I am but an actress, playing two parts:

Linguistic experiences of Latino Heritage Language Students in Southern California

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Question driving this study

What role do Latino heritage language students perceive Spanish to have played in their schooling?

Literature review

- MacGregor Mendoza (2000);
- Valdés (2001);
- Valenzuela (1999);

Methodology

Subjects: 156 bilingual Latino college students studying Spanish as a heritage language;

(105 from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB)
51 from the University of California (UC))

Methodology (cont.)

<u>Task</u>

*Students replied in writing to the following prompt:

How has your knowledge of Spanish affected your experience in school? Can you remember an incident when your heritage language was helpful or caused you problems in school?

36 CSULB students participated in focused interviews

* CSULB students wrote a 2-3 page composition
  UC students answered prompt in a survey

Findings

Overall assessment of Spanish in school the context (N = 119)

Positive: 73
Negative or mixed: 46

The social domain

Total students who wrote about the social domain: 149

<u>Total positive comments</u>: 148
- Felt like they had something to contribute to school
    as language brokers (60)
    as a resource for SLA students of Spanish (19)
- Helped them make friends or fit in school (60)
- Drew them closer to teachers, counselors, etc. (9)

<u>Total negative comments</u>: 46
- Felt isolated/lonely or humiliated/embarrassed (31)
- Felt imposed upon, uncomfortable, or insecure
    as language brokers (8)
    as helpers for SLA students of Spanish (3)
- Prevented them from participating in extracurricular activities (4)

The academic domain

Total students who wrote about the academic domain: 64

Total negative comments: 78
• Resulted in a substandard academic preparation - tracking/ESL (35)
• Interfered with their ability to speak or write well in English (15)
• Made them feel dumb/unproductive/retarded (12)
• Impeded their academic mobility (5)
• Made teachers underestimate their abilities (3)
• Was their first experience with academic failure (3)

Total positive comments: 19
• Helped in Spanish (7) or French class (3)
• Enabled them to progress at an appropriate pace - tracking (4)
• Helped with English vocabulary or grammar (2)
• Made it possible for them to earn AP credits in Spanish (2)
• Improved GPA (1)

Summarizing

Social domain:

• Primarily positive (3 out of 4)

• Rarely in opposition to English

Academic domain:

• Overwhelmingly negative (4 out of 5)

• Often in opposition to English

(Note: 14 students rated Spanish as being professionally valuable)

Discussion

- Comparison with other studies
- Strategies and stages

Strategies

Berry's Acculturation Model
(1990, 1997, 2001)

- Two dominant aspects of acculturation:
  preservation of one's cultural heritage
  adaptation to the host society
- Two questions:
  Is it valuable to maintain one's cultural heritage?
  Is it valuable to develop relationships in the larger society?

Berry's Acculturation Model (cont.)

• Answers to the above generate four acculturation strategies:

Strategy 1: Integration
  Preserve heritage culture? Yes
  Develop relationships in the larger society? Yes

Strategy 2: Assimilation
Preserve heritage culture? No
Develop relationships in the larger society? Yes

Berry's Acculturation Model (cont.)

Strategy 3: Separation

Preserve heritage culture? Yes
Develop relationships in the larger society? No

Strategy 4: Marginalization

Preserve heritage culture? No
Develop relationships in the larger society? No

Linguistic acculturation

- Is it valuable to preserve/develop one's heritage language (HL)?

- Is valuable to develop English?

  (Depending on the context, academic English or basic interpersonal communication skills)

Linguistic acculturation of subjects

	Integration	**Assimilation** (Richard Rodriguez)	**Separation** (elderly Latinos)	**Marginalization** (Latino students at risk)
Preserve or develop the HL?	Yes	No	Yes	No
Develop English?	Yes	Yes	No	No

Academically promising

Preservation of Spanish

- Driven in part by significant social advantages in the school context;

- Takes place despite the awareness of significant academic negatives;

Integration strategies used by subjects

- Resisted negative messages (Tse 1998);
- Questioned authority (both in school and at home);
- Exercised choice;
- Negotiated different linguistic/ethnic personas;
- Persisted in their demands;
- Sought out opportunities for cultural validation and exploration (Phinney 1989, Tse 1998)

When I came to the United States…I only knew the basics in English, so my parents and I decided I would go to the 5th grade for a couple of months in order to get the feel for the classes and also listen to some English. I had always loved school in Argentina and always did well, so I was not concerned; I was glad I was starting in a stress free environment instead of being thrown into it…Everything was going well until one day the teacher hands me a piece of paper with a huge red F and started talking to me loudly, almost yelling, that I hadn't been doing my homework… She didn't understand, but I couldn't explain. I was a good student, a very good student, in fact. She had it all wrong (DP, age 25).

I am but an actress
Playing two parts
The American by day
The Mexican at heart

My Spanish is sketchy
Though I can get by
I play a perfect American
Though my English is shy

KH, age 21

When I was in the 7th grade, I began volunteering for teachers to translate during their meeting with parents whose knowledge of the English language was limited. I did this during 8th grade and all through high school as well. This inspired other students at my high school to do the same. It felt great to be able to help so many parents get involved in their children's education and also to motivate other students to help out as well. I was recognized for the work I had done during my high school senior awards. I felt really honored (MH, age 20)

The development of integrated linguistic identity

Stages of ethnic development

- unawareness
- ambivalence/evasion
- emergence
- identity incorporation

Graham (2006), Phinney (1989), Tse (2000, 1998)

- Linguistic identity unawareness and ambivalence vary in their manifestation according to the particulars of the school context
- Linguistic identity emergence is when integration strategies first develop
- Linguistic identity integration manifests itself primarily in the social domain

Pedagogical implications for HL

- Attend to students' social needs and wants
  (contribute, connect)
- Make HL learning academically valuable and relevant
  (connect it to other areas of the curriculum *and* English, use it to enhance the academic experience of students)
- Attend to stages of linguistic and ethnic identity development
- Teach integration strategies

Thank you