

AN EXPLORATION OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
FOR HERITAGE SPEAKERS OF SPANISH

SABBATICAL PROPOSAL BY CECILIA MILÁN
LETTERS DEPARTMENT, SPANISH PROGRAM
SPRING 2013

Submitted October 24, 2011

2- Rationale

a) Professional Development Since I started teaching fulltime at Oxnard College in 2004, I have been researching the relatively new field of Heritage Speakers language learning Resources were few; textbooks with heritage speakers in mind were slowly making their way into the market. Since then, I have been progressively making changes to curriculum, mostly by trial and error. There is still a strong need for more research in this field and development of new materials and training opportunities for instructors. In the course of the sabbatical leave, it is my intention to gain a solid theoretical knowledge of heritage language acquisition as well as to create suitable teaching materials for these classes

b) Value to Department or Discipline Heritage speakers do not fall neatly into the traditional categories of beginner, intermediate and advanced language learner. Therefore, all Spanish instructors at Oxnard College, regardless of the level they teach, are bound to encounter heritage speakers in their classes. I believe it is worth exploring ways to make some adjustments to our teaching strategies in order to make the heritage speakers' time in class more productive, without compromising the learning experience

(Tomlinson 2000), which allows for more differentiated tasks and assessment

methods could work well in a mixed

secondary or postsecondary education in Mexico. Our community offers countless opportunities for using authentic materials in Spanish relevant to students: advertisements, job announcements, transportation, medical and touristic brochures, radio announcements, etc. Elders in the community have lived through important social times for the county and state, such as the *Bracero* Movement, a migrant working program recently honored by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Incorporating these authentic materials and personal resources into the already existing materials for heritage speaker classes is very time-consuming. The resulting lessons, though, provide a more meaningful and culturally relevant learning context for students in this community.

- e) Value to Community It has become increasingly important in our community to have bilingual skills. Heritage speakers, due to their linguistic backgrounds, are in a unique position to reach high levels of proficiency at a relatively fast pace (see [CAL Guidelines on Heritage Language Instruction](#)). After two semesters, many heritage speakers are equipped to start using their skills in a professional setting. Students who successfully complete Spanish courses at Oxnard College often find themselves in a position to...

Another excellent resource is the National Heritage Language Research Center (NHLRC), also based at UCLA. I plan to complete the two modules of the online workshop offered by this institution, the first on theoretical research and the second on teaching strategies. After the completion of the workshop, I will follow the research leads and networking possibilities offered by the NHLRC to share my experimentation and results with professionals in the field. Next, I plan to create specific lessons on writing composition for heritage speakers. For that purpose, I have contacted two composition experts Kim Potowsky from the University of Illinois and Cecilia Colombi from UC Davis to collaborate as mentors for my research. Next, I plan to read books and articles and extract practical applications for my lessons. Among the titles I plan to consult are *Heritage Language Education: A New Field Emerging*, *Differentiation and the Brain: How Neuroscience Supports the Learner-Friendly Classroom*, "Teaching Spanish to Native Speakers in Mixed Ability Language Classrooms," "The Abuelos Project: A Multi-Disciplinary, Multi-Task Unit for Heritage and Advanced Second Language Learners of Spanish," and "The Professional Development of Teachers of Heritage Language Learners: Matrix."

Please refer to Appendix B

I anticipate the creation of the following materials:

d) Projected timeline

SPRING 2013

Month	Resource	Task
<u>January</u>	-Attend the 2nd International Conference on Heritage and Community Languages (CLA), date to be determined	-Research differences in language acquisition for heritage speakers and second language learners.
<u>February</u>	-Complete Online Heritage Teacher Workshop (NHLRC) <u>Module 1: Heritage Language Learners Profiles and Definitions</u>	-Compare the profile of the average heritage speaker with the average heritage speaker at OC. -Create a survey to understand students' linguistic and cultural background.
<u>March</u>	-Complete Online Heritage Teacher Workshop (NHLRC) <u>Module 2:</u>	

4- Past Contributions to the District

- a) Scholarship: I continuously seek opportunities to expand my field. Since being hired by Oxnard College I have completed a certificate in Translation and Interpretation and a graduate level course on Mexican Literature, both from UCLA Extension. I have received a certification as a bilingual mediator from the Ventura Center for Dispute Settlement Pepperdine University School of Law have designed and taught specialized courses, "Spanish for the Legal Profession" for the Ventura County, and "Spanish for Teachers" at Casa Pacifica. I have translated non-fiction books and poetry that have been published in the U.S. and in Argentina. I have attended distance education workshops at Oxnard College and been
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APPENDIX B

Works Cited

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