

INTRODUCTION

Pronouns and Marital Satisfaction

The way partners communicate is an indicator of their satisfaction with their relationship¹.

- More use of “I” and “we” is associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction².
- More use of “you” is associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction³.

What We Don’t Know

Previous observations have focused on middle and upper-class White couples.

- Growing U.S. populations, like Hispanics, have different cultures and speak different languages.
- Issues like immigration, acculturation, religion and socioeconomic status often differentiate Hispanics from middle-class White Americans.

If these communication and marital satisfaction patterns are not the same for Hispanics, it would indicate that further research needs to be conducted to, for example, generate better-tailored therapeutic approaches.

RESEARCH GOALS

Do English and Spanish-speaking Hispanics use “I”, “we”, and “you” at the same rate as other Americans?

Is the use of these pronouns related to marital satisfaction in the same way across the groups?

METHODS

Participants

- 398 low-income newlywed couples ($N = 796$)

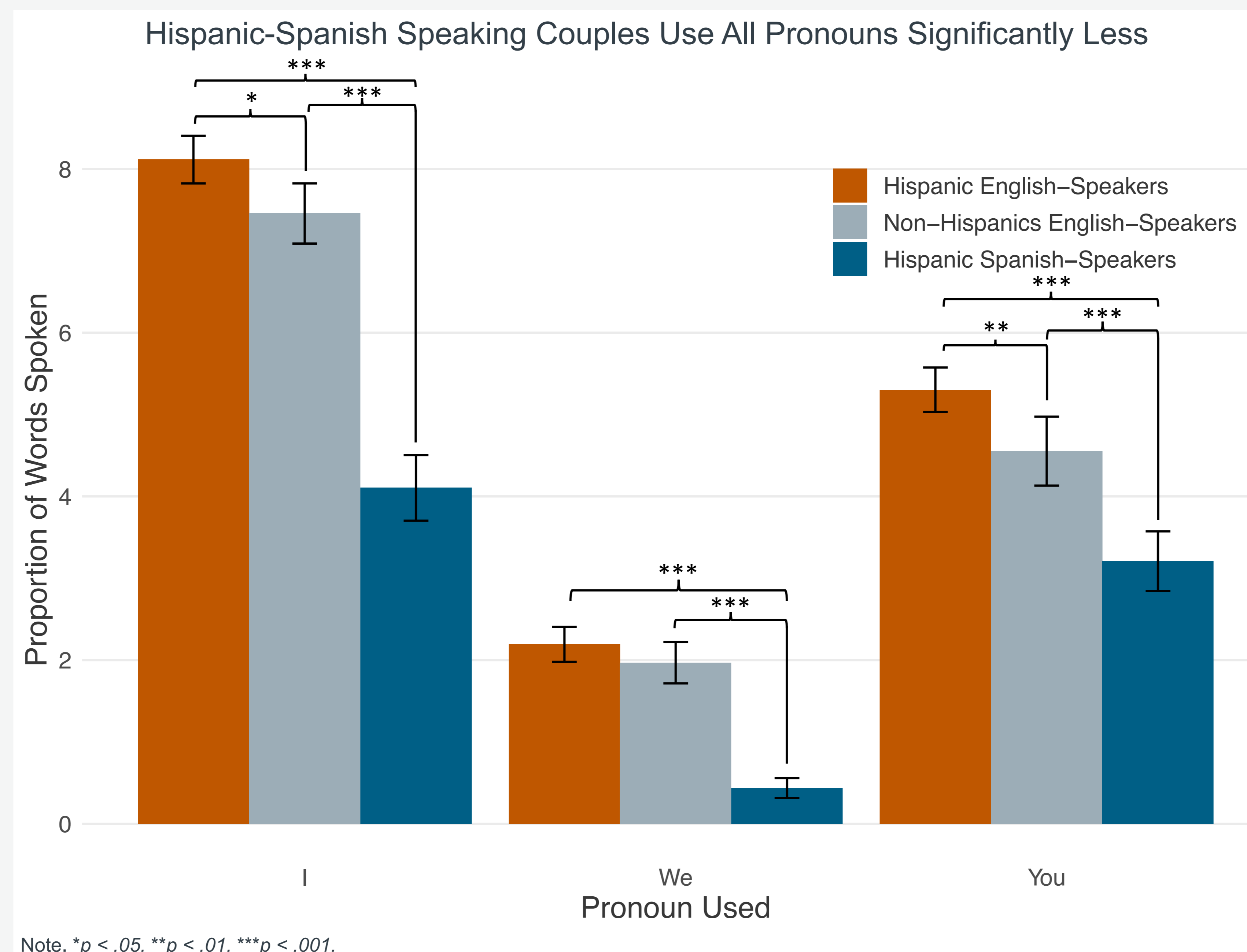
Measures

- An 8-minute video discussion of a relationship problem
- Relationship satisfaction (7-item scale, 37 points)
- English and Spanish LIWC dictionaries
- All the couples resided in the U.S. and they were grouped into three categories:
 - White and Black couples ($n = 94$)
 - Hispanic, English-speaking couples ($n = 208$)
 - Hispanic, Spanish-speaking couples ($n = 96$)

Analyses

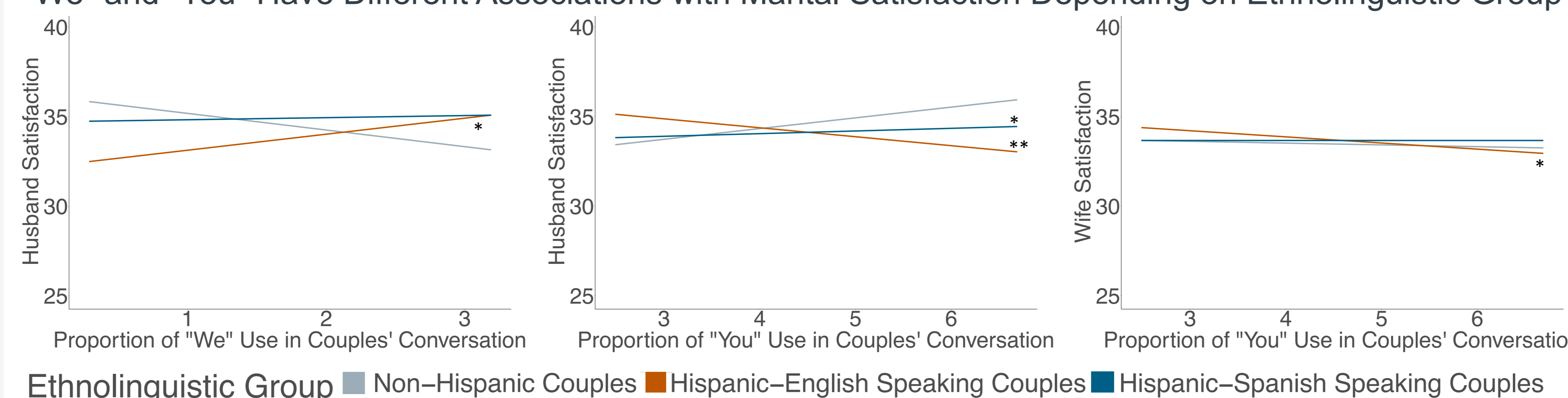
- One-way between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted to compare pronoun use across the three cultural/linguistic groups.
- A series of OLS regressions were conducted to test whether use of each pronoun was related to marital satisfaction and whether these associations were moderated by cultural/linguistic group.

RESULTS



Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

“We” and “You” Have Different Associations with Marital Satisfaction Depending on Ethnolinguistic Group



Regression of Ethnolinguistic Group as a Moderator of the Association Between Pronoun Use and Marital Satisfaction

| | “I” use | | “We” use | | “You” use | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | Husband | Wife | Husband | Wife | Husband | Wife |
| Constant | 32.76*** | 34.47*** | 34.88*** | 33.53*** | 32.63*** | 33.50*** |
| Pronoun use | .20 | -.15 | -.32 | .08 | .35* | -.03 |
| Hispanic English-speaking | 1.88 | .43 | -1.91** | -1.42 | 2.35* | 1.83 |
| Hispanic Spanish-speaking | 1.38 | -1.38 | -1.21 | -.25 | 2.19* | -.40 |
| Pronoun use X Hispanic English-speaking | -.32 | -.10 | .65* | .44 | -.60** | -.43* |
| Pronoun use X Hispanic Spanish-speaking | -.23 | .21 | 1.04 | .21 | -.61* | -.11 |

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Main Effects

- Husbands and wives’ rate of the use of “I” was not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction in any group.
- Wives’ rate of the use of “we” was not significantly associated with relationship satisfaction in any group.

Moderation Effects

- More use of “we” was significantly associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction only for husbands in Hispanic-English speaking couples.
- More use of “you” was significantly associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction for Hispanic-English and Hispanic-Spanish speaking couples.

CONCLUSIONS

Proportion of Pronoun Use Per Group

- Results suggest that both culture and language play a role in amount of pronoun use.

Associations of Marital Satisfaction with Pronouns Use

- Lower use of “we” and greater use of “you” were consistently related to relationship satisfaction for Hispanic-English speaking couples, consistent with prior research.
- However, more use of “I” and “we” were not related to level of relationship satisfaction in Hispanic-Spanish speaking couples, suggesting that this association is English-specific.

Limitations

- All couples were recruited from the U.S., so we do not know how representative our sample of Hispanic Spanish-speaking couples were of collectivist couples.
- Pronoun use is only one way of assessing communication; other aspects of communication (e.g. tone) could provide more information on differential interaction patterns in culturally and linguistically diverse couples.

Overall, this study provides greater clarity about the role of culture and language in the association between pronoun use and relationship satisfaction in a diverse group of newlywed couples.

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