing to and drawing on this transformation there has been an increase in the sites in which literacy is researched and seen as relevant. Most research traditionally has focused (and still does) on formal educational institutions and their official practices as the sites where literacy is acquired and bureaucratic (work and state) institutions as the main arenas where these acquisitions need to be displayed efficiently (cf. Hull 1993). Other sites and practices (such as families or literary literacy) have been rendered much less relevant or have only been considered in relation to how they contribute to the acquisition of literacy in other contexts (e.g. how families support the acquisition of school-like reading and writing). However, recent studies have complicated this scenario significantly. On one hand, several

reports have shown how even inside the above sites multiple forms of literacy co-exist. Some of these practices run parallel to publicly sanctioned uses of written language, such as 'unofficial' family literacies (Gregory and Williams 2000) or the 'vernacular' writings that adolescents circulate in schools (Camitta 1993). Other literacy practices present in institutions such as schools may antagonize with their formal goals and are 'proscribed', such as the verbal metalinguistic games practiced by African-American girls in school described by Gilmore (1983, 1986, 1987).

On the other hand, new spaces for literacy display and acquisition have been considered in the process of uncovering the range of resources and institutions available in local communities (cf. Silverstein 1998). For several reasons, both religious institutions and after-school community programs for children and youth have drawn research attention. First, while religious institutions and community programs are very different kind of settings, when focused on children and youth, they have in common that they can be seen as intentional learning environments (McLaughlin 2000) – although the particular goals and means to achieve learning across individual sites may vary significantly. Second, participating in both these settings requires acquiring and displaying new forms of oral and written language and these forms are specially marked by the constraints of their particular domains, whether religious language (Keane 1997) or the specific registers of different after-school programs (the 'language' of science, sports, computers, art, etc.) (Heath 1998, 2001). Third, both religious and community organizations have been instrumental in the political and social mobilization of different social groups, especially in the case of minority communities (these transformations are discussed for *Gitanos*[1] below).

Religious literacy practices, especially different versions of Christianity around the globe, have been the topic of recent studies that have highlighted several processes. Religious instruction has been examined as a space for linguistic socialization (Schieffelin 1996,

Tusting 2000). In these sites children are socialized into a set of moral and religious values through language and are socialized to use language (e.g. display new genres and discursive practices associated with religious rituals) and interpret texts (e.g. The Bible) in specific ways (e.g. Zissner 1986, Reder and Reed Wikelund 1993). The introduction of Christian religion in non-Western 'traditional' societies has been related to cultural and social change and the development of new relationships between local communities and Western agents and institutions (Duranti and Ochs 1986, Schieffelin 1996). In industrialized societies, religious congregations formed by minority and immigrant communities have been seen as sites for the construction of collective identities and the management of relationships with mainstream society (Baquedano-López 2000, 2001).

Community organizations and their programs have also been analyzed in similar terms, especially when designed for minority and 'at risk' children and youth. In these programs, students with a presumed history of school underachievement have been seen to develop and display rich literacy achievements and develop new discursive repertories not contemplated in other contexts (McNamee and Siviright 2002, Cushman and Emmons 2002). Equally, participation in community organizations has been considered a form of social and individual mobilization by social actors that otherwise have been pushed to the margins of the social system (Fine, Weis, Centrie and Roberts 2000).

Assumptions and shortcomings in the study of Gitano literacy

Given the above interest in community literacy in minority and subordinated groups it would seem that this would be a relevant topic to be examined in Gypsy communities. However, a review of the available literature shows that this (along with many other aspects of Gitano culture) has been a clearly under-researched topic. This situation can be 'explained' taking into consideration some broad assumptions that have been forwarded regarding Gypsy

culture, which in turn have configured the form and conclusions that have been extracted from the little research that has focused on literacy in Gypsy communities.

In firs place, there is an often unarticulated pan-cultural assumption that Gypsy culture is essentially oral and has not developed any role for written language in its repertory or transmission (e.g. Smith 1997). In this context, literacy acquisition is seen as an index of acculturation (San Román 1990). As such, those Gitanos that are more literate are so because they have engaged with non-Gypsy institutions (e.g. formal education) and literacy domains (e.g. press, written literature, etc.) that are not internal to Gypsy culture while "written culture seems incompatible with traditional Gypsy culture. And, obviously, it has no use or cultural support to stimulate it" (San Roman 1990: 114, our translation). From the perspective of non-Gypsy *payo*[2] agents, this has often been taken for granted and, consequently, concerns about literacy acquisition have focused on school-based initiatives and school literacy or adult literacy and education – programs which have as a goal to secure Gypsy children's participation in a non-Gypsy institution (formal education) or, in the case of adults, provide resources to move on to economic sectors traditionally not occupied by Gitanos.

Complementarily, from the perspective of Gypsies, literacy is supposedly viewed as an instrument that is important exclusively to transact with the majority group (in economic, bureaucratic, legal, etc. affairs). Further, this 'restricted' use for literacy highlights two properties regarding its social organization inside Gitano communities. In first place, illiteracy is not a 'social problem' as long as each family or social unit has at least one member that is literate in this sense and who can play the role of *mediator* with the payo social system (see Baynham 1993, Jones 2000 on the notion of *literacy mediators/mediation*). In second place, this version of literacy is acquired mostly in adulthood and by informal means rather than formally in school and during childhood (Liégeois 1998).

This framing of Gitano literacy seems to have some parallels with discussions regarding the introduction of literacy in indigenous communities (cf. Duranti and Ochs 1986, Reder and Reed Wikelund 1993, Schieffelin 1996) in which literacy to some degree is considered an external technology introduced by external agents, that is eventually transformed and considered internal to the community, but still it is possible to consider a time before this contact and use of literacy. However, in the case of Gypsies, since their arrival in Europe, contact and transactions with other social groups is a constitutive feature of their social life and a necessary (whether 'desired' or not) feature of its cultural repertory. This difference requires a more dynamic theory of acculturation and group contact that contemplates the range of practices and institutions that social groups develop to manage their social boundaries and exchanges (San Román 1990, Mulcahy 1979). A theory that is even more necessary when a feature of Gitano communities in Spain is that, in recent decades, they have experienced a significant transformation in the resources and ways through which they construe their relationship with payo society and their role in the Spanish social system.

This can been seen as a process of cultural transformation and socio-poltical mobilization. Instrumental to this change has been the establishment and development of new social institutions, of which the available literature has highlighted two as having a key role: associative movements and the Evangelist Church (San Román 1997). These community organizations have been expanding strongly during the last decades and are seen as key sites for the development of Gitano cultural expression and group identity (Abajo 1997, Méndez 2002, in press). Further, they should been seen as institutions internal to the Gitano community: they are sustained by Gitanos, are directed to Gitano members (which does not preclude others from participating in them) and are organized according to Gitano social principles and practices. Yet, often their goals, especially in the case of associations, refer to

the relationship with the larger social system (regarding education, work, housing, welfare policies, etc.) and Gitano's socio-political advancement in a payo-dominated society.

It is not possible to delve into a full discussion of the history and nature of these organizations, but it can be predicted that the development of new institutions will require developing new skills and practices which members of the community will acquire as they engage with these new sites (Wenger 1998, Eckert 2000). New ways of using written and oral language are certainly part of this new repertory. Further, by examining these uses of literacy in the Gitano community it is possible to hypothesize that the features outlined above for Gypsy literacy will need to be revised. Literacy in these contexts becomes a culturally supported achievement, relevant to a large body of community members and intentionally transmitted in social occasions explicitly designed for this purpose in these community sites.

The goal of this paper is precisely to delve into this set of questions and examines the development and display of certain literacy achievements of Gitano children in two community settings: the religious instruction classes (*escuela dominical*) organized on Saturday mornings by the 'Gitano' Evangelist Church (The Evangelist Church of Philadelphia) and the writings in a computer after-school program organized several evenings a week by a Gitano cultural association of the same locality. The goal is to discuss the connections between the discourse genres developed in each site as forms of Gitano community literacies and in light of the theoretical discussions that opened this paper – which, to our knowledge, have not been introduced in the study of reading and writing in Gypsy communities. This analysis draws on a set of theoretical tools developed in recent linguistic anthropology that will be reviewed in the next sub-heading as a closure to this introduction.

Genre, entextualization and natural histories of discourse

The research scenario outlined above (and further described below) suggests that children and adults in this community are producing and circulating a set of oral and written texts that are deeply intertwined with the institutions and activities in which they participate. Bakhtin's (1986) seminal work on *heteroglossia* and genre highlighted that all utterances and discourse practices are historically embedded and contain the ideological and formal resources of previous speakers and community members. These resources are contained in speech genres, which serve as flexible interpretive frames for communication regardless of whether speakers are consciously aware of their workings or not.

This conception of discourse invites to question empirically what allows for texts to be produced as part of a specific socio-cultural activity, *de-contextualized* or *de-centered* from this original context and transposed and *re-contextualized* or *re-centered* in a new context for different purposes. Work drawing on the process of *entextualization* (Hanks 1989, Bauman and Briggs 1990, Silverstein and Urban 1996a) has delved into this set of issues. Defined "in simple terms", entextualization "is the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit -*a text*- that can be lifted out of its interactional setting" (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 73). Indeed, as analysts and participants we are aware that several of the texts and genre instances we engage with are recognized as units and manipulated as "things" (Silverstein and Urban 1996b: 1). However, it is possible to proceed 'backwards' and ask what allows for this, given that speakers may see it as a conspicuous feature of their linguistic behavior. Bauman and Briggs (1990: 75-77) outline, from an ethnographic perspective, what analytic points could be addressed, roughly formulating complementary sets of intra-textual and extra-textual questions. Potential elements in the texts that configure its entextualizability are its framing (metacommunicative management), form (rhetorical design), function (perlocutionary and illocutionary force), indexical grounding (of

person, time and place), translation (across languages or modes) and the emergent structure of this process. Potential elements in the social system that sustain this process (facilitate or inhibit) are the institutional structures in which texts are inserted, the legitimacy and authority of participants, the competence of speakers and the value system that organizes the relative status of different texts.

This paper draws on this analytical framework and examines a set of verbal genres that could be tied to religious events and recognizable oral practices in related settings, such as the religious instruction classes, and reappeared in written form in the texts produced in the after-school computer classes. After presenting the research context and procedures, the analysis will focus on some of the intratextual devices that may allow for this entextualization to take place by consecutively examining a corpus of texts from each setting. In the conclusions, this re-centering will be examined in relation to its socio-political context, specifically focusing on what dynamics might explain this permeability among Gitano community contexts and its halting when similar situations are considered inside the formal educational system.

Method

The results of this study are part of a larger project in which the linguistic practices of Gitano children have been examined in various community settings. Participants in this part of the study are the children and supervising adults of the Gitano community of a small mid-eastern city in Spain, which we will call Mid-City, who are actively engaged in the activities organized by two institutions of the community: a local Gitano cultural association and the city's Gitano Evangelist Church. In total we have worked with around thirty children ranging from 5 to 13 years of age who participated in an after-school computer program three times a week during weekday evenings and the religious instruction classes organized by the Evangelist Church Saturday mornings – of this group of children, some participated in both activities and some only in one of them. Except for the social worker who has been employed

for several years by the cultural association, and was responsible for the computer classes, all other adults were Gypsy community members voluntarily involved in the maintenance of these activities.

During the winter of the year 2001 a number of visits were organized to the cultural association's after-school programs, as a follow-up to a study that had been conducted during the previous summer. Initially, we had not planned to organize a new data collection process. However, when we observed the children working we discovered that most of them were intensely engaged in writing in their computers and that the content of these writings deserved analysis. As a result, several of the writings were saved on disk as the children completed them (by the researcher and the social worker) and field notes were taken during a small number of visits to the program during that winter. In total we recorded 38 texts written by the children (several by the same children) throughout the year[3]. Also, as part of the ongoing collaboration with this cultural association we have conducted in-depth interviews with the president and social worker of the association, compiled varied documentation on the institution and the larger life-conditions of Gitanos in this community and had numerous informal conversations with Gitanos of the community as part of each of the successive periods of participant observation that are part of the project.

A first analysis of the texts showed that the most frequent themes were of religious content, so we considered that their origin had to be found elsewhere. Therefore, during the winter-spring of the year 2002 contacts were made with the Evangelist Church to discuss the interests of our study and to establish a new study site. The pastor and other adults of the Church pointed out their *escuela dominical* as a key site to be observed and for this reason a small ethnographic study was undertaken between January-May 2002. In this part of field-work, we wrote field notes and made audio and video recordings of the classes, gathered several documents used in these classes and / or related to the Church's activities, organized

semi-structured interviews with the children we identified as having participated in both settings and held several informal conversations with the adults regarding their religious practices. Finally, this information was complemented with a few visits to the Church's regular services in the evening.

Both the written and oral texts have been transcribed and edited using the conventions and tools developed in ethnopoetics (Hymes 1981, 1996a) and stanza analysis (Gee 1996), both for oral and written discourse (Hymes 1996b). These procedures build on classic conceptions of the poetic function of language (Jakobson 1960) and follow largely inductive criteria to uncover the textual organization of discourse at multiple levels, organizing transcripts around two basic units: the line/verse and the stanza – given the differences between the types of texts that have been analyzed, the specifics of edition and transcription of each set will be discussed below.

Verbal genres in the escuela dominical

In the Gypsy community of our study, religious sites are genre rich settings in the most salient definition developed in recent linguistic anthropology. Activities during church services (*el culto*) and the religious instruction classes are organized as a successive set of verbal formats and activities that are clearly bounded, labeled and recognized by participants. *Presentaciones* 'presentations' and *despedidas* 'farewells' open and close religious events both in the Church and the classes. The culto is composed of verbal activities such as *alabanzas* 'hails', which are songs performed in chorus and accompanied by instrumental music, *dar la palabra* 'give the word', the reading of the Bible and comment produced by the pastor or other religious leaders of the Church (e.g. invited pastors from other congregations or 'apprentice pastors' *candidatos*) or *testimonios* 'testimonies', in which Church members narrate personal experiences where the work of the Lord played a significant role in times of hardship and precipitated a key episode in their conversion or faith consolidation. The

religious classes also have versions of hails and word giving and also have what participants properly called *escuela* 'school', which is instruction on religious matters organized by a teacher and with 'book and pencil work' as supporting materials.

All these verbal genres are experienced with an orientation towards performance in its 'marked sense', towards the display and evaluation of verbal competence by participants (Bauman 1977, Bauman and Sherzer 1989, Bauman and Briggs 1990). Speakers who produce elaborate instances of the above genres are said to have a 'good word' *buena palabra* and many verbal productions receive immediate interactive feedback by applause or praise at the end or inserted religious response (cries of 'amen', 'praise the Lord', etc.) (or in the 'negative' moderately disparaging comment if the instance has been viewed unoriginal – e.g. instead of improvising a prayer reproducing the verses of a known song). Complementarily, speakers may 'disclaim' their capacity to produce an instance of the genre (Bauman 1977, 1993), both as a means to avoid being designated as speakers or to calibrate the possible assessment that will be offered after their performance.

Presentations and farewells share all the above traits and will be the focus of our analysis, since in the context of religious instruction they clearly show a developmental progression (between children of different ages) and are modeled and scaffolded by adults in an explicit process of genre teaching and acquisition (cf. Bakhtin 1986). Religious instruction classes took place Saturday mornings approximately between 12:00 am and 2:00 pm in the congregation's church, which was opened and closed specifically for this purpose. They were attended by a variable number of children and several adults (male and female) responsible for the classes: two-three women, one of which was the responsible teacher while the others acted as assistants, and two other male adults who supervised the activities and were primarily responsible for the children's choir rehearsal that also took place in these classes – one of these adult males was a highly regarded 'pastor candidate' who also participated in the

discussions during 'school', served as an authority to maintain order and, as we will see, was often invited to open and close the reunion.

In the escuela dominical, presentations and farewells opened and closed the event. When the classes began, once all the children were inside the church, the teacher had turned on the lights, organized the materials and moved the front benches into a square, she asked the children to form a circle (including adults) standing up, holding hands, vowing their heads and closing their eyes. Then, she designated between two and four children to successively 'present' the class and/or allowed one of the available adults to do the same. At the end of the class, after 'school', choir rehearsal and other planned activities were completed, the teacher gathered the children again, reviewed the work done during the morning (regarding both content learning and the children's behavior) and gave instructions and reminders of the events and work that was planned for the coming week. After this, she organized the group in the same manner as the presentations and again designated a set of children and adults to farewell the class. Then, the group disassembled, participants gathered their belongings and left the church, which was closed and locked by one of the adults until the evening, to go home walking or by car, alone or in groups accompanied by the adults.

Presentations and farewells are relatively brief instances of discourse that can be generically characterized by a set of traits relating to their rhetorical design, illocutionary content and metric structure, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Generic traits of oral *presentaciones* and *despedidas* in religious classes

Rhetorical structure	Organized in lines Contextualized by religious formulas: *Jesus, Oh señor* 'Oh Lord', *Padre* 'Father' Syntactic and semantic parallelisms
Illocutionary content	Thanking Requesting blessing Requesting curing
Metric structure	Variable: Short verses: 5-9 syllables Long verses: 11-20 syllables

A presentation or farewell is composed by improvising a set of lines, which are often begun or closed with a reference to God within several alternative tokens (Jesus, Father or Lord) and built by developing and recycling a number of syntactic constructions (regarding verb tense and predicative structure). These presentations, in their oral version, center on a limited set of verbal actions directed to God (illocutionary content) which may be realized in one line or along a set of lines in which the same basic act is elaborated. Although we have no evidence that the actions which may be performed in presentations or closings should be constrained to what appears in the corpus we have gathered, these seem to be limited to three kind of verbal tasks: thanking God, asking God to bless (*bendecir*) different people and asking God to cure different people. Content-wise, the recipients of these actions to be performed by God can be those immediately present in the class (the teachers and the children), other known community members that are personally named or identified by role ('the pastor', 'my family') or segments of society at large that are prayed for ('the sick', 'the poor', 'the good', etc.). The following example, produced by José Luis, the adult pastor candidate, illustrates an elaborate instance of the genre (as a farewell) to be used as a model by children:

Example 1: Oral farewell (José Luis)[4]

A	1JL:	Señor estamos a tu divina presencia agradecidos (.) Señor	(19)
	2	y como no (.) agradecerte Señor	(11)
	3	Padre estos jóvenes estos niños y estas niñas Señor	(16)
	4	que (.) Padre que desde pequeños se proponen Padre	(15)
	5	cantarte a ti alabanzas para ti Señor	(12)
	6	(y aprender todo lo bueno de tu camino)	(13)
B	7	gracias Padre porque tu Señor tu XX XX XX XX razones	(16)
	8	nos pones XX para que Señor	(9)
	9	administremos a estos pequeños Señor	(12)
C	10	bendícenos Señor	(6)
	11	gracias por (.) por los compañeros que están que están con nosotros Señor	(19)
	12	bendícelos Señor	(6)
	13	Señor tócales el corazón	(9)
	14	XX XX de una manera necesaria	(12)
	15	y que Señor te des a conocer en ellos	(13)
D	16	Señor gracias Padre por la Angelines por (.) por Ester Señor	(17)
	17	por Vanesa por Israel por Samuel	(11)

	18	por mí y por estos jóvenes y estas niñas	(12)
	19	gracias por todo en el nombre de Jesús	(11)
	20G:	ameen ((elongating the final vowel))	

English translation:

A	1JL:	Lord we are here in your divine presence grateful (.) Lord
	2	and how not (.) thank you Lord
	3	Father these youngsters these girls and these boys Lord
	4	that (.) Father that at young age they attempt Father
	5	sing to you hails for you Lord
	6	(and learn all the good [things] of your path)
B	7	thank you Father because you Lord XX XX XX XX reasons
	8	you put us XX so that Lord
	9	we administer these youngsters Lord
C	10	bless us Lord
	11	thank you (.) for the 'partners' that are that are here with us Lord
	12	bless them Lord
	13	Lord touch them in their hearts
	14	XX XX in a necessary way
	15	and that Lord you let yourself be known to them
D	16	Lord thank you Father for [the] Angelines for (.) for Ester Lord
	17	for Vanesa for Israel for Samuel
	18	for me and for these youngsters and these girls
	19	thank you for everything in the name of Jesus
	20G:	ameen ((elongating the final vowel))

In this example we have a rather long text organized in four stanzas in which Jose Luis builds elaborate 'thankings' and 'requests for blessings' to three sets of participants: the children attending classes (stanza A and the second part of stanza D), the adults and himself (who are first cited in general in stanza B and then named in particular in stanza D), as those responsible for the religious education of the children, and us the researchers, as visiting observers, in a mild instance of proselytism (stanza C). Structurally, this adult speaker is able to produce fluently a combination of rather long and shorter verses in which improvised verbal formulas are recycled in different versions and grammatical forms (e.g. lines 10-11-12). Finally, he contextualizes several of his lines and stanzas with a varied set of referential tokens for God, such as Señor 'Lord', Padre 'Father' and Jesus.

As an adult and authorized figure in this religious setting, José Luis produces instances of the genre that serve as a model for the children of the community. In this way, some of the older and more competent students in the class are capable of performing instances of 'presentations' and 'closings' that make use of the templates that have been provided by adults, such as the case of the girl in Example 2 (a 'presentation'):

Example 2: Oral presentation (Meli)

A	1M:	gracias te damos Señor	(7)
	2	por-porque nos has permitido venir hoy aquí en tu gloria Señor	(18)
	3	te damos también las gracias por XX XX XX XX	(13)
	4	te damos también las gracias Señor por Angelines y la Vanesa y la Ester	(23)
	5	y guárdalas en el hueco de tu mano Señor	(14)
B	6	por los tres compañeros que han venido hoy aquí	(14)
	7	que los guardes en el hueco de tu mano	(12)
	8	por todos los que no han venido (hoy aquí) XX XX	(13)
	9	que los guardes en el hueco de tu mano	(12)
	10CH:	amen ((single child))	
	11GR:	amen ((group in a chorus))	

English translation

A	1M:	thank you we give you Lord
	2	be-because you have allowed us to come here today in your glory Lord
	3	we give you also thanks for XX XX XX XX
	4	we give you also thanks Lord for Angelines and [the] Vanesa and [the] Ester
	5	and keep them in the 'cup' of your hand Lord
B	6	for the three 'partners' that have come here today
	7	that you keep them in the 'cup' of your hand
	8	for all that have not come (here today) XX XX
	9	that you keep them in the 'cup' of your hand
	10CH:	amen ((single child))
	11GR:	amen ((group in a chorus))

This presentation contains several of the elements that have been pointed out above and we saw in adult performances but, as can be expected, in a simplified form. The explicit illocutionary content is reduced to thanking, and the same parties as in the first example are mentioned: herself and her fellow students, both present (line 2) and absent (line 8), the researchers (line 6) and the adult women in charge of the class (line 5). In this last case, Meli's thanking is made from the perspective of the children and she simply thanks the Lord for the

presence of the teachers - in contrast to Jose Luis' perspective as an adult where he thanks the Lord for providing him and the other adults with the capacity to educate the children (Example 1, lines 6-8). Also, throughout her presentation Meli, of the available alternatives, only uses one token to refer to God (Señor). Finally, as complementary activity to thanking, in her presentation she asks the Lord to 'keep in the cup of his hand' each of the participants. This is a complete formula, that allows for little improvisation and variation within itself, that appears in the prayers and songs of the congregation. In this case, Meli produces three couplets (lines 4-5, 6-7 and 8-9) in which the second part is the canonical formula and the first part successively mentions the different constituencies of the class (the adults, the visiting researchers and the children who have not come to class). Given this development, while the overall presentation has a compact design, in comparison to the adult version the degree of personal elaboration is reduced.

Meli represents one of the more competent children in the class, yet even the youngest students in the class (four or five years of age) are encouraged to participate and produce their presentations or farewells. These instances may be fully scaffolded by adults, such in the following farewell performed by César, as the last instance of a round of farewells that closed the class that morning:

Example 3: Oral Farewell (César)

1	ANG:	(...) después de haber dado mucha guerra tienes que orar venga [repite con Ester
2	EST:	[gracias Señor
3	CES:	gracias Señor
4	EST:	por habernos permitido
5	CES:	por haber(nos) permitido
6	EST:	estar delante de tu presencia
7	CES:	estar delante de tu priven-cia
8	EST:	gracias por todo
9	CES:	gracias por todo
10	EST:	amén
11	CES:	amén
12	GRO:	ameen ((prolonging the final vowel))
13	ANG:	¡muy bieen! ((kisses César))
14	GRO:	((applause))

English translation

1	ANG:	(...) after causing so much racket you have to pray come on [repeat with Ester
2	EST:	[thank you Lord
3	CES:	thank you Lord
4	EST:	for allowing us
5	CES:	for allowing (us)
6	EST:	to be in your presence
7	CES:	to be in you presen-ce
8	EST:	thank you for everything
9	CES:	thank you for everything
10	EST:	amen
11	CES:	amen
12	GRO:	ameen ((prolonging the final vowel))
13	ANG:	very good! ((kisses César))
14	GRU:	((applause))

In this instance, the above components are reduced to a minimum. The farewell is reduced to two instances of thanking, the first of which one of the teachers breaks down into three segments to be repeated by the child, and it contains only one token for God. However, there are two aspects of this presentation that are relevant. In first place, it is a collective construction of a child and adult, so the perspective it adopts in relation to its interlocutor is common to both - as opposed to adult or child produced instances which develop distinct participant frameworks (Goffman 1981) between all the mentioned parties and the performer's interlocutor (i.e. God) (cf. Keane 1997). In second place, there is an explicit assessment of the child's achievement, a move that helps index the marked nature of this speech and explicitly insert the children in a developmental path.

To restate what has been said so far about presentations and farewells, these represent a recognizable genre in the community associated to a set of religious events and practices in which they play a specific social role. Formally, presentations and farewells can be characterized by a set of flexible rhetorical and content features that allow members of the congregation to improvise specific instances of the genre. Further, although all these instances share the set of traits that allow them to be recognizable as part of a the same generic framework there are important variations between instances that reflect broader social

processes between the participants implicated in their production and reception. In first place, speakers vary in the competence they display in the genre according to both age and institutional roles in the community (children, adults, students, teachers, pastor candidate, etc.). In second place, within the 'escuela dominical' different sets of participants emerge (adult teachers, students and observing researchers) and this distribution is reflected in the different positions that individual performers construe as members of one segment in relation to other groups of participants and his or her supernatural interlocutor. In short, while some 'general' generic elements allow for production in a wide range of social events, the particular social conditions and relations in effect in these occasions also determine the specific traits of each generic instance.

This combination of textual processes may explain the varying characteristics that were displayed in texts of religious content produced by children in a very different social setting to which we turn in the following section.

Religious writings in a computer after-school program

Mid-City's Gitano cultural association has been working over the last fifteen years in the social, political and educational advancement of local Gypsies. It is a small institution chartered as a non-profit organization with very few paid employees and develops two main lines of action. On one hand, it serves as a reference, for advocacy and consultation, for most political affairs that affect Mid-City Gitanos (such as housing policies, schooling measures, social programs, etc.). On the other hand, it organizes and runs publicly funded socio-educational programs designed for adults, youth and children. While all programs share a central concern for the educational and economic advancement of Gitanos, the specific design and implementation of programs vary each year to meet changing political priorities in funding and the human resource and economic pressures that the association has to confront permanently. During the years we have been working with the association as part of our

research project at least three programs have been implemented for school-aged children: a summer-school program, a computer after-school program and a home study-support program.

As said above, the computer after-school program took place during the 2000-2001 school year three evenings a week at the facilities of the cultural association. Computer programs have been developed for some time by the association to provide Gitanos access to new technologies and, in the case of youth and adults, skills that might facilitate their entrance in the labor market. However, as explicitly expressed by the social worker in charge of these programs, computer classes (especially those designed for adults) have also as a goal general literacy acquisition and development. Both these goals have been continued in the development of the after-school program for school-aged children as evidenced by the fact that children's main activity during the class sessions was writing.

The educational approach in the program was rather open. The children were allowed to enter and exit the program freely and were only reprimanded or invited to leave classes when their behavior was excessively disruptive. Participating children, around twenty children on a regular basis, organized in pairs, groups or individually in front of computers and worked freely with different programs. The children would ask the social worker to turn on the computer and run different programs depending on what they intended to do (e.g. 'play' with a CD-ROM, 'paint', 'write', etc.). By large, the most frequent activity was writing, which usually took place in a word processing program or on a painting program. Children wrote freely in their computers and their texts were corrected and edited by the available adults only when the children requested. Some of these texts were saved or printed out (which allowed for further development on later occasions), while others were erased at the end of the session or when the program was closed and the computer turned off.

The content and structure of the texts varied significantly, ranging from ritual insults and personal letters to texts of exclusively religious content, which has allowed us to establish a preliminary classification based on different generic traits (Cano, Palomares-Valera and Poveda 2002). Content-wise the most frequent references were of religious themes, which appeared in 37% of the texts. An initial analysis of the texts applying the accumulated knowledge on verbal activity in religious contexts shows that, indeed, presentations and farewells provide the main generic grid for religious written texts. However, these writings are not a simple transcribed version of oral presentations-farewells and show a number of particularities, summarized in Table 2, that complicate the text-context relationship.

Table 2: Generic traits of the written texts with religious references in the after-school program

Rhetorical structure	Organized in lines Contextualized by religious formulas: *Jesus, Señor* 'Lord' , *Dios* 'God' Syntactic and semantic parallelisms
Illocutionary content	Thanking Requesting Declaring love Asking for forgiveness Promising / Making a commitment Explaining Self-identification Letter closing
Metric structure	Variable: Short verses: 3-8 syllables Long verses: 9-18 syllables

Religious writings share with the oral versions a rhetorical structure based on parallelisms, the contextualization of lines with formulae and a textual organization that can be divided into lines/verses and stanzas[5]. However, they show a much wider range of illocutionary acts and include declarations of love, commitments, requests for forgiveness and explanations that did not appear in the oral presentations-farewells. Also, in texts that must be seen as instances of generic hybridization, we have writings of religious content in which the author identifies him or herself as well as other acquaintances (by name, surname and other personal information) or combine religious formulae with canonical elements of other genres,

such as letter closings. Finally, the written texts continue to combine verse constructions that vary in length and are contrasted within texts but in comparison to oral versions seem to be much more regular[6].

The following text, produced by Talia, a seven year old girl, shows how some of the features of oral presentations-farewells are entextualized in the written texts and blended with other generic frameworks:

Example 4: Written text (Talia)

A	1	para dios	(3)
	2	mi padre	(3)
	3	yquiero que sanes a los enfermos	(11)
	4	y me sanes a mi	(6)
B	5	gracias por mi padre por mi madre por miermano	(14)
	6	y gracias por todo	(6)
C	7	muchos besos	(4)
	8	talia	(2)
	9	gracisa.aa	(3)

English translation

A	1	for god
	2	my father
	3	andIwant you to cure the sick
	4	and that you cure me
B	5	thank you for my father for my mother for mybrot(h)er
	6	and thank you for everything
C	7	lots of kisses
	8	talia
	9	tha(kn.ss)

This text shares several of the features that we discussed in the previous section. It limits itself to two discursive actions, requesting curing and thanking, that in form are produced in a very similar way as the instances discussed above (compare line 6 in this example with line with lines 8-9 in Example 3). The participants in these actions are God (lines 1-2), who continues to be the direct interlocutor, an anonymous segment of society, 'the sick' (line 3), and more immediate 'beneficiaries' such as herself or her family (lines 4-5). However, the full text is opened and closed with devices that are not easily associated with

the generic framework we are familiar with. The opening 'for god' (line 1) makes explicit the intended interlocutor, an explicitness that is obviously redundant in a formal religious activity and never appeared in oral versions. The opening could also be seen as a 'personal letter' type opening. This second possibility becomes relatively clear with the closing of the text, where the girl completes her text with a highly personal and informal formula (line 7) and 'signs' her writing (line 8), which are both canonical elements of personal letters

In short, this text combines features of two separate and different genres: religious openings-farewells and personal letters (cf. Guerra and Farr 2002). These genres are heavily grounded in oral and written modes respectively, which, among other things, determines the degree to which different participants are made explicit in the texts. In an oral routine within a religious event, both the final interlocutor (God) and the author (the speaker) are not problematic and thus their participation roles do not have to be stated. In contrast, in a written text (a potentially permanent record) produced in a non-religious event these roles need to be explicitly established, both in terms of the designated addressee ('for') and the author (signature). Further, children not only signal explicitly these differences in their texts, they have also different conceptions as to the social consequences and uses of each type of text. Specifically, in the interviews several children explained that letters are written to "print out and send in the mail to someone", while religious texts are written for "oneself to keep and express what one feels".

Children's sensitivity to these variations shows that they are developing working distinctions among modes of transmission (oral/written) and the constraints that are placed in different communicative situations. While the above contrast can be seen as a by-process of established generic conventions, children can also use oral-written distinctions for much more expressive purposes, as in the following text authored by a ten year old boy:

Example 5: Written text (Luis Ángel)

A	1	Teamo jesus solo ati	(7)
	2	as quese bajen los queno crean enti	(11)
	3	oseñor teamo	(5)
B	4	nopuedocansarme de ti de decirtelo	(13)
	5	manda tumandato luis angel	(9)
	6	oseñor	(3)
C	7	debería escribir minombre connalluscula	(14)
	8	pero llosoloescribo con mallusculas solo parati	(18)
D	9	oseñor te amo sobre todas las cosas	(12)
	10	y guardanos enlapalma detumano	(12)
E	11	oseñor teamo oseñor	(8)
	12	no puedo cansarme deti	(8)
	13	porque todo lo quetengo es gracias ati.	(13)

English translation

A	1	Ilove you Jesus onlyyou
	2	do thatthose that do not believe in you come down
	3	olord Ilove you
B	4	Icannotgetired of you of telling you
	5	send yourcommand luis angel
	6	o(h)lord
C	7	I should write myname in uppercase
	8	but Ionlywrite in uppercase only foryou
D	9	o(h)lord I love you over all things
	10	and keep us inthepalm of your hand
E	11	o(h)lord Iloveyou o(h)lord
	12	I can not get tired ofyou
	13	because all Ihave is thanks toyou.

In this text Luis Ángel continues some of the discursive acts that we have seen so far but does so simplifying the verse design. The text develops a central statement, that is recycled several times (lines 1, 3, 9 and 11), accompanied by a complementary act that is also repeated (lines 4 and 12) and relatively fixed religious formulae (lines 5 and 10) in which he also identifies himself. More relevant to our discussion, the texts contains a metalinguistic stanza (stanza C) in which Luis Ángel explicitly discusses differences in capitalization, a problematic restricted to the written mode, to organize a hierarchy between God and himself and establish his subordination to the higher being. In other words, the child draws on an

established written convention and infuses it with theological meaning for his own expressive purposes in the text[7].

Finally, in the corpus of religious written texts, although presentations-farewells are the main generic resource, other verbal formats present in religious contexts are entextualized in this new context. Some texts incorporate full lines of songs and hails or exploit established maxims of the Evangelist church (such as *Dios es amor* 'God is love' which is an often repeated statement that also appears printed in Church banners and bulletins). The texts that make use of these elements can be seen as hybrid instances of different religious genres, but it is also possible that children draw primarily on other religious verbal formats. In the following example, an eleven year old boy produces a relatively long text that is grounded in 'giving the word' (sermon) of the culto:

Example 6: Written text (Antonio)

(T)		**Dios vive**
A	1	Dios es mi mejor amigo
	2	el demonio antes era un angel
	3	y se queria ser mas poderoso que dios
	4	y por eso dios lo echo al infierno
B	5	y el hijo de dios murio por nuestros pecados
	6	y alos tres dias resucito
	7	dios es mas Poderoso que los brujos
C	8	hai jente que no baja al culto
	9	ermanos el culto no te va ha salbar
	10	no solo tienes Que ser bueno en el culto
	11	si no tienes queser bueno en todas las partes
D	12	no todas las personas son perfectas
	13	Todas las personas tienen defectos
	14	pero hai algunas personas que se rien de las personas
	15	y tan bien hai Personas que fuman
	16	y son alcolicos
	17	y drogadictos
	18	yo no vevo por que llo soi un hijo de dios
E	19	el demonio Es el hijo de satanas
	20	y la bestia es poderosa
	21	pero dios 'es aun mas poderoso que la bestia
	22	y cuando Venga dios tanbien bendra la bestia
	23	y nos pondra el 666
	24	pero llose que me boi con dios.

English translation

(T)		**God lives**
A	1	God is my best friend
	2	the devil was an angel before
	3	and he wanted (be) to be more powerful than god
	4	and that is why god sent him to hell
B	5	and the son of god died for our sins
	6	and(three) days later he resurrected
	7	god is more Powerful than the wizards
C	8	the(r)e (p)eople that do not go to the culto
	9	brot(h)ers the culto is not going to sa(v)e you
	10	you not only have To be good in the culto
	11	rather you haveto be good everywhere
D	12	not all people are perfect
	13	All people have faults
	14	but there are people who make fun of people
	15	and al so the(r)e are People who smoke
	16	and are alco(h)olics
	17	and drug addicts
	18	I don't (drink) because (I) am son of god
E	19	the devil Is the son of satan
	20	and the beast is powerful
	21	but god 'is still more powerful than the beast
	22	and when god Comes al(s)o the beast will (c)ome
	23	and he will put us 666
	24	but (Iknow) that I am (g)oing with god

Given that other religious verbal formats have not been researched in depth and discussed in the previous section, the analysis of this text will be limited. As an instance of writing, the text is opened with a title (which in the original is presented in boldface, centered in a single line and in much larger font than the rest of the text), a resource grounded in print conventions. As an instance of 'giving the word', the text exploits the more cryptic religious rhetoric regarding conflicts between 'good and evil' and Gods presence. It is only in the central part of the writing (stanzas C and D), where Antonio turns to more immediate matters addressing possible co-members of a congregation, who are referred to as 'brothers' (line 9), and speaks broadly of the human faults that need to be overcome (which from the child's perspective are 'making fun of others', 'drinking', 'smoking' and 'doing drugs').

What is interesting of this key is that it develops in a direction opposite to that which is recurrently stressed during religious instruction. The teacher and other adults in the class

appreciated children's broad references to 'God, good and evil and human faults' but they also insisted that children speak and pray about 'little things' and establish connections with their daily lives and specific problems and needs (with families, friends, school, etc.). Further, such a concern for the specifics of daily lives and the establishment of connections between religious beliefs, the Bible and members' immediate concerns is a fundamental trait in the growth of the Evangelist Church among Gitanos at a national level (Méndez, in press) and is reflected in the content and structure of the verbal practices that constitute religious events.

To summarize the discussion of this section, children's texts in the computer after-school program draw, from among other resources, on a set of established discourse genres developed in an oral mode in religious settings - most prominently presentations-farewells. However, their re-centering in a written mode in the program can not be seen as a simple transcription, since the previous generic frameworks experiment several important transformations in the written instances. In firs place, children build hybrid texts that draw on diverse genres, both religious and non-religious and are socially grounded equally in an oral or written mode. In second place, children exploit tacitly and explicitly features of the written mode for their own rhetorical expressive purposes - a process that, while it does not show that overall these children master standard written conventions, it does indicate that there are important distinctions between the oral and the written that are established in our participants. Finally, children show sensitivity to the new participation frameworks that permeate writing in the after-school program in which the relationships and identities of authors, designated addressees and overlooking readership (those present in the after-school setting at the time of writing and the full set of unspecified readers that may access the text if it is stored) are diluted.

In combination, these two sets of results and the interconnections between them have a series of implications that foremost require that we revisit several assumptions regarding

literacy among Gypsies and also have implications for a final topic that we want to develop in the conclusions: consequences for our understanding of Gitanos performance in formal education and of how linguistic practices are embedded in larger institutional and social systems.

Conclusions

The results we have discussed so far have implications for the conceptualization of literacy in Gitano culture that we presented in the introduction. Reading and writing have sanctioned roles inside the community and Gitanos have organized for themselves different institutions in which literacy plays a fundamental role. An important part of these literacy practices, most notably religious literacy, do not have as an immediate function to transact with non-Gypsy institutions and segments of the social system. Currently, acquiring and displaying these literacy practices is something that is expected from all or the majority of members of the community. An expectation that is exacerbated in the case of religious literacy, since Evangelist theology places great emphasis in individual reading and interpretation of the Bible (and interpretation that, of course, is scaffolded by religious leaders). Consequently, the Gitano institutions that we have examined have developed spaces and occasions explicitly and intentionally designed as literacy instruction events. Children, as developing members of the community, are the targeted participants of these events.

All these transformations should be seen as evidence of cultural change, thus previous conceptualizations of Gitano literacy need not be seen as incorrect but rather can be put in historical perspective. One among the several factors that may account for this process of cultural change is, indeed, contact and exchange with majority non-Gitano society. However, this contact cannot be seen as an added phenomenon to Gypsy culture, since transacting with the majority group of each territory in which they have historically settled should be seen as a constitutive element of Gypsies cultural repertory. What has changed, especially as a result of

the political and ideological mobilizations of the last decades, are the terms under which these transactions are going to take place. Redefining this relationship requires, on the part of Gitanos, building new competencies, such as those we have been discussing in this paper. Furthermore, because Gitanos are a part of the social system, transformations in this community requires transforming the totality of the social system and the role that the majority group has built for itself in this system.

We consider that these general statements have powerful implications for discussions of Gitano culture and the practical socio-political applications that may derive from this portrait. The argument outlined above could be supported by several pieces of evidence that we have been observing and gathering for the last few years and of which the particular forms of entextualization that we have presented are only one part. Yet, the specific nature of these results do have relevant implications for our understanding of processes inside formal education.

We have shown how Gitano children acquire a set of verbal practices associated with specific domains and are able to transpose and transform these into new forms in different settings. This is possible because the children and other community members are able to establish continuities between different social settings and find this circulation of textual practices across varied contexts legitimate. Several factors contribute to this in the case of our study. Most generally, Mid-City's Gitano community forms a relatively small and closely-knit population, in which all members have knowledge of each other and are related by different kinship, neighborly and economic ties. Institutions such as the cultural association and the Evangelist church play a important and uncontested role in the advancement and maintenance of this collective identity and the above social ties.

In practical terms, the leaders of each institution work in close contact with each other and support each other in common causes, such as access to public resources and facilities or

the dissemination of Gitano culture. For example, the president of the cultural association is an active member of the Evangelist congregation and his political oratory is infused with religious references. In turn, the teacher of the escuela dominical, who is also a social worker, was a speaker in a seminar organized by the cultural association for educators working with Gypsy children. It is the same pool of children who participate in the educational programs of each organization, and several of the children who participated in the Saturday morning religious classes have also been actively involved in the educational activities of the cultural association (e.g. summer school and computer classes). As an illustration of these interconnections, to facilitate participation in both institutions the hours of the computer after-school program were set to not interfere with the evening Church services. In short, children are provided with opportunities to learn valuable skills and are legitimated to circulate and transfer these skills to different community contexts.

When we consider what role schools might play in this matrix all available evidence suggests that the 'circulation' is halted. None of the discourse and literacy skills that we have documented seem to have any presence in schools, even in a transformed and adapted version (similar to those that take place between the escuela dominical and the after-school program). Alternatively, the prevalent educational discourse regarding the educational competencies of Gitano children is infused with deficit explanations that stress children's lack of cultural resources, familial support, motivation and basic skills. Consequently, the instructional adaptations geared towards Gitano children are of a compensatory nature and often are translated into a curriculum that stresses mechanical and narrow literacy skills[8].

While all adult Gitanos we have worked with stress the importance of formal education for the socio-economic advancement of their community and children, they also openly state that Gypsy children's experience with the educational system is very complicated and that many things would have to change for Gitano students to find themselves on equal

standing with their payo peers. In an in-depth interview with the president of the cultural association this position was clearly stated: schools are not prepared to receive Gitano children, Gitano culture (from the historical contributions and references to 'national culture an history' to day-to-day arrangements) is ignored and remains invisible in the educational system. Under these conditions, daily requirements of compulsory education are seen as an imposition to Gypsy children - and these children, often, respond to this imposition by disengaging from the objectives and procedures of formal schooling.

Of course, similar arguments regarding cultural conflict and discontinuities among minority students in schools have already been reviewed extensively (Ogbu 1994, Mehan 1998). Available theories build explanations that range from general cultural adaptive oppositional strategies to mismatches in the interactional patterns developed outside and inside schools. In the case of our data, we believe the fundamental question is legitimacy. It is not difficult to imagine ways in which the oral and written practices that we have presented could be adapted and used productively inside schools to advance Gypsy student's success in schools. However, the value of these achievements is systematically being ignored if not disparaged.

Currently, schools strive to develop and maintain connections with community organizations, such as parental associations, libraries, civic organizations, museums, etc. Equally, even though Spain is not a confessional state and Spanish public schools are not confessional, the Catholic Church occupies a privileged position in the educational system - both through formal Catholic religion classes available in school hours and the conspicuous presence of Catholic celebrations in the curriculum and school calendar. The possible participation of the Gitano institutions we have been discussing is clearly underdeveloped, and, in this case, their role is 'twice-discriminated' as ethnic minority and members of a minority religion. In short, these contributions are not given the necessary legitimacy to

participate on equal standing and 'proportionally' in the network of community-school exchanges that are built and maintained on a daily basis between members of the majority social group. Consequently, any transformation of current conditions would require and precipitate changes in the social and institutional order, as well, as the daily interactional order of schools (Heller 1995, Heller and Martin-Jones 2001).

In conclusion, to return to the opening concepts of this paper, the de-centering and re-centering of texts that we have presented is embedded in large socio-political dynamics as well as grounded discourse internal features. Therefore, any extension of the textual trajectories of the instances we have examined would have implications both for the generic frameworks of the texts and the social order in which they are inserted.

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Notes

1. Gitano is the term used to refer to the Gypsy or Romani communities in Spain. It is also the term preferred by Gitanos to refer to themselves. In this paper we will use Gitano and Gypsy as the literal translation of the previous to refer to this community, since in Spain the label 'Gypsy' does not have the negative connotations that have been pointed out in other European countries. As a very brief introduction, it is considered that Gitanos first arrived in the Iberian Peninsula in the XVIth century and since then have constituted an integral part of Spanish society, yet have always been pushed to a marginal position in the social system, experiencing throughout Spanish history different forms of prosecution and socio-economic exclusion that continue in contemporary times. It is estimated (imprecisely, since there is not an official census on the matter) that currently Gypsies form a group of about 600.000-1.000.000 inhabitants that are spread out through Spain with a presence in all regions and types of localities (from urban centers to rural communities).

2. Payo is the term used by Spanish Gypsies to refer to the non-Gypsy population and that we will use in this paper to refer to the majority Spanish native segment of society.

3. The file was saved with the children's names and ages as identifiers. Also, the file information saves the date in which it was created, so it possible to trace the temporal relations between related texts by the same child or a group of children.

4. The oral texts have been edited in lines/verses using intonation as the primary criteria, organizing each tone unit into a line. This line may later be 'recomposed' to unify clear first parts or endings of a single predicative structure. Verses have been grouped in stanzas following semantic criteria or by using clear parallelisms as boundaries of stanzas. To facilitate the readability of the transcripts, conventions have been kept to a minimum and words have been transcribed conventionally, although certain phonological variations may be present in participant's speech. Possible transcription of unclear speech is shown in brackets and non-transcribable fragments are written in roughly groups of XX per syllable. Mid-line Pauses are indicated in with (.). In the English translation square brackets are used to complete morphological information that is necessary to understand the Spanish version. Verses are measured following conventional Spanish literary metrics and are counted into syllables, which are blended if successive words end and begin with a vowel. The total count is indicated in brackets in the right-side column.

5. Written texts have been organized into lines following clause structure and different forms of semantic, syntactic or rhetorical parallelisms. The 'natural' alignment of texts has been considered accidental and determined by the configuration of the page in the word processor. Punctuation has been subordinated to the first criteria and all spelling and case elections have been maintained. In the English translation brackets are used to indicate instances in which non-standard constructions appear by producing 'equivalent' deviations. Several of the texts use multiple colors in their lettering but its role has been postponed for a possible later analysis, since the theoretical tools we are currently using have not developed insights into this feature of writing.

6. In any case, given the controversies surrounding criteria for verse analysis and that we are comparing two different sets of texts that have been produced in different modes and edited through different criteria, discussions regarding contrasts in verse structure should be considered tentative.

7. Regarding children's understanding and use of written conventions this text is illuminating. Luis Ángel restates a norm but only partially implements it, since his name is written in lower cases but none of the tokens used for God are written or begun in upper cases. Also, this text is one of the most deviant cases in terms of non-conventional word segmentation - although, the original is produced in a painting program and the final result may be a product of screen formatting, different use of keyboard keys, etc. and, thus, may be difficult to interpret in terms of metalexical skills.

8. Admittedly, in this part of the research project we have not observed these children inside schools. This characterization is developed from the available literature (e.g. Enguita 1999), other work by ourselves (Martin and Poveda 2002) and, most immediately, by observations and conversations with teacher-students, teachers, counselors and supervisors that formed part of our daily work in the School of Education and Humanities of the region's University. Many of these students and professionals work with the very same participants that we have studied out of school and their views almost never contemplate or consider possible the achievements that we have observed (see Varenne and McDermott 1998 for a more general statement on similar issues).

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