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Positional Identities, Access to Learning Opportunities, and Multiliteracies: Negotiations in Heritage and Non-heritage Spanish-Speaking Students' Critical Narratives

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Introduction

Heritage language learners (HLLs) are defined differently in the literature, and other labels, such as *dual language learners* or *bilingual learners*, are also used sometimes to describe them, although there are still nuances in their meanings. In this chapter, a HLL refers to "a student of language who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken. The student may speak or merely understand the heritage language and be, to some degree, bilingual in English and the heritage language" (Valdés 2005, 412). Even though I adopt this definition in this chapter, I want to emphasize that it is not a rigid definition and "there is no universal understanding of just what the terms 'heritage language' and 'heritage language learner' mean" (Leeman 2015, 103). Indeed, given the diverse nature of individuals' linguistic background, proficiency, and societal status among

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many other factors, identifying the boundaries becomes difficult. Both "heritage language" and "heritage language learner" as concepts are fluid and maybe a bit ambiguous. Furthermore, my goal is not to categorize or label language speakers or users in any way. Indeed, as a second language user myself and a scholar who has been researching and writing on the topic of identities for several years, I believe that language learners have and should have the freedom to self-identify themselves as they wish. It is rather problematic to impose certain identities on them, especially because, as research shows, the identities assigned to those learners have direct consequences for their classroom learning (e.g., Abdi 2009; Cho 2014; Jee 2016; Merrills 2015).

Although the *identities of HLLs* is a research topic that has received attention quite recently, the body of research has grown quickly. Studies have focused on not only different education levels (e.g., K-12, higher education, etc.) but also multiple language contexts (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Turkish, etc.). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a thorough and comprehensive synthesis of that literature. Since this chapter deals with heritage Spanish speakers in university settings comparing their experience to those of their non-HLL peers, it will focus only on studies on the identities of HLLs in higher education contexts. This limited and yet growing literature has mostly focused on Spanish heritage learners' cultural, ethnic, and linguistic identity negotiations in Spanish language classrooms. For example, in a recent study, Showstack (2015) examined how one instructor, Layla, positioned herself and her students differently while navigating between two competing discourses in an intermediate Spanish heritage language (SHL) classroom. While Layla aimed to teach "Standard Spanish" to help students achieve academic success, she struggled to legitimize home linguistic practices or controlling the classroom linguistic norms by defining what is acceptable or unacceptable in the Spanish language. She corrected the students when they used language that she did not consider to be acceptable within the linguistic norms of the class. This resulted in her positioning herself as an authority with respect to linguistic "correctness," which devalued certain features of language that the students brought with them to the classroom.

In an earlier study, Showstack (2012) examined classroom discourse in two Spanish language courses for Spanish-English bilingual students

at a large university in central Texas in order to examine how participants constructed their linguistic and cultural identities by using the language. Showstack observed that certain students constructed essentialized social categories by describing different kinds of people and by making value judgments about their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In some contexts, they associated value with hybrid cultural experiences, but they also presented the legitimacy of their linguistic repertoires as questionable, constructing themselves as not being "legitimate speakers." Participants' construction of the legitimacy of certain language varieties and the speakers of those varieties was related to how they sometimes constructed an essentialized notion of Hispanic identity and positioned themselves and others within or outside of this identity.

Heritage Spanish-speaking students' educational, social, and individual challenges and struggles in college Spanish classrooms and the impact of those on their identities were examined also by Felix (2009). Thirty-nine adult HLLs enrolled in Spanish beginner and intermediate classes in various community colleges took a survey followed by nine focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that HLLs felt inadequate and embarrassed due to some preconceptions voiced by instructors and fellow students. The classroom activities specifically designed for the monolingual English speakers seemed to prevent HLLs from reinforcing and expanding their repertoire of literacy skills. HLLs expressed feelings of empowerment when confronted with honing literacy skills in Spanish. Yet, they were not encouraged to explore higher-level cognitive skills in Spanish often. Felix concludes highlighting the necessity and importance of an educational philosophy and pedagogies that affirm the heritage language as a springboard for learning, increased self-awareness, and validation of identities.

A few other studies have used only surveys to explore different aspects of Spanish-speaking heritage students' identities. A study by Beaudrie et al. (2009) focused on the link between Spanish-speaking heritage students' identity and culture, more specifically the impact of heritage instruction on students' cultural identity. The researchers designed a lengthy survey to assess SHL pedagogy from the students' perspective. The survey was carried out with students in all the classes and levels of

one of the oldest SHL programs in the United States. The results indicated that the term "Hispano," a translation of the term "Hispanic," was selected as a self-identification label by the majority of the respondents. The term "Hispanic," as translation of "Hispano," instead of "Latino," was the most commonly used in students' open-ended answers. Researchers concluded that students who enroll in SHL classes for the first time may develop a more concrete sense of their cultural identity in relation to the society of the United States as they progress in the course series. In another survey study conducted much earlier, Villa and Villa (1998) examined the relationship between self-identification labels and self-reported language use, among other factors, of students who self-selected into Spanish for Native Speakers (SNS) courses. The goal of the study was to gain a better understanding of certain identity features of students with heritage learner (HL) skills. The survey results indicated that there existed a correlation between certain labels and self-reported language use. Those who employed a label which represented the country of origin tended to have the strongest self-reported language skills, while those who used a label which identified more with an ethnic group tended to report less Spanish language use. That is, being a "Mexican" implied having the ability to speak Spanish, but being "Hispanic" suggested this ability to a lesser degree.

Leeman (2015, 106) argues that "large scale surveys such as these are an efficient means for providing a sense of student demographics, experiences, and opinions, all of which can prove extremely useful for program design and administration. However, designing survey questions that reflect HLLs' sense of their own identity is extremely challenging, if not impossible." This reasonable observation along with the limited number of studies on the identities of Spanish HLLs in post-secondary contexts clearly demonstrate a need for additional research that looks at identities of this particular student population in different contexts and using varying research designs and methodologies. The research presented in this chapter is an attempt to address this need. Building on previous studies, this work adds to the growing literature on HLLs' identities by specifically focusing on the positional, narrative identities of heritage and non-heritage students in a doctoral program in Hispanic linguistics.

Positioning, Identity, and Membership

Davies and Harré (1990) use the term *position* to refer to presentations of self in communicative situations. By assigning a position to another individual (interactive positioning), people deny or give rights to others to do or not to do certain things. Individuals can also position themselves (reflexive or self-positioning), and as they discursively position themselves and others (Korobov and Bamberg 2004), they (co)construct and (re)shape their identities. Davies and Harré (1990) state that positioning is the dynamic construction of personal identities. Therefore, analyzing positioning in written and oral discourse is a way of uncovering participants' identities. Narratives, in particular, are a "primary site of identity construction" (Deppermann 2013, 1) as narrators constantly position themselves and others while narrating events, stories, or personal experience.

In an educational context, positioning becomes particularly important as how students are positioned can influence their participation, in terms of how rights and duties are distributed, and classroom membership, as positioning activities "contribute to answer the questions 'who am I' and 'who are you'" (Deppermann 2013, 66). For example, in a study by Abdi (2009), a Spanish heritage speaking student, Pat, was not positioned as Hispanic by her instructor in a college Spanish class due to her limited Spanish-speaking abilities and her reluctance to speak the language. Consequently, during class activities, Pat was perceived and positioned as non-Hispanic and assigned tasks accordingly. Unlike Pat, Yolanda, another Spanish heritage speaker in a similar study (Merrills 2015), was positioned as a Spanish expert by her teachers even though she was hesitant in the Spanish expert role and unwilling to use her Spanish language knowledge to help her classmates. As her teachers in the 9th and 10th grade continued to position her as a Spanish expert, Yolanda began to support her peers, second language (L2) learners of Spanish, with more confidence by translating and responding to their questions. Over time, Yolanda took the initiative to help her peers with Spanish and English, engaged in discourse that showed critical thinking, and communicated with confidence about what she wanted to convey in her writing in

Spanish. Her teachers took advantage of the full repertoire of linguistic multicompetence skills that Yolanda and other HLLs brought to the classroom and positioned them in powerful ways, which greatly supported their language learning experience. As seen from these two studies, the ways in which the HLLs were positioned had consequences for their language learning, identities, and participation in the classroom environment.

Participation is an "encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities" (Wenger 1998, 4). Therefore, participation, as Wenger argues, is "both a kind of action and a form of belonging. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do" (Ibid., 4). Participation, positioning, and identities are therefore intertwined in complex ways, influencing one another. In order for the process of learning to be effective or "most personally transformative" (Wenger 1998, 4), learning must involve engagement in and contribution to the practices of the communities of practice. Wenger (1998, 149) argues that

> Developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and they acknowledge each other as participants. As a consequence, practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context.

In this study, positioning is used both as a theoretical framework and methodological tool to understand heritage and non-heritage Spanish-speaking students' identity constructions and negotiations in their academic program and how Multiliteracies pedagogies shaped them as well as their access to learning opportunities.

Learning Opportunities and Multiliteracies

In this chapter, learning opportunities refer to any cognitive or metacognitive activity that is likely to lead to an increase in knowledge or skill (Crabbe 2003, 2007). Thus, negotiating meaning in a discussion is a

learning opportunity, as is processing comprehensible input or getting direct feedback on one's own use of language. According to Crabbe (2003, 22),

> learning opportunity is a term that is neutral as to who seeks or provides the opportunities, unlike terms such as instruction or delivery, and as to where those opportunities might be available. This aspect of the concept allows a teacher to consider the learner's role in seeking opportunities and the teacher's role in encouraging that opportunity seeking. In short, the notion of opportunity is compatible with the goal of supporting and fostering learner autonomy within instructional curricula.

Multiliteracies pedagogy offers a wide array of learning opportunities to language learners. In the writings of the New London Group (1996), the term "multiliteracies" is described as an approach to literacy pedagogy that particularly focuses on the growing significance of cultural and linguistic diversity as well as the influence of new communications technologies. Rowsell et al. (2008, 110) state that Multiliteracies pedagogy recognizes that there is a diversity of language forms and many types of literacy, and hence "it is inappropriate for schools to focus on 'a singular, canonical' language form such as formal written English," and all modes of communication should be acknowledged, valued, and supported in schools. In their description of a pedagogy of Multiliteracies, Cope and Kalantzis (2015, 3) state that

> the Multiliteracies notion sets out to address the variability of meaning making in different cultural, social or domain-specific contexts. This means that it is no longer enough for literacy teaching to focus solely on the rules of standards forms of the national language.

They further argue that in adopting a Multiliteracies approach, such as *Learning by Design,* teachers should bring "multimodal texts, and particularly those of the new, digital media, into the curriculum and classroom" (Ibid., 3). By enhancing traditional literacy pedagogy, the *Learning by Design* framework is known to foster a greater appreciation of literacy in classrooms and it enables students to feel more involved as

a wide range of literacies are recognized and supported. "Through immersion in the real, everyday stuff of the world" (Kalantzis and Cope 2005, 75), learners *experience* the language. Experiencing involves listening to, reading, and writing texts using a multitude of designs and multimodal genres. Drawing on Kalantzis and Cope (2005), López-Sánchez (2016, 68) states that "when experiencing, one draws from 'the known'—prior knowledge and familiar experiences—while confronting unfamiliar and new information and situations ('the new')." Experiencing the new can help learners construct new identities or renegotiate the existing ones in order to adapt to the changes in their instructional environment.

For HLLs, a learning environment supported by the *Learning by Design* multiliteracies framework means the opportunity to renegotiate their ethnic and cultural identities and have a voice through different literacies because this framework "emphasizes the multiplicities of languages, genres, and modalities" (Kumagai and López-Sánchez 2016, 3) and "puts this multiplicity at the center of the curriculum, while also honing learners' agency all with the goal of generating active and dynamic transformation" (Ibid., 3).

Based on the tenets of the multiliteracies pedagogy *Learning by Design* (e.g., Cope and Kalantzis 2009; Kalantzis et al. 2010; Kalantzis and Cope 2012), the current study attempts to address the following research questions: (1) How do heritage and non-heritage Spanish-speaking students position themselves in relation to the Spanish language? (2) How does *Learning by Design* shape access to learning opportunities in the classroom environment for heritage and non-heritage speakers? Unlike the majority of the studies that investigated the linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identities of speakers in Spanish language classrooms, this study was conducted in a doctoral program where all participants had already completed their formal Spanish language learning. By focusing on a different context and comparing and contrasting the participants' socio-historically situated experiences and identity constructions, the study will hopefully become a significant contribution to the literature.

Methods

Participants and Setting

The participants in this study were seven graduate students (five female and two male) enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Hispanic Linguistics at a southwestern university in the United States. The program provides training in Spanish phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and language teaching. One of these participants, Sarah (all names are pseudonyms), self-identified herself as a heritage speaker of Spanish. Sarah started to learn Spanish at a very early age mostly from her grandmother who only spoke Spanish. Sarah's mother chose to not communicate in Spanish in the family as Sarah explained, "because my mom was born in the United States in the sixties so people weren't very friendly to other languages or people that looked different." Sarah started to formally learn the Spanish language in 8th grade. Another heritage speaker participant in the study was Carla whose father spoke both Spanish and English. However, Carla lost her father in an accident when she was in her early teens. Although this unfortunate incident negatively affected her exposure to Spanish, it increased her passion, love, and personal connection toward the language. The next participant in the study, Anastasia, had no exposure to or contact with Spanish until 7th grade when she started to learn it in school. Anastasia self-identified as both a non-native speaker and heritage speaker:

> Now I teach both L2 learners and I teach HLLs, and I identify as both because I first learned as a L2 learner. Had no other language backgrounds in my family, but then, having lived abroad so early in language learning experience, I uhm yes, I had Spanish classes in Mexico, but I was learning the language through immersion and being there and through context. Ever since then, it's been more expanding knowledge through that language, but not necessarily learning the language. I identify as both. When I'm with my heritage students, I say, "I've had similar experiences. Not the same, but similar." When I'm with my second language learners, I've had those experiences, too.[1]

In this chapter, I decided to analyze Anastasia's data under the "non-native speakers" group for three main reasons: (1) Anastasia did not fit into the definition of heritage Spanish speaker adopted in this chapter, (2) her linguistic background was different from those of Sarah and Carla, and (3) she did not fit into the definition of heritage Spanish speaker adopted by the institution where this study took place.[2] Joshua was the other non-native speaking participant in the study. He started to learn the language in high school in the United States. The three other participants, Miguel, Martina, and Sofia were native speakers of Spanish. Miguel was born and raised in Mexico and came to the United States for graduate school. Martina and Sofia were born and raised in Spain, and like Miguel, they also came to the United States to attend graduate school. All participants were students in the Ph.D. program, and at the time of the study they were all teaching assistants in the Spanish for Heritage Learners program at the same university. The demographic information about the participants is summarized in Table 6.1.

The narrative study was initiated to investigate how these students learned and used Spanish in educational contexts and the role that *Learning by Design* could play in their positioning and identity with respect to Spanish. These individuals' considerable achievement in pursuing their doctoral work in Hispanic linguistics motivated my desire to focus on their linguistic strengths and identity negotiations. I recruited the research participants through an email sent to the program director. The program had 12 Ph.D. students at the time of the study, and 7 students responded to my email, indicating interest to participate in the study.

Table 6.1 Demographic information about the participants

Participants' names (pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Language affiliation
Sarah	F	Mid-20s	U.S.	HSS
Carla	F	Mid-20s	U.S.	HSS
Anastasia	F	Mid-20s	U.S.	NNSS
Joshua	M	Mid-20s	U.S.	NNSS
Miguel	M	Mid-20s	Mexico	NSS
Sophia	F	Mid-20s	Spain	NSS
Martina	F	Mid-20s	Spain	NSS

Data Collection and Analysis

The seven participants in this study were interviewed once. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. I was aware that one round of interviews with my participants would not allow me to fully understand how the *Learning by Design* framework could shape their graduate learning nor their teaching of Spanish. I therefore particularly focused on (a) their positioning in relation to the Spanish language and (b) their classroom learning/teaching experience, in particular, their experience with digital literacies, an important principle of the *Learning by Design* pedagogy. Thus, the purpose of the semi-structured, in-depth interviews was to understand how heritage and non-heritage speakers of Spanish constructed identities, positioned themselves and others, and how their identity constructions and negotiations limited or increased their chances to gain access to learning opportunities in the graduate program.

The interviews elicited the participants' linguistic autobiographies, which Pavlenko (2007, 165) defines as "life histories that focus on the languages of the speaker and discuss how and why these languages were acquired, used, or abandoned." Merriam (2009) argues that in semi-structured interviews questions are used flexibly, some specific data are required from all respondents, and the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored. The questions I asked were broad and focused on the participants' educational background, language learning and teaching experience, interactions with their professors, peers, and students in the doctoral program, and classroom practices (e.g., the use of technology, etc.). As participants narrated their experience and related stories, I asked follow-up questions, which varied in each interview. All of the interviews took place in my office on campus on different days during the same month in the same academic semester. The average length of the interviews was an hour and 23 minutes.

After the interviews were transcribed, I developed common data categories via recursive and multiple reviews of the data. After reading all interview transcripts, I coded the first interview transcript, which included jotting down codes in the margins and identifying and highlighting segments that stood out. The codes were in the form of

words or short phrases and included either participants' own words, my words, or concepts from the theoretical framework or literature. This coding process was completed in light of my research problem statement. The next phase included going over these codes, grouping the similar ones, and forming categories. As I engaged in this phase, I used colored markers and assigned a different color to each category. As I worked with the data, I refined my categories (e.g., combining, eliminating, revising etc.). For example, *positioning self* and *positioning peers* emerged as two categories. I then identified tentative themes. *Positioning self and positioning peers as competent users of the language*, for instance, became one of the major themes. These themes were retained for further examination or eliminated due to lack of significant data evidence. Additionally, I carefully reviewed the data for negative cases that served to disprove an emerging theme or to provide alternative perspectives on key issues. I applied the steps described above to each interview transcript, constantly going back and forth to refine codes, categories, and themes. Once this entire phase was over, I employed the constant comparison method (see Merriam 2009) to find out the differences and similarities between the three groups of student participants (heritage, native speaker, and non-native speaker) in terms of their positioning, identity negotiations, and overall experience in the graduate program. This phase simply included a comparison of categories that emerged from the first phase of analysis, but that comparison was done among three groups of participants. Recursive analysis of the data yielded the following themes.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to understand, in light of the *Learning by Design* framework and positioning theory, how heritage and non-heritage speakers of Spanish in a doctoral program in Hispanic linguistics positioned themselves in relation to the Spanish language and gained access to learning opportunities in their program, and how the *Learning by Design* pedagogy shaped, if at all, their positional learner and teacher identities. Although my participants were not language learners themselves, they still negotiated their linguistic identities as speakers of English and Spanish in the

doctoral program. They also constructed and negotiated teacher identities as they taught Spanish in the heritage program. In the following section, I present the findings that emerged from the data.

Positioning Self and Peers as Competent Users of the Spanish Language

Both heritage and non-heritage Spanish-speaking students recursively positioned themselves and their peers as *competent, legitimate users* of Spanish language regardless of the *varieties* that they spoke. In the following excerpt taken from the interview with Miguel, he describes how all varieties are valued in the program:

> I think we all have kind of like a pride for our own variety of Spanish. People from Spain often talk about the Real Academy of Spanish, which is very natural because they have it there. It was born there. It's a whole institution that we feel its weight everywhere else. We know it exists. It has a certain force everywhere in the Spanish-speaking world, but it's not the same with other countries. For example, with Mexico we just have a lot of pride in our own variety of Spanish, the culture. Yeah, I mean, you can notice when you're speaking with somebody from Mexico, even if it's not the same region, we start using more slang. When you hear a group of Spaniards speaking, you can hear they're using their own slang. It's really accepted. It's welcomed to use. There's no frictions or anything.

Miguel was aware of the different status each variety of the Spanish language had and seemed to accept those status differences. Yet, this acceptance did not mean that he felt less positive about the variety he spoke. He not only emphasized how proud he was about his own variety but also how all varieties were accepted and valued by others. For Sofia, "it was just interesting to see a different type of Spanish," and she felt her peers and professors in the program were always open to discussing these differences:

> Sometimes with the Spanish professors, we would say something they would say "Well, you have to know here we don't say that". We would have

> funny discussions about how Spaniards say something, words in Spanish that are different here. Always from a respectful atmosphere I think.

Sofia's comment above, like Miguel's reflection, also indicates that the differences were not subtle but explicit and respectful. Unlike the heritage speakers in other studies (e.g., Felix 2009; Leeman 2005) who devalued their own variety as being not proper, Carla and Sarah highly valued the varieties they spoke and were not discouraged from speaking Spanish in different academic communities. Carla stated that even though they knew about the differences in the language use among professors and peers in their program and felt comfortable discussing them, no particular speaker was positioned to have more power over another:

> It's a lot of fun to have a professor who is from Spain who has a different vocabulary and makes different sounds and everything and so that's really, it's not that one is raised above another but we do talk about, we'll go around as we're talking about sounds and so we say okay, the way you say it is going to be like this but then she'll have somebody from Southern Spain read something out and say okay, listen to the way he's talking and hear how this is different. It's used as a tool really. It's helpful when you're in a class about the sounds of language to have people from all over the place. It makes everything we're studying a lot more concrete.

As seen from her comment above, Carla perceived the differences in her peers' language use as a learning opportunity in her phonology and phonetics class. Obviously, as doctoral students in a program focusing on linguistics, these students were all aware of the current status of the Spanish language and socio-historical background of it. This awareness and knowledge is clearly reflected in Sofia's comments below:

> We are all studying sociolinguistics so we're all brainwashed that that shouldn't be something that has to be said. That's why we are linguistics students. Hopefully, we'll know that there's no "You're using the correct Spanish, you're using the wrong Spanish." No one corrects anyone unless we are joking [inaudible 00:20;18] in the context like, "No, no, that's wrong." In the classes or anything, no never. One would never correct anyone.

All participants, but mostly the heritage speaking students, Carla and Sarah, transferred and valued the differences into their heritage language classrooms. The comments from Carla below indicate how she integrated those into her teaching:

> I speak I guess I have a lot more of a Mexican influence in the Spanish that I speak and but I do point out, we just finished yesterday, I just gave the exam on Chapter eight and the theme was chebe, chili for my students and they had a lot of vocabulary words that were South American vocabulary words for foods that are not the same as they are in Central and North America. It's all based on indigenous languages and so we had a lot of fun. […]You know, trying to making them aware that even if you go just to a different part of Mexico or Peru, there are going to be massive differences. More enjoying the differences than driving one in a certain direction.

As teachers, it was important for these participants to teach their students that the differences existed in terms of the varieties, word choice, or language use. It was equally important for them to teach such differences in the best neutral way possible, without putting more emphasis on or favoring one variety over another. Similar to the comments above, Sarah also highlighted that the varieties are accepted and appreciated in the program, but when it came to writing, she said there was an emphasis on academic Spanish:

> Even within the same country you can have so many different dialects of the language. I wouldn't say that one is valued more within the program. They definitely stress having the ability to write academically. I would say that if anything is valued, it's making sure that you know how to write academically not only in Spanish, but in English, especially for like publishing purposes. As far as valuing, I mean we understand that because linguistically we talk about the values, especially like in sociolinguistics classes or heritage classes, the values are the differences in how it plays out socially. […]As far as like what is stressed to us, it's making sure that you have the knowledge of academic. That's a reality.

Both groups of students felt supported by their professors and peers in the Hispanic linguistics program. Joshua who learned Mexican Spanish

stated "I learned kind of like Mexican Spanish and then so most of my professors are from Spain but there's never really been a problem or anything. The professors have never said anything to me about language differences." If they ever lacked access to classroom talk or other learning opportunities, it was not because of their language abilities but their content expertise. Even then, they took it as an opportunity to learn from others and construct a professional identity.

Conflicting Positional Identities in Relation to the Academic Register

In the graduate level program, participants reported that no one seemed to feel superior to another or felt excluded due to the language use, abilities, or varieties spoken. However, both groups of students struggled with *constructing an academic writer identity* in their L2 (Spanish or English). Heritage and non-native speaking students were required to write academic papers in Spanish in all courses in the program whereas others were required to write them in English. This experience enabled both groups of students to fully understand what it meant to be an L2 writer and in a way minimized differential power relations. Even though constructing an L2 writer identity was not smooth for the participants, they also perceived it as an opportunity to grow professionally and construct a powerful professional identity.

The sharp contrast between academic versus non-academic language especially in the context of writing is evident in Anastasia's statements below:

> Yeah. Yeah. There's no whitewashing of spoken varieties. Yeah. We all come at it with what we naturally would say. I don't self-monitor about using certain like using the vosotros form. That's not something that I use for my verbal conjugations, but speaking with somebody who does, the whole point of understanding language is knowing that they do, and I understand what it means. […] In our written work, it makes sense, a push for an academic, more formal Spanish because when we do write in Spanish, which is not all the time, we are writing with intent to publish. That may not be an actual publishable paper, but it's with that practice in mind.

> Code switching is not really allowed in papers, unless it's to show an illustration or something like that. That's where whitewashing of dialects would come through, is in that academic form of writing. Again, it's because of the ultimate audience of being in a journal or in a presentation or something.

The conflicting identities these participants constructed in relation to writing became more visible in their narratives in which they narrated anecdotes from their classrooms that they taught as teaching assistants. Although they all recognized and appreciated *different varieties of Spanish* and valued diversity in their classrooms, they believed that it was important for any Spanish-speaking student to write *academic, standard Spanish*. For some participants, this meant an identity negotiation. The struggle was stronger in the narratives of native speakers in the heritage language classrooms. The conflicting identities are clearly seen in the following narrative by Martina:

> I actually love diversity and I teach in the heritage program and I always say at the very beginning of the class, even though it's a Spanish class, I love code-switching and they can code-switch as much as they want. […]My variety of Spanish is from Canaria Islands. I have my way of speaking and I have my way of saying things, but it doesn't mean that this is how they should talk in my class. They come with Spanish already, use the Spanish they know, and the Spanish they know is influenced by English so use English, as well. I love diversity and I love the fact that Spanish from the United States is so rich on so many levels that I love to hear in the classes. Then when I have to grade, it's so hard because I don't want to diminish anything that comes in their writings but sometimes it's like, this is very informal, you have to be more formal in a way. This is very controversial and we have had this discussion in the heritage pedagogy class, because I don't want to impose anything to them. On the other hand, it's academic environment so they should be more academic. How they should be more academic, I don't know yet. It's very difficult to grade for me.

Although Martina appreciated differences in the Spanish language use in the classes she taught as a teaching assistant, she did not seem to know how those differences could still be accepted and supported in academic

writing. Her struggle became stronger in the context of assessment as she did not seem to be sure what types of proficiency her students would need to show. She expected them to demonstrate their knowledge of the academic register, and yet, merging the academic language with all other varieties of Spanish, without changing the inclusive and supportive nature of her classroom practices, was a challenge. Similarly, Sofia had to renegotiate her identities in the HL classroom where she taught Spanish:

> It's been challenging for me sometimes because I come from the Spanish mind and we think that in Spain Spanish, it's very very standard. In college, I mean. When you go to college they ask you to be very standard and write things in a certain way. I've had a hard time knowing that I can't do that to my students. Not because I want to do that to my students but sometimes when you say, "Well, no you shouldn't say this," because they are in the class to learn that they shouldn't write that way but sometimes I feel like I shouldn't be telling them this because it's the way they speak. I can't tell that what they are writing is wrong but at the same time, they are taking the class for me to tell them what they are writing is wrong. It's challenging for me, that sense. For a native Spanish speaker because my heritage speakers are native speakers because they grew up from birth, learned speaking both Spanish and English or just the Spanish and then English later. They are native speakers. It's kind of like sometimes, for me, controversial because I don't want to offend anyone because it's how they speak and it's their dialect and it's as good as mine but at the same time, they are there to learn. They ask me like, "No, no, no. I want you to correct me because I know I say things that are not correct." I have a hard time with that. Since I am from Spain, I feel like more awkward about it because I feel like if they had a teacher from their background, like another heritage speaker, maybe they will feel better like more equal. I don't want them to feel like I feel superior because I am a native speaker from Spain or things like that.

Sofia was negotiating identities at different levels. Coming from an academic background where standard Spanish was highly valued, she had a hard time in addressing the diverse linguistic needs of her HLLs whom Sofia positioned both as HLLs and native speakers. She appeared to be concerned about the possible power differentials between her, as a native

speaker, and her HLLs. Even though she did not assign herself a more superior position, she seemed to be concerned that her students might. Her perceived, different identity positions between herself and her students seemed to restrict her autonomy or agency as she did not seem to know the best ways to assess her students' writing without offending or insulting them. Sofia also recognized and positioned her HLLs as native speakers, which seemed to restrict her decisions regarding assessment and evaluation of their language performance. Among all participants, heritage speaking students, Sarah and Carla, seemed to be more certain and flexible regarding the pedagogical choices that they made in their HL classrooms. Sarah explained how important it was for her to understand the background and goal of her students:

> A lot of times we talk about those expectations that I want them to feel comfortable using the Spanish that they use on an everyday basis, but at the same time they also have to understand, you know, we're in school obviously so if their desire is to continue using Spanish in an academic setting, that they also have to learn that academic Spanish what is going to be used if they want to go to a conference and present a paper, if they want to continue and get a master's in Spanish or continue …We kind of talk about the realities of those situations, but a lot of times that might not be their goal. Their goal is maybe to strengthen their fluency. Their goal is to be able to talk to their grandparents. Their goal is to be able to watch a TV show in Spanish. We have to gauge those types of things with the students and get that feedback from them. "How do you want to use your Spanish after this class," because if all I do is teach them grammar, then what have they learned? How are they going to use it outside of the classroom? For me, that's the biggest thing. I try to see, well … gauge the classroom, "What is your goals for after this class?" Then try to insert a little bit of everything. […] We talk a lot about United States Spanish and we talk a lot about identity. Sometimes I'll top in a little bit in English.

Sarah's comment above highlights another important feature of the *Learning by Design pedagogy*, which is *getting to know learners* in order to create an inclusive curriculum. Drawing from a broad array of activities and genres, it seemed that Sarah "aligned with her students and validated their linguistic practices" effectively (Showstack 2015, 356).

Experiencing the Old

Although all participants reported how different varieties of Spanish were used and valued in their graduate level courses, the integration of digital multiliteracies into those courses was almost non-existent. Obviously, *Learning by Design* involves more than the use of multimodal resources, and yet the use of those in order to address diverse needs of learners in classrooms is an important principle in this pedagogy. All the participants mentioned the use of power points that professors used for lectures to share an article or document with the class, but as Sofia mentioned, in most classes that they took, there was "no technology at all" while in others "technology's not that present." Likewise, the use of digital media was rare in the classes that they taught. Their classes included lab-time, but they did not seem to be prepared to use this time effectively. Sofia described her experience:

> To be honest, I just use them because we have to go to the lab that day. It's a lab day that day. The department director imposes that somehow. There's a day that is in the lab, you have to go. Since I'm there, I'm like okay, "I'm just going to use the computers." Sometimes I don't know with the computers, to be honest. I'm not that tech savvy. That's why I did that because I thought it was cool that I could see all of the [inaudible 00:28:46] and they liked it actually and I think it's faster. They are just typing and then they get a response.

In her heritage language classroom, Sofia took her students to the computer lab as she felt obligated to do so. When asked to describe activities that she used in her class using digital media and other forms of technologies, she acknowledged that she only used electronic versions of the course textbooks through which students completed language exercises in the computer lab. In addition to using ebooks, Carla described how she integrated technology into her teaching:

> I use YouTube quite a bit as far as finding songs and short videos. I listened to a lot of music. It's something that I now encourage my students is that I would print out lyrics and read them as I was listening to them and then look up stuff that I didn't know. But playing songs over and over and over

> either on YouTube or just a CD was great because it gets stuck in your head and then I could work out, if a song was stuck in my head, I could work out the grammar throughout the day to eventually arrive a place of understanding.

As seen from Carla's narrative above, she was mostly drawing on her own experience as a language learner in integrating multimedia tools into her teaching. Other participants' experience with digital literacies, multimedia and multimodal projects, was extremely limited.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a study that looked at how doctoral students in a Hispanic linguistics program positioned themselves and others and negotiated identities in light of certain dimensions of the *Learning by Design* framework and through a positioning lens. Although the participants in this study spoke different varieties of Spanish, they did not feel different or excluded in the doctoral program. This finding is important to highlight given that one of the central principles of *Learning by Design* is that it recognizes and supports a diversity of language forms. Furthermore, both Joshua and Anastasia, the non-native speakers of Spanish, and Sarah and Carla, two of the very few heritage speakers in the program, positioned themselves as powerful, legitimate speakers and members of the community in the program even though they were the linguistic minority. This finding is remarkable as the previous studies heavily focused on the deficit model, elaborating on HLLs' negative experiences or feelings of inadequacy, isolation, inferiority, or powerlessness. For example, the high school Spanish teachers, who self-identified as the non-natives or United States Latinos in a study by Carreira (2011) referenced the native speaker norm as the model of correct usage and expressed feelings of linguistic inadequacy. Likewise, Valdés and her colleagues (2003, 14) interviewed 43 members, including faculty, doctoral and master's students, and lecturers in a Spanish department in the United States and reported that "even though bilingualism itself was rarely mentioned, the formulas used in discussions of academic Spanish constructed a reality within

which bilingualism was seen as suspect, difficult to attain, and its narrow definition, characteristic of very few members of the department." Contrary to what the participants reported in these two studies, all participants in this study felt quite confident about their competence and performance in Spanish. Rowsell et al. (2008, 112) acknowledge that "another key dimension of the Multiliteracies position—some would say its most fundamental—is its emphasis on recognizing minority and marginalized voices." All participants were aware of the differences between academic literacy versus home or local literacy or formal language versus colloquial and conversational language or immigrant language. As doctoral students, they felt that their language backgrounds were recognized and valued and no particular dialect or variety was emphasized over another. Similar to the high school Spanish teachers in Carreira's study, the participants in this study supported the discourse of linguistic tolerance and sophistication, challenging the ideologies of linguistic uniformity, linguistic nationalism, or linguistic homogeneity. Yet, as teaching assistants, they seemed to have difficulties in connecting their heritage Spanish-speaking students' multiple languages and literacies to academic literacies and promoting a *Learning by Design* pedagogy. Participants therefore seemed to constantly negotiate their conflicting identities, one that recognized and accepted all varieties in the classroom and the other that did not know when not to accept non-academic usages. Correa (2011) emphasizes that standard Spanish should not be a replacement for local varieties but it should be introduced as simply a register heritage speaking students can use once they appreciate their own language. This emphasis along with explicit discussions of inclusion and literacy forms as well as a clear focus on Multiliteracies pedagogy in the doctoral curriculum would help the participants in their teaching and forming powerful professional identities.

One can argue that these participants were not language learners and they were not in a language program, and hence, the use of *Learning by Design* may not be applicable in their graduate level courses. However, *Learning by Design* is and should not only be limited to language classrooms. The doctoral program these students were part of focused on linguistics, which meant that the participants read, reacted to, and wrote different types of texts almost on a daily basis. However, their experience

took place in a very traditional space. A strong integration of digital multiliteracies to the linguistics program would diversify literacy options and learning opportunities for these students. It would certainly better prepare them as instructors for the HL classrooms that they all taught. Yet, these students lacked the pedagogical knowledge to integrate digital literacies into their teaching. They did not seem to be ready to "experience the new" and construct new identities or renegotiate their existing ones. That may be partly because these participants were experiencing negotiation in the traditional forms of literacy. That is, they were engaging in negotiations of code-switching and the use of academic versus non-academic language both in their learning and teaching contexts. Perhaps, they were not ready for another literacy to negotiate. Indeed, Cope and Kalantzis (2015, 19) state that

> Learners encounter new information or experiences, but only within a zone of intelligibility and safety […] sufficiently close to the learners' own lifeworlds to be half familiar, but sufficiently new to require new learning.

The participants in this study did not have the scaffolds and opportunities to "experience the new," one of the knowledge processes of the *Learning by Design* framework. The findings presented in this chapter expand on the arguments by Correa (2011), Showstack (2015), and others who call for attention to HL instructor training, highlighting the opportunities that a Multiliteracies pedagogy such as *Learning by Design* could offer for diverse curricula.

Notes

1. The transcription symbols used in this chapter are adapted from Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., and Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 696–735.
   " " Direct quote
   Uhm Filled paused word (conversation filler)
   [ ] Transcriber's comments/observations of body language
   […] Deleted segment(s) or utterance(s)
   ... Incomplete utterance

2. The definition adopted by the institution: "Heritage learners of Spanish are students who have been exposed to Spanish in their homes or communities from a young age. As a consequence of that early exposure, they can understand and/or speak the language and have a personal connection to it." Anastasia did not have the exposure in her home or community at a young age. She rather learned it in a formal way in the school environment. She went to Mexico for a short period of time when she was in 11th grade.

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