Heritage Learners of Spanish: Self-Ratings of Oral and Writing Proficiency

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OVERVIEW

- Study of heritage learners' self-ratings of proficiency

- Focus on Intermediate and Advanced heritage learners of Spanish

- Written and oral modalities

WARM-UP

- Do self-assessments inform placement for heritage learners in your program?

- What self-assessment tools yield the most reliable information?

- How do heritage learners' self-assessments differ between the written and spoken language modalities?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How accurate are heritage learners of Spanish at self-rating their proficiency in Spanish?

- How does accuracy vary…
  - across proficiency levels?
  - across language modalities?

MOTIVATION

- Self-assessment is a common tool for placement of heritage learners

- Interpretation of self-assessment crucial for accurate placement

- Insight into learner attitudes and goals

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Participants
Materials
Procedures

WRITING PROFICIENCY OF HERITAGE LEARNERS

- Center for Integrated Language Communities (CILC) study
- Aims:
  - To provide recommendations for instructors teaching **writing** to heritage language learners, based on learner profiles
  - To analyze the relationship between writing proficiency, self-ratings of proficiency, biographical characteristics, and educational experiences

PARTICIPANTS

- 98 heritage learners of Spanish

- Who is a heritage language learner?
  - Heritage language spoken in the home
  - Bilingual to some degree in English and heritage language
  - Engaged in heritage language instruction
    (Valdés 2000)

MATERIALS & PROCEDURES

- Biographical Questionnaire

- Self-ratings: *Can-Do* statements

- Writing Proficiency Test

- Oral Proficiency Interview

- Analysis of writing samples

CAN-DO STATEMENTS: WRITING

NL NM	I am able to write words and phrases. I can write lists and short notes. I can fill in information on simple forms and documents.
NH IL IM	I have the ability to meet practical writing needs (i.e., I can write simple messages and letters, requests for information, and notes). I can ask and respond to simple questions in writing. I am able to communicate simple facts and ideas in a series of connected sentences on topics of personal interest.

CAN-DO STATEMENTS: WRITING

IH AL AM	I can write routine informal and some formal correspondence, as well as narratives, descriptions, and summaries of a factual nature. I can narrate and describe using the major time frames of past, present and future. I can elaborate to provide clarity.
AH S	I am able to produce most kinds of formal and informal correspondence, in-depth summaries, reports and research papers on a variety of social, academic, and professional topics. I can write about abstract issues with virtually no linguistic errors.

CAN-DO STATEMENTS: SPEAKING

NL NM	I can only say a few words and phrases. It may be difficult to understand what I say in Spanish.
NH IL IM	I can say enough to survive in a Spanish-speaking environment (i.e., order a meal, buy a train ticket, ask questions, deal with a simple social situation). A sympathetic listener will be ale to understand what I say in Spanish.

Swender et al. (2014)

CAN-DO STATEMENTS: SPEAKING

IH AL AM	I can tell stories; explain situations; clarify miscommunications; and describe people, places, and things. I have enough language to make explanations even when there is an unexpected turn of events. Most native speakers of Spanish will understand what I say when I speak Spanish.
AH S	I can support opinions, deal with abstract issues, and speak hypothetically with virtually no errors in language.
D	My ability in Spanish is equal to that of a highly articulate, educated native speaker. I am able to tailor my language to all audiences and speak with subtlety and nuance.

RESULTS

Self-ratings
WPT
OPI

TWO SELF-RATING MEASURES

- Likert scale (1-5)

  - Writing

    - n=96

    - median=3 "good"

  - Speaking

    - n=96

    - median=4 "very good"
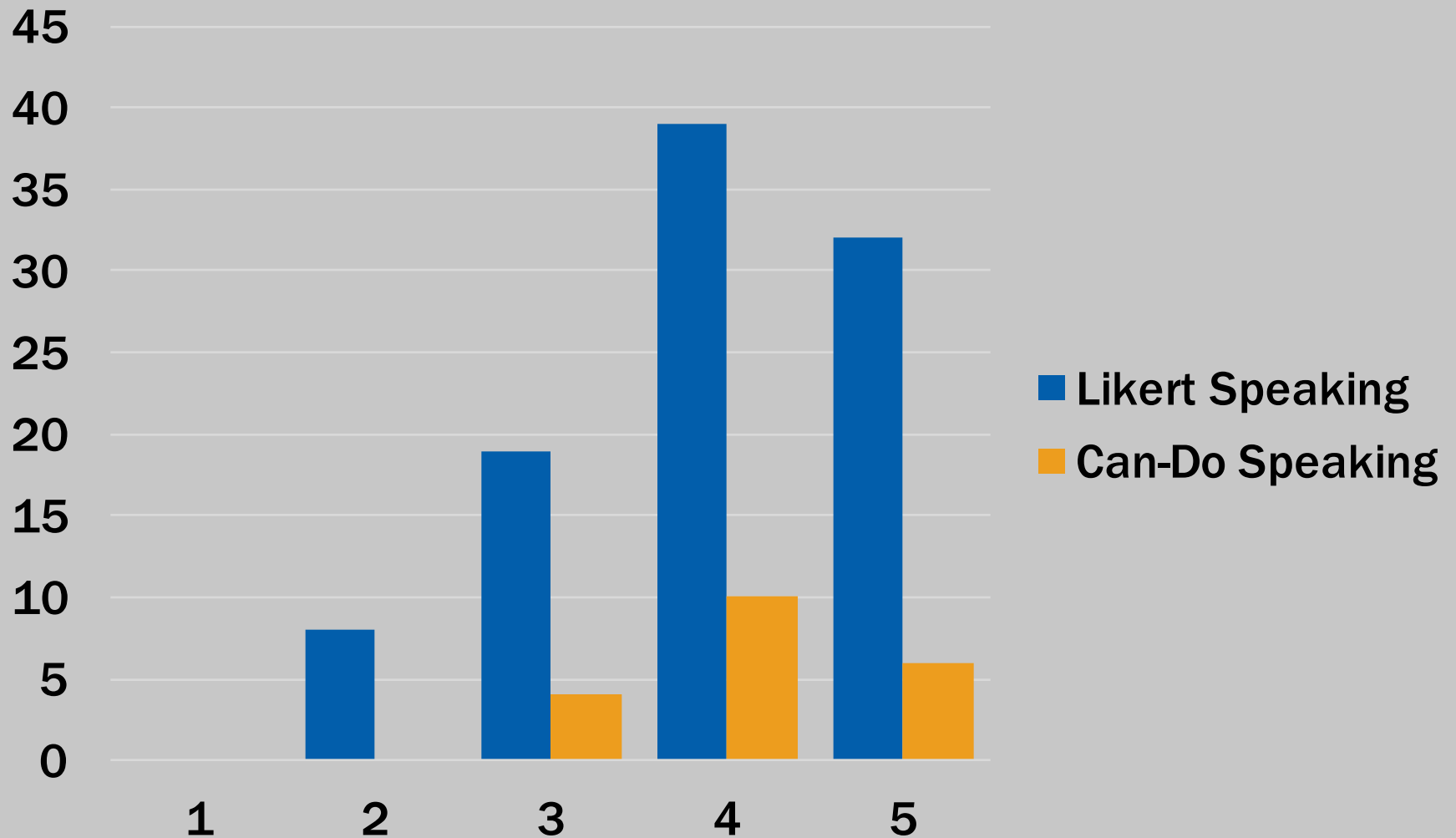
- Can-Do Statements

  - Writing
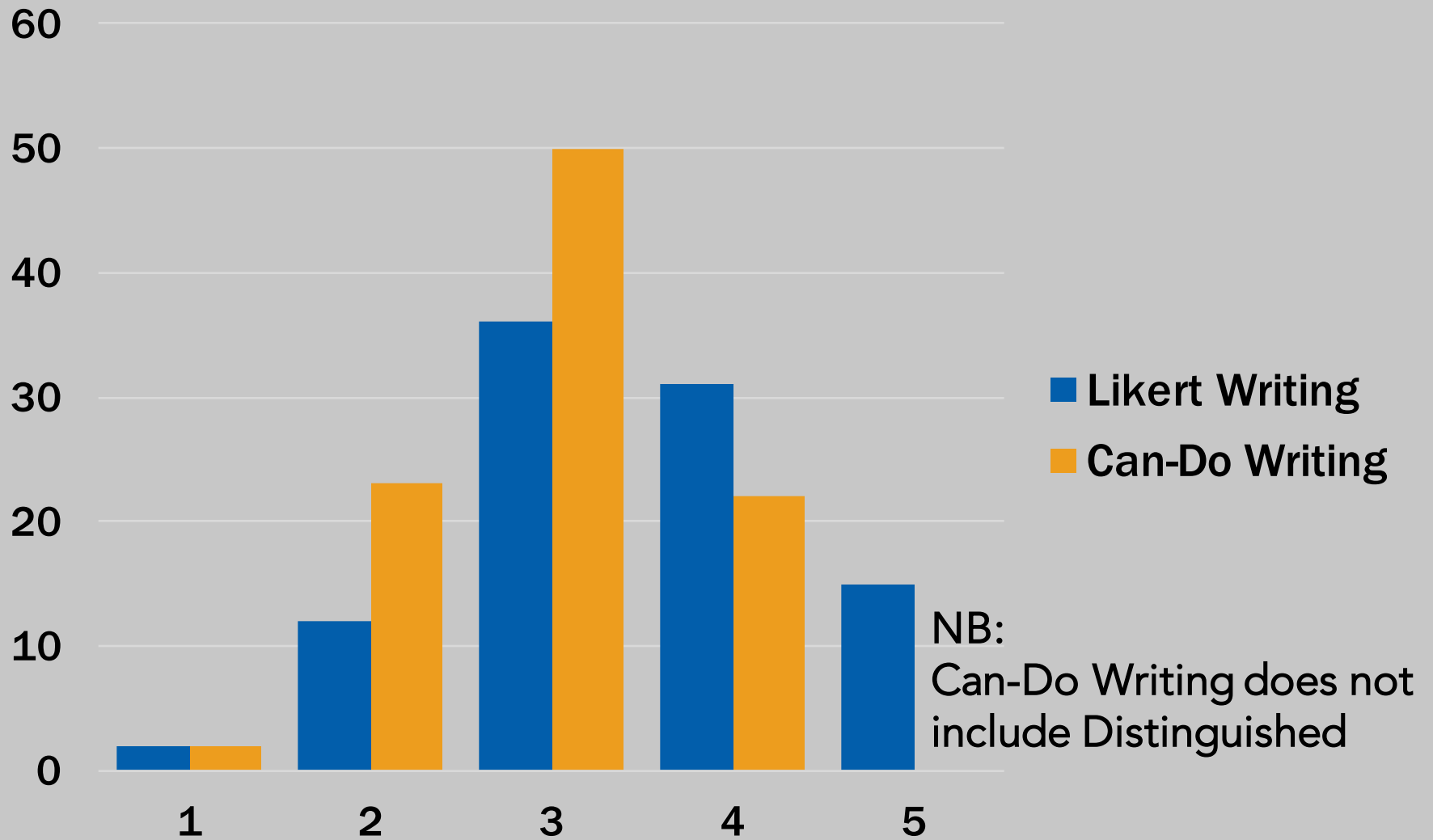
    - n=97

    - median=3 (IH, AL, AM)

  - Speaking

    - n=20

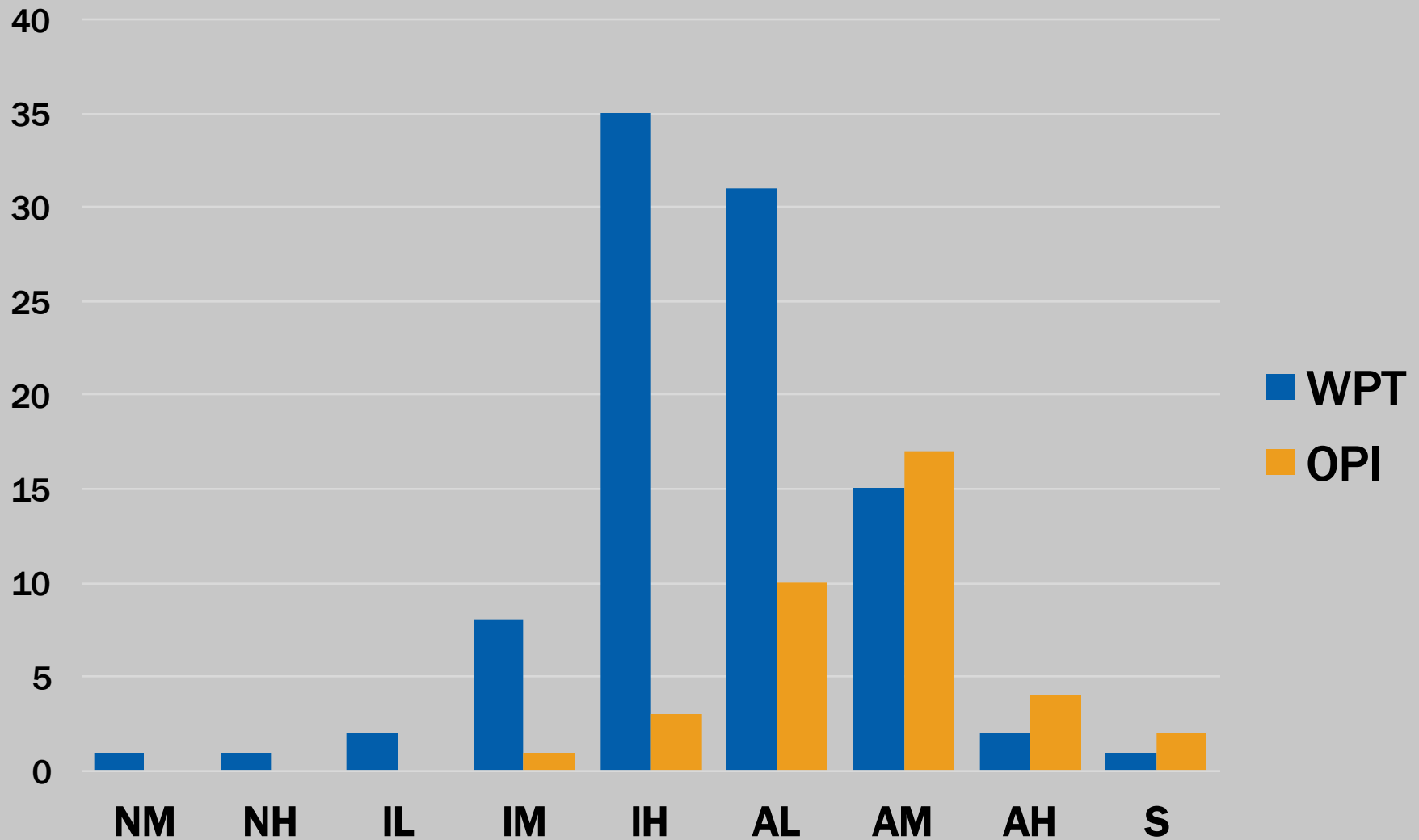   - median=4 (AH, S)

SELF-RATINGS: SPEAKING

SELF-RATINGS: WRITING

Legend:
- Likert Writing
- Can-Do Writing

NB:
Can-Do Writing does not include Distinguished

TWO PROFICIENCY MEASURES

- Writing Proficiency Test

    - n=95

    - median=Advanced Low

- Oral Proficiency Interview

    - n=37

    - median=Advanced Mid

PROFICIENCY TEST RESULTS

ANALYSIS

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEASURES

- Can-Do measures
  - Yield similar self-ratings to Likert scales (weak correlation due to low response rate)
  - Facilitate reflection on learning objectives

- Likert and Can-Do measures
  - Writing: r=0.57
  - Speaking: r=0.38

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEASURES

- Accuracy of self-ratings varies by level and modality
- Proficiency and Likert self-rating
  - WPT and Likert: r=0.52
  - OPI and Likert: r=0.45
- Proficiency and Can-Do self-rating
  - WPT and Can-Do: r=0.43
  - OPI and Can-Do: r=0.07

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MODALITIES

- WPT and OPI
  - r=0.52

- Likert self-rating
  - r=0.70

- Can-Do self-rating
  - r=0.44

- OPI > WPT

- Speaking self-rating > writing self-rating

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LANGUAGES

- Accuracy of self-ratings varies by preferred language
- Writing and Speaking
  - Learners who feel dominant in Spanish are more accurate self-rating their Spanish than learners who feel dominant in English (contra Gollan et al. 2015)
  - Learners who feel equally comfortable in "Both" are the least accurate

SELF-RATING ACCURACY: WRITING

	Under	Accurate	Over
NL NM	n/a	1	0
NH IL IM	0	7	4
IH AL AM	16	47	17
AH S	0	3	n/a

SELF-RATING ACCURACY: SPEAKING

	Under	Accurate	Over
NL NM	n/a	n/a	n/a
NH IL IM	0	0	0
IH AL AM	0	3	12
AH S*	1	3	n/a

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MODALITIES

- Speaking > Writing
  - **80%** of IH-AM over-rated **speaking** proficiency
  - **21%** of IH-AM over-rated **writing** proficiency
  - **20%** of IH-AM under-rated **writing** proficiency

- Typical heritage learner profile
  - Broader range of experiences and contexts in spoken modality than written modality
  - More confident speaking than writing

DISCUSSION

LEARNER STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

- Accurate self-assessment of **narration** and **description** at Intermediate level

- Tendency to over-rate ability to deal with **abstract issues, hypothesize**

- Tendency to over-rate facility with **formal** and **professional contexts**

- Tendency to **over-rate accuracy**

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLACEMENT

- Self-assessment can inform placement
  - Learners may over-estimate their speaking proficiency and under-estimate writing proficiency
  - Self-assessment is one tool in a larger toolkit
- Self-assessment can empower learners
  - Can-Do statements help learners recognize specific strengths, weaknesses, and goals
- How might you use this information in your context?

IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

- Test results influenced by testing context
  - IH-AM learners may be able to access some Superior-level functions and contexts with preparation, time, and opportunity to revise

- What are some strategies for implementing self-assessment as a tool for formative assessment

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

- Identify and leverage the strengths HLLs bring to the classroom

- Use oral language skills to scaffold the development of next-level writing skills

- Provide rich input to develop weaker functions, contexts, and text types

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CONTACTS

Center for Integrated Language Communities
Visit our booth (#1333) at ACTFL!

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