

## GOING BEYOND 'APPROPRIATENESS': FOREIGN AND HERITAGE LANGUAGE STUDENTS EXPLORE LANGUAGE USE IN SOCIETY

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People who grow up speaking Spanish in Texas often learn a colloquial variety of Spanish at home or in their communities and have limited abilities to move between different registers in different social contexts. As heritage language (HL) learners' understanding of the value of different language varieties plays an important role in the development of their cultural and linguistic identities, the best methodology for the exploration of register and genre in the HL classroom is a key question that merits further discussion. Research also indicates the need for instruction on discourse, linguistic variation and local uses of the target language in the L2 classroom. In order to address the needs of HL and L2 learners described above, faculty, graduate students and undergraduates at the University of Texas at Austin are collaborating to create a database of recordings of authentic conversations between Spanish speakers from Texas. This paper proposes a unit on local uses of Spanish that allows heritage language learners to participate in the development of the database while at the same time exploring and reflecting on language use in local Spanish-speaking communities.

### INTRODUCTION

This paper outlines a curriculum proposal that is part of a larger pedagogical project currently in development in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Texas at Austin (UT) called the *Texas Spanish Project*. The Texas Spanish Project is a corpus of recordings of authentic interaction in Spanish between Spanish-speakers from Texas, created *by* and *for* second language (L2) and heritage language (HL) learners. In the proposed curriculum, L2 and HL learners make recordings of authentic, local language use and then reflect on the recordings in a series of activities designed to promote critical language awareness.

I will start off by explaining what inspired me to start this project and why I think it is the logical response to current research in L2 and HL pedagogy. Then, I will discuss some

related projects that have provided models and ideas. Finally I will describe in detail the vision and structure of the Texas Spanish Project, with a particular focus on a curriculum proposal that allows undergraduate students to explore local language use by conducting original research.

## **SPANISH AS A LOCAL LANGUAGE**

### **Linguistic variation and legitimacy**

My initial inspiration for the project came from a 2006 article by Manuel Gutierrez and Marta Fairclough that points to the need to incorporate local varieties of Spanish into the Spanish foreign language curriculum, particularly in areas with large Hispanic populations, like Texas and Arizona. Although the two textbooks currently used in our lower-division Spanish language courses do acknowledge some of the effects of language contact in U.S. Spanish vocabulary (Salaberry, R., Barrette, C. M., Elliot, P., & Fernandez-Garcia, M., 2003; Ogando-Lavín, M., Murphy, M., & Méndez-Montesinos, 2009), the topic of Spanish in the U.S. is touched on only very briefly, and there is virtually no acknowledgement of the fact that students see and hear Spanish all around them both in Austin and in their hometowns. Similarly, in the Spanish courses for heritage speakers, students who grew up in the U.S. speaking both Spanish and English, the discussion of the difference between what is called “standard Spanish” and the colloquial varieties that many of our students learn to speak at home has often been limited to “It’s O.K. to speak that way with your *abuelos* [grandparents], but this is how you are going to speak in class.”

An important social element of language to consider when planning L2 and HL curricula in highly multilingual regions such as Austin, Texas, is which varieties of the target language are considered to be legitimate, and who is considered to be a legitimate speaker. Regan and Osborn define linguistic legitimacy as “what counts and what does not count as real language” (2002, p. 8). In the context of Spanish language education in Texas, the key question is: Which varieties of Spanish spoken in Texas do students and educators consider worthy of study? Until now, it seems that the answer to this question has only included monolingual, relatively standard varieties.

The focus on teaching one “standard” variety of a language, whether to L2 learners or to heritage language learners, is related to a concept that has been referred to as the “native speaker norm” (Firth & Wagner, 1997), the “monolingual norm” or the “native-speaker construct,” an assumption common in traditional foreign language instruction that the goal of language learning is to speak like a prototypical, monolingual native

speaker. The language forms and styles associated with this imagined speaker are generally closer to written Spanish on the oral-written spectrum than the way most people actually speak, especially in less formal contexts. Although it's important for students to be able to recognize and utilize the types of language commonly viewed as valuable in professional and academic contexts, a great deal of current pedagogical theory acknowledges the importance of guiding students toward an understanding of language as part of a social practice, an expected way of interacting in a certain context, within a certain community, that has specific meanings in that particular context that cannot be duplicated under other circumstances (e.g., Kramsch, 1994 [1993]; Hall, 1999; Young, 2009). As Cecilia Colombi (2009) and others have pointed out, it is important for both L2 learners and Spanish heritage speakers to examine and practice language use in a variety of social contexts in order to develop an understanding of how context and meaning are mutually constitutive, and to gain an awareness of the social value associated with different types of language use.

**Linguistic legitimacy and identity.** Research on language learner identity has demonstrated that institutional constructs of what it means to be a legitimate speaker of the target language influence the ways students negotiate their own identities as speakers of that language. Perhaps inspired by Bonnie Norton's groundbreaking work on the multiple identities of a group of English language learners in Canada (1995, 2000), a great deal of research on language learner identity over the past 15 years has explored Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power in the context of language learning (1977). Bourdieu (1991) observed that certain ways of speaking hold more value than others in a symbolic market, or a particular context for language use, and that the speakers of these linguistic varieties thus receive certain social privileges that speakers of less powerful varieties may not receive. For L2 and heritage language learners, one of these social privileges is often that of speaking (see Norton [Peirce], 1995).

In the context of learning Spanish in Texas, where words like "pocho," "chueco," "Tex-Mex," and "Spanglish" are commonly used in opposition to "good Spanish," we need to consider how the idealization of the monolingual, native speaker in the Spanish language curriculum might influence how bilingual students view themselves as learners and speakers of the language.

**Spanish as a Heritage Language.** In the United States, Spanish is the primary language spoken at home by 35 million people, more than 12% of the entire U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2008). Children who grow up speaking Spanish at home in the U.S. often become dominant in English during their first years of schooling, and begin to study Spanish formally many years later. At home, these students often learn

colloquial varieties that differ widely from the standard, formal varieties taught in university Spanish language programs (Valdés, 1997).

Many Spanish heritage speakers who enter the Spanish language program at UT have developed some level of oral proficiency in Spanish, but have limited Spanish literacy skills and limited dominance in prestige varieties of the language. The learning needs of these students are different from those of the L2 learners, and placing them in L2 Spanish courses does not afford them a maximum opportunity to improve their Spanish literacy skills. Like several major universities in the U.S. Southwest, the Spanish language program at UT has begun to offer courses designed specifically for heritage speakers, termed 'native speaker courses', 'heritage language courses' or courses 'for bilingual/bicultural students'.

Research has demonstrated that mental models of linguistic identity affect HL learners' experiences in Spanish language programs (Potowski, 2002; see also Hornberger and Wang, 2008). Heritage speakers are often viewed as a problem for language programs, and their skills are viewed as incomplete or deficient (Potowski & Carreira, 2004; Hornberger & Wang 2008). Drawing from Norton [Peirce] (1995) and a 2008 study conducted by Bonnie Urciuoli, my research on classroom discourse in Spanish courses for heritage speakers in Texas demonstrates that heritage speakers may construct their Spanish language skills as either a value or a deficit, thus categorizing themselves as either legitimate or illegitimate speakers (Showstack, forthcoming).

The language ideologies that are constructed and negotiated in Spanish language classrooms in Texas have their roots in a history of segregation and racism, and students are often unaware of the power structure that delegitimizes their language. These students need to learn prestige varieties of Spanish in order to use language successfully in some contexts, but when designing curricula to address this issue in the classroom, it is important to consider what students learn about linguistic legitimacy.

## **APPROPRIATE MODELS AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES**

Taking a view of language learning as the development of participation within a practice (Young, 2009), I believe that the language ideologies linked to language learners' identities are constantly created and negotiated in the classroom. Given this perspective, the context provided for exploring topics such as dialectical variation and speech genre in the language classroom is an important consideration for developing a curriculum that allows heritage language speakers to think critically about how language is socially constructed in society. It is important to consider not only what instructors

convey to students about the power associated with Standard Spanish and the stigma associated with the way some students learn to speak at home, but also how students and instructors negotiate a shared understanding of what this means for the role of a good heritage language learner in the classroom and in the society.<sup>1</sup>

Fairclough (1992a) uses the term “appropriateness model” to describe a curriculum in which students are told which language varieties are appropriate for a given context without further exploration of the topic. According to Fairclough, appropriateness models present prescriptivist notions of language as a sociolinguistic reality, thus supporting existing hegemonic discourses on legitimate vs. stigmatized language varieties. I would argue that using appropriateness models for heritage speakers and second language learners unintentionally supports a political objective to maintain power relations the way they have always been. For example, several years ago in an essay assignment, a Mexican-American student of mine described a break in the middle of class using the word “quebrada” (*break*, taken from the Spanish verb *quebrar* “to break”), and I told him that this was incorrect, assuming that it was simply transfer from English. I later found out that the usage of the term “quebrada” is much more common in certain varieties of Spanish spoken in the U.S. to refer to a break in the middle of a period of work than the term “descanso”, which is generally used in monolingual regions. What if I had told him that his usage was inappropriate for academic writing and simply left it at that? This still gives me the power to decide what is appropriate, and, of course, my decision is based on a view that U.S. Spanish varieties are less legitimate in academic contexts than monolingual varieties. This perspective oversimplifies the situation, avoiding discussions about the social meaning of language, and my use of an appropriateness model makes this power relation opaque (see also Leeman, 2003; Martínez, 2003).

### **An Alternative Model**

As an alternative to the use of appropriateness models to instruct students on the differences between academic Spanish and colloquial varieties, I support Achugar and Pessoa’s suggestion of “pedagogical interventions that make language and power issues explicit” in multilingual learning environments (2009, p. 220). This echoes earlier work on Critical Language Awareness activities, where students explore dialectical variation, genre and symbolic power by examining and reflecting upon local language use, including their own roles as language users outside the classroom (Clark, Fairclough, Ivanic, & Martin-Jones, 1988; Fairclough, 1992b) and recent publications in the field of heritage language education that suggest incorporating the ideas of critical

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<sup>1</sup> See Pomerantz, 2008, for an analysis of how an understanding of what it means to be a “good language learner” is constructed and negotiated in an L2 classroom.

pedagogy into curricula for teaching Spanish to heritage speakers (e.g., Leeman, 2003; Martínez, 2003).

Second language pedagogical research over the past decade has pointed to the value of using naturally occurring conversations in L2 pedagogy (see Young, 2009, for an overview of this research). Building on previous research, Young proposes a methodology for “a pedagogy of conscious and systematic study of interaction” (Young, forthcoming), in which the language teacher and learners observe real-life interactional processes or study video recordings of natural interaction and analyze the use of language that they observe as a social practice, considering the “participation framework and the verbal, interactional, and nonverbal resources employed by participants”, as well as the “roles of the participants and the ways in which the practice reproduces and constructs broader societal values” (Young, 2009, p.194, drawing from Hall, 1999). In the HL classroom, the video recordings of interaction studied by the teacher and learners could include, for example, the practice of “hanging out with the guys” in one student’s family. The instructor could ask students to talk about what it might mean to participate in this particular practice in this particular family, including the purpose of the practice, the typical topics of conversation and the type of language used. Then students and the instructor could examine the ways participants cooperatively construct meaning in interaction through both what they say and how they say it, as well as through gesture and other non-verbal resources. If the participants are talking about work, the students could consider what values about work are implicit in the conversation.

This approach can be highly productive in mainstream and heritage speaker Spanish courses, in raising students’ awareness about the social nature of language. Active engagement in sociolinguistic research can encourage students to give symbolic power to the multiple language varieties they observe in their local communities and develop a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the institutional push for a focus on standard Spanish.

**Related projects.** Systemic Functional Linguistics (e.g. Halliday, 1985) and the multiliteracies perspective developed by the New London Group (1996) have formed the basis for a series of pedagogical proposals that have been implemented to varying levels of fruition in second and heritage language courses. Thorne and Reinhardt (2008), for example, describe a model they call “bridging activities” in which L2 students bring to the classroom samples of vernacular language use from computer-mediated contexts, analyze the types of language considered appropriate for those contexts, and compare their samples with the types of communication found in other genres.

In the field of heritage language education, Roca (2010) describes a community-based curriculum for Spanish heritage speakers with a strong oral history component. As part of a unit that integrates various genres of language use, students are asked to conduct an interview with a grandparent or elderly member of a local Spanish-speaking community.<sup>2</sup> Carreira and Wijaya (2008) suggest having students conduct an analysis of the organizational properties and the language of such narratives in order to understand the progression from aural to written registers. In a related paper, Colombi (2009) proposes an application of Systemic Functional Linguistics as part of a similar curriculum design.

Martínez (2003) notes the work of authors of heritage language textbooks, such as Ana Roca in *Nuevos Mundos* (1999), to promote what he calls classroom based dialect awareness, but he suggests that previous work has not done enough to address the social values associated with different varieties of language. He argues that curricula for dialect awareness should “engage not only questions of code but also questions of structure, and it must highlight the relationship between language, power, and social groups” (Martínez, 2003, p. 6). Martínez proposes a series of classroom activities that explore not only the distribution of dialects but also why one dialect is valued over another.

Meanwhile, at the University of Texas there is a community of researchers working to document the types of linguistic variation present within some of the most widely spoken languages in the state. Most notably, the Texas German Dialect Project provides web access to a database of recorded interviews with German speakers whose families have lived in Texas for up to seven generations. While the Texas German Dialect Project aims at preserving an endangered language, the Texas English Project takes an ethnographic perspective in exploring the use of English in different ethnic groups. In comparison, little has been done in recent years to document the second most widely spoken language in the state.

The University of Texas has a responsibility to its second and heritage language learners of Spanish to follow the lead of the applied linguists and sociolinguistics mentioned above and develop a focus on Texas Spanish. Until now we have only been able to explain to the 7,000 students who enroll in our lower-division Spanish language program that U.S. Spanish contains many calques from English and contains “archaisms.” By avoiding Texas Spanish in the past, we have taken an institutional position by virtue of inaction, but we have come to a point at which we can no longer ignore the local sociolinguistic context.

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<sup>2</sup> Ana Roca, Cecilia Colombi and Maria Carreira have collaborated on this project (Ana Roca, personal communication, January, 2010).

## **WHAT IS THE TEXAS SPANISH PROJECT?**

The Texas Spanish Project is an on-line resource center for people interested in teaching and learning about the use of Spanish in Texas. It provides access to a database of audio recordings of authentic language produced by Spanish-speakers from Texas in a variety of social contexts. To facilitate searching of the database, the recordings are segmented and classified according to sociolinguistic variables and particular linguistic features that appear in the discourse. Instructors have used the recordings in lower-division Spanish courses as an element of top-down, inductive lesson plans that guide students to discover patterns of grammar and discourse in real data samples.

Data are collected by undergraduate students taking Spanish courses in our department and a pair of research assistants who travel to different cities in Texas to make recordings. Student data collection is a significant component of the project, because it provides students with the opportunity to develop their own perspectives on how language functions as a social practice in their local communities. A team of research assistants and web developers are in the process of creating a website with access to the database and information about language variation and the use of Spanish in Texas. When complete, the site and access to the database will be available to the public.

### **Texas Spanish Project and Linguistic Legitimacy**

The primary purpose of the Texas Spanish Project is to raise L2 and heritage language learners' awareness about linguistic variation and the use of Spanish in Texas. The project serves as a jumping-off point for the development of community-based curricula for both L2 and heritage Spanish programs. A curriculum that includes examination of language use in the local community naturally brings some legitimacy to local varieties by conveying the idea that they are worthy of study. The project aims to take a step further, implementing an approach that combines Critical Language Awareness with the study of interaction, with the hope that course activities will prompt students to consider the social nature of language and to question the symbolic power of different language varieties and the reasons behind the differences in status of these varieties. In addition, by structuring the student data collection as part of a larger sociolinguistic research project, students will come to understand the relationship between language and context as an important question that forms the basis for a field of study.



**An open resource.** While the core of the Texas Spanish Project is its use at the University of Texas, the site and database will also be available as a public resource. This lines up with the goals of an emerging trend in computer technology, the Open Education Movement. According to Baraniuk (2006), the Open Education Movement is based on the following beliefs: “that knowledge should be free and open to use and reuse, that collaboration should be easier, [...] that people should receive credit for [...] contributing to education and research, and that concepts and ideas are linked in usual and surprising ways”. Based on these ideas, various on-line resources have been developed to provide public access to course material, and many of these resources are licensed by Creative Commons. . The Texas Spanish Project also uses Creative Commons licensing and aims to share its resources with other institutions. And we have found an important link between resources for teaching and resources for research.

### **The Data**

All of the data that have been recorded so far are audio recordings with no video, but the ultimate goal is to move toward a focus on video data, because of its use in demonstrating non-verbal aspects of communication and social practice. Most of the audio data that have been collected are of two types: sociolinguistic interviews and spontaneous conversations. I collected an initial set of spontaneous conversational data among my friends over dinners in my apartment. This method allowed for natural conversation with many examples of features of unplanned, oral discourse, and provided useful material for use in language courses. Therefore, I have trained both graduate and undergraduate students to continue to collect data with this method, creating recordings of spontaneous interaction among groups of Spanish-speakers from Texas. Undergraduate students in one Spanish sociolinguistics course also contributed to the data collection by conducting sociolinguistic interviews with Spanish-speakers from Texas as part of a class assignment.

**The Activities.** The recordings have been incorporated into three different types of assignments for undergraduate students: top-down, inductive classroom activities focused on a particular pattern of grammar or discourse, a sociolinguistic research project in which students analyzed a specific linguistic factor in their data, and an essay assignment in which students were asked to reflect on the type of language used in their recordings. The common thread in these three assignments is that the data served as a tool for students to make their own conclusions about language, using authentic conversations between local speakers. Due to a lack of flexibility in current curricula, it was necessary to tailor each of the assignments to existing curricular goals, limiting room for creativity and innovation. For the remainder of this paper, I will discuss

a proposed set of activities that I would like to implement when there is an opportunity to make room for them in the Spanish HL curriculum, and I will explain what I learned from piloting certain elements of the proposal.

**Spanish in Austin.** The curriculum proposal that I will discuss here, called Spanish in Austin, is designed for undergraduate heritage language learners in lower division courses, but it could also be modified for intermediate L2 courses. Spanish in Austin aims to educate Spanish heritage language learners about genre in a way that legitimizes their existing linguistic skills and allows them to develop an understanding of how language functions to constitute a social reality. These goals require an understanding of genre that goes beyond formalist approaches, which define it as “types of text, or types of language, distinguished by their respective formal features and the ways they combine the features” (Hanks 1996, p. 242). Instead, genre is viewed here as set of semiotic systems used for communication that has a history, and because of its history creates shared expectations about a particular interaction, embodies a set of values and a way of being in the world and indexes a particular type of relationship with the interlocutor (Bakhtin 1986, as cited in Young, 2009; Hanks, 1987).

As a result of the implementation of this curriculum, students will: (1) deepen their understanding of language as a social practice (see Kramsch, 1993 [1994]; Young, 2009), (2) become more aware of the variety of ways that Spanish is used in Texas, and reflect on the social construction of the value of different language varieties, (3) develop their analytic and metalinguistic skills, (4) develop their academic writing skills, and (5) contribute to an authentic project, the creation of a database, which will serve the Texas Spanish-speaking and Spanish-learning communities. The curriculum draws from the pedagogical proposals discussed above, and incorporates the additional element that students are collaborating to create a pedagogical corpus.

**Phase I.** In the first phase of the curriculum, students observe spoken and written use of Spanish in the community, keep a journal of their observations of language use, and write an academic essay describing their initial observations. Some suggested questions to address in the essay might include:

- What uses of Spanish did you observe?
- Who was speaking and/or whose voice was being represented?
- To what audience(s) was the language use directed? What kinds of assumptions were made about this audience?
- Were the messages communicated effectively? How do you know?

- What level of formality was used in the language you observed?
- Was a standard form of Spanish used (e.g. what is generally taught in Spanish textbooks and grammars)? Did you observe any uses of Spanish that did not seem to be standard uses?
- Did you hear any Spanish words that were not pronounced in Spanish? If so, which ones? Why were they pronounced differently?

These questions are designed to prompt students to begin to think about language in terms other than appropriateness and inappropriateness, and to prepare them to take on the role of sociolinguistic researchers. In writing an academic essay to address the questions, students are given the opportunity to develop their skills in a register that is much more formal than much of the language use they observe (Colombi, 2009), and they may develop specific vocabulary and linguistic structures for expressing an authoritative, academic voice (see Valdés, 2004).

**Phase II.** In phase II, students record spontaneous conversations and sociolinguistic interviews that they will later contribute to the Texas Spanish Project database, thus further legitimizing the varieties they record as worthy of study. Involvement in the selection of participants and collection of data allows students greater agency in determining what type of language will be examined in the classroom (cf. Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008). This phase of the project requires a substantial amount of preparation and training. It is important that students understand the multiple ways that the data will be used, including what kinds of questions they will be asking about the recordings in their own investigations. It would be helpful to provide students with sample data so that they get a sense of what kind of data they are aiming for (this issue is discussed further below). Training in the use of recording equipment should also be carefully planned and implemented. Finally, students must complete the on-line ethics training for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and obtain copies of the consent forms for their participant(s) to sign. This process is highly valuable for aspiring student researchers and to inspire student researchers, as they are introduced to the research process and they come to understand what it is like to collect data for a large-scale research project. In addition to learning about the research process, students also learn to understand the value of research.

**Phase III.** In the final phase, students and instructors analyze language use in some of the students' recordings, answering a set of questions designed to help students develop symbolic competence (see Kramsch, 2010). Thus, the questions below address the ways that language is used to represent discourse models and construct social reality, and the symbolic power relations become explicit through the way in

which language is used in the sample. Drawing from Koike (2009), the exploration of how language is used to constitute a social reality is explored through examination of *implicature*, indirect expression of concepts and ideas, as well as language used to negotiate *alignment*, “a sense of cooperation and affiliation with the other participant” (p. 37), and an awareness of sociolinguistic variation. Consideration of the symbolic power associated with the recorded samples is inspired by Fairclough (1992b) and Thorne and Reinhardt (2008).

Some questions for classroom examination of the student-collected data might include:

- What social practice are the speakers participating in? How can this social practice be described? What do you see as the goal of this social practice, and what do you think are the preferred topics of conversation?
- What are the roles of the participants in the conversation? How are they using language to negotiate their roles?
- Are speakers using language to cooperate with each other in order to come to a shared understanding and sense of affiliation?
- Are the speakers using both direct and indirect forms of communication? What ideas, if any, are speakers communicating indirectly?<sup>3</sup>
- How do participants use language to convey a certain way of seeing and being in the world?
- Would the linguistic forms used in this interaction communicate the same meaning in alternative communicative contexts (e.g. a more formal, or less formal context, or between interlocutors whose relationship is different)?
- Would the style of speaking used in this segment be valued in other communicative contexts? Why or why not?

The questions listed above are designed to spark class discussion, and instructors can further guide the conversation in ways that they deem appropriate for their particular course level.

### **Implementation**

Although this curriculum has not yet been implemented in its entirety, various aspects of it have been piloted in a lower-division L2 course, an upper-division introduction to

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<sup>3</sup> The first three questions are inspired by Koike (2009).

sociolinguistics course and an upper-division Spanish composition and conversation course for heritage speakers. Students' responses, both in their essays and in conversations with me, indicated that the activities allowed them to reconsider and negotiate new understandings of the value of different language varieties while at the same time expanding their awareness of other symbolic dimensions of language. Although students who recorded spontaneous conversations and sociolinguistic interviews did receive some training in techniques for the two types of data collection and the use of the equipment, the outcome of the data collection indicated that further training is needed. Nonetheless, the participating students collected a great deal of valuable data that will be added to the database.

The students in the upper-division Spanish conversation and composition course for heritage speakers demonstrated an awareness of levels of formality in their essays. However, they did not go into depth about specific linguistic features that distinguished a certain sample as more formal than another. For example, one student described variation in levels of formality within the spontaneous conversation that he recorded with his friends:

(1) La grabación, como antes mencionado, se tornó informal después de varios minutos de formalidad. Sentí que nos transferimos a hablar mas informalmente mientras que nuestra conversación se tornó mas apasionada y sincera. Yo usé lenguaje más coloquial, fonética más urbana y entonación más informal. Honestamente creo que es una grabación con la combinación de formalidad e informalidad. Sin embargo, la formalidad si se hizo aparente mientras hablábamos de nuestras familias, costumbre o de política nacional.

*The recording, as mentioned earlier, became informal after several minutes of formality. I felt that we switched to speaking more informally while our conversation became more passionate and sincere. I used a more colloquial vocabulary, more urban phonetics and more informal intonation. I honestly think that it is a recording with a combination of formality and informality. Nonetheless, the formality became apparent while we talked about our families, customs or national politics.<sup>4</sup>*

The student cited above touches on some interesting issues that he does not discuss further in his one-page essay. Spanish heritage speakers at this level would have benefited from an assignment to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the language use in the data and a class discussion on their observations and conclusions.

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<sup>4</sup> All translations are mine.

Students in the Spanish course for heritage speakers reported experiencing a sense of satisfaction with their recordings and pride in their language after participating in the project. I think this may be related to their understanding that their recordings would contribute to a database that would be used for teaching people about the Spanish language and for research. The student in Example 2 below explained why she felt a sense of pride after completing the recording:

(2) Lo que me gustaría comentar sobre mi experiencia de hacer la grabación es que me dio la oportunidad de sentirme orgullosa de saber el español y aunque no lo hablé igual como mis compañeros con quien hice la grabación, mi forma de hablarlo es única y es así cómo cada uno de nosotros somos únicos.

*What I would like to comment about my experience of making the recording is that it gave me the opportunity to feel proud of knowing Spanish, and although I didn't speak it the same as my classmates with whom I did the recording, my way of speaking is unique, and this is how each one of us is unique.*

Various students expressed similar experiences, indicating that the assignment may have given them an opportunity to develop a sense of the value of the varieties of Spanish they speak.

Data collection required a great deal of training: an audio specialist gave a 20-minute presentation on the use of the high-quality digital audio recorders that students were required to use. The students who conducted sociolinguistic interviews were also given a 20-minute presentation on sociolinguistic methodology, with a focus on getting their participants to do most of the talking. All students received handouts with an explanation of the task at hand. Nonetheless, there were many problems with the data that were submitted. Some of the students who conducted sociolinguistic interviews did not prompt their interviewees to elaborate on their answers to yes/no questions. For example, at least two students asked the question: “¿Tus padres te han enseñado alguna leyenda de su cultura?” [*Have your parents taught you a legend from your culture?*], and, upon receiving an affirmative response, simply moved on to the next question. Samples of these interviews will be used in future training sessions as examples of what not to do in a sociolinguistic interview.

In conclusion, the Texas Spanish Project provides an opportunity to integrate local uses of Spanish into the L2 and HL curricula at the University of Texas at Austin and provides a model for the development of similar projects at other universities. This paper

presented an example of the way that the participation of HL learners in data collection for the Texas Spanish Project can be part of a curriculum that aims to educate them about genre in a way that legitimizes their existing linguistic skills and allows them to develop an understanding of how language functions to constitute a social reality. This curriculum has a great deal of potential to improve the Spanish language program at the University of Texas at Austin and could serve as a model for similar curricula to be implemented in other heritage language programs at other universities.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Rachel Showstack** is a PhD candidate in the Hispanic Linguistics program at the University of Texas at Austin. Her dissertation research explores the ways that Spanish heritage speakers negotiate their identities as Spanish-speakers within different social practices in the university heritage language classroom.

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