

Spring 5-2018

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Language Use by Spanish Heritage Speakers in the Classroom and the World and the
Implications for Educators

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Abstract

Looking at the patterns of language use, language attitudes, and language ideologies, this literature review investigates how Spanish heritage speakers' use of Spanish and their views on using Spanish translate into the classroom. This paper looks at Spanish heritage language use in both official and unofficial spaces, putting emphasis on use in the classroom. Additionally, it looks at the language attitudes and ideologies Spanish heritage language speakers have toward the use of Spanish, English, and "Spanglish" in different contexts. Heritage language speakers, particularly Spanish heritage language speakers, are growing in number in the United States and in American schools. In order to help schoolteachers— including Spanish teacher, general education teacher, and English Language Learners teachers— understand these students on a deeper level and implement best practices in their classrooms this paper includes implications and suggestions for teachers working with Spanish heritage language speakers.

Keywords: Spanish heritage language, Spanish teachers, ELL teachers, classroom, language attitudes, language ideologies, education

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Introduction

As a Spanish teacher much of my undergraduate classes and practical teaching experience has been focused on teaching Spanish as a foreign language or as an L2. So when I was tasked with teaching a class specifically for heritage speakers of Spanish I was nervous, as I did not have background knowledge on teaching this niche group. The class introduced me to a whole new set of challenges that teaching heritage language speakers presented. As a heritage speaker myself I related to them but still had many questions. Those students and challenges inspired this paper and I hope that other teachers of Spanish for heritage speakers, as well as general education teachers, are helped by the findings and implications presented.

Research Questions

There were two main questions that guided the research for this paper:

1. What are the language choices and patterns in different contexts and linguistic landscapes for Spanish heritage language speakers?
2. What are the speakers' language attitudes and ideologies towards Spanish and English?

Methods

This paper is a literature review that involves several articles retrieved from peer-reviewed journals. To find these articles I utilize the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's online library search engine. I searched for keywords like: heritage language learner, Spanish heritage language speaker, language attitudes, official and unofficial spaces, etc.

As this paper is a literature review I chose to organize it in four main sections: introduction of topic, literature review, discussion, and implications.

Definition of Terms

Heritage Language Speakers

First, it is important to define the term heritage language speaker. A heritage language, as defined by Valdés (2001), is “a language with which individuals have a personal connection”. So a heritage language is usually one spoken by grandparents or parents. In the context of this paper a heritage language speaker, then, is “a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English” (Valdés, 2001, p. 38).

This paper is going to specifically talk about and examine Spanish heritage language speakers. In the United States Spanish is the most spoken non-English language with more than 37 million speakers, according to the United States Census (Ryan, 2013). As a teacher of foreign language, this is an important group to understand, especially as heritage speaker language classes are becoming more popular.

Official and Unofficial Spaces

Official and unofficial spaces are one way to define where and how heritage language speakers use their heritage language. Kiramba (2016) defines unofficial spaces as “any space at home or at school where the activities are student controlled” (p. 143). An example of an unofficial space would be recess, in the hallways during passing periods, or in the cafeteria. In this paper one of the most common unofficial spaces was with family.

Dyson (2008) further defines official and unofficial spaces in the context of language uses. In general, Dyson (2008) defines school as an official space, or a space where cultural norms and regulations are followed (p. 121-122). Children perceive school as an official space with a certain vocabulary, and schools teach children to act in certain ways in this space (p. 122). Popular official spaces uncovered in this paper are school and work. Unofficial spaces, however, are “peer governed contexts” (p. 123). That is to say, unofficial spaces call for communication with peers and can include family.

Another way to look at official and unofficial spaces is by using the terms formal and informal. Spanish heritage language speakers often connect with these terms because of the usage of *tú* and *Usted* in the Spanish language.

Language Attitude and Ideology

The terms language attitude and language ideology are also essential elements to this paper. While the data may not explicitly discuss language attitudes and ideologies, it can still be uncovered and is important in understanding why heritage language speakers use Spanish versus English and vice versa.

Language attitudes are often in reference to people or places (King, 2000, p. 168). A heritage speaker may have a negative language attitude about using Spanish at school or around teacher because of a bad experience in their lives. A language ideology, on the other hand, is a “broader system of beliefs, norms, or values” (King, 2000, p. 168). A language ideology could be that a Spanish heritage speaker believes that English is the language that intelligent people use therefore Spanish should not be used in relation to school or work.

Literature Review

Introduction

This section consists of a literature review. As discussed in the methods section, all of the sources are from peer-reviewed journals or books. The literature review will be split into two sections based on the research questions: language choices and patterns and language attitudes and ideologies. In the next section, discussion, the literature will be analyzed and elaborated upon.

Language Choices and Patterns

In the article, *Heritage Speakers of Spanish in the US Midwest: reported interlocutors as a measure of family language relevance*, Velázquez, Garrido, and Millán interviewed heritage language speakers of Spanish, among other groups, to discover with whom they use Spanish and the underlying reasons why (2014). Velázquez et al. discovered that heritage speakers used Spanish in two main ways: the most common group of people with whom heritage speakers spoke Spanish is relatives and heritage speakers used Spanish most often in their free time (2014).

One of the common trends found among Spanish heritage speakers is that they spoke with relatives, particularly older relatives. (Velázquez et al., 2014, p. 395). Among heritage speakers, sixty-eight percent of them responded that they speak Spanish with older relatives; in comparison, the same speakers also responded that only two percent of them said that they spoke Spanish with younger relatives (p. 395). Within the category of relatives, Spanish heritage speakers also most often spoke with their parents—thirty percent spoke with their mother and twenty two percent spoke with their father (p. 393). Other relatives included by the heritage speakers include siblings (21%), aunts and uncles (9%), and grandparents (6%) (p. 393).

The second common pattern of language usage found by Velázquez et al. is that heritage speakers used Spanish frequently in their free time. The heritage speakers in the study cited that ninety six percent of them they spoke Spanish “with at least one person during his or her leisure time” (p. 396). Eighty percent of the heritage speakers also reported having spoken with the same cohort, or people of the same age, during their week (p. 395). One can assume that much of these interactions took place during leisure time or social contexts, either after work or school or in casual non-school or work related ways.

Some conclusions can be made from the Velázquez et al. study. The first conclusion is that for heritage language speakers Spanish is the language of unofficial spaces. Spanish was most often used by these speakers at home, with parents and in their free time. Home is certainly an unofficial space and free time at school, work, in public places can also be considered unofficial spaces.

Colombi (2015) in *Academic and cultural literacy for heritage speakers of Spanish: A case study of Latin@ students in California* discusses the pedagogy behind teaching heritage language speakers. Colombi uses the term register when discussing the usage of Spanish by heritage speakers (p. 10-12). Colombi finds that Spanish heritage speakers are much more familiar with the informal register and she suggests teaching the formal register in heritage speaker classes (p. 12). One very important conclusion can be drawn from this: that Spanish heritage speakers are using Spanish in unofficial spaces. This can be concluded because the unfamiliarity with the formal register suggests that the speakers use the informal register most often, or perhaps exclusively, in their daily lives.

Galindo (1995), in *Language Attitudes Toward Spanish and English Varieties: A Chicano Perspective*, discusses the language attitudes of Chicano Spanish heritage speakers. Galindo also identifies three different types of Spanish used by the speakers: formal Spanish, informal Spanish, and a mix of Spanish and English (1995). Galindo found that the speakers used Spanish in three main places or spaces: “home (90%), the school (73%), and the neighborhood (57%)—including church, restaurants, recreation centers” (1995, p. 84). Furthermore, Galindo (1995) found that Spanish heritage speakers recognize the specific spaces in which Spanish is used. One speaker said the following: “Not too many people speak Spanish nowadays. Used to be you’d speak English out of the house and Spanish in the house like to your parents, and now, English is everywhere. You don’t hear much Spanish. Even your Spanish teacher talks in English!” (Galindo, 1995, p. 87). Galindo (1995) further dissected the speakers’ language use by asking which of the three types of Spanish they used. It was discovered that 50 percent of the speakers used formal Spanish and 76 percent of the speakers used a mix of Spanish and English (Galindo, 1995). This finding lines up with the spaces Velázquez found Spanish heritage speakers use Spanish—informal spaces that allow for the mixing of Spanish and English.

One interesting revelation discovered in this literature review is that there were some gender differences regarding language use within Spanish heritage speakers. Galindo (1995) found that more females than males preferred Spanish or a mix of Spanish and English. The paper found that the participating females had more positive experiences with Spanish. For example, one female said that she experienced significant praise when speaking Spanish at a community party (Galindo, 1995). Velázquez (2014) reports that females are more proficient in their heritage language than males are (p. 390). The reason for this higher proficiency stems from

the societal expectations and upbringings of females: “gender socialization possibly affects the language situation of these children, with girls who are expected to be at home more and help around the house... At the same time, boys may be encouraged to spend time outside of the house...” (Velázquez, 2014, p. 390). Gender differences in the usage of Spanish by heritage speakers is an important element when also considering the impacts it may have in the classroom.

Language Choices and Patterns in the Classroom

As seen in this literature review, school is a space where heritage speakers often use Spanish. School can also be considered both an official space and an unofficial space, depending on with whom the speakers are talking and what the circumstances are. In Blair’s article (2016), *Academic uses of language (re)defined: A case of emergent bilinguals engaging in languages and literacies in and outside of school*, bilingual students are observed in classroom settings using their heritage language. Blair (2016) observed that students in the classroom initiated the use of their heritage language even when the work is in English, making “informal interactions with peers a prime sources for negotiating academic discourse” (p. 114). So, although school calls for English use (because the work is in English) heritage speakers utilize their heritage language to help their schoolwork. One of the main findings from Blair’s (2016) article is that students use their heritage language in order to understand and better their academic performance in school (p. 116). This carries important implications for teachers of heritage language speakers and will be further discussed in the implications section.

In other words, what Blair (2016) describes is a process called translanguaging. It is a common occurrence in a classroom of heritage language speakers. Translanguaging is defined as

the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (Blair, 2016, p. 110). Translanguaging includes multiple processes, including code-switching and translating (Blair, 2016, p. 110). The purpose of translanguaging is to help the speaker make sense of something, for example school work, in ways that utilize both their languages because that is how they learn or understand best. Blair (2016) describes translanguaging in the classroom as positive because it “encourages children... to simultaneously draw from, rather than separate and fragment, their linguistic resources” (p. 110). Translanguaging is particularly useful in schools because it helps students understand materials, concepts, or ideas more efficiently than using just one language would. For example, Blair (2016) observed a classroom in the U.K. in which the students and the teacher use translanguaging in order to clearly explain a concept (p. 111). Translanguaging is common in the classroom among heritage language speakers and has been proven to be an effective means of communication.

Language Attitudes and Ideologies

The language attitudes and ideologies are important factors in understanding the Spanish heritage speaker. Galindo (1995) uncovered the language attitudes, both towards Spanish and English, from Spanish heritage speakers from Texas in her article. Galindo identified three different types of Spanish used, as discussed in the previous section (1995, p. 84). When asked about their feelings or attitudes toward codeswitching, or a mix of Spanish and English, the heritage speakers had negative attitudes about it (1995). One speaker said: “It doesn’t seem correct and can be due to laziness...” (p. 84).

Velázquez et al. (2014) explored the reasons why heritage Spanish speakers spoke Spanish in their lives, that is to say the relevance of the language to them. Velázquez et al. found that the heritage language speakers spoke to four to five people in Spanish during their week and argue that for these speakers Spanish is very relevant and important in their lives (p. 397). This ties in well with the most common pattern found in this literature review of Spanish heritage speakers. The most common pattern that emerged is that heritage speakers used Spanish predominantly or a lot in their home and with their family members. Arriagada (2005) supposes that the reason for this is that in Latino or Hispanic families the family unit is the “central institution”, quite similarly to Velázquez’s finding of relevance.

In general, the heritage speakers in Galindo (1995) had positive attitudes toward Spanish and being speakers of Spanish. However, this is one area where the gender differences between females and males became evident. Females interviewed by Galindo (1995) expressed positive feelings toward Spanish and cited their positive experiences speaking Spanish in their communities. One female stated, “I take it as a privilege that I was taught how to speak Spanish” (1995, p. 86). Males, however, did not express as positive views as the females. One male said, “I don’t wanna use that language because people will make fun of me and they’re gonna go, ‘Well, you know Spanish, you’re part of those wetbacks that come over here and all they wanna do is work,’ and you get stereotyped with a class just because you know a language” (1995, p. 86). According to Galindo, this attitude is common and in fact prevents Spanish heritage speakers from using Spanish in places other than the home (1995). This is significant because the prevailing language attitudes are affecting the language use.

Language Attitude and Ideologies in the Classroom

The language attitudes of students in the classroom are much like the attitudes outside of the classroom, but the classroom carries more implications and complexities. A reason for the language attitudes in the quote from Galindo about being stereotypes for speaking Spanish is explored in Razfar & Rumenapp's *Applying Linguistics in the Classroom* (2014). Razfar & Rumenapp call this speaker's feelings or attitudes "in-betweenness" (2014, p. 280). In-betweenness is described as when the majority culture and the minority cultures do not mix well or clash (Razfar & Rumenapp, 2014, p. 278). Key to understanding in-betweenness is understanding that culture is "... not static, but rather is dynamic and changing" (Razfar & Rumenapp, 2014, p. 280). That is to say, the culture or cultures of one group of people or place are always changing and along with that the attitudes of the people and places are changing. The "in-betweenness" of the Spanish heritage speakers of the paragraph above will be discussed more in-depth in the next section.

Showstack (2017) describes the process of stancetaking in the classroom, which involves the language attitudes and ideologies of Spanish heritage speakers, in her article, *Stancetaking and Language Ideologies in Heritage Language Learner Classroom Discourse*. Showstack states that heritage language speakers may be affected by "societal discourses that devalue their home and community linguistic practices" and that this may affect "their investment in classroom language learning" (2017, p. 271). The article focuses on stancetaking, which can be defined as "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means (language, gesture, and other symbolic forms), through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (themselves and others), and align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field" (Showstack, 2017, p. 273). That is to

say, heritage language speakers take a stance on their language, how they use it and why, and position the language and themselves in relation to, for example, other languages and their speakers. Showstack (2017) found that students had very polar reactions, or stances, in relation to “Spanglish”, or a mix of Spanish and English. The article shows that the students are either very pro-“Spanglish” or against it (Showstack, 2017, p. 278). In general, however, Showstack showed that heritage language learners show strong opinions and stances in the classroom in relation to their heritage language and its appropriate usage (2017). Showstack also gives many valuable insights and recommendations for teachers of HL students, which will be discussed in the implications section of this paper.

Conclusion

In this literature review we have seen that Spanish heritage language speakers use Spanish and English in many common circumstances; they often use Spanish with family member, particularly parents, and in their leisure time. In the classroom they often use Spanish and English in tandem, even when their work is done in English. The language attitudes and ideologies of the Spanish heritage language speakers were enlightening, showing that they were divided in their desire to use Spanish and why. In the classroom, the speakers’ attitudes about their heritage language use are reflective of their adolescent age and a factor called “in-betweenness”.

Discussion

Introduction

In this section there will be discussion about the findings from the literature review and I will also provide some examples from my experience as a teacher of Spanish heritage speakers as well as my life as a heritage speaker myself.

Discussion

One of the most interesting findings for me was the gender difference between female and male heritage speakers. The two genders experienced different attitudes toward their heritage language, which in this case is Spanish, and therefore used it more frequently. This was an eye-opening finding however easily explained if one is familiar with or a part of Latino or Hispanic culture. Latino culture is traditionally male-dominated, and there is a word for this in Spanish: *machismo*. *Machismo* is the emphasis on manliness and male pride. *Machismo* often manifests itself in the stereotypical man-woman relationship in which the man works outside the house and the woman is a stay-at-home mother. It is no surprise then that this attitude and lifestyle affects language usage. While the women and girls stay at home they acquire Spanish (or another heritage language) more quickly than the boys do, who might be encouraged to leave the house more than the girls. This difference may also be because of simple biology, as females have evolved to be more social creatures than males.

Another finding that I believe is directly affected by Latino culture is the finding that the largest group with which Spanish heritage speakers spoke to was their family. Latino culture is family-oriented and places a lot of emphasis on being close to one's family. It is not uncommon in Latino culture for grandparents, aunts and uncles, or cousins to be living with a nuclear family unit. So if one's grandparents and parents speak exclusively Spanish in the home then there are multiple people and reasons to speak Spanish in the home. Along with the home Spanish was

also used often in speakers' free time. If one's free time is spent at home, then using the heritage language is the obvious choice. This is a language pattern that has appeared in my personal life and journey as a heritage speaker. While my family did not speak Spanish in the home when I was a child (because my mother did not speak Spanish and the mother's language often dominates), I did speak Spanish with my paternal grandparents out of necessity.

As a teacher of Spanish heritage speakers, I have found that the students in my class have followed many of the findings from the literature review almost exactly. All of the students in my class—a middle school in a small Midwestern town that hosts a large group of Latino students—come from homes in which Spanish is spoken. I have also noticed that they follow an interesting pattern, one that is reflected in the literature review, when it comes to speaking Spanish at school. As Blair (2016) discussed, my students use both Spanish and English in the classroom and they use the languages selectively, depending on the work or their understanding of the topic. For example, when working on a unit that involves the parts of speech (noun, verb, and adjective) the students preferred to speak in English as they had experience with this topic in English Language Arts classes. On the other hand, my students preferred to speak Spanish when discussing a piece of literature read in class or cultural topics.

Interestingly—and yet somewhat predictably—English is also the language of choice for my students when gossiping or talking about non-school related topics. I believe that this language choice is tied in to their language ideologies and the language ideologies of the community, and even the country. I mainly believe that English is the language of choice because it is the common language across peers at school.

The language attitudes and ideologies uncovered in the literature review were striking to me and I believe they highlight the complex world bilingual Spanish speakers live in in the United States. It was discovered in the literature review that Spanish heritage speakers had varying attitudes relating to speaking Spanish. I think that the male attitude described by Galindo reflects the attitude felt by many Hispanics and Latinos because it is an unfortunate attitude spread by a large percentage of the American public. This attitude is being reflected also in American politics, a dominating factor in the current public sphere. The description of the term “in-betweenness” by Razfar & Rumenapp resonated with me and the way many of my students have expressed feeling to me reflects that they also feel the same way. They are Americans by citizenship or by birth but they also strongly identify with the country of their heritage. They are stuck between the American world they live in and the Mexican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, etc. world that their families are from or they are originally from. They are “in-between” and this affects their language attitudes. These attitudes bring many implications about Spanish heritage speakers and will be discussed in the next section.

Conclusion

In this discussion I have expressed my own thoughts and ideas about the information from the literature review and have brought in examples from my work as a teacher of Spanish heritage speakers and my life as a heritage speaker. All of these ideas and discoveries have implications, especially for teachers, which will be discussed further in the following implication section.

Implications

Introduction

The implications of the findings from this literature review are far-reaching and impact many different fields or aspects of life. However for this paper the implications will be focused on the teaching profession. More specifically, teachers of Spanish heritage speakers, including general education teachers, Spanish teachers who teacher heritage language classes, and English Language Learner teachers. I have also included some implications for the heritage language students themselves.

Spanish Teachers of HL Students

Teaching Spanish heritage language speakers, particularly when teaching Spanish for heritage speakers, presents many challenges and the teacher must be ready and equipped with strategies. The teacher also must have an understanding of the community where the heritage speakers are from because they face many challenges of their own. Perhaps most importantly, the teacher must understand how the HLL students' language attitudes may affect not only their schooling but also their self-esteem. Based on the quote from Galindo (1995) ("I don't wanna use that language because people will make fun of me and they're gonna go, 'Well, you know Spanish, you're part of those wetbacks that come over here and all they wanna do is work,' and you get stereotyped with a class just because you know a language" (1995, p. 86)), we can assume that many heritage language speakers often feel poorly about their ethnicity, their heritage and their language. Even if the students do not feel poorly about their background, they still are surrounded by negative attitudes, especially now with politics and media. Showstack (2017) gives some suggestions and advice at the end of her article. She says that teachers of HL students must "encourage their students to develop identities" in relation to their identity and their language (Showstack, 2017, p. 281). One way to encourage the development of students'

identities is by creating content and lesson plans that is relatable to them. According to motivation theory, there are three important elements to motivating students: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By relating the material back to the students they will be motivated to learn and will realize that the material is important in their lives.

Another suggestion for Spanish teachers of heritage language speakers is to take into consideration the different dialects of Spanish spoken by the students. Many Spanish classes teach the “proper” Spanish, academic Spanish, or the Real Academia Española’s version of Spanish. It is important to remember that only some heritage language speakers have received formal school instruction in Spanish and that the families of the students may not have received formal school instruction either. Therefore, the Spanish spoken by the students will most likely be colloquial and reflect the many countries and regions represented by the students. Showstack (2017) recommends straying away from the terms “standard” and “correct” with HL students and instead embrace all the dialects spoken by the students (p. 282). One way to do this in the classroom is by avoiding overtly correcting students’ grammar or syntax. For example, if a student says, “But that’s not how we say it in my family,” it is not advantageous to simply tell the student that they are incorrect. Instead the teacher should explain to the student that there are different ways to say things and continue to model the proper form. While this may seem counter-intuitive and detrimental for students’ grammar and writing, it does not negatively affect them because they will pick up on the proper form through the modeling and will not feel as though their dialect of Spanish is not legitimate.

A unit that I taught about legends, myths, fairy tales, and fables incorporates these two suggestions and I found it easy to execute and my students enjoyed it. The unit began with

discussing the legend of La Llorona, a well-known story across Central America and Latino families. I asked the students to collect an example of the story from their family and share it with this class. This activity promoted the language and cultural varieties found in the class. During the unit we also talked about formal versus informal writing when they did an assignment in which they wrote a letter pretending to be an Argentinian writer. While discussing formal versus informal writing I was able to teach the “proper” Spanish that is required of me while also making sure to reinforce that the informal Spanish and “Spanglish” used by my students is not wrong or bad and does have a place.

The implications of this literature review’s findings are important for Spanish teachers of HL students because we have the opportunity to develop not only our students’ language and fluency but also their self-esteem, which is challenged and developed in adolescence.

General Education Teachers of HL Students

The general education teacher plays an important role in the school lives of heritage language learners because these are the teachers with whom they spend the most time. The general education teachers have the power to embrace the differences that heritage language students bring to the classroom or ignore them.

The main suggestion for general education teachers of HL students is to allow students to speak in their heritage language in the classroom, including during work time. Teachers must not prohibit students from speaking in their heritage language (or native language) in the classroom because it gives students the wrong impression about the importance of validity of their language in the school setting as well as in their community. Blair (2016) observed that students in the classroom initiated the use of their heritage language even when the work is in English, making

“informal interactions with peers a prime sources for negotiating academic discourse” (p. 114).

This shows that HL students often prefer to utilize their heritage language in the classroom. They often use the heritage language in tandem with English, using a term called translanguaging, discussed earlier in the literature review. Allowing students to use their heritage language (or translanguaging) has two benefits. First, it shows students that you as the teacher recognizes the significance of their heritage language and validates its use in the school setting. This, in turn, helps students develop their self-esteem and helps them avoid the feelings of “in-betweenness” that Razfar & Rumenapp (2014) described.

General education teachers spend the most time with heritage language speakers, more time than Spanish teachers and ELL teachers do, and because of that it is very important that general education teachers understand this special group of students and the needs they have.

ELL Teachers of HL Students

ELL (English Language Learner) teachers are in a unique position when it comes to teaching heritage language learners. HL student might be placed in an ELL classroom for a variety of reasons; their English proficiency is not quite high enough to be successful, they have just arrived to this country, or because the school simply does not have enough resources to accommodate the students in the mainstream classroom and have decided the ELL teacher will know more. In any of these situations the ELL teacher can follow the following advice in order to make sure the HL students are successful.

The main suggestion for ELL teachers who find themselves teaching HL students is similar to the advice for general education teachers. ELL teachers should allow students to use their heritage language in the classroom. The students should be allowed to use their heritage

language in both informal classroom settings—such as discussions or group work time—but also during formal classroom instruction. A question an ELL teacher might have regarding this advice might be how allowing the use of a heritage language will help learning and understanding. The answer to this question comes straight from the research. Research on translanguaging (discussed in the literature review section) shows that allowing students to use their HL in the classroom because it enhances understanding. Allowing the use of the HL (or perhaps several HLs) in the classroom also helps build trust and community between the students and the teacher. The students understand that the teacher respects them, their heritage language, and their culture when the teacher allows the HL in the classroom. Community is very important in the classroom, especially when teaching a group of students who comes with many problems and challenges beyond their English proficiency.

The ELL teacher may or may not come into contact with many HL students, but if they do it is important to understand the research behind the best practices for these students.

HL Students

For the heritage language speaker or student himself, there are also implications to the findings of the literature review. Heritage language students (in this case, Spanish HL students) should know the complexities of their status in both their community and in the classroom. Understanding their unique linguistic situation will help them better understand themselves, and in the context of schooling, help improve their self-esteem.

As the literature review showed, HL students struggle with their self-esteem and self-image as a result of “in-betweenness”, or when their two cultures (for example, Salvadoran culture and American culture) clash (Razfar & Rumenapp, 2014). Without understanding this

concept, HL students might suffer confusion in regards to their self-esteem, which in turn has been proven to undermine school success. HL students should actively work against “in-betweenness” and there are two main things they can do. The first thing the students can do is be an active participant in both of their dominant cultures. For example, the students can participate in traditions from the culture of their heritage language (Spanish), like having a quinceñera, as well as involving themselves in American traditions (or traditions from their community), like attending a football game.

The second recommendation for HL students is to gain friendships or relationships with other HL students or speakers. Gaining these relationships with similar people will help the speaker, again, overcome and avoid feelings of “in-betweenness”. I stress this term because according to educational psychology’s motivation theory feelings of low self-esteem, self-image, and self-efficacy are detrimental to students’ school achievement. One way students can gain relationship is by joining clubs geared toward Hispanic/Latino students, such as National Hispanic Honor Society, Latina Leaders, or Latinos Unidos.

Conclusion

The findings from the literature review implied several things for the different groups who worked with (or are) HL students. Spanish teachers of HL students have an important job and are able to shape both the students’ language learning and the students’ self-esteem, both of which affect their future school success. General education teachers arguably are the most important group as they see the HL students more frequently than other types of teachers. ELL teachers are in a unique situation because they are often times given HL students out of desperation of the school. HL students themselves also need to know about the interesting

situation they are in in American schools. All in all, the implications laid out in this section are very important for educators to not only understand but also implement in their classrooms in the best interest of their students.

Conclusion

Spanish heritage language speakers are a growing group of students represented in America's schools. They are in a unique position as speakers of two languages and show some common characteristics. Spanish HL speakers often speak Spanish with family members, at home, and in their free time, or in other words unofficial spaces. Within the group they have varying language attitudes and ideologies in relation to the use of Spanish and English in different contexts. For many HL speakers they continued to use their heritage language because it was relevant in their lives, for example, having Spanish-only speaking grandparents and parents. The political and social climate within the country and communities impacts the speakers' language ideologies, including their desire to speak Spanish. Within the classroom, Spanish HL speakers enjoy using Spanish and English together and in fact it helps the students engage in their learning and understand better. Allowing HL students to participate in the process of translanguaging is indeed advantageous for both the students and the teacher.

The purpose of this paper was to inform teachers of HL students about their uses of Spanish and English, their language attitudes and ideologies, and—most importantly—advise them of the best practices for these students according to research. In the implications section of this paper there were several suggestions made for teachers of HL students, including Spanish teacher, general education teacher, and ELL students, as well as suggestions for the HL students themselves. Across all the suggestions there was a common theme—do not prohibit the use of

the students' heritage language and instead encourage the development of the heritage language because it will be beneficial for the students' school performance in the long run.

I hope that this paper and its suggestions will help many educators of Spanish heritage language speakers better educate and understand this special and growing group of students. I also hope that the heritage language speakers who have read this paper gain a better understanding of their status as bilinguals.

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