

Apples and Oranges:
Teaching Spanish to Heritage Speakers





Dr. Kim Potowski
Professor, University of Illinois Chicago
Department of Hispanic & Italian Studies





Saturday November 16, 2024

1

Gracias a:

- Ricardo Sosa, Ohio State University
- John Grinstead, Ohio State University
- Vista Higher Learning
- Todas y todos ustedes





2



3

Sobre mí

- Estudio y enseñanza sobre la **sociolingüística del español** – en particular el español de Estados Unidos – en la Universidad de Illinois en Chicago.
- Directed the Spanish for Heritage Speakers program from 2002-2020
- Cursos, talleres y libros para instructores de español

4

Preview, three main points of this workshop:

- 1) Heritage Spanish-speakers **who have "X" level of Spanish proficiency should not be in L2 Spanish courses.**
- 2) Heritage speaker classes should be **language arts** classes that **respect and build on U.S. Spanish.**
- 3) We Spanish teachers need **specialized professional development** in order to work well with heritage speakers.

5

Sobre ustedes

Town	Percent Hispanic
Columbus	11.5
Cleveland	10.5
Cincinnati	9.5
Dayton	8.5
Akron	7.5
Toledo	6.5
Mansfield	5.5
Parma	4.5
Lorain	3.5
Warren	2.5
Wickliffe	1.5
Westerville	1.0

6

A common criteria:


If **10%** of the student population is Hispanic/Latino, a **separate heritage speakers class** is often justified.

Criteria	Quantity
Average size, U.S. high school	600 students
Estimate, % who study World Language	30%, or 180 students
Of those, average % who study Spanish	75%, or 135 students
If 10% of these students are heritage speakers:	13 students

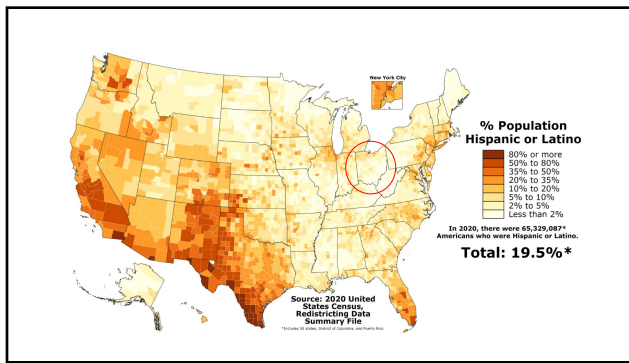
7

Other common scenarios:

Criteria	Quantity	Criteria	Quantity
High school size	600 students	High school size	1,500 students
% who study World Language	50%, or 300	% who study World Language	50%, or 750
Of those, average % who study Spanish	75%, or 225	Of those, average % who study Spanish	75%, or 562
If 10% of these students are heritage speakers:	23 students	If 14% of these students are heritage speakers:	79 students

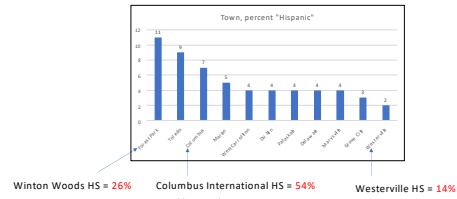
Westerville Central HL 

8



9

Sus escuelas, % "Hispanic"



10

What is a "heritage speaker"?



An individual who was raised in a home where a **non-English language** is spoken, who speaks or only understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language.

(Guadalupe Valdés 1997)

11

Latinos:
18% of U.S. population; projected 24% by 2050

Hispanic children = already **25%** of U.S. public school population

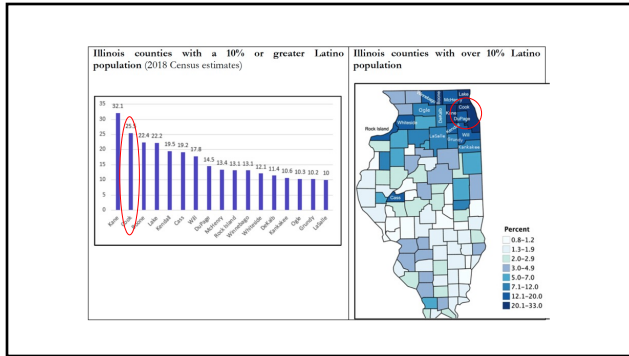
Urban areas have many schools with **50% to 100% Latino populations:**

33% of Chicago schools are majority Latino

- 34% of New York City schools
- 46% of Miami schools
- 71% of Los Angeles schools



12



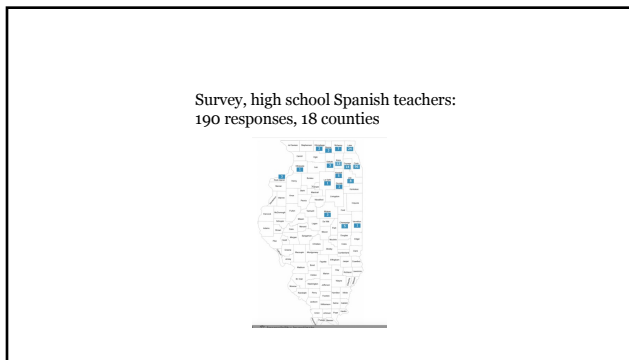
13

Number of Illinois high schools that are 10%+ Latino

Name of county (>% Latino)	# of HS that are 10-49% Latino	# of HS that are 50-99% Latino	Total # HS in the county
Kane (32.1%)	8	6	16
Cook (25.5%)	47	46	133
Boone (22.4%)	3	0	3
Lake (22.2%)	13	3	21
Kendall (19.9%)	4	0	4
Case (19.2%)	0	1	1
Will (17.8%)	11	1	17
DePaul (14.9%)	17	3	23
Madison (13.4%)	10	1	14
Black Island (13.3%)	3	0	3
Winnebago (13.3%)	7	0	7
Whitewater (12.1%)	2	0	2
DeKalb (11.4%)	4	0	4
Total	149	61	237

52% 23%

14

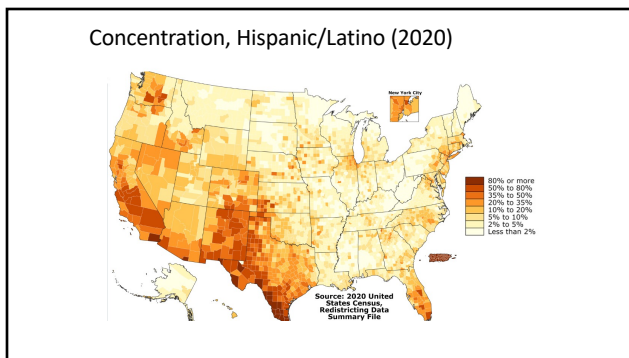


15

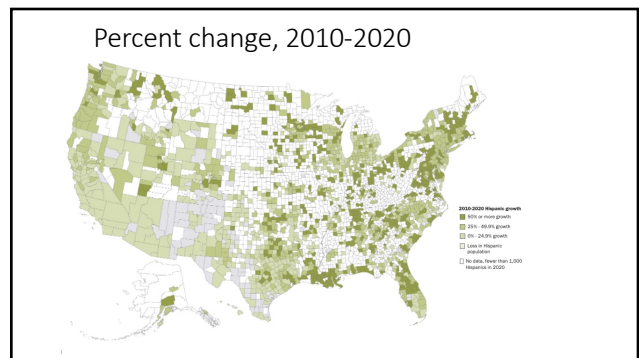
33 universities that license high school Spanish teachers; ONE teaches a heritage speaker methods course

Illinois Universities that license K-12 Spanish teachers (<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/IHE.aspx>)

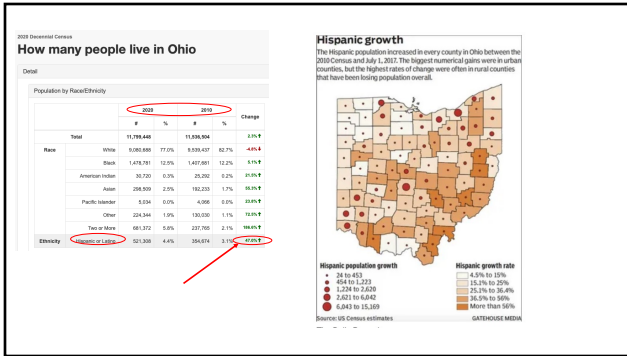
16



17



18



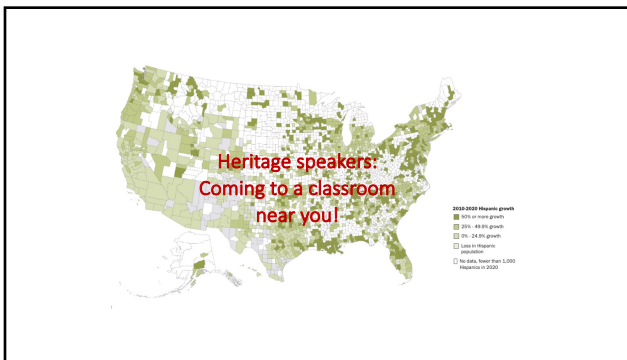
19

Conclusión:

Hay una alta probabilidad de que muchos profesores de español tengan alumnos hispanohablantes en sus clases...

... a pesar de que la mayoría recibimos formación profesional únicamente en la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera (L2).

20



21

1) Heritage Spanish-speakers who have “X” level of Spanish proficiency should not be in L2 Spanish courses.

How are heritage speakers different from L2 learners?

1) Linguistically
2) Affectively
3) Academically

22

1) Linguistically
2) Affectively
3) Academically

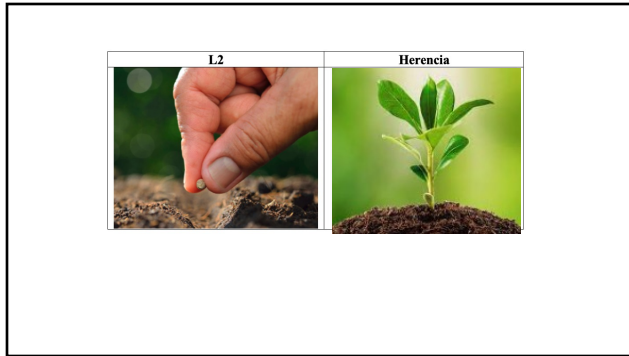
Path of acquisition is different.

	Heritage speakers	L2 learners
Learn grammatical terminology		✓
Learn a prestigious, monolingual variety		✓
Exposed to reading and writing in the language		✓
Learning begins after “critical period” has ended		✓

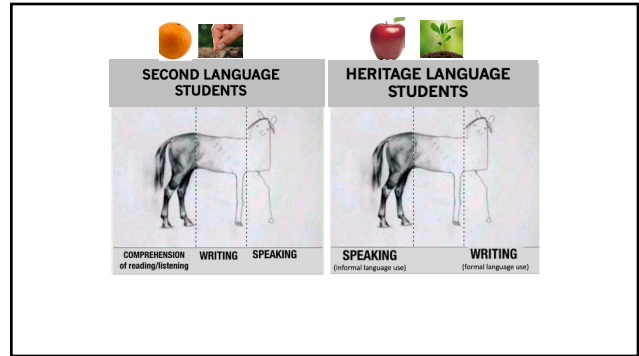
23

	Heritage speakers	L2 learners
Typically possess fluent oral abilities – production and comprehension	✓	
Larger vocabulary, particularly for everyday items and cultural processes/products	✓	
Greater sociolinguistic accuracy: for example, use of “usted” and titles of respect	✓	
Pronunciation is native	✓	

24



25



26



1) Linguistically
2) Affectively
3) Academically



- Family connection to the language.
- Very aware of their limitations in Spanish.
- “Triple bullying”


27

Our students’ Spanish often has:

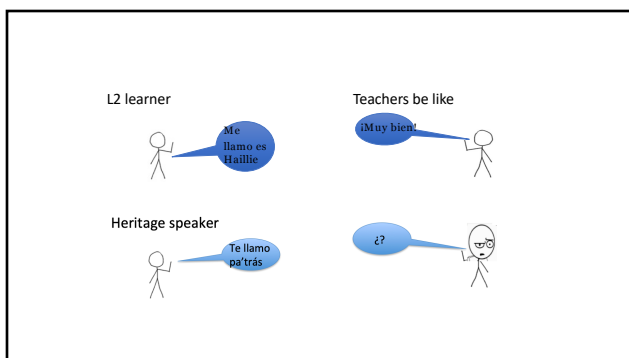
Features that are...	Common examples
Stigmatized in Latin America because they are associated with the working class, rural communities, less formal education, and/or ethnoracially stigmatized groups (afro-origin, indigenous).	haiga (haya) tú fuistes (fuiste) Su mamá de ella
Influenced from English	Atender mis clases Escribir un papel Te llamo pa’trás

Dijiste haiga!

Pero me entendistes



28

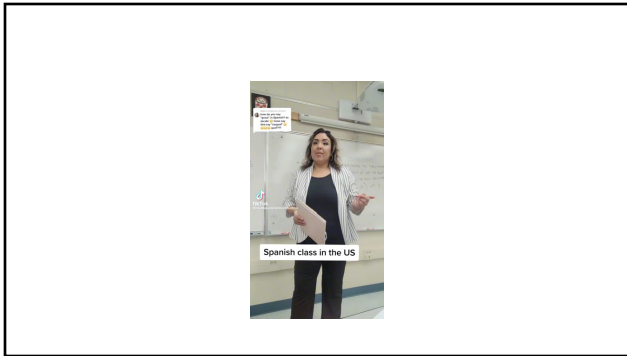


29

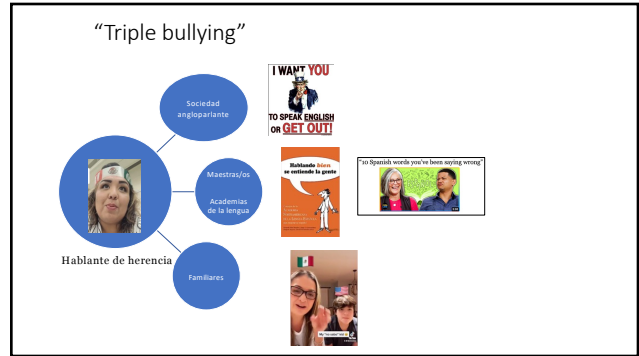
¿Cuáles son algunas palabras en español para ‘grass’?



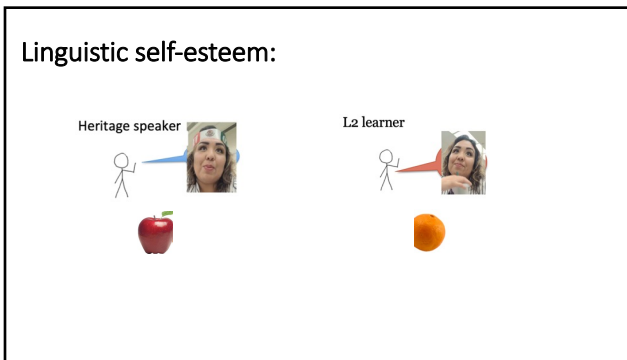

30



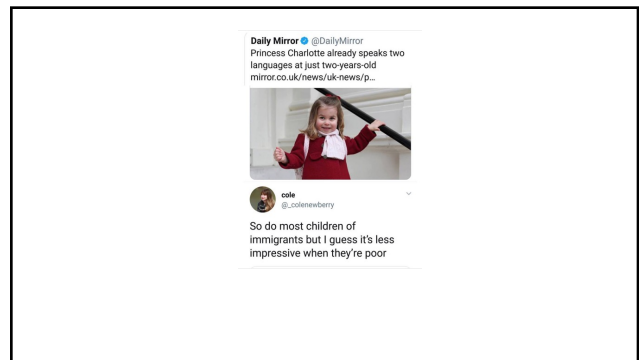
31



32



33



34

- 1) Linguistically
- 2) Affectively
- 3) Academically

- Lower levels of parental formal education
- Reading to children → higher adult literacy levels
 - 15% Latino children, in Spanish
 - 42% Latino children, in English
 - 45% African-American children
 - 61% Anglo-American children
- Poverty
 - 26% Latino children
 - 26% African-American children
 - 8% Anglo-American children

"Could someone help me with these?"
"I'm late for math class." - Scott Sumner

35

High school dropout rates:


	National:	Illinois:	Ohio:
Latino	17%	18%	24%
Afro-American	19%	23%	25%
Anglo	10%	9%	10%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019
https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/ipeds_indicators/cpi/

Some scholars suggest that Spanish heritage speaker courses can contribute to graduation rates as well as college recruitment and retention/graduation.

36

Not only are heritage speakers substantially different from **L2 learners...** they can be different from each other.



On the count of "3", shout out the name of a kind of apple

37



MOST TART

GRANNY SMITH PACIFIC ROSE MCINTOSH EMPIRE

JAZZ BRASSIERE LADY ENZY COSTLAND

MACOON AUTUMN GOLD ORAL SUGARBEET SMITTER

JONAGOLD GOLD DELICIOUS RED DELICIOUS EMERALD HONEYCRISP

FUJI AMERISKA GALA FUJI

MOST SWEET

38

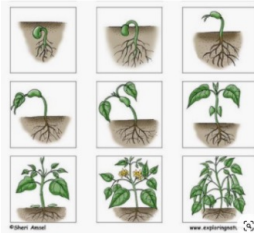
Heritage speakers can also be very *different from each other.*



- Can be born in the U.S. (60%) or abroad (40%)
- Might have immigrated at 6 months, 2 years, 5 years, 10 years of age
- Could have some formal study in Spanish in their country of origin, or can be SIFE.
- May have attended a dual immersion school
- Might live with their *abuelos* in the house
- Can be first born or later born.

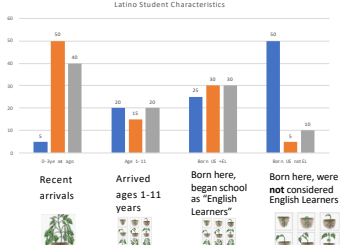
39

Spanish proficiency



40

Latino student populations at just three schools represented here today:



Latino Student Characteristics

Category	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4
Recent arrivals	5	50	40	5
Arrived ages 1-11 years	20	15	20	5
Born here, began school as "English Learners"	25	40	30	5
Born here, were not considered English Learners	50	5	10	5

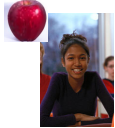
41

Variación en los **perfiles** de estudiantes de herencia

I have students who only understand Spanish to students who only speak Spanish. I have students who barely attended school in the rural areas of their country to students who attended good schools in the city. I also have students from Spanish speaking countries who never spoke Spanish, they speak their local language.

42


Example 1: Marta



- Born in Mexico, came to U.S. at age 7
- Family from a small, rural ranch. Some non-prestige features of Spanish. Intermittent schooling.
- Three years in bilingual education.
- Speaks 100% Spanish at home with parents, 50% with siblings.

43


Example 2: Luis



- Born in the U.S., but lived from ages 3-5 in Santurce, Puerto Rico.
- No bilingual education.
- Speaks ~50% in Spanish with parents, 100% in English with siblings.

44


Example 3: Roberto



- Born in Argentina, came to the U.S. at age 10.
- Regular schooling; middle-class family; parents completed high school.
- Speaks only Spanish at home; a prestige variety.

45


Example 4: Carolina



- Born in the U.S. to U.S.-born parents.
- Grandparents from Honduras.
- Speaks 100% English at home with parents & siblings.
- Speaks Spanish with grandmother who lives in the house.

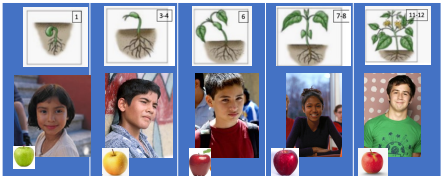
46

Example 5: José
(most typical in Chicago)




- Born in U.S., parents immigrated from Mexico as adults.
- 100% Spanish with parents, 50% with siblings.
- Began school **monolingual (or very dominant) in Spanish**. By 3rd grade, dominant in English, although still uses Spanish with parents.

47




48

Summary thus far:



Heritage speakers' linguistic, affective, and educational needs are **different from those of L2 learners**.




However, heritage speakers can be a very **heterogeneous** group themselves.


49

Options, Spanish classes

- **Separate basic level** classes into "Heritage" and "L2" (students can come together for more advanced classes, including A.P.). 60% of universities now have this!




- They all take L2 Spanish classes together.



50

The mixed "beginning" classroom



	Heritage speakers	L2 learners
Learns grammatical terminology		✓
Learns a prestigious, monolingual variety		✓
Exposed to reading and writing in Spanish	✓	
Learning begins after "critical period" has ended		✓

	Heritage speakers	L2 learners
Typically possess fluent oral abilities – production and comprehension	✓	
Large vocabulary, particularly for everyday items and cultural processes/products	✓	
Greater sociolinguistic accuracy: for example, use of "tú" and titles of respect	✓	
Pronunciation is native	✓	

51

If there **are** separate heritage speaker courses:

Heritage speakers should **not** take classes designed for the foreign language students.

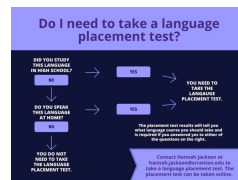


...for the same reasons that **native English speakers** are **not** permitted to fulfill their English requirement in an **ESL course** (English as a Second Language).

52

This requires a placement exam that is **BOTH**:

- Required
- Binding



53

If you cannot require heritage speakers to enroll there...

...what 'carrots' can you offer? 

- Heritage courses should carry "Honors" label
- Build towards the A.P. Spanish Language & Culture exam → college credit
- Very cool field trips, projects, etc.





54


Reality: **Mixed** classes (heritage + L2)

Pedagogically **unsound**, but very common.

- L2 students are intimidated by the heritage speakers.
- Heritage speakers are intimidated by the L2 students.

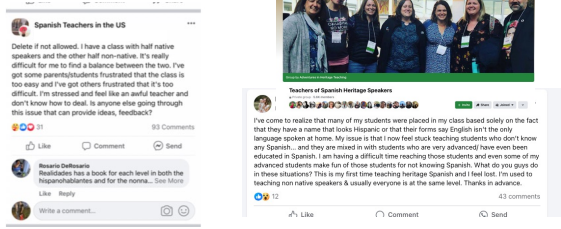
Especially when that "easy A" doesn't materialize.

- Teacher goes crazy.




55

I highly recommend these Facebook groups



56

If you have "apples" in your "orange" Spanish class:



DO	DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address the elephant in the room; point out that students have different strengths and needs. Differentiate instruction as much as possible, possibly creating working groups that largely operate separately. Use Free Voluntary Reading with heritage speakers as much as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treat the heritage speakers as unpaid tutors for the L2 learners. Assume that heritage speakers will know grammatical terminology (or that they NEED to know it!). Always ask heritage speakers for cultural or language input.

57

"Dear white girls in my Spanish class"

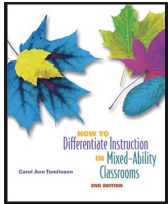


58

Differentiated instruction

Definition:

Learner-centered teaching that varies instruction and tasks according to individual learner profiles (Thomlinson 2011)



59

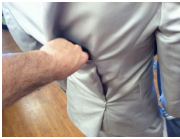
"One-size-fits-all" instruction: L2 Spanish




60

Some teachers may **think** they're differentiating instruction by **adjusting** the same suit of clothes for different students:

Tuck and gather here




Let out a seam there



61

Truly differentiating instruction entails providing clothes that are **the right fit for each student**.




62

HOW do we differentiate instruction?


Utilize multiple approaches to:	Definition:
Content	What students learn
Process	How they acquire the skills and knowledge
Rate	The rate at which students progress through learning
Product	What they produce to show what they've learned

Claire Chik & Maria Carrera





63


Free Voluntary Reading



Mike Peto

- Very rarely is the whole class reading the same book. 😊
- Let students read whatever interests them, and guide them towards increasingly challenging material.
- There is accountability!
- Turn students into lifelong readers.



64

What we need:

- More **separate heritage speaker courses**.
- When mixed classes cannot be avoided: L2 textbooks that have a **heritage speaker ancillary component**.

65

2) Heritage speaker classes should be **language arts classes** that **respect and build on all varieties of Spanish**.

If you went to high school in:	What did you study in your...
The U.S.	English class?
Latin America/Spain	Spanish class?

66

Which is MORE important to you?

Sentence level goals	Text level goals
Preterite vs imperfect Accent marks/spelling Definite articles Infinitive vs gerund	Supporting an argument Transition phrases Use of powerful images Critical reading abilities

We only have them in class for a short period of time! What do you want them to come away with?

"Profesora, ahora escribo mejor en mis otras clases."

67

Who teaches English in your building?

GO HANG OUT WITH THEM!

Adrienne Brandenburg



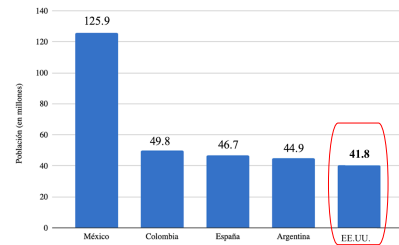
68

2) Heritage speaker classes should be **language arts** classes **that respect and build on all varieties of Spanish.**

Features that are...	Common examples
Stigmatized in Latin America because they are associated with the working class, rural communities, less formal education, and/or ethnoracially stigmatized groups (afro-origin, indigenous).	haiga (haya) tú fuistes (fuiste) Su mamá de ella
Influenced from English	Atender mis clases Escribir un papel Te llamo pa'trás

69

Países donde se habla español



70

Dialect variation







71

It's not just vocabulary!

En algunas comunidades	En otras comunidades
¿Qué quieren ellos?	¿Qué ellos quieren?
Llegaste tarde.	Llegastes tarde.
Tú eres mi amiga.	Vos sos mi amiga.
Usar uniformes es buena idea.	Usando uniformes es buena idea.
Es importante que haya un balance.	Es importante que haiga un balance.

72

elevator

trunk

lift

boot

Is it valid to demand that U.S. Spanish-speakers use words and structures from other places?

73

Which is the "best" flavor of ice cream?





74


- "Chocolate is **better** than strawberry."
- "Strawberry is **incorrect** chocolate."





75

Beach vs. wedding



76

Spanish


English

Q: WHY does he have only bathing suits in Spanish, but a full range of clothing in English?


A: Prior language experiences. He's been to beaches AND weddings in English. In Spanish, he's only been to the beach. That is, all formal communication activities that he's participated in have been in English.

77

Tupac



Ustedpac



78

Let's not be this guy!

Linguistic prescriptivists make terrible zoologists.
Starkey Comics

79

Common U.S. Spanish features

Fenómeno	Ejemplos
Uso del gerundio	" Usando uniformes en la escuela ayuda a reducir el bullying." "No se tienen que preocupar en comprando ropa de marca." "Los uniformes eliminan el problema de buscando ropa por la mañana."
Falta artículo definido	"Yo creo que _ escuelas no necesitan uniformes." " _ Tiempo y _ dinero son muy importantes." "El uso de uniformes debe ser opcional cuando _ estudiantes entran a esta etapa."
"a" personal	"Uniformes pueden ayudar _ maestros" " _ Uniformes ayudan _ estudiantes _ concentrar." Then he went on to write, verbatim with diacritics, "Ojalá que mi explicación ayude y posiblemente cambie su opinión sobre el uniforme escolar."

80

Common U.S. Spanish features

Fenómeno	Ejemplos
Clause-final prepositions	"Los uniformes es un tema que todos tienen una opinión sobre ." "Las opiniones es algo muy importante que todos tenemos el derecho a ." "Las consecuencias que los niños pasan por ."
Léxico	"Las opiniones sobre este tópico " "Cuando los niños crezcan, realizan que el uniforme no se debe llevar" "Este artículo no soporta mi opinión"/ "El uniforme soporta a los estudiantes en maneras positivas" "Si salvas tiempo, después tendrás más tiempo para desayunar o hacer otras cosas."//Ayuda a los padres a salvar dinero."

81

Los bilingües NO son dos monolingües unidos por el cuello

....cuyos sistemas lingüísticos deban mantenerse separados y 'puros'.

Sus lenguas se apoyan mutuamente.

82

This is challenging

83

But it is IMPORTANT.

Some scholars suggest that **INCLUSIVE** Spanish heritage speaker courses can contribute to graduation rates as well as college recruitment and retention/graduation.


84

Glenn Martínez (2003)


"If our students walk into the class saying *haiga* and walk out saying *haya*, there has been, in my estimation, no value added. However, if they walk in saying *haiga* and walk out saying either *haya* or *haiga* and **having the ability to defend their use of *haiga* if and when they see fit**, then there has been value added."

Dijiste haiga!

Pero me entendistes



Also: Que sepan WHO has the power to stigmatize certain language forms, and WHOSE interests they are protecting.



85

3) We Spanish teachers need **specialized professional development** in order to work well with heritage speakers.

Linguistic background	Can they be SUCCESSFUL heritage language teachers?	Can they be TOXIC heritage language teachers?
Raised in Spanish-speaking country	✓	✓
Raised monolingually in English; Spanish is L2	✓	✓
Heritage speakers	✓	✓

86

To learn more: FREE online lessons for teachers



87

At UIC, we teach an online course every Fall semester open to teachers around the U.S.

Teaching Spanish to Heritage Speakers

UIC UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO

Taught 100% online synchronously each Fall semester

Even-numbered years by Dr. Kim Potowski (2022, 2024, etc.)

Odd-numbered years by Dr. Angela Betancourt (2023, 2025, etc.)



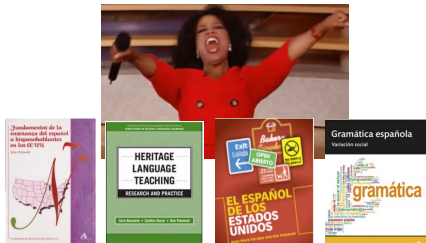

88

Three main points of this workshop were:

- 1) Heritage Spanish-speakers **who have the requisite level of Spanish proficiency for your program should not be in L2 Spanish courses.**
- 2) Heritage speaker classes should be **language arts** classes that **respect and build on U.S. Spanish.**
- 3) We Spanish teachers need **specialized professional development** in order to work well with heritage speakers.

89

Book giveaway!



90



¡Gracias!

Kim Potowski
kimpotow@uic.edu
<http://potowski.org>



91