

Critical Pedagogies for Spanish Heritage Language Programs

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Picture by Heather Quarles

1. I will share relevant information regarding the state of the Spanish Heritage Language (SHL) field within Linguistics.

2. An overview of the key pedagogical approaches in the SHL program which I direct at the UO. I will also share an open-source series of pedagogical units that we use in our program.

3. I will show how SHL students in our program respond to these pedagogical approaches.



The objective of SHL curricula at UO

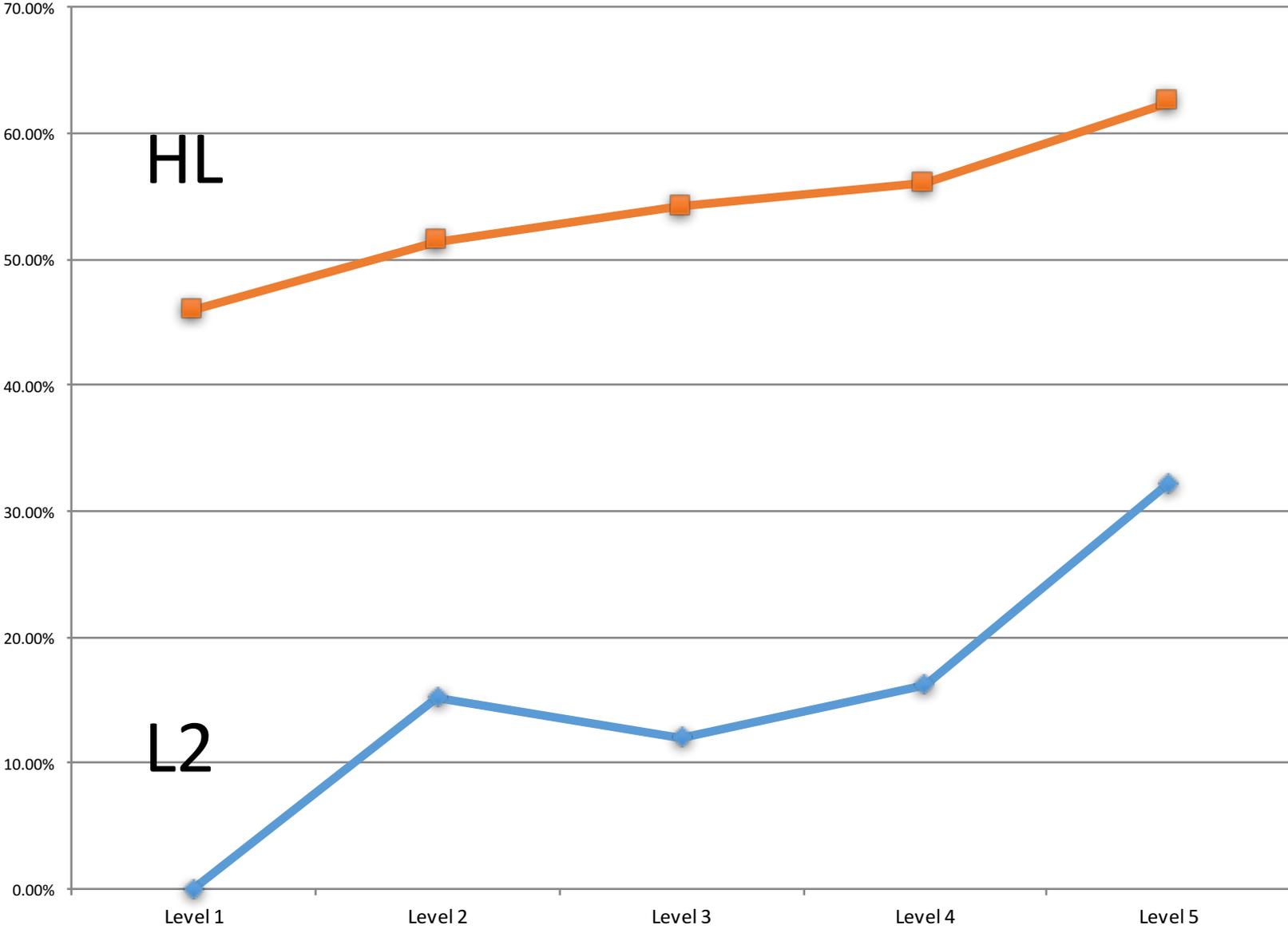
To meet the educational goals of students for whom Spanish is a birthright language

Latinxs at UO

- The strong increase in the state's Latinx / Hispanic population is likewise reflected in growing university enrollments:
- currently about 10.4% of the student body at UO identifies as Latinx or Hispanic, up from 3.4% ten years ago.

*Latinx is the gender-neutral alternative to Latino and Latina.

Adapted from Fairclough (2005, 2012)



Some Differences Between L2 & SH Learners

L2 Learners

1. Display an “apparent faster” progress.
2. Acquisition of the “standard” form in school.
3. Manifest typical language classroom anxieties.

SH Learners

1. Display an “apparent slower” progress.
2. Enter already fluent in standard non-standard varieties (correlating with working social classes and racial formations).
3. Manifest heightened social anxieties (ethnicity, social class, racial formations).

Two main strands in SHL pedagogy

(A) a more normative approach

- Emphasizes the expansion of heritage speakers' linguistic repertoires.
- Includes prestige varieties and formal registers.

(B) a more critical approach

- Attempts to make heritage speakers' own linguistic experience a more central part of the classroom.
- Fosters awareness of linguistic and sociolinguistic principles related to Spanish in the United States.

Critical SHL approaches

“To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques.

It is to dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness... acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, or syllables—lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe—but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self transformation producing a **stance of intervention in one’s context**...This teaching cannot be done from top down, but only **from the inside out**” (Freire 1973: 48).

Freire, Paulo. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum.



Picture by Kelsey Kaufman

**What does
this mean for
the teaching
of Spanish
in the US?**

SHL Student Stories

<http://rl.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/shl/shl-blogs/>



Oregon Class of 2016



Never Forget Where You Come From

Pictures by Gildardo Corona

Gildardo Corona
graduated Fall 2016
with a major in
Spanish and a
minor in Music



What does this mean for the teaching of Spanish in the US?

- To include questions regarding the **social contexts** of language use, and to question not only discourse but language forms themselves.
- To incorporate **Critical Language Awareness (CLA)** of the meaning of words, grammar forms, distinct pronunciations, etc., **toward the end of questioning social meaning embedded in language.**

(Leeman 2005)

Language Ideologies

As Spanish teachers, we transmit, directly or indirectly, implicit ideologies about:

- **Nationalism:** one nation = one language.
- **Standard-ness:** a commitment to linguistic purity and correctness.
- **Idealized monolingualism:** superiority of the educated monolingual speaker.

(Valdés et al. 2003)

Linguistic attitudes towards varieties of Spanish

- Racialized and class stereotyped varieties such as,
 - Andean Spanish,
 - Working class Mexico city Spanish,
 - Spanish from Southern Mexico,
 - Spanish in Alicante, etc.

First steps in our SHL program at the UO

- 1) An auto-evaluation, including an introspection for teachers, and for the entire language program,
- 2) In relation to our students' stories and experiences, and
- 3) In relation to our own language and cultural ideologies.

SHL at the UO

“We aim to generate opportunities for both teachers and students to produce the necessary knowledge for them to be able to reevaluate their own prejudices regarding language ideologies and other related social meanings”

(Holguín Mendoza, forthcoming).

**We reflected on US Spanish and the
Sociohistoric and Economic Conditions
of Spanish Speakers**

**Start with the learner, NOT with the
curriculum**

The Mission of the SHL program at the UO

1. **To value and develop Spanish language proficiency**, particularly for students who grew up in a Spanish-speaking household or community.
2. **To recognize and validate Spanglish and Spanish language varieties in the U.S.**, thus giving students an opportunity to integrate and build upon their existing linguistic and cultural knowledge and experiences.
3. **To create meaningful connections** with local Spanish-speaking communities, acknowledging the fact that languages are shaped both inside and outside academia.

<http://rl.uoregon.edu>



French



Italian



Portuguese



Spanish



Romance Languages



US Spanish (SHL)

Spanish Courses in the Department of Romance Languages at UO

L2 program

SPAN 101-102-103
Beginning Spanish

SPAN 201-202-203
Intermediate Spanish
>1, >BA Language
Second year

SPAN 111-112
High Beg. Spanish
Intensive

Spanish upper division

SPAN 301
Identidades hispanas
>1, >BA Language

SPAN 303
Expresiones artísticas

SPAN 305
Cambio social
>1, >IC

SPAN 311
Advanced Writing

SPAN 308
Comunidades Bilingües
>2 >IP

SPAN 312
Spanish in the Media
Advanced Writing for
Heritage Learners

General
Education

SPAN 238
Spanish Around the
World
>2, >AC

SPAN 248
Spanglish as a Speech
Community
>2, >AC

HIST 248
Latinos in the Americas
>2, >IC

SHL program

SPAN 218
Latino Heritage I
>1 >AC
Intermediate

SPAN 228
Latino Heritage II
>1 >BA Language
Intermediate

KEY

Blue
L2

Any
student

White
SHL

L2 learners acquire Spanish by learning the majority of the target language in the classroom. Heritage learners (SHL) have acquired the majority of the target language in the home or community (not the classroom).

Empowering Learners of Spanish

Open Source Resources for Critical Language Awareness

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YlITzzlEm8Dg8585NejqdTyWuO576NJ2p7fpnkCyMp0/edit>

Practical positive effects of this revalorization:

1. Changes in instructors' language attitudes.
2. Reduced anxiety in our classrooms.
3. Changes in all of our teaching practices
(L2 courses, upper division courses, placement exams, etc.)
4. Aware agents of change.

SHL Research Results

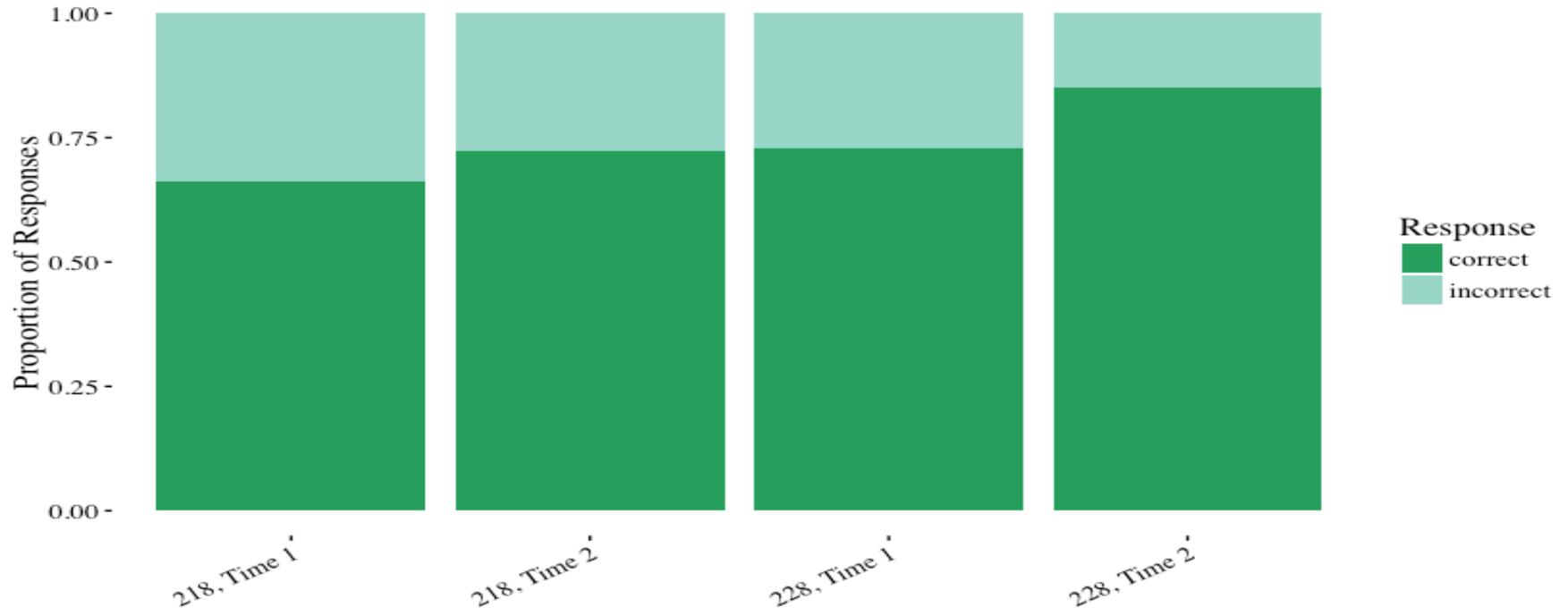
- Students enrolled in two Spanish language classes (SPAN 218 and 228) in a single term completed a survey assessing language attitudes early in the term and again at the end of the term.
- Students were asked to respond “correct” or “incorrect” to 30 phrases (*correcto / incorrecto*),
- And to indicate whether they **would** or **would not** say those phrases that way (*Yo lo diría así / Yo NO lo diría así*).

Methodology

The 30 phrases that students evaluated included words from:

- adapted forms (e.g., *porche*, “porch”),
- non-adapted forms (e.g., *shopping*),
- vernacular forms (from rural areas) (e.g., *ansina*, “like”),
- Caló/slang (e.g., *chales*, “no way”),
- distractor standard words from different varieties of Spanish from Latin America (e.g., *comal*, “iron pan”).

Quantitative Results



- In general terms and as predicted, the proportion of “correct” judgments increased over time.

Qualitative Results

“I would say ‘mira’ because my parents hated when we said ‘ira’” (218).

“este es como mi papá habla” (“this is how my dad talks”) (218).

- These remarks expose students’ considerable experience and knowledge regarding a wide array of socio-pragmatic **language uses, ideologies, and distinct “accents.”**
- In our program, we can observe how some of the macro-social linguistic attitudes and awareness continue to influence students’ language choices.

Qualitative Results, cont.

- Some students, on the other hand, offered in their open-ended responses arguments about CLA and language use that we discussed in class.

[Mixear is] “*prestamo lexico que hay en los E.E.U.U.*,” (“lexical borrowing that exists in the US”).

“*si eres bilingue, es correcto*” (“if you are bilingual, it is correct”).

Qualitative Results, cont.

- On a more confident note, we believe that the teaching curriculum in this CLA-based program has provided students with an opportunity to display their acts of resilience and agency more freely.
- We can observe this in post-course responses from students in SPAN 228, such as:

“Yo lo diría así, es similar como mi familia habla español en un Spanglish”

(“I would say it like that, it’s like my family speaks in Spanglish”).

“Todos los formas en español son correctos y acceptable en mi libro”

(“all forms in Spanish are correct and acceptable in my book”).

Conclusions

- Preliminary results indicate that SHL students are capable of developing a broader, more transcultural communicative competence if and when they are encouraged:
- **(1) to discern the social meanings of linguistic styles, and**
- **(2) to articulate how their own linguistic decisions shape and are shaped by social values that either perpetuate or resist oppressive structures.**

SHL pedagogy

student learning objectives

- “Identity trumps grammar”: heritage students sometimes seem resistant to change/progress unless questions of identity are addressed first
- Treat affective concerns before linguistic issues: the power of linguistic trauma
- Use real-world bilingual practices in the classroom: code-switching, calquing, borrowing, neologisms
- Raise linguistic awareness of power dynamics inherent in selection of forms
- Invest heavily in mentoring students outside of class time, in both academic and identity issues
- Adopt assessment practices that make room for and validate learners’ heritage proficiency and identity.

Thank you! ¡Gracias!



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<http://rl.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/shl>

(From L-R), Alex Zunterstein, Liliana Darwin-López,
Kelley León-Howarth, Amy Costales,
Heather Quarles, and Claudia Holguín Mendoza.

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