

Using Classroom Conversation to Embrace Ethnolinguistic Identity and Heritage Language

El uso de las conversaciones en clase para abordar la identidad etnolingüística y la lengua de herencia

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“...consciousness is the first step towards emancipation”
(Fairclough 1989, 1). *Language and Power*;1

Resumen

El aula de idiomas es un espacio ideal para empoderar a los alumnos a través de prácticas lingüísticas y animarlos a convertirse en agentes de cambio. Es importante que los hablantes de herencia, especialmente en niveles intermedios y avanzados, puedan discutir en un espacio de aprendizaje seguro los temas que enfrentan en sus realidades diarias, como la identidad etnolingüística y las experiencias en torno al bilingüismo y la biculturalidad. Discutir estos temas en el salón de clases de lengua de herencia produce beneficios a corto y largo plazo, como la aceptación de la identidad etnolingüística y la preservación de su idioma y cultura heredados.

Basado en la pedagogía crítica de Freire (2000) y la conciencia crítica del lenguaje de Fairclough (1989 1992a), este capítulo presenta una serie de actividades pedagógicas para fomentar el pensamiento crítico y la conciencia crítica del lenguaje en el aula del LH a través del diálogo y la escritura. Diseñadas para estudiantes minorizados por su herencia etnolingüísticas, como lo son los hispanohablantes en los EE.UU., las actividades pretenden cultivar actitudes positivas hacia la HL y combatir los prejuicios lingüísticos y culturales contra los latinos estadounidenses. La secuencia de actividades implica (a) una composición que explora la identidad etnolingüística; (b) una revisión por pares de la composición; (c) un diálogo mediado por computadora; y (d) una composición colectiva posterior a la discusión. Estas actividades implican la práctica de leer, escribir, escuchar y hablar, así como el pensamiento crítico. Presento las actividades paso a paso junto con sugerencias para abordar las inseguridades lingüísticas y los temas de inequidad.

Palabras clave: Pedagogía del español como lengua de herencia, pedagogía crítica, pensamiento crítico, comunicación por medio de ordenadores, población Latina de EEUU, agencia.

Abstract

The language classroom is an ideal place to empower students through linguistic practices and to encourage them to become agents of change. It is important that heritage speakers, especially in intermediate and advanced levels, can discuss in a safe learning space topics they face in their daily realities, such as ethnolinguistic identity and experiences around bilingualism and biculturalism. Discussing these topics in the heritage language classroom produces short- and long-term benefits, such as the embracing of ethnolinguistic identity and preservation of their heritage language and culture.

Based on Freire's (2000) critical pedagogy and Fairclough's (1989 1992a) critical language awareness, this chapter presents a series of pedagogical activities to foster critical thinking and critical language awareness in the HL classroom through dialogue and writing. Designed for ethnolinguistically minoritized students, such as Spanish heritage speakers in the U.S., the activities pretend to cultivate positive attitudes toward the HL and combat linguistic and cultural prejudice against US Latinxs. The activity sequence involves (a) a composition exploring ethnolinguistic identity; (b) a peer review of the composition; (c) a computer-mediated dialogue; and (d) a post-discussion collaborative composition. These activities entail practice of reading, writing, listening, and speaking along with critical thinking. I present the activities step-by-step along with suggestions for addressing linguistic insecurities and inequity topics.

Keywords: Spanish as a heritage language pedagogy, critical pedagogy, critical thinking, computer mediated communication, U.S. Latinx, agency.

1. Background

Heritage learners of Spanish have specific socio-affective, cultural, and linguistic needs. Instructors in the heritage language (HL) classroom must be cognizant of crucial identity issues surrounding US Latinx students, as well as the potential diversity of identities that students may embrace. Recently, Guadalupe Valdés and Frances Aparicio, respectively, have proposed two new goals for HL education; namely, the “cultivation of positive attitudes toward the heritage language” and the “acquisition or development of cultural awareness” (Martínez 2016: 42). These two goals focus on appreciating and valuing the HL and its culture, rather than on developing the linguistic skills to master academic or standard Spanish. This chapter presents a sequence of writing and discussion exercises for the college-level HL classroom that focus on embracing the heritage language and culture, as well as critical thinking and critical language awareness around Spanish as a minoritized language. The intent of these activities is to support ethnolinguistically minoritized individuals, such as heritage language speakers, emancipate themselves from experiences of domination, linguistic discrimination, and systemic racism, although structural imposition of language attitudes and language ideologies might still impede them from embracing their HL and their identity as Spanish heritage speakers and as US Latinxs. Additionally, these activities aim to support students in becoming conscious advocates for their linguistic rights within their social environment. Given that “ethnic identity formation is a dynamic process, embedded in notions of similar and shared history, culture, and kinship” (Valdez 2011: 469), collaborative work with classmates is an effective approach to accomplish this goal in the language classroom. Although designed for intermediate to advanced Spanish HL students, this pedagogy may be adaptable to heritage speakers of other languages and speakers with lower proficiency levels.

The theoretical background for this chapter derives from Paulo Freire’s theories of empowerment and critical consciousness, and from Norman Fairclough’s model of critical language and social emancipation. First published in the 1970s, Paulo Freire’s *critical pedagogy* conceptualizes education as a practice of freedom through dialogical experiences between oneself and others. Freire conceptualizes *dialogue* as a horizontal exchange between two participants. An authentic and effective dialogue has certain characteristics, among them *critical thinking*. A critical thinker is someone who questions the established order of society and, at the same time, is committed to the “continuing transformation of [social] reality” (Freire

2000: 92). Thus, critical thinking can be boosted through experiencing oneself in different situations in the social context within which one is immersed.

One means to problematize society is by discussing the interconnection of language, power, and the existing social order. Language attitudes and linguistic ideologies are intrinsic to these social aspects (Fairclough 2016) because they are not inherent to the language itself, but rather exist in the associations between language and individuals in a social world (Woolard & Kroskrity 1998: 3). For example, displays of derogatory social attitudes are usually tied to language prejudice, racism, classism, sexism, and xenophobia (Lippi-Green 2004). As Herman stated, “What enables the dominant culture’s exclusion or subordination of minority groups is a complex system of assumptions, norms, and practices” (2007: 218). Those assumptions, norms, and practices shape the cultural and language ideologies of the hegemonic group, meaning the group with greater sociopolitical power. In the United States, the prevalent ideology is assimilationism.

In our role as teachers, we should open space to allow our students to become social agents within their social environment. By adopting a dialogic approach in which students reflect on and discuss different perceptions of reality, we can stimulate our students’ sociolinguistic awareness about issues surrounding their social context, in order to move them toward becoming social agents. This approach proposes to focus not on people, “but rather [on] the thought-language with which men and women refer to reality, the levels in which they perceive that reality, and their views of the world, in which their generative themes are found” (Freire 2000: 97). One of the objectives of critical thinking pedagogy is to discover other points of view and to become aware of others’ circumstances, a process known as *conscientização* which Freire defines as “the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence” (2000: 109). The role of an educator is to guide students in cultivating critical awareness so that they can visualize themselves as agents/actors/subjects of change.

Critical pedagogy directly confronts and questions the concrete existence of the social structure in which students are embedded. In the case of bilingual speakers, they belong to or participate in two divergent communities: one hegemonic and another minority. Due to the US history of colonization and monolingual language policies, the languages of bilingual speakers have unequal social status. English is the societal and dominant language, while all other languages are minoritized, stigmatized, and relegated to community

contexts. The US acquisition of the formerly Spanish-Mexican territories where Spanish was spoken,¹ brought with it the imposition of a new language, external values, and ideologies on the inhabitants of those regions. Freire (2000) labels these types of actions as *cultural invasion*, as opposed to *cultural synthesis*, which occurs when one cultural group approaches another with the intention to learn rather than to overtake it (Freire 2000: 180).

English-Spanish bilingual speakers whose first language was Spanish—the language passed down from their ancestors—may face challenges to identity formation in a social context where there is a strong preference for English and assimilation to the mainstream culture, which implies abandoning the HL and its culture. To this day, a foundational US value remains the imposition of English and the undervaluing of minoritized languages, such as Spanish. In addition, a secondary form of cultural invasion is the imposition of standard Spanish on heritage speakers who grew up speaking nonstandard varieties of Spanish (Showstack 2015). These practices undermine the linguistic self-esteem of heritage speakers, possibly leading them to abandon the HL, which is why language educators should acknowledge the value of students' home dialects.

Examples of language discrimination in the United States include (a) the use of *mock Spanish*² (e.g., “*hasta la vista, baby*” ; “*cinco de drinco*”); (b) the belief that Spanish speakers are second-class citizens; (c) the *English-only* movement; (d) the idea that Spanglish (or, more properly, codeswitching, is a result of linguistic impurity and language ignorance (Stavans 2000); (e) the no speaking Spanish in the workplace policy, implemented at Albertsons stores in Southern California (Cook 2018); and (f) bullying directed at schoolchildren who speak Spanish; among many others. Among the evidence of rejection and discrimination toward Latinx communities is (a) the fact that “about half of Hispanics in the U.S. (52%) say they have experienced discrimination or have been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity” (Krogstad & López 2016); (b) stereotypes that only low-income people like gardeners and domestic workers speak Spanish, or that US Latinxs are poor and uneducated; (c) the false idea that US Latinxs do not pay taxes; (d) the use of offensive words towards Latinxs, such as *wetbacks* or *beaners*, to degrade, target, and define US Latinxs; (e) racial slurs directed at those who

¹ I want to acknowledge that before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, indigenous people spoke multiple languages. Therefore, Spanish was also brought to those territories by colonizers.

² On *mock Spanish* as a manifestation of racism, see Escobar and Potowski (2015: 149) and Schwartz (2019).

speaking Spanish in public or ordering them to go back to their countries; (f) racial profiling by authorities in some states; and (g) mass shootings targeting Mexicans at an El Paso Walmart and Latinx schoolchildren in an Uvalde elementary school. The vast majority of US Latinxs were born in this country; they are not immigrants, but US-born citizens of this nation. The idea that all Latinxs are recent immigrants is a misconception; in fact, some can trace their families back multiple generations, to ancestors who inhabited what is now US territory even before the nation was founded.

In order to move forward from *cultural invasion* to *cultural synthesis*, the conflict between the two cultures needs to be resolved by rethinking and critically approaching them. Thereby, bilingual-bicultural individuals can build up a multifaceted identity as free of struggles as possible. Two important steps are to promote the use of the HL to broader contexts outside the home to increase proficiency in the HL (Montrul 2016: 308), and to use the HL to reflect upon the relation between language and power. Developing a critical awareness of the power of language can aid students in understanding and challenging the social order. The critical awareness theory of language use, which Norman Fairclough developed in the 1980s (Fairclough 1989 1992a), derived from the language awareness movement in the United Kingdom. This movement disagreed with the curricula used in the public school at that time to teach English as a second language and to teach foreign languages (Fairclough 2010; Farias 2005). Cultivation of language awareness enables students to situate language use in different contexts based on different communicative situations and the social and power relations between the interlocutors. This pedagogical resource must be used to enable students to exercise agency in choosing when and how to use the HL. As Fairclough argues, language contributes social imbalance when individuals with a higher social rank use it to subjugate others who are at the lower end of or on the periphery of the social structure.

One way of avoiding this dominance is by cultivating a consciousness of these language-power relations. Fairclough proposes *critical language study* as a path to emancipation for those who are being socially oppressed (Fairclough 1989: 233). Moreover, discourse contributes to “the production, formation, and reproduction of the objects ... of social life. This entails that discourse is in an active relation to reality, that language signifies reality in the sense of constructing meaning of it” (Fairclough 1992b: 41-42). From a sociolinguistic perspective, it has been established that languages are

influenced by different social variables and that language use and language change are shaped by language users. Additionally, language contributes to the formation of *social identities* by establishing and cultivating relationships with others, and to “the construction of systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough 1992b: 64). The value of dialogue is that it contributes to the activation of critical thinking: “critical dialogue is learned in community and serves the community, and the process can unite students and faculty members from divergent backgrounds and viewpoints around difficult, yet shared, issues and problems” (Morris 2017: 378).

Fairclough has defined *critical language awareness* as a “conscious attention to properties of language and language use as an element of language education” (Fairclough 1992a: 1). If not everyone is aware of the sociolinguistic processes that take place in language production, then we can assume that not everyone is aware of the processes that take place in the construction of ideologies. The main goal of critical language awareness is to develop a consciousness about the underlying ideologies of discourse, in order that language users can be aware of both their own language practices and the language practices—and ideologies—others might impose them (Fairclough 1992b: 90). A critical pedagogy encourages students to question the power hierarchies in the existing world order (Leeman 2018: 346). It also aims toward the emancipation of oppressed individuals and the recognition of minoritized groups whose voices are largely silenced at the macro- and micro-context levels in educational institutions. For example, Cho claimed that “there are various mechanisms in school (e.g., tracking) that discriminate against some children who are considered to be the ‘other’ ” (Cho 2013: 17).

Up to a certain point, educational practices also reproduce linguistic hegemonic power. As language instructors, we need to keep in mind that “language use ... is also a matter of expressing and constituting and reproducing social identities and social relations, including crucially relations of power” (Fairclough 1989: 237). To counteract oppressive uses of language, critical language pedagogy conceptualizes a *language learning model* that accounts for social dynamics and recognizes three main elements of discourse: text, interaction, and context. Interaction and context within the discourse are dependent on the social relationships of the participants. A pedagogical approach to language instruction that considers the contexts in which language is used promotes students’ critical awareness of their environment and their ability to contribute to reshaping the social world in a more equitable way (e.g., social justice). Critical language awareness can be

stimulated by following the language learning model. It integrates two guiding principles: (a) marrying awareness and practice, and (b) building on experience. The first principle refers to the fact that acquisition of language skills is dependent on the strong bond between critical awareness and practice of language. The second principle establishes that critical awareness should be built upon existing language abilities and experiences (Fairclough 1989: 240), a principle already presents in HL education regarding the expansion of cultural and linguistic abilities.

Another aspect of critical language pedagogy is the self-construction of identity, which students can express in their own voices as speakers or as writers. Once students have developed a critical consciousness of language, they can also construct and project identity in printed texts. This consciousness prepares them to comprehend such sociolinguistic concepts as stigmatized versus prestigious language varieties, and local versus standard language uses to raise their awareness of the constraints and disadvantages that speakers of nonstandard varieties face, and the effects of breaking sociolinguistic norms and challenging the hegemony of standard varieties (Fairclough 1992b: 240). An alternative practice of self-identification is positioning ourselves in communicative situations or categories that we either can or cannot identify with, in order to understand our personhood (Davies & Harré 1990). In the case of Spanish heritage speakers, these constraints apply to their own language practices, for which reason it is imperative that they are aware of the costs of those constraints outside the language realm. For example, minoritized groups tend to have fewer job opportunities, lower salaries, and more limited access to education. The implementation of critical language pedagogy in the classroom can contribute to larger social benefits as students are empowered to become agents of change, not only linguistically but also socioeconomically.

SUMMARY OF BASIC CONCEPTS

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: A teaching approach proposed by Paulo Freire in the 1970s. The foundation of this pedagogy is that education is a practice of freedom through dialogue. Dialogue stimulates students' awareness about

issues within their social context in order to make them agents of social change.

CRITICAL THINKING: The ability to conceptualize, analyze, and evaluate information. It challenges the normalization of the established social structure, problematizes the current social order, and promotes people's perception of themselves as a social agent. From a critical thinking perspective, the current social reality is not static, but rather transformable and dynamic (Freire 2000: 92).

CRITICAL LANGUAGE STUDY: The analysis of social interactions in relation to linguistic components with the aim of unveiling concealed factors that influence social relationships and identifying their consequences or effects (Fairclough 1989: 5).

CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS: "Conscious attention to properties of language and language use as an element of language education" (Fairclough 1992a: 1).

OPPRESSION: In the educational context, the conception of students as passive recipients of information instead of social agents. In the societal context, it is education aimed at controlling thinking and action, accepting the imposition of the oppressors' world, and inhibiting creative power (Freire 2000: 77).

EMANCIPATION: The process of freeing someone from legal, sociopolitical, and cultural restrictions. In the educational context, emancipation occurs when students are positioned as part of the world through awareness.

CULTURAL INVASION: The occupation of one cultural group by another group wherein the invading group imposes its perception of the world upon the invaded group, preventing the latter from developing their independent creativity and expression (Freire 2000: 152).

CULTURAL SYNTHESIS: When one cultural group approaches another not as an invader, and without the intention of teaching or transmitting their own reality, but of learning about the other group's world (Freire 2000: 180).

SELF-CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY: Within the theoretical framework of critical language pedagogy, the opportunity for students to work on their own identity formation, express their voices as speakers and writers, and develop the critical awareness necessary to shift language and cultural practices in an emancipatory direction.

2. Critical Thinking and Language Awareness Activities

In this section, I offer some activities that support students to grow into agents of change of their own realities. Dialogic exchanges serve to foster critical thinking and critical language awareness that increase students' awareness of the relationships between language, power, and society.

Students engage in reflecting about their realities as bicultural and bilingual individuals using their HL in the written and oral modes. To begin, they write their life story with the option to expand their discourse beyond "objective language" into "subjective language" to communicate their personal reality. For example, use of the first-person pronoun "I" can project their personal positionality and identity in their writings (Ivanic & Simpson 1992). At the same time, students need to be aware of academic writing conventions as well as the ownership and responsibility that the use of "I" implies. To help students accomplish this, we must stimulate critical awareness of the linguistic conventions used in various writing styles (e.g., creative writing versus academic writing). Another strategy is to implement *translanguaging* practices in the educational context (García & Wei 2014) to validate bilingual linguistic practices, such as code-switching, that many HL speakers practice on a daily basis. Giving students options to use subjective language, nonacademic writing styles, and deploying their linguistic resources in two (or more) languages is a type of emancipation from the hegemonic linguistic discourse typical in education and an opportunity to learn about different linguistic registers.

3. General Procedure

1. Ask each student to write individually in their HL about how being bilingual and bicultural shapes their identity. Gear the length and complexity of the writing assignment to the students' level of

proficiency in their HL. I recommend they be assigned to write the compositions outside the classroom so that they are not pressured by the limited class time.

- i. **Option 1:** Students write an ethnolinguistic autobiography focusing on their personal story (see *Appendix 1* for instructions). For example, students may write about their family origins, acquisition of Spanish and English, use of the HL with friends and family, cultural traditions they cultivate, self-identification in terms of race, ethnicity, and other factors.
 - ii. **Option 2:** Students write about the meanings and origins of their first and last names.
 - iii. **Option 3:** Students can write a poem in Spanglish about their experiences as bilingual/bicultural individuals.
2. The compositions are also an opportunity to improve writing skills as students revise their drafts collaboratively through a peer-review process. To do this, ask each to find a partner with whom to exchange their compositions for reciprocal feedback about how to improve their draft. Google docs³ offers a user-friendly platform to share, read, comment on, and suggest changes to word processed documents with regard to word- and sentence-level issues such as spelling, accent marks, sentence structure, etc. Peer review helps students gain proficiency in the domain of writing conventions and benefit from their peer's linguistic resources to work toward a more flawless discourse in terms of higher-level decision about organization and lexical selection (Belpoliti & Bermejo 2020, 23). Online dictionaries, autocorrection tools, and other resources is also recommended.
3. After integrating their peer's feedback into their composition, students submit a final version for grading.
4. Next, students share their compositions for their classmates to read. There are several options to accomplish this: uploading the compositions onto your educational platform (e.g., Canvas, Blackboard), uploading them into Google Drive and sharing the folder with the class, or creating a blog (e.g., using Blogger) or a website. Here is an example of a website I created for this purpose, <https://rosalvaalamillo.wixsite.com/shlsd>.

³ Students need a Google email account or an institutional account with access to Google Workspace, formerly, G Suite, in order to use Google Docs.

5. After everyone has read the compositions, the students form small work teams (the instructor can form the groups or students can form the groups by themselves). I recommend limiting groups to five members to reduce challenges with time management and virtual meeting technology. They engage in dialogue about their impressions from reading the compositions and engage in critical thinking about their peers' experiences. If you teach more than one section of the same course, you may choose to team up students across sections. Doing so allows students to meet others outside of their class who have similar experiences. In addition, I suggest instructing students about language preferences for the conversation, for example, only Spanish or a combination of English and Spanish.
6. To conserve instruction time, I have students meet outside of class for the discussions using teleconferencing platforms. Provide them with instructions for using the relevant platforms and software, ideally at the beginning of the semester (for example, you can post information in the educational platform linked to the course. Several free online platforms can be used for teleconferencing, including Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Duo (see John 2021; Google 2021a, b; Microsoft 2021; and Zoom 2021 for online instruction documents). You can select one platform for all students to use, or let students select whichever platform they feel comfortable using.
7. Set parameters for the virtual dialogue, including the participation expectations for each member and how long the discussion should last. Students may be prompted discuss, for example, similarities and differences in their experiences as US Latinx and Spanish heritage speakers, based on information in the compositions. Other possible topics are how their bilingualism and biculturalism has shaped their identities, the different identities evident in the compositions, how they self-identified—as US Latinx or as something else—and how their individual circumstances have shaped their acquisition and use of their HL Appendix 2 contains sample instructions for the virtual meeting and questions to use as conversation starters.
8. One member of each team is responsible for recording the dialogue and sharing the link with the instructor. An assignment on the educational platform can be created for this purpose.

9. Have each team of students collaboratively write a post-dialogue reflection on the topics discussed in their group to share with their classmates. The aim in this assignment is that all students' voices are recorded and that they establish a sense of community. In addition, encourage students to include their ideas on how they have advanced toward cultural synthesis and how they, as members of their communities, can work to rebalance social inequity in a multicultural society. You may also ask students to reflect on whether using the HL in their writing and dialogues was or not an *act of identity* (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985, cited in Parra 2016: 180) for them. (See Appendix 3 for sample questions.)

4. Implementation

This section offers step-by-step directions for implementing the sequence of activities. The “Input” portion addresses how to prepare students to write about and discuss the topics for their compositions, as well as outlining goals, expected outcomes, amount of time to allow for each step, and an evaluation rubric. Next, the “Filter” part offers techniques for keeping students' affective filter low. It is particularly important to be sensitive to the socio-affective needs of heritage speakers who may be using that language for the first time in a classroom and to talk about topics other than home or ethnocultural identity, because these activities can trigger students' memories of discriminatory experiences. The last part, “Competence,” outlines the language skills and other capabilities that are developed in each activity.

4.1. Input

This section describes what students need to know before you introduce the activities; knowing the expectations in advance will facilitate accomplishing the goals of each activity.

4.1.1. Preparing students for the activities

In courses designed for Spanish heritage speakers, the outcomes of language contact and bilingual speech communities are usually part of the curriculum and are usually reviewed through a sociolinguistic lens. Relevant topics are, to name a few, code-switching, diglossia, and bicultural and hybrid identities. In addition, Spanish HL textbooks typically contain texts on these

topics written by US Latinx or Latin American writers. To develop critical language awareness, students need to understand the dynamics in their social environment from the moment they are asked to engage in critical thinking.

4.1.2. Explaining the objectives of the exercises

It is essential that students clearly understand the goal of each activity so that they can write and dialogue with a specific purpose in mind and have direction for completing the tasks. The main goal of these activities is to empower students to advance toward emancipation by fostering their critical language awareness as they use the HL. Ways to promote these objectives include asking students to reflect on their personal experiences as bilingual and bicultural US Latinxs, and the ideologies around language and culture that may have been imposed on them (e.g., assimilation) and that may be stopping them from embracing their identities and linguistic rights.

Providing oral and written expectations for the composition and group dialogue help to achieve the goals more smoothly. However, if the direction is very lengthy and specific, students have less space to write and discuss creatively and spontaneously. I recommend offering students example compositions.

4.1.3. Time and length of assignments

I recommend the assignment specify the anticipated length of the individual and collaborative writings (e.g., one page, two pages), and the expected time of the tele-dialogue (e.g., 30-40 minutes). In addition to students' language proficiency, consider the time required for students to write and peer review, and for instructors to grade, the initial compositions and post-dialogue reflections. On the other hand, a two-page composition may more effectively stimulate critical thinking and accomplishment of the learning objectives.

4.1.4. Assessment

Students should receive credit for each activity in the sequence. In determining assessment procedures, consider which construct is predominant (e.g., writing skills, speaking skills or critical thinking) and how best to assess it. Evaluation charts or rubrics tailored to each construct are useful for this purpose.

Providing the evaluation criteria to students in advance helps them to understand what is expected of them and reduces the affective filter. Sample rubrics can be found in online teaching forums and in books such as *Introduction to Rubrics* (Stevens & Levi 2013). See Appendix 4 for a sample rubric for the virtual dialogue.

4.2. Filter

Multiple affective paradigms may be encountered as students are completing the oral and written activities. Because most of the tasks are student-directed (either individual or collaborative), the best approach is to give the students recommendations for what to do and what to avoid in certain situations.

4.2.1. Technology issues

Students will have different degrees of familiarity with online platforms and software. Students navigating such technology for the first time may feel anxiety (a high affective filter). One way to reduce technology-related anxiety is to assign a “practice conversation” in which students focus on getting to know one another better. This allows them to familiarize themselves with tools such as audio and video recording, or uploading files, while also feeling safer around their fellow team members. Assigning a small point value to this practice conversation can motivate students to complete it without fearing that an unexpected technology issue could derail their course grade.

4.2.2. Parameters on sharing personal information

Make sure all students understand in advance that what they write, dialogue about, and debrief on will be shared with their classmates. Therefore, they have the right to decide how much personal information to disclose, including choosing what experiences they are willing to share with their classmates and altering the names of relatives or other sensitive facts. In some cases, allowing students to share their initial composition anonymously may be appropriate (although this may make it challenging for them to participate in the group activities). Students should be reassured that their degree of self-disclosure will not affect their grade, which positions them as agents who control the content of their writings. Finally, students should also be aware that college instructors are required by the university to disclose certain information, as suspected abuse or discrimination occurring on campus.

4.2.3. Dealing with linguistic insecurities

Not all heritage speakers feel confident about their writing skills in the HL. To reduce linguistic insecurities, remind the students that their first-draft compositions do not have to be perfect, that they will have the opportunity to edit their drafts, and that the objective is to improve their writing skills not to achieve mastery. It is important that students pay attention to (and are graded on) not only *how well* they write in the HL, but also on the insights they gain into their identities and histories as minoritized speakers.

4.2.4. Addressing social inequity

As mentioned previously, it is important that students gain awareness of the sociolinguistic disparities between the dominant language and the HL, the mainstream culture, and the minority one. Exploring these issues might trigger feelings of unfairness, inequity, discrimination, and anger. In the face of this discomfort, it is important that students keep in mind the purpose of the task: to become conscious members of their communities and agents of change by developing critical language awareness and critical thinking skills. They personally can play a role in improving conditions that are important to them within their communities and social environments.

The purpose of conducting dialogues in small teams is to create an intimate environment and a sense of community among team members. Therefore, students need to bear in mind that their classmates and the classmates' families have endured some difficult experiences, so they should be sensitive with their comments.

Certain topics surfaced in the collaborative dialogue and collaborative written debrief might heighten some students' affective filter (e.g., migration, discrimination, linguistic repression, social inequity, lack of opportunities, etc.), while others might lower it (e.g., advantages of being bilingual/bicultural, having dual citizenship). To lower the affective filter, again encourage students to focus on the goal of the activity and to leverage this opportunity to write collaboratively, get to know their classmates better, bond over similar experiences, and become agents of social change. The ideal outcome of this task is to prepare at least some students to participate in building a more equitable world outside of the educational context. This understanding will empower students to focus on their potential contributions

as social change agents, rather than any feelings of self-consciousness or discomfort.

4.2.5. Responding to negative attitudes

As a general rule, disparagement and prejudice should not be tolerated in any classroom, because such attitudes can easily spread from one student to the entire class and typically hinder the teaching-learning process. Some students might present with a less than positive attitude, especially if they are uncomfortable with the topics being addressed. The instructor's role is to intervene and dissipate any negative attitudes. Strategies include emphasizing that all students in the class have something to contribute. For some students, reflecting about their personal realities and past experiences may be uncomfortable, but the practice of critical thinking may stretch out their comfort zone.

Consistently encourage positive attitudes and be perceptive of the range of students' attitudes. Some will naturally be more willing than others to engage in the activities. Reiterate to the less engaged students that their contributions are essential to create a community within the language classroom.

4.3. Competence

The language learning and critical pedagogy models aim to foster critical thinking while also developing students' language capabilities. In terms of language competence, the tasks in this chapter strengthen authentic language use through individual and collaborative writing as well as conversations in the HL.

This pedagogical model starts from the students' level of knowledge of the HL and their previous experiences. The only materials students receive are instructions and examples of the written assignments. The activities described here are targeted at intermediate to advanced heritage speakers but may be simplified for lower-level students according to the instructor's judgment.

Reading their classmates' compositions builds students' reading skills. Similarly, the online dialogue exercises their listening skills. Altogether, this sequence of activities promotes students' mastery of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while promoting cultural competence and the appreciation of Hispanic/Latinx/Chicanx or hybrid identities. These activities also familiarize students with sociolinguistic terminology such as

bilingualism, biculturalism, and dominant language. Finally, critical thinking is a skill that students can practice in multiple situations within and outside the educational context.

5. Recommended Activities

The following activities address ethnolinguistic identity, the relation between language and power, and other social considerations, for example language use, social class, education, and gender.

1. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMPOSITION: EMBRACING ETHNOLINGUISTIC IDENTITY THROUGH THE HL	
PROFICIENCY LEVEL	Intermediate-advanced, although the exercise can be modified for other proficiency levels. Heritage speakers with low expressive proficiency in the HL can utilize <i>translanguaging</i> by deploying all the linguistic resources they have available in both languages.
INSTRUCTIONS	Students will write an autobiography that narrates certain experiences as bilingual and bicultural US. Latinxs. The composition may be 1 or 2 pages long, depending on students' language proficiency.
GOAL	Students consciously reflect on their self-perceptions as bilingual-bicultural individuals. They may optionally use identity terminology (e.g., Mexican American, Colombian), but they must reflect on their experiences as US Latinxs.

COMPETENCE	Students will practice their writing skills in the HL while activating critical thinking skills. Writing: Students will choose to use academic or creative writing, first- or third-person voice, and a formal or informal register, whichever best reflects their voices and their preferred writing style. They must however compose a coherent and cohesive discourse while following spelling and punctuation rules.
MATERIALS	None required.
PROCEDURE	See Appendix 1 for instructions.
VARIATION	As described, the topic of the composition may address their bilingual-bicultural history, the meanings of their names, or a poem in Spanglish about their bilingual experience. I recommend assigning this activity as a homework assignment to preserve instructional time.
HANDOUT PROVIDED	Instructions for the activity.

2. IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS BY DRAFTING COMPOSITIONS

PROFICIENCY LEVEL	Intermediate-advanced, although the exercise can be modified for other proficiency levels. Students with limited writing ability in the HL can write and practice <i>translanguaging</i> , utilizing all their available linguistic resources in both languages.
INSTRUCTIONS	Students exchange their autobiographies with classmates for peer review of spelling, accent marks and sentence structure.

	Students are allowed to use dictionaries and other online resources, as well as to ask questions about the meaning of a sentence. It is however important that they respect the author' s ideas.
GOAL	Improve writing skills through peer review of compositions.
COMPETENCE	Students will practice their writing skills in the HL while activating critical thinking skills. Writing: Students will focus on the clear and understandable transmission of a message by following spelling and punctuation rules and presenting information in an organized and coherent way. They should pay attention to connectors, main and secondary ideas, paragraph structure, and capitalization. Students will also engage in peer-reviewing.
MATERIALS	A draft of the autobiography in an electronic format.
PROCEDURE	Students upload their compositions to Google Docs or another platform to share with their partner. Students use the <i>suggesting</i> function to suggest changes and the <i>comment</i> function to make comments. Changes are automatically saved, and the author of the draft has immediate access to them. When the peer reviewer notifies the author that the review is complete, the author decides which suggestions to implement, then turns in the second draft to the instructor.
VARIATION	Instead of pairing up students, let students choose a classmate to work with. After the

	peer review step, the instructor can grade the composition and make further suggestions for refining the final draft.
HANDOUT PROVIDED	See <i>Appendix 5</i> for guidelines for peer review.

3. VIRTUAL DIALOGUE IN THE HERITAGE LANGUAGE	
PROFICIENCY LEVEL	Intermediate-advanced, although the exercise can be modified for other proficiency levels. Students with low proficiency in the HL can practice <i>translanguaging</i> by utilizing all their available linguistic resources in both languages.
INSTRUCTIONS	Students self-select or are assigned to small teams (of no more than 5 members). The instructor provides instructions for using teleconferencing software and guidelines for the online discussion (see <i>Appendix 2</i>). I recommend the discussion be at least 30 minutes long, but adjust the time based on the number of team members.
GOAL	Students will exercise critical thinking through dialogue by consciously reflecting what being a US Latinx means to them and whether they relate to their classmates' experiences.
COMPETENCE	Students practice their speaking skills in the HL while engaging in critical thinking. Speaking: Students will engage in a dialogue using the HL according to the interpersonal mode as described by ACTFL (2012). Students should exchange ideas and negotiate the meaning of them by asking for adjustments and clarification.
MATERIALS	A computer, tablet, or smartphone with camera, speakers, and microphone. Access

	to a videoconferencing platform such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom). Internet connection.
PROCEDURE	See <i>Appendix 2</i> for instructions.
VARIATION	Instructors may select a different discussion topic, such as where students choose to speak Spanish or English, or how experiences of traveling abroad have made them more aware of their identity. In this case, adapt the sample questions in <i>Appendix 2</i> to fit the topic.
HANDOUT PROVIDED	Instructions for teleconferencing. See Google (2021a, b), Microsoft (2021), and Zoom (2021) for options.

4. COLLABORATIVE WRITING

PROFICIENCY LEVEL	Intermediate-advanced, although the exercise can be modified for other proficiency levels. Students with low proficiency in the HL can write and practice <i>translanguaging</i> by utilizing all their available linguistic resources in both languages.
INSTRUCTIONS	Students collaboratively write a short essay on the ideas exchanged during the virtual discussion. All team members are expected to contribute. The essay may be 1 to 2 pages long, depending on the students' language proficiency. The activity can be completed in class or as homework, depending on time availability.
GOAL	For students to express, synthesize, and share their individual ideas and voices in a structured way by transforming the medium of communication from speech into writing. For students to self- and collaboratively construct an ethnolinguistic identity that

	represents them, both as a community and as individuals, in their writing.
COMPETENCE	Students will practice expressing their own voices in an organized manner by writing collaboratively in their HL. The expression of their individual and collective voices is an essential component of this activity. Writing: Students will decide whether to use academic language or more creative writing, whether to write in first or third person, and whether to use a formal or informal register to best portray their voices in their preferred writing style. However, they must compose a coherent and cohesive discourse using accurate spelling and punctuation.
MATERIALS	You can provide your students with sample questions to help guide their writing. See <i>Appendix 3</i> for ideas.
PROCEDURE	If this assignment is completed outside the classroom, students decide whether to meet in person or virtually. They are also in charge of assigning roles to all team members for completing the task. It is important to let students organize themselves so that they can experience cooperative learning and understand the importance of personal responsibility.
VARIATION	This step can be completed as homework or during class time. I highly recommend scheduling class time for a session in which students can share their impressions of these activities after they are concluded.
HANDOUT PROVIDED	None.

6. Conclusion

The pedagogical activities described here aim to provide students with opportunities to use their HL to cultivate critical thinking and embrace their ethnolinguistic identity by reflecting on the US Latinx experience of belonging

to more than one community, and by discussing the relationships between language, social structure, and power. Although I have chosen to focus on ethnolinguistic identity topics (i.e., bilingualism and biculturalism and the students' experiences around these axes), Block (2007) summarizes seven concepts around which identity can be approached: ethnic, national, migrant, gender, social class, and language (as cited in Potowski 2012).

In terms of the effectiveness of this instructional approach, I recommend that the instructor create an online survey to ask students what they liked and disliked about these assignments and to solicit suggestions for improving the activities in future courses. Among the potential benefits of these activities are (a) sharing similar experiences of being US Latinx with classmates; (b) practicing the four language domains in the HL; (c) developing awareness of what it means to be a bilingual-bicultural individual; (d) developing understanding of the relationships between language, society, and power; (e) reflecting on cultural and language diversity; (f) understanding how the imposition of one language and culture on others leads to social inequity; (g) differentiating between cultural invasion and cultural synthesis; (h) putting into practice the self-construction of identity by expressing their own voices in their writings and dialogue; and (i) one hopes, embracing their ethnocultural identities and their HL.

Current educational practices provide limited opportunities to empower students through linguistic practices. However, just as cultural content has become a standard component of foreign language courses, perhaps in the near future it will be inconceivable to design HL courses without a critical pedagogy that helps speakers of minoritized languages to empower themselves in the use and preservation of their HL and heritage culture. This standard will contribute to reducing and curbing the impact of negative ideologies and attitudes toward US Latinxs, such as those mentioned by Carreira (2012: 225). A stated goal of HL education is that it should cultivate positive attitudes toward the HL and develop cultural awareness (Martínez 2016: 42). It is also important that HL education support the embracing of hybrid and complex identities among US Latinx students. Likewise, HL classes should provide students with theoretical and empirical tools to empower them in their linguistic practices and in questioning hegemonic linguistic ideologies imposed on them by individuals with more socioeconomic power. It is imperative that we, as educators, work to equip our students to resist cultural prejudices and negative attitudes toward

minoritized languages. In concluding this chapter, I want to mention that for instruction to be effective, educators must keep in mind their students' linguistic, cultural, and affective needs.

APPENDIX 1

AUTOBIOGRAPHY: EMBRACING IDENTITY THROUGH THE HERITAGE LANGUAGE

Instructions: The objective of this activity is for you to reflect consciously on your identity as bilingual and bicultural individual. This is an opportunity for you to write about your cultural and linguistic heritage. Although you can choose to provide any information about your life, to achieve the goal of this activity, I suggest you include information on your age when you learned English and Spanish, as well as information about your origins:

- Where do you come from?
- What do the culture and language you inherited from your parents or grandparents mean to you?
- How do you identify yourself in terms of national origin?
- Which culture(s) and traditions do you follow?
- Which ethnic identity do you identify with most strongly?
- How important is it to you to exercise your right to use your heritage language in whatever contexts you wish?
- Where do you place yourself as an individual and as a member of one or more communities?

You may also wish to ask your parents, grandparents, or other family members for information about your background and history.

APPENDIX 2

VIRTUAL MEETING TO DIALOGUE IN THE HERITAGE LANGUAGE

Instructions: Before meeting with your team, take the following steps:

1. Decide which online platform you will be use for the online discussion. Designate a team member to record the session and upload the recording to earn credit for the assignment. Note that Google Meet and Zoom have the capability to record and upload video without requiring additional software. All of you should read the operation instructions for the teleconferencing platform your group chooses.
2. Before the virtual meeting, check your internet connection to make sure it is reliable connection. Test the speakers, camera, and microphone of your computer, tablet, or smartphone.
3. Schedule a date and time for the online dialogue.
4. After the session, the designated team member should send the link to your conversation to your instructor.

Here are some sample questions to get the dialogue started. Please do not limit your conversation to these questions:

1. What does it mean to you that you are bilingual?
2. Which Latino cultural traditions do you follow, if any?
3. What are some advantages of being bicultural and bilingual? What about disadvantages?
4. How do your heritage language and your ethnic group influence who you are, as an individual and as a community?
5. How do the dominant language and the dominant group influence who you are, as an individual and as a community?
6. What other elements play important roles in defining your identity?

APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE POST-DIALOGUE COLLABORATIVE WRITING

1. What are some experiences that you and your classmates have in common?
2. What positive experiences related to being bilingual have you had?
3. What negative experiences related to being bilingual have you had?
4. In which situations do you prefer to communicate in English? Why?
5. In which situations do you prefer to communicate in Spanish? Why?
6. Do you think that communication in one language or the other is preferable in certain situations or places (e.g., family events, school orientations, at the grocery store)? If so, why do you think this happens?
7. Do you interact with others as a bicultural individual? Reflect on your bicultural identity and how it shows up in different settings.
8. Do you think most people in your social networks identify you as bicultural? Why or why not?
9. Which identity/identities do you and your classmates embrace?
10. Is there a preference for expressing/representing a particular culture in your social environment? If so, why do you think this happens?
11. How can you defend your linguistic right to communicate in your HL?
12. How can you cultivate your ethnolinguistic identity in a society where the mainstream culture is different from your heritage culture?
13. What would you say to someone who does not feel comfortable speaking a language other than English or practicing their cultural traditions due to social pressure from the mainstream cultural group?
14. How can you contribute to making our society more equitable in terms of language and identity?

APPENDIX 4

EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR VIRTUAL DIALOGUE

You are expected to:

- **Participate actively:** Engage in the dialogue by asking and answering questions in positive manner. Contribute to creating a safe space where you and your classmates feel comfortable sharing your experiences, thoughts, and opinions.
- **Be prepared:** Show that you have read the handouts and other materials that prepare you for this dialogue.
- **Pay attention to your classmates:** Be present in the conversation. Avoid getting distracted by your cellphone or other items. Actively listen to what your classmates share with you.
- **Communicate in your HL:** Although code-switching (Spanglish) is allowed, avoid the temptation to communicate in English. One objective of this activity is to practice your speaking skills in the HL.
- **Activate your critical thinking:** Actively listen to your peer, think for yourself, and question things that are usually taken for granted.

A	B	C	D	F
Thoroughly meets expectations	Meets expectations	Approaches expectations	Does not meet expectations	Did not attempt

APPENDIX 5

GUIDELINES FOR PEER REVIEW

- Before you even make your first comment, read the essay all the way through.
- Make sure you schedule enough time to read through and give feedback on the document, and for your peer to edit the document based on your comments before the assignment due date.
- If you receive a feedback form to fill out and something is unclear, do not ignore the item; instead, ask the instructor for clarification.
- Point out the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the essay.
- Offer suggestions, not directives.
- Make appropriate and constructive editorial comments. There is no excuse for being rude. Be respectful and considerate of the writer's feelings.
- Be sure that your comments are clear and text-specific so that your peer will know what you are referring to. (For example, comments such as "unclear" or "vague" are too general to be helpful.)
- Raise questions that cross your mind as a reader, points that may not have occurred to your peer author.
- Try not to overwhelm your peer with too much commentary. Follow the feedback form and focus on the issues you are supposed to address.
- Be careful not to let your own opinions bias your review. (For example, don't suggest that your peer completely rewrite the paper because you don't agree with their point of view.)
- Reread your comments before passing them on to your peer. Make sure all your comments make sense, are easy to follow, and are politely worded.
- Avoid turning your peer's paper into your paper.

Source: *Pedagogy in action*. (2018), available at <https://serc.carleton.edu/sp/library/peerreview/tips.html>

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