Heritage, Identity, and Learning at Stake: Marginalization in a Diverse Spanish Class

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ABSTRACT

A surge of diverse heritage language learners in American schools has contradicted the longstanding ideology that this population is monolithic. Previous theories about separating foreign language learners (FLLs) and heritage language learners (HLLs) are problematic because they fail to address the diversity of the HLLs that end up in schools today. This research report lends support for the claim that less proficient HLLs are more suitable for a heterogeneous beginning language class than those that are highly proficient. Placing a highly proficient HLL in a beginning level language course can actually be detrimental to both emergent learners’ development and the educational outcomes of the entire classroom community. Moreover, the monumental task of teaching a heterogeneous class like the one analyzed here complicates and is complicated by an already-problematic school context. This study exhibits how the classroom talk privileged certain classmates while marginalizing others, halting educational progress.

KEYWORDS

Classroom Talk, Discourse, Heritage Language Learners, Heterogeneous Classes, Learning Opportunities, Positioning, Socially Situated Identities

INTRODUCTION

Spanish-speakers hail from a variety of different locales around the world. Therefore, classifying Spanish-speakers has resulted in the adoption of unique terms which emphasize different characteristics. The U.S. Census Bureau has chosen to use the term Hispanic (or Latino) with this population on official documents. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a Hispanic is “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race” (www.census.gov). Current demographics of the United States provide staggering numbers with respect to an exploding Spanish-speaking population. Published in December of 2012, the most recent census estimates the number of U.S. Hispanics at 52 million, which is about 16.7% of the total population.
In fact, Hispanics are widely acknowledged to be the current largest ethnic/racial minority in the U.S. Indeed, twenty-five states listed Hispanics as their largest minority group per the 2010 census. As the Hispanic population takes root across the U.S., the Spanish language too fortifies its stronghold as a dominant minority language. In fact, in the census data from 2010, 37 million of the 52 million U.S. Hispanic residents (five and older) reported speaking Spanish at home. More than half of these people also self-reported that they spoke English “very well.” The commonly-held myth that Hispanics retain the Spanish language at the expense of learning English is simply a fallacy. It could be argued, due to this self-reported data, that bilingualism and biliteracy are held in high regard.

The rapidly growing number of Spanish speakers has major implications for classroom instruction at all educational levels and across content areas. There is an ever-increasing number of students entering school with some degree of Spanish language skills. Students born in the U.S. who do not consider themselves native speakers of Spanish are often labeled heritage speakers (HS) or heritage language learners (HLL). For the purposes of the present paper, the definition of a heritage language learner is adopted from Valdés (2005, p. 412): “the student may speak or merely understand the heritage language and be, to some degree, bilingual in English and the heritage language.” Based upon this definition, the heritage learner’s proficiency can fluctuate along a continuum. Some heritage learners are highly proficient in both Spanish and English. They may have attended dual-immersion schools where instruction took place in both languages simultaneously. Others may have been educated primarily in the U.S. and consequently, have very little to no receptive or productive skills in Spanish. A great deal of variety can come between these two examples, as well.

Spanish-speaking students bring a wide range of diverse language experiences to the classroom that must be considered. Numerous scholars have discussed the diversity of Spanish-speaking students in the United States: “the U.S. Spanish-speaking population is extremely diverse in terms of linguistic backgrounds and abilities” (Leeman, 2005, p. 36). Therefore, it is not sufficient to assume that each speaks the same variety of Spanish, nor that they all speak and write Spanish at the same proficiency level.

HLLs often self-identify and have variable affiliations with the target language and culture. Each HLL is a distinct case that should be treated as such. It is the teacher’s job to establish a rapport with students and encourage students to open up about their language experiences. After obtaining this type of information, teachers have the complex task of tailoring instruction so that it meets the distinct needs of their Spanish-speaking students. The teacher’s mission is all the more arduous when HLLs enroll in classes meant for traditional FLLs. (FLLs are all students who do not have a heritage claim to the target language.)

This study lends support for the claim that less proficient HLLs are more suitable for a heterogeneous beginning language class than those that are highly proficient in the target language. Having a highly proficient HLL in a beginning level language course can actually be detrimental to both emergent learners’ development and the establishment of a positive classroom community. Moreover, the monumental task of teaching a heterogeneous class complicates and is complicated by an already-problematic context. Cases such as the one presented here call into question the current policy for HLL placement of HLLs in American schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spanish Heritage Learners in American Schools

Research has demonstrated that HLLs have linguistic, affective, and social needs which are distinct from their monolingual peers that study Spanish as a foreign language (Roca, 2001; Valdés, 1997). Current policy denies these differences, making the situation a black and white one. For example, some Spanish-speakers who lack Spanish literacy skills are denied access to Spanish courses. This is crucial because the majority of Spanish-speakers could benefit from some type of Spanish instruction,
especially with writing. Many Spanish speakers are successful with regard to oral communication but they have never learned to write the language: “Unlike second language (L2) learners who learn Spanish in instructional settings and normally learn receptive and productive skills more or less simultaneously, heritage speakers with excellent comprehension abilities may not be able to speak fluently” (Leeman, 2005, p. 36). With a one-size-fits-all approach, these students are placed in classes where they are unable to meet their fullest potential.

Educational Goals for Spanish Heritage Learners
A primary goal of teachers of Spanish heritage learners is to meet each student’s diverse needs effectively (Alarcón, 2010). HLLs do not comprise a homogenous group but rather their diverse backgrounds, attitudes, linguistic needs, and expectations fluctuate among lower-level and more advanced proficiency groups (Alarcón, 2010; Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010). As Lynch (2008) explained, educational goals for HLLs should be tailor-made as advanced proficiency learners more closely resemble the native speaker norm while low-proficiency learners typically coincide with the second language learner norm. Therefore, accurate course placement based upon proficiency level is critical. In order to achieve this, it is crucial for educators to take the time to get to know their students.

Heterogeneous Classes: the Reality
Determining heritage learners’ proficiency levels and finding the best ways to target instruction toward their individual needs is an intricate undertaking. Despite a long-standing assumption that heritage speakers and foreign language learners are best taught in separate classes, they often end up in mixed classes at the high school level (Draper & Hicks, 2000). Special HLL courses are rarely offered in American public schools today. Instead, heritage learners typically find themselves in courses designed for foreign language learners and “for the most part, FL courses are designed for monolingual speakers of English with little or no knowledge about the language or the people and the cultures involved” (Blyth, 2003, p. 109). This situation presents both a challenge and an opportunity for educators of heterogeneous Spanish classes.

Heterogeneous populations are a common occurrence for second/foreign language educators today. However, there is a lack of research that deals with the complexities of teaching a mixed class (HLLs and FLLs), especially those at the secondary level, as most prior research has been conducted via the post-secondary level. This study addresses the gap in research about this population by not only researching heterogeneous classes but also by carefully examining the students’ oral interactions. So far, the few studies that have investigated heterogeneous classes dealt with only the affective aspects by interviewing students about the advantages and disadvantages of these combined HLL/FLL classes (Edstrom, 2007; Katz, 2003). The remaining research with this population compares specific linguistic outcomes of both groups (Au et al., 2002; Bowles, 2011; Montrul, 2008; Potowski, 2002) but tells us nothing about how their linguistic diversity can be used to peer-mediate. In contrast, Draper and Hicks (2000, p. 16) advocated for the investigation of HLL/FLL collaboration as an avenue for “using the linguistic diversity…as a learning tool for both teachers and students”.

Theoretical Orientation
A sociocultural approach to positioning was utilized as a framework to reveal the situated, contingent meanings communicated through the classroom discourse (Gee, 2011). The mastery of higher cognitive functions is a direct result of the internalization of social speech (Vygotsky, 1978). Social speech in this study was evidenced by the daily classroom discourse. When the students worked, they used social speech to mediate their accomplishment of classroom tasks. Analysis of the discourse discloses underlying positioning (both deliberate and tacit) which essentially is the “ongoing construction of the self through talk” (Tan & Moghaddam, 1999, p. 183). In the classroom, students represent and re-construct their socially situated identities through the positions they assume and those they ascribe to others.
In-depth analysis of classroom talk is essential to reveal the complexity of classroom positioning. A cursory view of one or two episodes cannot be taken to stand for storylines or reinforce long-standing ideologies. Therefore, to assist an investigation of the classroom discourse on a micro level, Gee’s (2011) notion of socially situated identities was adopted as a key analytic tool. Gee (2011, p. 30) defined a socially situated identity as “the ‘kind of person’ one is seeking to be and enact here and now”. Gee (2011) helps us to recognize that socially situated identities are localized and constantly in flux; they are not static but rather extremely dynamic. Gee (2011, p. 30) noted this dynamic nature when he described how discourse could be used to discover the socially situated identity of any given interaction “lots of interesting complications can set in when we think about identity enacted in and through language”. Discourse analysis of Ms. M.’s1 Spanish II class provided an exploration of the participants’ socially situated identities because:

Discourse produces identity through the roles and positions it makes possible, the tools and mechanisms it provides for people to use in assuming and assigning themselves and others to various roles and positions, and in the boundaries it creates between insiders and outsiders. (Bloome et al., 2008, p. 50)

Discourse also has been used to reinforce ideologies. Gee (2012) described the origin of the term ideology, making an important distinction between ideology and “facts.” He classified ideology as any claim based solely upon one’s “values or prejudices” (Gee, 2012, p. 5). Ideology involves power and agency, advancing the agenda of the privileged meanwhile marginalizing the disadvantaged “people often (but not always) see the world the way they need or want to in order to sustain their desires, power, status, or influence” (Gee, 2012, p. 5).

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Questions**

Four research questions were developed to meet the research goal, detailed in the overarching question that follows. Particular attention was devoted to the notion of positionality and its impact on academic outcomes.

**Overarching Question:** What is the nature of oral interactions within a heterogeneous class of so-called heritage language learners (HLLs) and foreign language learners (FLLs) in a beginning level Spanish classroom?

1. What instructional stance does the instructor adopt and how does this impact the classroom community?
2. What positions, if any, do the heritage language learners (HLLs) assume?
3. What positions, if any, do the foreign language learners (FLLs) assume?
4. How do these assumed positions contribute to or impede the accomplishment of oral tasks?

**Site and Participants**

This study was conducted in an urban public high school in the northeastern United States. The classroom observed incorporated both foreign language learners and heritage language learners in one Spanish course. The focal class had a relatively high percentage of heritage learners (four of fourteen total students). The present analysis focuses primarily on three of the heritage learners, the classroom teacher, and brief interactions with various FLL peers. A discourse analysis of their classroom talk revealed glimpses into their unique positions as Spanish language learners and users in a heterogeneous classroom environment.
Ms. M, the Spanish Teacher

Ms. M was a second year teacher who was also enrolled in a Master’s program at the local university. She previously expressed an interest in facilitating improved interactions between her HLLs and FLLs. Ms. M. was committed to assisting her students but this endeavor took a toll on her. In informal interviews with the researcher, Ms. M. admitted to feeling “burnt-out” and “exhausted.” She also felt incapable of properly differentiating instruction to meet the needs of her diverse learners.

Pepe, Heritage Language Learner

Pepe was a foreign-born Puerto Rican American in Ms. M.’s class. Pepe was highly proficient in Spanish, both in receptive and productive skills. He always earned very high scores in Spanish class. Since the general course content did not sufficiently challenge him, Pepe was often given differentiated tasks. He was provided a small laptop upon which to complete assignments; most often he was asked to read an authentic Spanish newspaper article and write a critique of it in Spanish.

Carlitos, Heritage Language Learner

Carlitos was a foreign-born Puerto Rican American. However, Ms. M. illustrated the extreme diversity among her HLLs by contrasting Pepe’s strong academic skills (in Spanish and English) with Carlitos’ literacy deficits. Ms. M. intensified the differences between the two students when she recalled a story about a discussion with Carlitos’ family in which it made explicit that Carlitos did not speak Spanish at home. Despite having been born in Puerto Rico, Carlitos’ family chose to raise him in the U.S. in an English-speaking environment. In informal personal communication, Ms. M. also expressed deep concern that Carlitos was often absent from school. She said that he was truant and only came to school a handful of times during the course of a few weeks.

Carlitos had major difficulty with spelling and grammar of both Spanish and English. Carlitos had an IEP which detailed accommodations and modifications he received in school. Near the end of the study, Carlitos was removed from Ms. M.’s class and placed into a resource room. Ms. M. explained that Carlitos’ truancy and missing assignments had amounted to a failing grade in her Spanish course. Therefore, the administration made a decision to pull him from Spanish class and insert him in a resource room where they felt he would be able to receive more one-on-one support to boost his English skills.

Edwin, Heritage Language Learner

Edwin was a U.S. born second-generation Spanish speaker. His father was born and raised in Puerto Rico but his mother was a United States born native English speaker. Edwin was not included with Pepe and Carlitos who were classified as Spanish “native speakers” by the classroom community. Edwin’s U.S. birth and scant use of Spanish in the home separated him from the “native speakers” of his class. In contrast, Edwin distinctly classified himself as a heritage language learner in class when he was able to self-identify.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collected originate from a week-long series of classroom visits. The focal class was observed naturalistically to capture the essence of typical educational practices. Discrete audio recorders were used to capture classroom talk when students worked in dyads or small groups. Simultaneously, a small video camera (placed on a tripod at the back of the room) provided a whole-class perspective. Audio and video recordings afforded the researcher the pivotal opportunity to revisit the classroom discourse verbatim at a later date for in-depth analysis.

Data analysis proved to be an ongoing, recursive process. Fieldnotes were the first step in the analysis process. Then, a bracketing procedure was used to section off personal thoughts about the
observations within the fieldnotes. Each evening at home, while recollecting the day’s events, handwritten analytic memos were utilized for the purpose of reflection and analysis of the classroom talk.

The second major portion of data analysis was transcribing the video and audio recordings verbatim. Next, a cursory review of the transcripts was conducted and annotations were completed. Then, after another read-through, brief initial codes were assigned to the turns of talk. Color coordination of common codes helped to chart their appearance within and across the lessons and days. Later, these codes were aggregated into categories. Lastly, salient patterns and trends were noted for further analysis. These patterns formed the major themes that follow.

FINDINGS

The Instructional Stance Positioned Ms. M. as Primary Knower

Ms. M. utilized a very common teaching technique (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) for the majority of the whole-class interaction. This instructional stance gave Ms. M. two thirds of the turns of talk (TOT), as she occupied two of the three turns in each I-R-E sequence. Therefore, the students typically only responded to her initiations. In the typical triadic dialogue sequence (I-R-E), the teacher initiates a question and has a previously selected answer in mind (QWKA - Questions with Known Answers). It is the student’s job to provide the answer the teacher is expecting. Then, the teacher takes her second turn where she evaluates the student’s response. The evaluation can take the form of a positive or negative response. This type of instruction is didactic and leaves no room for student interpretation or creativity.

The Instructional Stance Positioned Certain FLLs as “Unprepared” or “Inattentive”

Ms. M.’s instructional stance required both attention and preparedness. Since Ms. M.’s instructional style was to call on students randomly, it was crucial for them to follow along closely. If a student was unaware of the number that she was on, he/she was considered “inattentive.” Often, Ms. M. called on students to answer questions even if she knew that they did not complete their assignments. If a student had not completed the assignment, he/she had to “think quickly” to answer it correctly. This made it very difficult for the student to answer the question correctly. In the following example, Ms. M. positions Alvin (a FLL) as “inattentive” and “unprepared” by directly questioning him about his homework in front of the whole class.

181 T: Número nueve. Ellos están comprando una memoria USB, Señor Alvin?
(Number nine. They are buying a USB drive, Mr. Alvin?)
182 Alvin: Um, what number?
183 T: Nueve. (Nine.)
184 (Silence.)
185 T: Nueve, ¿Tienes o no? (Nine. Do you have it or not?)
186 Alvin: Nope.

The Instructional Stance Positioned Pepe as a “Spanish Expert”

Whereas Alvin was positioned as “inattentive” and “unprepared” by his teacher, Pepe occupied the role of “Spanish expert.” In the following episode, Ms. M. reinforced Pepe’s expertise when she utilized his home literacy as a resource in the classroom.

198 T: Ok, número diez. Señor Pepe, gracias. The workers are reading the documents about the new mouse.
(Ok, number ten. Mr. Pepe, thanks.)
Ms. M. repeatedly called on Pepe to answer what she perceived to be more difficult grammar questions aloud instead of affording the other students opportunities to attempt them. This decision, in concert with various other instructional choices, positioned Pepe above all of his classmates.

**Ms. M. Positioned Pepe as a “Spanish Expert” by Controlling his Participation**

Pepe was eager to demonstrate his knowledge of Spanish to his teacher and classmates by volunteering. Consequently, Ms. M. sometimes asked him not to answer. Ms. M. was attempting to offer space for other students to answer. In one such instance Ms. M. stated that she wanted “students other than Pepe” to answer her question. This comment bolsters the position of Pepe as the “Spanish expert” in the class. Despite their similar HLL status, Carlitos and Edwin were marginalized because they were not considered “Spanish experts” by Ms. M.

**Certain HLLs Were Positioned as MVPs by FLLs**

Ms. M.’s attitude towards the HLLs had serious implications for the classroom dynamics. Ms. M. often used Pepe as a language resource thereby honoring his “fund of knowledge” (Moll, 1992). This treatment impacted the way the FLLs perceived him. The class was cognizant of the fact that Pepe had differentiated tasks because he physically left his seat to go work in the back of the classroom. Therefore, his classmates internalized the notion that the HLLs (but particularly, Pepe) were the class “MVPs.”

One day, Ms. M. tasked the students with a translation game. Meanwhile, Pepe was working on his differentiated assignment. The FLL boys voiced their displeasure with the fact that Pepe would not be joining their team for the game and coined him the class MVP.

Clearly, some of the boys felt disadvantaged because they were missing Pepe’s knowledge. Without their MVP, many of the boys clearly felt inept. In fact, they gave up before the game even started. Pepe’s socially situated identity as the leader of the HLLs and as a “Spanish expert” had serious implications for how the FLLs viewed themselves in this class.
This short episode elucidates how Ms. M.’s instructional stance provided specific affordances for each student. Pepe and Carlitos were positioned as “Spanish experts” because they spoke Spanish at home. Edwin was excluded because he was not fluent in Spanish. Moreover, Pepe was viewed as the MVP because of his superior Spanish abilities. Despite Anthony’s insistence that he could handle the task, Ronnie and Alvin refuted his claim thereby reinforcing the FLLs’ ineptitude. These complex group affiliations have definite impacts on the learning outcomes of all of the students.

Pepe Revealed the Other HLLs’ Language Deficiencies to Assert his Dominance

Pepe owned his role as “Spanish expert” of the class in many ways. He flaunted his Spanish knowledge by quickly shouting out answers. Often, Pepe did not allow his peers “think time” to process the teacher’s questions. When his peers encountered stumbling blocks, Pepe often ridiculed them. He exhibited little patience with them. Pepe grew exasperated by his peers’ lack of Spanish knowledge. He made biting comments about his classmates’ inability to be successful Spanish learners, going so far as to tell another HLL Carlitos, that he wasn’t Hispanic because he couldn’t speak Spanish.

Pepe: Tú no eres hispánica. (You’re not Hispanic.) [Comment directed at Carlitos]

When he worked with other HLLs, Pepe used language to socially situate himself at the top of the classroom hierarchy. In one example, Pepe and Carlitos worked on an information-gap activity together. Almost immediately, Pepe assumed a dominant role, forcing his partner Carlitos into submission. When Carlitos inquired about the format of the task, Pepe did not concede. Pepe socially situated himself as the dominant partner by ignoring and excluding Carlitos. Pepe held the reins on the activity, telling Carlitos exactly how to complete the task, often using “teacher talk” to assert himself as dominant (Pomerantz, 2008).

5 Carlitos: Why am I always A?
6 Pepe: Why am I always B?
7 Carlitos: I always, “no sé” (I don’t know)? What if I don’t wanna be A?
8 Pepe: Ready? ¿Quieres un ordenador o un portátil? (Do you want a desktop or a laptop?)
9 Carlitos: I’m not even writing... No, I gotta do the next one...
10 Pepe: No, now you gotta write what I said.
11 Carlitos: Ok.

The disparity between Carlitos’ and Pepe’s Spanish language proficiency created an unresolvable tension that halted their progress on the task. Pepe assumed the position of “Spanish expert” by exposing Carlitos’ Spanish weaknesses. At times, Carlitos endeavored to ignore Pepe’s comments but they were always quick to return. Carlitos began the paired activity using strategies to ask for help from Pepe. When Pepe did not repeat the statement or speak more slowly, Carlitos gave up his bids for extra support. Instead of working together to negotiate meaning, Carlitos spent the majority of his time stalling while Pepe strongly urged him to finish. Pepe was relentless, imploring Carlitos to just get the task done. The more he pushed, the more Carlitos resisted. After immense frustration on behalf of both parties, insults ensued. At one point, Pepe diminished Carlitos’ heritage connection to Spanish by declaring that he was unable to recount his alphabet in Spanish. Pepe noted that any true “Hispanic” person would surely be able to recite their alphabet correctly.

158 Pepe: Do you know your alphabet in Spanish?
159 Carlitos: Um hmm.
160 Pepe: Lemme hear it.
{C starts signing alphabet song in Spanish aloud but does it out of order. A, B, C, D, L, LL, F}
161 Pepe: Go!
162 Carlitos: A, B, C, D, L, LL, F! I only know like the first three letters.
163 Pepe: Letters, that’s a first grade level!

Pepe’s dominance unquestionably left frustration and anger in its place.

CONCLUSION

These findings challenge some commonly held beliefs about the heritage language population and their proper placement in the language classrooms of American schools. This case study investigated three diverse HLLs and reiterates that all HLLs are not homogenous (Alarcón, 2010). Instead, they bring diverse language and cultural experiences to the language classroom. In fact, research has demonstrated that traditional foreign language classrooms are not adequate sites for HLLs to learn their first language, particularly at advanced proficiency levels. While special Spanish for native speaker (SNS) courses are optimal for HLLs, they are relatively uncommon at the high school level. This paper recommends that teachers advocate for HLLs and FLLs alike by adopting a learner-centered pedagogy and differentiating instruction in a heterogeneous language classroom.

Testing HLL proficiency in both receptive and productive skills is likewise critical for course placement to avoid a mismatch like the case described above. Alarcón (2010) claims that advanced heritage learners typically have already acquired receptive and productive skills in Spanish, consider themselves fluent in a standard variety of the target language and primarily want to boost their academic writing skills. Pepe falls into this category. Spanish II was the highest class that the school offered but a student with Pepe’s proficiency level should have been placed in a more advanced class. At the very least, since a higher level course was not offered, Pepe’s tasks should have been differentiated better to challenge him and avoid his disruptions. This single move could have radically changed the classroom dynamic. It might have provided other students more opportunities to shine, learn, and grow.

Ms. M. attempted to verbally interrupt the existing ideologies in this classroom but her attempts were unsuccessful. Her teacher-centered instructional stance constructed a classroom hierarchy which placed her at the very top. Then, Pepe was slightly below as the classroom MVP. Next, Carlitos came in a distant third. Edwin, despite his HLL status, was excluded from MVP status along with the rest of the FLLs in the class. This hierarchy fortified the detrimental ideologies which positioned some students at the top and others at the bottom. Consequently, the remaining FLLs and one less fluent HLL, Edwin were marginalized. It was no wonder that Carlitos, Edwin, Ronnie, and Alvin all failed the course. They were not set up for success. As educators for diverse student populations, we must nurture all students. Without the necessary support, struggling students often end up either failing courses and/or dropping out of school. Often the emphasis on the HLLs in mixed classes is to the detriment of traditional FLLs who are actually more appropriate for these Spanish courses.

In Ms. M.’s class, many students failed to meet their educational goals. Edwin and Carlitos were removed from Spanish class, where they were studying their heritage language, and placed into intensive English support. While this may seem admirable, it speaks volumes about the prestige of English. With the proper support and resources, Edwin and Carlitos could have simultaneously strengthened their literacy skills in both languages.

Moreover, a significant number of the FLLs in Ms. M.’s class also failed to reach high educational standards. Heterogeneous classes like the one analyzed here are problematic for all students and the teacher. The educational pursuit is not only complicated on the micro level by the wide range of Spanish skills in one classroom but also on the macro level by prevalent societal ideologies about language learners and users. The social injustices facing some students were too expansive to overcome with the existing resources provided by Ms. M.

This study sheds light on the significant work that remains in the field of language education, particularly with heterogeneous classes. As language educators, it is of little use to complain about
the mixed course situation. Rather, we should focus on the benefits of mixed-level ability classes and ensure that teachers are facilitating positive interactions amongst diverse students. Furthermore, we must continue investigating heterogeneous classes where educational goals are being met and implement perspectival and structural changes in our own classes based upon what has worked well for others. Major overhauls in language education at the classroom level and HLL policy changes on the national scale are potential positive outcomes of further research on heterogeneous language classes.

In the interim, we must forge ahead, steadfast in our goals to improve instruction for all students regardless of language background. Reaching all students and motivating them to believe they can succeed is paramount. However, this is no easy feat. Foreign language teachers everywhere need support, too. Administrators, parents, guardians and politicians must convene and address these issues collectively. Antiquated policy needs updating to meet the needs of students today. If budgets cannot fund separate tracks for HLLs then other avenues have to be explored that can help them be successful. Also, a commitment needs to be made to conduct further research in classrooms with positive partnerships between HLLs and FLLs in order to replicate their achievements.
REFERENCES


ENDNOTES

1 All names are pseudonyms to uphold anonymity.