Towards teacher development and national standards for Spanish as a heritage language

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Introduction

Between 1990 and 2000, the U.S. Latino population grew a staggering 40% while the rest of the population increased only 10%. This population change has profoundly impacted the American education system at all levels of instruction. Currently, Hispanics constitute nearly 32% of the student population of the 100 largest public school districts and 27% of the population of the 500 largest public school districts in the United States. In some of this nation's largest urban areas, the proportion of Latino students is even higher. There are 6,942 public schools that are between 50% and 100% Latino, including 71% of public schools in Los Angeles, 46% in Dade County, Florida, 34% in New York City and 33% in Chicago (Stearns & Watanabe, 2002).

These demographics are directly at odds with current practices in many Spanish programs. A recent survey conducted by the National Foreign Language Center and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) (Ingold, Rivers, Tesser, & Ashby, 2002) found that only 18% of the postsecondary programs surveyed had Spanish for Native Speakers (SNS) classes. At the secondary level, the lack of SNS is even more acute: just nine percent of schools offered SNS instruction in 1997 (Rhodes & Branaman 1999). This situation is not likely to improve soon, given the scarcity of teacher training resources in SNS. To date, there is no SNS methods textbook; there are no standards for SNS teacher preparation, no state-sponsored certification of SNS teachers, and no national language standards for heritage language speakers of Spanish. Additionally, few foreign language teacher-training programs include coursework on teaching Spanish to native speakers, a point that will be illustrated further in this article. This means that even at institutions with an SNS program, teachers often do not receive adequate preparation to work with these students. Calls for SNS

teacher training began appearing at least twenty years ago (García-Moya 1981; Roca 1992, Gutiérrez 1997) but to date no formal national surveys have determined how many pre-service teacher-training programs include heritage issues.

General curricular offerings in Spanish programs are also out of kilter with demographic realities. Although the United States is the fifth largest and the wealthiest Spanish speaking country in the world, the literature, history, language, and general contributions of U.S. Latinos do not figure prominently in the teaching of Spanish in this country. There is a growing volume of pedagogical resources with information of this nature, but the use of these materials is generally confined to basic and intermediate courses, where it is primarily intended to be used as a motivational tool rather than to provide substantive content matter instruction. Rarely, if ever, does this information make its way into the advanced language courses, much less into the literature and culture courses that form the core preparation of Spanish language majors.

Clearly, these curricular deficits do not serve heritage language speakers well. Furthermore, as researchers and teachers have noted repeatedly, they do not serve the nation well. In today's global economy, the linguistic and cultural skills of heritage language speakers are vital to the security and economic prosperity of the United States (Brecht and Ingold 2002). Heritage language speakers also represent a large potential source of enrollments to Spanish programs in the U.S. Currently, one out of every five teenagers (20%) in the United States is of Hispanic descent, and given that Hispanic birthrates are rapidly outpacing those of the overall population, the proportion of Latino teenagers is projected to climb sharply the next two decades. These projections are extremely advantageous to Spanish programs. Typically, the teenage and early adulthood years of minority youth are marked by a pursuit of their ethnic and linguistic roots (Tse 1998). Marketing specialists have even coined a name for this phenomenon: *retroacculturation*. Activities associated with retroacculturation include consuming ethnic goods and services, joining ethnic organizations, and taking foreign language and culture courses.

Notwithstanding their potential, heritage language students present a number of daunting challenges to Spanish programs. In the next section we turn our attention to a number of these challenges.

What is different about working with heritage language speakers?

The presence of heritage speakers in Spanish programs affects both placement and pedagogical issues. The placement of traditional (i.e. foreign language) students in language courses is a fairly straightforward process. Typically, students with no previous coursework in a language are assigned to the first level of instruction. Others are placed according to well-established formulas of equivalency and sequencing of courses (e.g. one year of high school equals one semester of college; in order to enroll in a course at level x, you must have completed coursework at level x-1). Even in the more difficult cases, such as when a long time has elapsed since the completion of prior coursework in Spanish, placement is still fairly deterministic. Students who cannot correctly conjugate the preterit and the imperfect forms of verbs, for example, likely belong at a beginning level of instruction. On the other hand, those with a good command of the system of aspect probably belong at the intermediate or advanced levels, depending on their command of other grammatical structures and vocabulary.

The teaching of Spanish to foreign language students is greatly facilitated by the existence of implicational hierarchies of linguistic knowledge. Such hierarchies enable teachers to make educated guesses about the skills and knowledge that students bring to the foreign class. Spanish teachers know, for example, that:

a) Foreign language students who are familiar with the verbs "haber" and "hacer" probably know that these words are written with "h". However, such students may not know how to conjugate all forms of these verbs.

b) Foreign language students who have studied the pronominal system of Spanish have learned that an infinitive or gerund and any pronouns that follow are written as one word. However, even advanced students may have difficulty using double pronouns in spontaneous speech.

c) Foreign language students that know how to form the imperfect subjunctive probably know how to conjugate the preterit and imperfect forms of the indicative. They may not have perfect control of any of these verbal distinctions in spontaneous speech, however.

d) Foreign language students with high levels of communicative competence in Spanish generally have done extensive coursework in this language. However, extensive coursework does not guarantee fluency.

Implicational hierarchies inform many of the decisions made by foreign language programs and teachers, from the selection and sequencing of instructional topics to assessment and materials development. They are so commonplace that their role in the foreign language classroom often goes unrecognized. Only when these hierarchies break down do they become the object of scrutiny. Teachers who have worked with heritage Spanish speakers will recognize that the above hierarchies break down precisely in the Spanish for Native Speakers (SNS) classroom. For example, heritage language students can be at a loss to spell verbs and pronouns that they employ with ease in conversation. They may be able to conjugate the imperfect subjunctive with fairly high rates of accuracy, but produce forms like *íbanos* and *truje*. They may speak Spanish with great fluency but have limited or no academic background in this language.

The SNS research literature serves as a record of what happens when implicational hierarchies cease to be operational. There is: (1) disorientation and frustration on the part of teachers and learners (Rodriguez Pino 1997, Scalera 2000, Potowski 2002); (2) a lack of correspondence between teaching methods/materials/goals and student needs (Aparicio 1997, Draper and Hicks 2000, Valdés 2002); and (3) a call for new paradigms of instruction and teacher education (Valdés 2002). Two primary factors contribute to the breakdown of implicational hierarchies in the SNS classroom: the wide range of linguistic and academic backgrounds represented among SNS students, and the limited knowledge base that teachers have about the academic skills and linguistic background of this student population. We turn our attention to these issues in the next sections.

Who are these students and what do they know?

In this section, we offer three profiles of heritage Spanish speakers in the United States: a linguistic profile, a language use profile, and an academic profile.

Linguistic profile of U.S. Latinos

Valdés (1997) classifies SNS students into eight categories according to their linguistic and academic skills. Linguistically, these students range from being fluent speakers of a prestigious variety of Spanish, to having only receptive skills in a contact variety of rural Spanish. Some students have basic to good academic skills in English and Spanish, while others have well-developed skills in one language, but not in the other. SNS students often find foreign language curricula inappropriate, much as native speakers of English would feel about a course for students learning English as a second language.

Silva-Corvalán (1994) and others have noted that the grammatical and lexical properties of U.S. Spanish vary by generation in the U.S. By and large, the Spanish spoken even by first-generation Latinos is characterized by the use of some English words and expressions. The Spanish of second generation Latinos shows a higher frequency of English borrowings, relative to that of first generation speakers. In addition, second generation U.S. Spanish exhibits the following grammatical tendencies: (a) simplification of the verbal system (particularly in mood and aspect) and prepositions, (b) overextension of "estar" at the expense of "ser" (c) codeswitching, (i.e. the mixing of English and Spanish; and (d) a preference for periphrastic constructions over synthetic verb forms (*voy a comer* vs. *comeré*).

Language use profile of U.S. Latinos

According to the U.S. Census (2000), there are approximately 38 million Latinos in the U.S., not counting Puerto Rico. Approximately 73% of the Latino population, (28 million) report speaking Spanish at home (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002). Studies focusing on the school population point to

lower percentages of Spanish-speaking Latino students. A study of K-12 students reports that 42% of Latino students speak exclusively or mostly Spanish at home (Llagas 2003).

Despite the presence of a large Spanish-speaking population, sociolinguistic studies raise legitimate doubts regarding the long-term survival of U.S. Spanish. The rate at which Spanish is undergoing erosion varies considerably across geographical areas in the U.S. The shift to English appears to be particularly accelerated in the Southwest, a situation that may be explained, at least in part, to the low socioeconomic standing of the Spanish-speaking population in this area (Rivera-Mills, 2001; Bills, Hudson & Hernández-Chávez 2000; Bernal Enríquez, 2000). Studies of New York City paint a less negative picture, perhaps due in part to the relative recency of migration there. For example, although Zentella (1997) and Pedraza (1985) both document a generational decline in Spanish among the Puerto Rican population in New York, they also find that Spanish is being retained in some domains, notably childrearing. By far the most optimistic picture of U.S. Spanish emerges from recent studies of the Miami-Dade area. Lynch (2000) and Boswell (2000) present a healthy picture of Spanish, and both studies connect this situation to the strong socioeconomic value of Spanish in this area. It must be noted however, that older studies of Spanish in Miami point to rapid loss of Spanish along the generational principles operating in other parts of the country (García and Otheguy 1988; Portes & Schauffler 1996).

Academic profile of U.S. Latinos

By and large, the research literature has focused on linguistic issues as the primary source of the negative attitudes that instructors hold about SNS students. The information presented in this section suggests that general academic deficiencies found among Latino students as well as social and cultural factors may also contribute to the widespread view of SNS students as a problem rather than a resource for Spanish programs.

The academic challenges faced by U.S. Latinos are well documented. The high school dropout rate of this population (27.8%) is four times higher than that of whites (6.9%), twice that of African- Americans (12.9%), and eight-fold that of Asian/Pacific Islanders (3.8%) (Horn, Peter & Rooney, 2003, p. 41). The

Scholastic Assessment Test Scores of Latino students are lower than those of any other ethnic/racial category, except for African-Americans (Llagas 2003, p. 62). The academic potential of Latinos in higher education is often compromised by a variety of social and cultural factors, which are of particular relevance to heritage language specialists.

a) Only 39% of Hispanic undergraduates were read to on a daily basis as children, compared to 64% of white and 44% of African-American undergraduates (Llagas 2003, p. 25) Research reveals that children whose parents read to them perform better in school and are better readers (Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998).

b) On average, Latino homes have fewer children's books than homes of other ethnicities. The number of children's books in the home has been shown to be a predictor of general knowledge in children.

c) In 1999, the reading scores of 9, 13, and 17 year-old Hispanic students were 13%, 9%, and 8% below (respectively) those of white students in these age groups, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Llagas 2003, p. 48).

d) As the first in their families to pursue higher education, Latinos often lack essential support systems at home. In 2000, 57% of Hispanic undergraduates had parents who had no more than a high school education. By contrast, only 33% of white or Asian undergraduates fit this description (Horn, Peter & Rooney, 2002).

e) The participation of Latinos in college is characterized by three risk factors for dropping out of postsecondary education: Latinos tend to be older students, they tend to be attending school on a part-time basis and they tend to be enrolled in two-year colleges (Fry 2002, p. 3).

f) Hispanic students who speak mostly Spanish at home are significantly less likely than those who speak mostly English at home to have parents who have a high school degree (Llagas 2003, p. 72).

The findings presented here bear on SNS instruction in three significant ways. They strongly suggest that:

1) SNS materials must be carefully **calibrated** not just to the linguistic level of Latino students, but also to their academic abilities and background. Some works of literature, for example, may prove impenetrable for Latino students, not for their use of language but because of their complex organizational structure. The same works may not be particularly difficult for foreign language students with a background in English-language literature and solid reading skills.   We do not advocate watering down curricula for these students, but rather developing strategies to assist them in engaging with such material.

2) Similarly, SNS instruction must focus on **filling the educational gaps** of Latinos, particularly in the areas of prose and document literacy, explicitly teaching reading and writing strategies, and developing habits that may have not been developed in the childhood years.

3) The SNS classroom should provide students with the opportunity and the tools to explore **cultural notions** and practices that may encumber the academic progress of Latinos. Some of these include the tendency to postpone college and to marry and start a family early in life.

In this article, we argue that the above goals are best met through the use of instructional practices that resemble those used in native language arts classes.

What are the goals of SNS instruction?

According to Valdés (1997) there are four goals for well-structured heritage language courses:

1) **Spanish language maintenance**. It is a widely held belief that the formal study of Spanish can contribute to the maintenance of the Spanish language among second- and third-generation Latino students.

2) **Acquisition of the prestige variety of Spanish**. Heritage classes generally seek to increase students' awareness of regional and social variation in the Spanish language. Exactly which prestige variety should be taught to heritage Spanish speakers is open to debate (Villa, 1996), but it is generally agreed that a primary goal of formal education, in any language, is to prepare students to function in formal circles of discourse.

3) **Expansion of bilingual range**. Language proficiency includes a variety of different competencies, including grammatical, textual, and pragmatic competence, and in bilingual speakers they are often unequally spread over both languages.

4) **Transfer of literacy skills**. By this, Valdés refers to the transfer of effective reading and writing strategies from one language to another.

Equally important are heritage speakers' affective needs. Many Latino students display insecurity about their Spanish and are hesitant to undertake formal study of what to them has always been an informal language. Heritage speakers may also reject Spanish because they have internalized messages about its inferiority or undesirability. These issues are not normally present in heterogeneous groups of non-Spanish speakers enrolled in basic Spanish courses, but should be addressed in heritage-speaking populations because language attitudes often affect language learning (Gardner 1982). Heritage speakers' affective needs and their importance in the classroom are explored with compelling detail in Webb & Miller (2000).

Another set of goals for heritage language students and curricula was produced by the Hunter College-ACTFL collaboration (Webb & Miller 2000). In this volume, the list of heritage language program goals developed by Scalera (2000) includes learning about the roles of students' heritage countries and how their cultures, customs and religions were developed; understanding the usefulness of the heritage language and developing increased self-monitoring abilities and confidence that continued use of the heritage language will lead to greater proficiency; integrating language experiences across the curriculum and across language arts skills; and including literature, social science, and history related to students' countries as well as to their daily lives.

The AATSP, long interested in the experiences of heritage Spanish speakers, has also published a set of recommended topics that SNS courses should address (2000: 83), several of which overlap with the goals proposed by Valdés (1997) and Scalera (2000). The concepts proposed by the AATSP to be included in SNS instruction include student motivation and self-esteem; linguistic issues such as language formality, regional

and social diversity, and improving accuracy in spelling; pedagogical issues including how to deal with student errors; strategies for language expansion; and increasing awareness of metalinguistic skills and cultural diversity.

The three volumes cited here provide a picture of what SNS instruction should look like, distinguishing it quite clearly from traditional FL instruction. The next question is, what do teachers need to know in order to carry out such instruction effectively?

What do SNS teachers need to know?

The preceding sections have demonstrated that heritage speakers have different linguistic and affective needs than SFL students. It should be clear that, as a result, SNS instruction occupies itself with a very different knowledge base and set of skills than does SFL instruction. However, there exists a perturbing assumption that teachers who have studied SFL acquisition and have been trained in SFL methodology will make good SNS teachers. This occurs even in institutions that are responsive enough to heritage speakers to offer a separate SNS track. It is useful to illustrate this problem through a comparison with the field of English teacher training. Nearly all English departments maintain a clear curricular distinction between those preparing to become ESL teachers and those preparing to become native English language arts teachers. It is not assumed that ESL teachers will be successful native language arts teachers, nor vice versa. In fact, state requirements demand separate coursework and award different endorsements and certifications in these two fields.

The SNS goals cited in the previous section also contain guidelines for what SNS teachers should know in order to carry out those goals successfully. In the AATSP volume, García & Blanco (2000) offer the list in Table 1.

Table 1, Necessary teacher competencies for teaching native speakers of Spanish

Teachers of native speakers should meet the requirements expected of all teachers of Spanish. In particular, teachers of native speakers should demonstrate the following competencies:
- Minimum of advanced language proficiency;
- Knowledge of appropriate pedagogical principles in language expansion and enrichment;
- Theories of cognitive processes that underlie bilingualism;
- Theories of social and linguistic processes that underlie bilingualism and languages in contact;
- Knowledge of the sociolinguistic dynamics of Spanish as a world language and as a viable system of communication in the United States;
- Knowledge and understanding of the interdependence of the students' home culture with Hispanic cultures, in general.

Source: García & Blanco (2000:88)

As Table 1 shows, the AATSP states that teachers of native speakers should meet the requirements expected of all teachers of Spanish and exceed them by demonstrating competencies in several other areas that are not covered in most foreign language methodology courses, notably the second through sixth points. Nor are topics such as bilingualism, language contact, and sociolinguistic variation likely to be studied by teachers while they are undergraduates or graduate students in a predominantly literature-based program.   We will return to issues of teacher development in a later section.

The Hunter College-ACTFL collaboration (Webb & Miller 2000:83) also offers a list of competencies and practices for teachers of heritage languages. Some are similar to those offered by the AATSP (including a firm background in sociolinguistics and an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the students). Additional points in Webb & Miller's (2000:83) list of required heritage teacher competencies include:

a) Understanding the social, political, and emotional issues associated with having various degrees of proficiency in one's heritage language;

b) Awareness of students' attitudes toward learning their heritage language;

c) Incorporating personal voice into the instructional program, thereby nurturing self-esteem;

d) Being an advocate for heritage learners and promoting the importance of the heritage language program within the school.

Other points not specified in these lists but that are crucial for SNS teachers are placement testing (see Otheguy & Toro 2000), critical dialect awareness (Martínez 2003) and assessment. Even students living in the same community can have varied linguistic profiles, and some of them are better served by regular FL Spanish classes. Teachers need to understand their options in testing speaking, reading, listening, and writing for placement purposes and for assessment during the course.

Given the above descriptions of well-designed SNS course goals and teacher competencies, we must ask ourselves whether traditional SFL teacher training programs are adequate to prepare teachers to work with these populations. To approach this question, we examined syllabi from 37 foreign language methods courses in 23 different states. Twenty-two of these syllabi were voluntarily posted to the FL Teach website (www.flteach.com), which as of 2003 had approximately 4,100 members on its listserv. The other 15 syllabi were found using an Internet search engine. All courses had to address future teachers of Spanish, so courses directed only to French teachers or ESL teachers were not included in this analysis.

The course syllabi addressed topics that are typical of FL methods courses, including second language acquisition, the preparation of classroom activities, curricula, and assessments, classroom management, evaluating teaching materials, state and national FL standards, and how to incorporate technology. Only one of the 37 syllabi mentioned heritage language issues, even though some of these universities were located in areas with heritage Spanish-speaking populations (as evidenced by SNS course offerings for undergraduates).

The textbooks most often required in these FL methods courses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2, Textbooks required in 37 foreign language methods courses

Textbook author(s) & title	Number of courses requiring the textbook
Shrum & Glisan, *Teachers' Handbook: Contextualized* language instruction.	18
Omaggio-Hadley, *Teaching language in context*	13
Curtain & Pesola, *Languages and children: Making the match*	8
National standards in foreign language	7

education project, *Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century*	
Lightbown & Spada, *How Languages are Learned*	4
Lee & VanPatten, *Making communicative language teaching happen*	4

Note: Total is greater than 37 because some courses required more than one textbook.

Apart from Shrum & Glisan (1994), which contains four pages about heritage language development, and the National standards in foreign language education project (1999) with another four pages, none of these textbooks offer insight about working with heritage language learners. Given the increasing presence of heritage students, evidenced by posts to the FL Teach listserv by teachers requesting advice about how to work with such students, FL methods instructors should begin incorporating a cursory exploration of heritage issues and a list of resources for further learning (such as AATSP 2000; Webb & Miller 2000; Roca & Colombi 2003). In areas with large heritage populations, more intensive alternatives should be explored, such as those we propose in a later section.

Although the sample of syllabi we examined is not large enough to make generalizations about FL methods instruction in the U.S., the courses represented by these syllabi are clearly insufficient to prepare teachers who work with heritage speakers. An informal survey taken of teachers in twelve states revealed that only one state had requirements for SNS teachers, but no state had SNS standards (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2001). No state currently offers SNS certification or endorsement for public school teachers.

Before proposing ways to improve the development of Spanish teachers who will work with SNS populations, we will draw from the field of native language arts to describe further the body of knowledge that SNS teachers should be familiar with in order to work effectively with their students.

Connections between heritage language teaching and native language arts

Noting that heritage language classrooms share many important characteristics with native language arts classrooms, Webb and Miller (2000) suggested that teachers of heritage language learners should study the

standards that apply to language arts classes and learn from the practices of language arts teachers. In this section, we briefly examine the *Standards for Foreign Language Teaching* (National standards in foreign language education project, 1999) according to the abilities and needs of heritage language learners in order to determine how these standards might be adjusted for SNS instruction. Then, we examine the national English language arts standards published in the same year (NCTE 1996) and recommend several NCTE standards that educators can apply to SNS instruction.

The national *Standards for Foreign Language Teaching* (National standards in foreign language education project, 1999; hereafter "National FL Standards") define content knowledge for foreign language students in grades four, eight and twelve. They are composed of five goal areas, often referred to as the "5 Cs": communication, cultures, comparisons, communities and connections. The proficiency-oriented goals reflect the movement of the profession beyond the grammar-translation focus of the past. Heritage language learners' abilities and language development needs are mentioned several times in this document (on pages 19 and 437-438) and the standards were written in very general terms in order that they could be applied to a variety of different settings and student backgrounds. However, the value of the standards to the teaching of SNS is compromised by their poor alignment with regard to the needs and abilities of heritage language students of Spanish. In particular, the national FL standards:

a) Fail to address the affective needs of SNS students. Research has shown that Latino students are often subjected to harsh criticism of their Spanish-language abilities. As a result, SNS students are frequently plagued by significant linguistic insecurities that may interfere with their becoming lifelong learners of Spanish (Carreira 2000, Krashen 1999, Rodríguez Pino 1997).

b) Fail to address the social needs of SNS students. Given that the U.S. is a microcosm of the Spanish-speaking world, U.S. Latinos must be attuned to dialectal differences and hybrid varieties. The notion of "community" must be expanded to accommodate the complex set of circumstances that characterize Spanish in the U.S.

c) Fail to address SNS students' academic needs as they relate to language development, including general literacy skills, the need to develop Spanish reading habits and learn specific strategies for the transfer of literacy skills.

d) Fail to address SNS students' linguistic needs with respect to acquisition of a prestige language variety and expansion of their bilingual range.

The National FL Standards, by focusing on the content that FL students should experience, do not represent the optimal framework for conceptualizing SNS instruction. The English language arts standards (www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm), however, may offer SNS educators some of these missing concepts. They resulted from a collaboration between the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and sought to describe what students should learn in the English language arts. The NCTE standards exhibit several similarities to the National FL Standards, including the belief that English language arts should support students' learning in other subjects, that students best develop language competencies through meaningful activities, and the recognition that children bring varied potentials for learning and require appropriate educational opportunities.

The NCTE Standards align well with the needs of SNS students. Standards 1, 8, 11, and 12 reflect the fact that Spanish is used in a wide range of professional and social contexts in the U.S. These standards call for the development of linguistic and academic skills essential to communicating in these contexts. Standards 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10 address the general literacy needs of SNS students and call for students to expand their command of registers and genres. Standard 9 recognizes the complex sociolinguistic circumstances that characterize the use of Spanish in the U.S. and reflect the importance of linguistic tolerance and respect in this context. In so doing, this standard provides a basis for addressing the affective needs of SNS students.

In the NCTE publication that describes these standards (1996:8-9), there is mention of two additional points that are highly relevant to SNS teaching:

a) The importance of recognizing the **impact of poverty, ethnic and cultural discrimination, family illiteracy and sociopolitical disenfranchisement** on learning. As we have seen, a number of social factors keep Latino students from reaching their full potential, not only in Spanish, but in all academic areas. The SNS classroom can provide a culturally sensitive context where these factors can be explored from the bicultural perspective of Latino students and where personal and group strategies for overcoming challenges can be proposed.

b) The need for students to understand the **underlying systems and structures of language** (grammar, punctuation, spelling). It is often lack of understanding of Spanish structures that leads to students' faulty transfers from English. In addition, students' lack of familiarity with grammatical terms and conventions often contribute to their sense of inadequacy in Spanish. SNS educators should explore the creation of a Spanish version of the student-friendly English grammar lessons developed by Vavra (2002).

The NCTE standards assume a population of learners who are not beginners in their language of study, but who are capable of communicating in this language. In this regard, they line up better with the profile of SNS students than do the foreign language standards. However, we must be careful when drawing upon the NCTE standards to address SNS instruction because the NCTE standards address students who are already native speakers of English (although native speakers of non-mainstream dialects of English as well as former ESL students surely present challenges in such classes). In other words, not all SNS students have a sufficient Spanish level to jump into language arts as if they were monolingual native speakers in a Spanish-speaking country. However, even though some heritage speakers may be better served by the National FL Standards, the NCTE standards in language arts have much to offer the field of SNS.

To conclude this section, in addition to the National FL Standards (1996) and the heritage language goals proposed by Valdés (1997), the AATSP (2000), and Webb & Miller (2000), the field of SNS can draw from the national English language arts standards (NCTE 1996) to conceptualize its aims. The field may decide

to produce a set of national SNS standards that can then feed into state certifications or endorsements in SNS teaching.

Suggestions for SNS teacher development

As described above, SNS courses are profoundly different from SFL courses. Teachers who work with heritage speakers, therefore, need to engage in professional development experiences that prepare them adequately.

<u>Full SNS course</u>

In New York City, Hunter College's Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Hunter College High School, and ACTFL developed a heritage methods course that became a required part of the undergraduate and graduate teacher certification programs at Hunter College (Webb & Miller 2000). Other institutions that offer SNS teacher development courses include California State University at Long Beach, New Mexico State University, Illinois State University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Recent syllabi for many of these courses are available at the webpage maintained by ACTFL's Special Interest Group devoted to SNS (www.uic.edu/orgs/actflsigsns).

These courses address many of the aspects of SNS teaching that were described in previous sections of this article, including dialect variation, the importance of becoming familiar with students' language habits, and the importance of teacher reflection. The obvious advantage of a full-semester course is that there is time to incorporate classroom action research (or, when the students are pre-service teachers not yet in teaching SNS, to conduct a classroom study) along with the readings and reflections. Action research, loosely defined as research that teachers undertake in their own classrooms, involves identifying a classroom problem, coming up with a solution, and instigating a collaborative community of action researchers working to reform education (Crookes 1993). Burton (1998) claims that teachers who carry out their own research are more likely to act on research findings in their classrooms and are enabled to engage in professional dialogues more effectively.

Two of the SNS teacher development courses cited, those at Illinois State University and the University of Illinois at Chicago, are offered entirely online. This provides an excellent opportunity for pre-service and in-service teachers who have difficulties commuting to campus. The incorporation of technology is another obvious advantage to online courses, particularly given the recent emphasis on technology in language teaching and the advances of the National Foreign Language Center in developing searchable SNS databases and teaching modules including REACH (http://www.nflc.org/reach). Since 2000, ACTFL and Weber State University in Utah have collaborated in offering an online FL teaching methods course. A similar collaborative SNS course should be explored in order for SNS teachers around the country to have access to crucial teacher development experiences.

Other options

When a full semester course is not feasible, teachers can meet during the first or second half the semester only, for a series of half-day Saturday sessions, or for a workshop. A 90-minute "heritage language awareness" workshop designed by Potowski (2001) involved collaborative hands-on work using authentic language samples produced by heritage speakers and reflection on personal experiences with sociolinguistic variation. Organizers of such workshops should make them available both to pre-service teachers as a portion of their regular FL methods course, as well as to in-service teachers looking to earn professional development credit from their school districts.   When teachers cannot attend workshops outside of class hours, methods course instructors may wish to dedicate one or two class sessions to SNS issues.

SNS teacher training is often available at workshops and conferences such as those sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Heritage Languages Initiative, the University of New Mexico at Las Cruces, and AATSP, ACTFL, and NABE. There is also an ACTFL-sponsored listserv (www.uic.edu/orgs/actflsigsns/listserv) where approximately two hundred SNS educators share ideas and organize readings and discussions. Additionally, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics maintains a website with links to useful SNS materials (www.cal.org/ericcll/faqs/RGOs/sns.html).

Our discussion thus far has centered on teaching Spanish to bilingual Latinos in the context of specialized classes for this student population. That is, we have assumed a dual-language track situation, with separate courses for second and heritage language learners. However, in many schools, economic limitations or other considerations preclude the existence of two tracks and make it necessary to group both types of learners in the same class.

The primary challenge that teachers face in mixed language classes stems from the wide range of abilities, goals, and attitudes represented among students. For example, in some parts of the country, mixed classes may have heritage language students who are first generation immigrants and are therefore highly proficient in Spanish. In other areas, such classes may have heritage language students who are third generation immigrants and are English dominant. Typically, second language learners represent the majority of students in mixed classes, but this is not always the case. In areas of high Latino concentration, the opposite situation may hold and second language learners of Spanish may find themselves in the minority. Though each of these examples represents a mixed class situation, each of them calls for different teaching practices and materials.

Clearly, the complexity and variety of issues surrounding mixed-language classes is such that it merits separate and extensive treatment beyond this paper. As a point of departure, a promising approach to dealing with this situation is in terms of *differentiation*, as proposed by Tomlinson (1999). Differentiated instruction has received a great deal of attention as an effective way to deal with issues of equity and excellence in mixed-ability classrooms. A differentiated classroom offers a variety of learning options so as be responsive to the needs of different students. Key tenets of this type of instruction are that: (1) Differences between students shape the curriculum; (2) On-going assessment of students is built into the curriculum; (3) Multiples learning materials are available; (4) There is variable pacing; (5) Students play a part in setting goals and standards; (6) Varied grading criteria are used; and (7) Work is assigned to students by virtue of their level of readiness.

With Latinos increasingly settling in parts of the country that have no history of Latino immigration, we believe that mixed-language classes will become the de facto mode of instruction in schools throughout the

country. As this happens, training teachers to deal with the challenges of mixed-language classes will be a priority of the profession.

Conclusions

> Teaching is a triadic undertaking. It involves someone teaching something to somebody – or I would prefer to say, enabling somebody to learn how to learn. The point though is that every term of the triad has to be attended to: the living being who is the teacher, …the subject matter… and the learners in their particularity and variety, with different biographies and degrees of interest, different levels of readiness and skill. (Green 1984, p. 284)

These words remind us of three areas that are crucial for arriving at effective teaching practices for teaching Spanish to bilingual Latinos: the subject matter, the teacher, and the learner. As we have seen, our knowledge of these learners must be not be narrowly confined to the area of linguistics, but must also take into consideration wider economic, social, and academic variables pertaining to U.S. Latinos. By focusing on these, we gain a deeper understanding of how to better calibrate our learning standards and teaching practices to meet the needs of heritage language students of Spanish. The following two principal conclusions emerge from this discussion:

1) There is a pressing need for SNS language standards that address the social, academic, affective, and professional needs of U.S. Latinos. We have argued that the NCTE Standards provide a better framework than the Foreign Language Standards for meeting these needs for two reasons. First, they align more closely with the conditions that characterize the use of Spanish in the U. S. and second, they put forth a vision of language and literacy instruction that aims to give students the necessary tools to succeed in society.

2) The diversity of the U.S. Latino population and SNS students, in particular, underscores the importance of training SNS teachers to engage in meaningful teacher development experiences. We have seen, for example, that the Spanish spoken by heritage language students varies by generation in the U.S. Likewise, the general academic skills and economic status of U.S. Latinos vary significantly by generation, geographic region, and national origin. One way to understand this variation and design effective teaching practices for their classes is for teachers to engage in action research.

As the Latino population continues to grow, Spanish-language programs in the U.S. (particularly those at the postsecondary levels) should consider whether the assumptions and philosophies that underlie their curricular and pedagogical practices are in alignment with demographic realities.   They should also actively recruit Latinos as undergraduate and graduate teacher candidates and as faculty.

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