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## ***Los talleres del español: A Collaborative Training Project for Teachers of Spanish as a Heritage Language in Secondary and Higher Education***

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**Abstract:** This study is the product of a collaboration between the *Initiative for the Teaching of Spanish as a Heritage Language* within Harvard's Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL) and the Instituto Cervantes' Observatory at Harvard, in conjunction with a dedicated team of Spanish instructors at the secondary and university level. This project arose from an interest in offering a teacher-training opportunity to better serve Latinx students in Spanish-language classrooms at these levels. The project consisted of ten workshops, including six theoretical-practical sessions on topics relevant to teaching Spanish as a heritage language and four sessions on designing and developing materials for this same student population and for mixed classrooms. The coalescence of this interdisciplinary and interinstitutional teaching community, as well as the corpus of materials developed, demonstrate that the educational workshop strategy is an ideal pedagogical model for training instructors in the teaching of Spanish as a heritage language.

**Keywords:** Teacher training, heritage Spanish, workshops, Open Educational Resources

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<sup>1</sup> [Editors' note: This is an English translation, offered by the Observatorio, of the Spanish original submitted by the author. See study 071-05/2021SP.]

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## 1. Introduction: Latinx Students and Spanish Classes

Teaching Spanish to Latinx students in the U.S. is a subject of increasing interest and importance, given the growing presence of Spanish-speaking children and young adults in U.S. schools. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that between 1996 and 2016, the number of Hispanic-identifying students enrolled in schools grew from 8.8 to 17.9 million, or 22.7% of all students in the country.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, enrollment of students between the ages of 18 and 19 increased by 21.4%, compared to 5.9% growth among non-Hispanics; at the university level, the Latinx presence has tripled in the past two decades, from 0.7 million to 1.7 million students.<sup>3</sup>

One consequence of this demographic shift in secondary and higher education has been an increase in the number of Latinx youths in Spanish classes. Their presence is generating significant interest among researchers, as it has been clear in the past few decades that these classes play a key role in Latinx students' wellbeing and academic performance. For example, Shiu, Kettler, and Johnsen (2009) found that offering AP Spanish<sup>4</sup> classes to Latinx students can open the door to their continued advancement in academic learning. Similarly, Carreira (2007) and Carreira and Beeman (2014) have highlighted the benefits of Spanish classes as spaces in which Latinx students feel a sense of belonging that contributes to their academic performance. Prada, Pascual, and Cabo (forthcoming) have gone a step further, demonstrating that students in these classes have a greater likelihood of completing a university degree. Research has also underscored the importance of Spanish classes for the strengthening of ethnolinguistic identity and self-esteem

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/10/hispanic-enrollment.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/08/school\\_enrollmentof.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/08/school_enrollmentof.html)

<sup>4</sup> AP (Advanced Placement) classes are the most advanced courses offered at the high-school level by the College Board, a non-profit organization that provides academic support surrounding university admission, oversees the curriculum for these classes.

(Sanchez-Muñoz, 2016; Parra, 2016a; Parra et al., 2018), as well as for the forging of connections with the Spanish-speaking communities to which these students belong (Martínez and San Martín, 2018; Carreira and Kagan, 2011). Thus, Spanish classes have significant and “vital growth” (Valdés, 1981) importance for Latinx youths’ academic performance and identity.

However, research has also shown that for these classes to have truly positive effects, they must meet the following conditions:

- a) The “construction” (Kibler and Valdés, 2016) of the student as a ‘heritage language learner’ (HLL) must be based on a conceptualization of the student as multilingual and multicompetent (Cook, 1992), and not deficient with regard to monolingual norms (Montrul, 2008).
- b) The class content must be socially and culturally significant for students in this demographic.
- c) The implementation and dynamics of the class, including forms of evaluation, must be supported by inclusive pedagogical practices (Beaudrie, 2012; Carrera 2012; Fairclough, 2012), in which students can participate and meaningfully contribute based on their own linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

Regrettably, these conditions are rarely the reality. Spanish classes at the secondary and university levels fit within a complex system of institutional mechanisms (Valdés and Parra, 2018), including literature and world languages departments; these tend to favor the linguistic ideologies of monolingual literary traditions that stigmatize the bilingual and popular speech of Latinx youth. Furthermore, Spanish instructors are a heterogenous group: they may have been trained in their countries of origin or within the United States; they may already have a teaching career and years of experience, or they may be graduate students for

whom teaching Spanish is a program requirement; many are not familiar with the personal, socio-political, and scholastic context within which Latinx children and young adults are educated; they have different academic training (in literature, applied linguistics, or second-language pedagogy) based on theoretical models that do not equip them with the tools to offer Latinx students the resources and pedagogical support necessary to expand and strengthen those students' academic, multilingual, and multicultural skills, much less their ethnolinguistic identities (Ortega, 2013; Potowski, 2002; Potowski and Carreira, 2014; Beaudrie, 2009; Leeman, 2018; Martínez, 2016; Valdés, 2005, among others).

This is an unfortunate situation given that, as Martínez and Train (2020) note, it contributes to the many experiences of segregation, discrimination, and stigmatization that Latinx youth experience in U.S. educational settings. It also represents an obstacle for teachers who are aware of their own resources' limitations when it comes to working with this student population, resulting in a tense environment both for the students, who do not benefit from the class as they would hope, and for the instructors, who, in many instances, end up using the second-language (L2) pedagogies available to them, despite being fully aware that these are not ideal for supporting Spanish-speaking youth. For authors like Lacorte (2018), among others, this lack of preparation and training “remains a problem, especially due to the lack of more comprehensive perspectives or models that could allow instructors to become more familiar with key notions and dimensions [for the teaching of Spanish as a heritage language]” (p. 198).

## 2. Instructor Training for SHL Classes

6 It is important to acknowledge that some Spanish departments and programs in secondary and higher education are aware of the Latinx student population's interest in taking Spanish classes, as well as the benefits of those classes, and they are launching classes and programs designed specifically for this group (see Beaudrie, 2020 for an overview of this subject). Many of these classes are the result of individual efforts by sensitive instructors and a growing awareness among administrations of the differences between L2 Spanish students and heritage speakers. That said, it is not an easy task. Within departments, there is still significant reluctance to launching a class if there are few students; furthermore, the lack of training opportunities in SHL instruction makes the instructor's path to curriculum design more difficult and perhaps less successful at generating interest among Latinx students. This is a vicious circle: the lack of training in the SHL field leads to classes that do not comply with best practices for Latinx students, which results in low motivation among this student population and, consequently, has a negative effect on enrollment, opening the door to the class's possible cancellation (Beaudrie, 2020).

Thus, attending to this professional need is essential for two interrelated reasons: first, instructors must possess specialized pedagogical knowledge, informed by the abundant research that already exists within the field, and which enables them to expand their linguistic repertoires, strengthen identities, and facilitate the Latinx student population's academic performance (for example, see the research included in the collected volumes of Beaudrie and Fairclough, 2012, 2016; Beaudrie, Ducar and Potowski, 2014; and Pascual and Cabo, 2017); second, as Beaudrie (2020) and Carreira (2014) point out, instructor training is one of the cornerstones of SHL classes that succeed in establishing higher enrollment over time, which ensures their institutionalization and thereby benefits a greater number of Latinx students.

### 3. Instructor Training Content

The content for training instructors to teach SHL classes has changed as these classes' objectives and benchmarks have shifted. Today, the goal is to move beyond the mere teaching of grammatical rules and towards culturally sensitive, socially responsible, social justice-oriented curricula that strengthen linguistic and cultural skills as well as Latinx youths' ethnolinguistic identities (Lynch, 2014; Valdés, 2015; Martínez 2016; Torres, Pascual and Cabo and Beusterien, 2017; Carreira and Kagan, 2018; Valdés and Parra, 2018; Leeman, 2018; Prada forthcoming).

Today, the instructor training opportunities in the SHL field include materials, presentations, workshops, summer programs, and certificates. The organizations and centers that offer these in-person and online resources include:

- a) The National Heritage Language Resource Center:  
<https://nhlrc.ucla.edu/nhlrc/professional>
- b) The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL):  
[https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/tle/TLE\\_MarApr18\\_Article.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/tle/TLE_MarApr18_Article.pdf)
- c) The American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese:  
[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.aatsp.org/resource/resmgr/teaching\\_and\\_learning\\_learning\\_resourc/AATSP\\_-\\_HERITAGE\\_2.8.21\\_.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.aatsp.org/resource/resmgr/teaching_and_learning_learning_resourc/AATSP_-_HERITAGE_2.8.21_.pdf)
- d) The Center for Applied Linguistics:  
<https://www.cal.org/twi/rgos/sns.html>
- e) The American Association of Applied Linguistics:  
<https://www.aaal.org/news/teaching-spanish-as-a-heritage-language-for-the-first-time-ten-suggestions>
- f) The Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning, COERLL:  
<https://heritagespanish.coerll.utexas.edu/>

- g) The Growing Global Citizens webpage offers a list of summer programs offered at various universities and centers:

[https://growingglobalcitizens.com/online-language-and-culture-pd-for-2021/#Heritage Language Dual Language and Immersion](https://growingglobalcitizens.com/online-language-and-culture-pd-for-2021/#Heritage_Language_Dual_Language_and_Immersion)

- h) The George Mason's online graduate certificate in Spanish Heritage Language Education:

<https://to.gmu.edu/shle>

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In order to enact this agenda, Lacorte (2016) suggests that instructors familiarize themselves with the following areas: a) their students' backgrounds; b) their range of oral and written linguistic abilities; c) the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors that influence their Spanish or English language acquisitions; d) the pedagogical frameworks for HL instruction; e) the collaborative pedagogies between L2 and SHL; and f) classroom management strategies. Lacorte (2016) and other researchers have also emphasized that instructor training should focus on critical reflection on the ideologies that guide instructors' teaching practices (Holguín 2017; Leeman 2018; Beaudrie et al., 2020; Martínez and Train, 2020; Parra, 2021b). Failure to engage in such reflection risks the implementation of pedagogies and forms of assessment that are detrimental to students' identity and self-esteem, and ultimately undermine their motivation to study the language. This need among teachers, as well as earlier indications that there was significant interest in this kind of opportunity in the northeastern U.S.,<sup>5</sup> prompted the creation of this project and the professional training model, *Los talleres del español*, both of which are described below.

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<sup>5</sup> In 2011 and 2012, I coordinated two symposia within the *RLL Initiative for the Teaching of Spanish as Heritage Language* to address the topic of teaching Spanish to Latinx students, and these conversations generated significant interest in the Boston metropolitan area. Secondary and higher-education instructors from public and private schools attended both events. Several of the university instructors who attended joined the *Spanish Workshops* project.

#### 4. Los talleres del español: a project

In 2017, the Observatory of the Instituto Cervantes at Harvard University and the *RLL Initiative for the Teaching of Spanish as Heritage Language* launched a collaboration that culminated in the organization of several support spaces for SHL instructors.<sup>6</sup> The permanent seminar *Teaching Spanish as Heritage Language: Theory and Practice* was the first such space.<sup>7</sup> A group of ten<sup>8</sup> university-level Spanish instructors gathered every semester to participate in conversations with experts in a given SHL research area. As part of this seminar, participants were also invited to lead a public presentation or workshop, for an audience that generally consisted of Spanish-language instructors at the secondary or university level.<sup>9</sup> However, although participation in the seminar and at public presentations was enriching for the group, an interest soon arose in creating another space for revisiting the topics presented in greater theoretical detail, and in creating concrete didactic resources. This led to a series of workshops whose goal was to continue delving into topics and pedagogical principles of relevance to SHL classes.

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##### 4.1 The 'workshop' format as a model for instructor training

This educational workshop's format has a series of characteristics that are important for instructors in general and for SHL instructors in particular. Based on the most common definition of the word 'workshop,' philosopher and educator Ezequiel Ander-

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<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Professor Francisco Moreno-Fernández, former executive director of the Observatory of the Instituto Cervantes at Harvard University, for the academic and financial support that he provided for this project through the Observatory. I am also grateful to Victoria Whitney for her unfailing logistical and organizational support at each of the sessions described in his project.

<sup>7</sup> This seminar received financial support from the Observatory of the Instituto Cervantes, from the Provostial Fund for the Arts and Humanities, and from Harvard's Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.

<sup>8</sup> This number varied from semester to semester, depending on instructors' ability to attend the seminar. Other invited teachers or visitors occasionally joined.

<sup>9</sup> The video recordings of all these presentations can be found here:

<https://hwpi.harvard.edu/heritagespanish/lecture>

Egg defines the educational workshop as a place or space “where something is worked on, developed, and transformed in order to be used” (1992, p.10; Observatorio’s translation). He goes on to say that it is “a way of teaching and especially of learning through the implementation of ‘something’ that is carried out collaboratively” (*Ibidem*; Observatorio’s translation).<sup>10</sup> Ander-Egg explains that this operating capacity grants the workshop its unifying nature, which is essential to professional training, as it makes it possible for participants to overcome the dissociations and dichotomies that generally emerge between theory and practice, education and lived experiences, and intellectual, volitional, and affective processes (p.17).

It is precisely this possibility of unifying theory and practice that transforms the workshop into a fruitful pedagogical strategy for training language instructors. Following in the footsteps of Johnson and Golombek (2011), Lacorte (2018) suggests that there are two kinds of concepts around which language instructors understand their professional goals: first, there are everyday concepts as they pertain to personal knowledge and experiences, both as language learners and teachers; then there are theoretical (or academic) concepts that come from theories of acquisition and pedagogy, which, in turn, are based on systemic observation and research. For Lacorte (2018, p. 204), instructor training ought to mediate and connect both kinds of concepts through specific, practical reflection activities, while at the same time taking into account the contextual and institutional factors within which classes are taught. That is, for Lacorte, the key to any teacher support program is the possibility that a teacher can develop their capacity to adapt to diverse teaching contexts. It is the constant mediation through the what, the how, and the where that form the foundation of instructors’ expertise (*Ibid.*, p. 205).

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, the notion of ‘learning by doing’ is nothing new. It has been a central idea within developmental psychology and the constructivism of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner.

But it is important to consider that the mediation and the “way of doing” (Ander-Egg, 1992) within the workshop must have certain characteristics in order to achieve their goals. First, for Ander-Egg (1992), a workshop requires a participatory methodology, i.e., everyone must contribute to the learning process. Participants learn as a group. Furthermore, the workshop is a pedagogy of questioning, unlike traditional, response-based pedagogy. In other words, through participation, workshopers find answers to their own questions. Furthermore, the workshop facilitates interdisciplinary work, understood as “a way of thinking and understanding problems” and “an effort to understand and operate that assumes the multifaceted and complex character of all reality” (Ander-Egg, 1992, p. 15; Observatorio’s translation), which generally requires interaction and cooperation between two or more disciplines (*Ibidem*). Finally, the dynamic of the workshop makes it possible to overcome hierarchies and the competitive relationships between participants. In short, the foundational dynamic of the workshop is group work with a shared objective.

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In order to achieve the desired instructor training, a workshop thus understood was a far more productive and efficient option than a seminar or a conventional class, for the following reasons: the group was already fairly consolidated through the seminar meetings, and all of them shared a strong interest in SHL instruction; several had already identified the chief differences between L2 and HLL students, and they were aware that the L2 methodology was not ideal for HLL students; furthermore, they all shared an open and committed attitude towards learning new ways of working that would enable them to better serve Latinx students. Thus, members of this group entered workshops with specific pedagogical questions that placed them in a position of openness, which facilitates learning (Knowles, 1980) and, most importantly, makes it possible to unify theory and practice (Ander-Egg, 1992). Furthermore, the group’s heterogeneity facilitated an enriching dialogue. Instructors had different origins (Latin America and Spain) and different experiences

in their professional training (by way of literature, L2 instruction, applied linguistics, psychology, and sociology). Participants taught at different institutions and their experiences varied, either in terms of years teaching, language-levels taught, and the contexts in which they worked: while some taught only L2 learners, others had mixed classes with one or two Latinx students, and others still planned to launch SHL classes in the near future.

Two workshop series were organized: the first focused on theory and practice, while the second discussed the design of educational material. The coordinator was in charge of proposing topics (based on her own experience, subjects considered in the seminar, and the areas suggested by Lacorte, 2018). Her role was to plan all of the sessions, select readings, and organize the activities for each session. She was also in charge of maintaining ongoing communication with the group through email. These communications included sending materials, reminders, and summaries of the most important subjects covered in each workshop.

#### *4.2 Series 1: Theory and practice workshops*

This first set of six workshops—two-hour sessions, twice a month for three months—were organized around the key topics of distinctive pedagogy (Parra, 2014) for SHL instruction. The general goal was for participants to reflect on the necessary disposition (Schulman, 2005) for teaching Spanish to Latinx youth. These sessions were an intense academic dialogue that sought to cover the linguistic, cultural, socio-affective, ideological, curricular, pedagogical, and professional dimensions that Lacorte (2018) indicates as part of any professional training.

In keeping with the multiliteracies<sup>11</sup> framework for teacher training (Lacorte, 2016, 2018), each workshop aimed to prompt critical reflection on the instructor's task through what Kalantzis et al. (2016, 80) call "epistemic moves", "what students do to know" (*Ibidem*. emphasis mine). These moves consist of: a) experiencing the known; b) experiencing the new; c) conceptualizing by naming; d) conceptualizing with theory; e) analyzing functionally; f) analyzing critically; g) applying appropriately; h) applying creatively. To achieve this, the workshops assigned an average of three readings related to each session's topic, which were discussed through participants' questions, beliefs, and pedagogical practices. This theoretical/reflective exercise additionally contained the introduction of multimodal texts, such as available models and examples of activities that research has identified as best practices for Latinx students. As the final component of each session, participants were invited to work in groups to design or redesign specific classroom activities by applying new information from the topic discussed. As almost all participants taught L2 or mixed classes, the questions that guided the (re)design of these activities were: What are the shared and different features of L2 students and SHL students? What distinctions can be made so that both groups have the chance for significant learning? These exercises and questions sought to create a space for transformative learning.

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The topics addressed in the sessions were as follows. The first was dedicated to the definition of 'heritage speakers.' This conversation took place within a critical ecological framework (Honenberg and Wang, 2008; Parra, 2021) that provided a panoramic view of the complex sociocultural contexts within which Latinx youth

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<sup>11</sup> The multiliteracies framework is a pedagogical approach to public education that began in the 1990s and which has made two significant contributions: a) it has expanded the definition of literacy, which is centered on written language, to "multiliteracy," which focuses on other textual modes (e.g. visual, audio, digital); b) it has highlighted the importance of including and recognizing linguistic variation in the educational process. Applied to the workshop context, this framework refers to the inclusion of multimodal texts within the materials with which participants ought to interact in order to generate new knowledge, and to the critical reflection exercises that they must perform based on these materials, which are described in the body of the text below.

develop their multilingual and multicultural capacities, as well as of the diversity within this same group. The sessions presented the limited and broad definitions of this notion proposed by Carreira (2004), which made it possible to problematize “constructed” notions (Kibler and Valdés, 2016) of the term ‘heritage speaker’ (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003) and of the ‘Latinx’ identity (Potowski, 2012; Parra, 2016a). This conversation also touched on identifying sociocultural and identity differences between L2 and SHL language learners.

The second and third sessions reviewed the pedagogical frameworks and best practices for SHL instruction. The second problematized teaching based on normative frameworks with exclusive emphasis on the presentation of grammatical rules. It reflected on the linguistic ideologies behind these proposals while discussing a sociolinguistics-based teaching framework that would emphasize the importance of including students’ own dialectal variation as part of a valid set of linguistic knowledge that must be recognized in classes. This discussion included suggestions of global teaching frameworks (Carreira, 2016; Parra et al., 2018) and of explicit instruction for teaching writing from diverse textual genres (Colombi, 2015).

The third session continued with the topic of best practices by introducing the multiliteracies framework (Kalantzis and Cope, 2005; Kalantzis, Cope and Cooland, 2010; Kalantzis et al. 2016) and how its principles align with the central contributions of critical pedagogy, which is the cornerstone of SHL (Leeman, 2018; Leeman and Serafini, 2016; Parra, 2016b; Holguín, 2017; Beaudrie et al., 2020). Thus, it emphasized the instructor’s role as a “transformative intellectual” (Giroux and McLaren, 1986) who ought to embrace and commit to working ethically with the Latinx student population. This rich pedagogical discussion was complemented with the presentation of materials and examples of didactic activities that incorporated the use of multimodal and multimedia texts (visual and audiovisual art, music, poetry), both in classroom work and in group cultural projects (such as building an

altar for *Día de Muertos*). The session also introduced activities that could be designed for alternative spaces outside the classroom, such as museums and within the community. The fourth session expanded the information on pedagogical frameworks to include those that connect students with their communities. Carreira and Kagan (2011) and Parra (2013) have highlighted the importance of this connection in order to strengthen ethnolinguistic identities. The session presented a course model to establish this connection (Parra, 2013) and sample activities designed according to the principles of pedagogy for assignments and projects (Torres, 2018; Torres and Serafini, 2016).

The topic of assessment in SHL classrooms was the final theoretical topic in this first series of workshops. The core goal was to reflect on the conditions of inequity that arise when Latinx students are evaluated with L2 methodology. Options were presented for the well-known grammar and fill-in-the-blank exams that allow for evaluation of heritage speakers' skills. These suggestions included activities that account for the students' own linguistic repertoire (Beaudrie, 2012) and the possibility of assessing students based on portfolios that are prepared over the course of the semester (Fairclough, 2012). Participants worked on the preliminary design of a rubric for evaluating SHL students' work. Finally, the sixth session recapped the earlier topics and conclusions, and offered a reflection on what participants had learned. There was also discussion of next steps.

Each of these workshops sought to create a space in which the participants could: a) answer their own earlier questions; b) ask new questions through the lens of the theoretical material and the experiences shared by other instructors; c) reflect on their own attitudes towards SHL instruction within their respective institutions; and d) problematize pedagogical positions that evaluate students' speech as deficient, while becoming familiar with the pedagogy and best practices for responding to Latinx students' needs and nourishing their multilingual and multicultural strengths.

### 4.3 Impact

To evaluate the workshops' possible impact on participants' attitudes and teaching practices, a brief survey was designed to gather information on what participants found the most interesting and useful for their current and future work, be it for SHL courses or mixed classrooms. The survey also asked about specific activities they had begun implementing in the classroom as a result of the workshops. The list below outlines the areas in which participants reported changes and incorporation of new knowledge as a result of the group discussions in the six workshop sessions:

1. The heterogenous and complex profile of the Latinx student population and the importance of designing classes for them to “realize [their] human potential.”
2. Identity as a central component of SHL pedagogy.
3. The importance of working off of students' strengths, based on what they already know, in order to “stimulate their self-esteem and the value they place on their language, culture, and traditions.”
4. The importance of valuing knowledge and the richness of the language and culture they possess through their families and communities, information that cannot be found in commercial textbooks.
5. Differentiated instruction as a key tool for mixed and SHL classes, as it enables instructors to tailor class content and dynamics to their students' characteristics. Differentiation was also identified as an opportunity for L2 and SHL student to learn “to open up the classroom discourse to L2 and SHL perspectives.”
6. Contributions to the multiliteracies framework for a pedagogy that includes accounting for differences among students and diverse multimodal materials and multimedia.

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7. The relevance of creating space in the curriculum for connection with the Spanish-speaking communities to which students belong, “doing more to connect with the outside world” and with students’ life experiences.
8. The role of creativity as an entry point for transformative learning.
9. Consideration of new forms of assessment: “Everything that can be evaluated.”
10. The importance of critical awareness among students and instructors, with the aim of dismantling dominant linguistic ideologies in the SHL classroom.<sup>12</sup>
11. Recognition of the theoretical approach as “critical to understanding the way we teach.” This comment is particularly relevant as it demonstrates the connection the participant drew between theory and practice.

The survey also provided information on the materials and activities that some participants were considering using, or which they had already begun to use in their classes. One participant wrote that “from now on” he would be sure to consider HLLs’ knowledge to be valuable information that is not included in textbooks. Another participant mentioned that she planned to include materials “that students can identify with.” Others talked about the new ideas that had emerged from the multiliteracies framework model based on assignments and projects presented in the sessions. One participant mentioned taking a group to the museum. Finally, one participant described the practice of having meetings with Latinx students outside of class to offer them materials that were “more suitable” for their interests and needs.

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<sup>12</sup> On this topic, one participant shared his concern about how instructors of Spanish origin should present and position themselves relative to Latinx students: “As someone from Spain, how should I position myself?” This comment and reflection would be an example of what Prada (forthcoming b) calls the “critical awakening” that “occurs when a person wakes up to a new reality and grapples with the nature of taken-for-granted knowledge.” In this case, there is a clear concern on this person’s part about not suggesting his Spanish background gives him unique authority in the SHL classroom. In a personal conversation, he added that the question also related to “gaining and being worthy of the trust of the students, for whom seeing an instructor from Spain in a class for heritage speakers could send a message that we’re going to ‘critique and correct.’”

The series of workshops on theory and practice had one more result worth mentioning: each two-hour session was divided by a brief break of ten or fifteen minutes so participants could have a coffee or a snack. During that break, participants continued the conversation on the topic addressed in the workshop in an informal but animated way, creating a significant feeling of cohesion among the group. The possibility of leaving their fixed spots at the seminar table enabled all of the participants to connect with other colleagues. During these short breaks, participants talked about the importance of the topic being addressed, validated one another's comments, remarked on the new information they had received, and shared some innovative ideas that emerged from that new information. Though 'informal,' this space for exchange was undoubtedly productive and led to a feeling of collaboration and cohesion among the group; this made it possible to segue into the second workshop series, which was dedicated to material design.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.4 Series 2: Material design

In Spring of 2018, the same group of instructors who participated in the first series of workshops began another, this time dedicated to design of classroom materials within the multiliteracies framework (Kalantzis, Cope, and Cooland, 2010; Kalantzis et al., 2005).<sup>14</sup> This cohort was joined by three instructors from the Framingham, Massachusetts school district who taught Spanish at the secondary and high school levels. This new project emerged from the 'imperious need' to develop didactic materials that reflected the most suitable practices for SHL classes (Carreira and Kagan, 2018) and that could also be adapted for mixed classes. The vision for this phase, then, was to create a body of materials and resources for teachers of SHL and

<sup>13</sup> This degree of cohesion was also what motivated the group to plan the second phase of this project, which is expected to take place in the 2021-2024 academic years.

<sup>14</sup> In note 11, I provided a brief explanation of this framework. For a review of the meeting points between the multiliteracies proposal and SHL instruction, see Parra 2021a.

mixed classes; this body of materials was to be publicly available, free, and modifiable under a Creative Commons license, in accordance with the needs and goals of each instructor and class.

These meetings—which also lasted two hours, though this time the sessions were held once a month for four months—focused on organizing working groups, identifying thematic units, selecting materials, and designing and providing feedback on didactic activities. The group had to make important decisions, some of which were quite complex, by working together and considering their audience; most of these decisions involved the level at which materials should be designed: How could they create flexible materials that could be adapted for audiences with differing levels of Spanish mastery, different linguistic resources, and different forms of cultural knowledge? This was a non-trivial matter. Furthermore, at that time, the majority of participants taught L2 classes, for whom the response to the question about adaptability seemed to be resolved by choosing the intermediate level, in accordance with the standards set out by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) or the B level within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFRL.)

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However, research has shown that these standards are not a useful reflection of the (trans)linguistic and (trans)cultural abilities of Latinx youth (Martin, Swender, Rivera-Martinez, 2013; Potowski and Carreira, 2004). Thus, the decision was made to consider these activities based on communicative competencies, rather than based on levels or standards. These abilities included a variety of possibilities, from description, narration and comparison to development of hypotheses and presentation of opinions, arguments, and counter-arguments. Linguistic objectives for these competencies were also identified. Thus, the workshop focused largely on things that students of Spanish could “do” (Austin, 1962/1975) and the linguistic resources necessary to achieve them, rather than on level-based classification.

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Participants formed four working groups, each of which selected a major topic of relevance for Latinx students, assuming that these would also make a significant contribution to transcultural and social knowledge of L2 students. The topics considered, then, how to create positive dynamics within mixed classes, in which all students could contribute based on their own perspectives and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992).

The topics were: migration, family, health, and the *quinceañera*. Each thematic unit or module consisted of a set of multimodal materials, including a film, documentary, or videos; texts written in diverse genres; visual arts; and music. For every piece of material, the groups designed two versions: a *Teacher's Guide* and the students' *Worksheets*. The *Teacher's Guide* included detailed instructions and suggestions for working with each of these texts, activities, and exercises, and the *Worksheets* could be modified based on the instructor's decisions. These materials can be used as a starting point for structuring an entire course, as a complement to a given thematic unit, or to design a specific class based on just one of the materials. The *Teacher's Guides* and didactic activities were also intended as pedagogical models that would be accessible to other instructors, so that they could design their own materials. The coordinator organized all of these materials on the webpage "Los talleres del español"<sup>15</sup>, which has been revised by a team of material design experts under a Creative Commons license and is currently published on the page of the Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL) at the University of Texas, Austin.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <https://sites.google.com/view/tallerdesdelespanol/home>. I am grateful to the Observatory of the Instituto Cervantes at Harvard University and its Executive Director, Dr. Marta Mateo, for the funding to make this work possible.

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## 5. Final Reflections, Limitations, and Future Steps

Research in education has shown that instructors who consider themselves to possess greater professional knowledge tend to provide more support for students (Chidolue, 1996; Opdenakker, and Damme, 2006). Thus, given Latinx students' growing interest in studying Spanish, continued development in the years to come will require theoretical and practical resources and SHL training opportunities for L2 and literature teachers. Instructor training guided by the best pedagogical practices for this group of students will fulfill the culturally sensitive, socially responsible, social justice-oriented curricula that have been suggested in order to strengthen linguistic and cultural skills as well as Latinx youths' ethnolinguistic identities (Lynch, 2014; Valdés, 2015; Martínez, 2016; Torres, Pascual and Cabo, and Beusterien, 2017; Carreira and Kagan, 2018; Valdés and Parra, 2018; Leeman, 2018; Prada, forthcoming, a).

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The collaborative project presented in this study emerged from the educational workshop strategy, an ideal pedagogical model for instructor training that facilitates connection between theoretical concepts and practices necessary for the adoption and implementation of best pedagogical practices in SHL classrooms (Lacorte, 2018). Based on participants' survey responses and their preparation of detailed *Teacher's Guides* and other materials, one can assume that the sessions on theory and practice had a positive impact on these instructor's disposition towards Latinx students, as it gave them an even greater sensitivity to those students' individual differences and special regard for the contributions they make from their own funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) regarding their linguistic, cultural, and academic strengths.

The workshop's success and ability to effect integration through group participation (Ander-Egg, 1992) made every session a space not only for theoretical and critical reflection, but also for participation, collaboration, and the formation of

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an inter- and intra-institutional professional practice community. The participants—experienced and novice teachers—expanded their knowledge on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of SHL instruction within their own specific contexts, which contributed to their expertise as instructors (Lacorte, 2018, p. 205). The workshop model also proved to be flexible and productive in facilitating dialogue between various disciplines (including applied linguistics, literature, sociology, and psychology), which in turn facilitated greater openness towards the multifaceted and complex realities and experiences in Latinx students’ lives (Ander-egg, 1992, p. 15) and enabled participants to transform this understanding into teaching materials. In this sense, each team’s work ‘organically’ responded to the call within the SHL field for the design of materials with content from the humanities, ‘Latinx Studies,’ and critical sociolinguistics (Martínez and San Martín, 2018; Parra, 2016a; Potowski, 2012; Torres, Pascual and Cabo and Beusterien, 2017; Leeman, 2018, Beaudrie et al., 2020; Holguín, 2017).

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Carreira and Kagan (2018) note that the long-term vitality of SHL education—or instruction in any heritage language—depends on the institutionalization of instructor training, so that teachers can acquire a sound foundation in the best teaching practices for these languages. Such programs could benefit from the inclusion of the workshop format as a means of strengthening interdisciplinary communities of teacher practices. In this regard, we agree with Prada’s suggestion, that (2021b):

The synergies between teaching methods and applied linguistics, and culture/literature courses hold great potential to, collectively, articulate pedagogies of hope and interrupt the processes guiding the miseducation of language teachers in graduate programs through critical re-socialization geared towards transformation.

Transcending “the miseducation of language teachers” –which I interpreted as education based on cognitive, structural, monolingual, normative paradigms– is, then, essential to designing classes that empower Latinx youth. We hope that the reflection, collaboration, and teaching materials prepared in *Los talleres del español* provide teachers who are in training or have experience in L2 with new possibilities for interacting with Latinx students that move beyond these limits.

We know that the workshops had positive effects on all of their participants and that, based on the possibilities discovered, they will contribute to the visibility (Carreira, 2017) of relevant teaching practices that benefit the Latinx student population. We hope that this, in turn, stimulates the emergence of a virtuous circle in which sound teaching practices that identify Latinx students’ interest (within mixed classes, for example) in classes dedicated to studying their own life experiences will grow. The identification of a collective interest of this kind among students and instructors may lead to the approval of the course at the administrative level and, in keeping with best practices, perhaps will lead to long-term consolidation and institutionalization. In fact, the workshops and collective effort to develop materials supported the curricular design of an SHL class in Brown University’s Department of Hispanic Studies. For now, the second phase of *Los talleres del español* is in the process of adding new materials to the project’s page focused on the call for decolonizing language programs (García, 2019) through relevant topics and pedagogies “of hope” (Prada, forthcoming, b) for Latinx youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>17</sup>

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