

Building Communities and Making Connections

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Edited by

Susana Rivera-Mills and Juan Antonio Trujillo

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

BUILDING COMMUNITIES AND MAKING CONNECTIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A NEW ROLE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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This edited monograph brings together innovative, exploratory, and thoughtful research essays on a variety of topics related to the role of higher education and academic research, and the need to establish academic alliances with the communities we serve. This is particularly important as our world becomes smaller and globalization seems to be the norm rather than the exception.

As language educators, we are immersed in a dynamic, rapidly changing environment marked by a sense of urgency in the United States due to the nation's multilingual and multicultural deficit. We face our nation's inability to communicate with other parts of the world, shortages of qualified language teachers, a lack of understanding of other cultures and languages, and a growing ethnocentric, monolingual society. It is this society that instead of embracing and fostering the linguistic and cultural diversity of its immigrants, encourages an assimilation process that promotes the loss of languages and cultures that are a priceless resource in a global community.

These issues must be addressed by higher education. As universities continue to emphasize the building of international areas of distinction and the need to serve domestic populations and communities that represent languages and cultures other than English, it is urgent that these institutions respond to the societal needs of our state, nation and the world by placing intercultural competence at the center of our curricula and providing opportunities for students and faculty to connect with their surrounding communities. We must begin to provide skills and tools (e.g., languages, intercultural competency, consciousness of social justice issues, communication skills, etc.) that create global citizens ready to engage in

economic growth and social progress. To this end, this collection of essays describes and presents academic models that have found innovative ways to establish connections and partnerships with underrepresented communities. These models are being piloted all over the United States, and it is our hope that they will continue to expand and guide learning and teaching in the 21st Century.

This collection of essays represents revised and developed papers selected for this edited monograph through a refereed process, involving the two editors, the general editor, and an anonymous reviewer in the field. It is organized into four chapters themes, with each chapter containing three essays. Both the themes and the topics in this edited monograph contribute to our understanding of the complexities of building communities in academia and beyond, and making connections to existing communities in the spirit of service and collaboration for mutual growth.

The Learning Community Model and Service-Learning

Given that a significant number of the essays included in this monograph present the learning community or service-learning as a model for making connections (see Martínez, Morin, Anderson-Mejías, Villa and McFarland in this volume), it is important to offer the reader some background information about this type of pedagogy and the benefits it provides in terms of community building and intercultural competence development.

Bennett (2008, 97) defines intercultural knowledge and competence as "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts." This concept, which includes cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions in an appropriate interaction, confirms the need to intentionally integrate intercultural competence into the curriculum. In other words, simply sharing space or being exposed to those who are culturally and linguistically different from ourselves is not enough to bring us into intercultural knowledge and understanding. We must engage with the "other" in a meaningful interaction in order for transformative education to happen. The learning community model and service-learning provide the framework for such transformative education to happen.

Learning Communities (LCs) and service-learning represent pedagogies of engagement, that is an alternative model of teaching and learning in higher education. Though the size, focus and format vary, generally speaking, a learning community is a group of students who study together in an intense, integrated, thematic course that meets for large

blocks of time (Eby et al., 2006). Following the same concept, service-learning includes courses with a community service component that is integrated into the course objectives and outcomes as a tangible product of the course. Unlike the learning community, service-learning is not considered the course itself but rather a component of an already existing course. According to O'Connor, et al., "Some of the distinctive features of LCs are that they are usually smaller than most units on campus, they help overcome the isolation of faculty members from one another and their students, they encourage continuity and integration in the curriculum and they help build a sense of group identity, cohesion and 'specialness'" (O'Connor, et al., 2003, 8). In addition, both LCs and service-learning connect students to real-world issues in their surrounding communities, and provide opportunities to interact with populations and communities that would not be readily available to them.

The first LC was founded in 1927 by Alexander Meiklejohn at the Experimental College of the University of Wisconsin. Meiklejohn was concerned with the fragmentation, compartmentalization and departmentalization of the university experience as well as the lack of social responsibility being required of students (O'Connor et al., 2003). Like his contemporary in Brazil, Paulo Freire, Meiklejohn believed that one of the purposes of a liberal education was to prepare students for civic action (Freire, 2004). In order to unite the various disciplines and offer students an opportunity to become involved in their community, Meiklejohn developed what he called a learning community. This first LC on the University of Wisconsin campus integrated varying disciplines and incorporated a service-learning component into one articulated course. Joseph Tussman followed Meiklejohn's lead and created LCs at the University of California at Berkeley in the 1960's. Both of these pioneers formed interactive communities of learners and professors who explored various integrated themes across disciplines and worked to put these ideas into action in their communities through civic engagement (O'Connor et al., 2003).

LCs now exist in over 600 educational institutions across the nation (Eby et al., 2006), and service-learning has now become a well-known pedagogical tool that is added to many traditional courses. Some LCs are residential where students and faculty live and study together, others are non-residential and vary in size, intensity, scope and format. The target audiences vary from program to program. Some LCs are designed for incoming first-year students while others are designed for senior-level capstone experiences and/or underrepresented student populations. The duration of programs differ as well. Some communities of learners begin

college together and stay in contact throughout their studies; others meet for only one term or one semester, yet others participate in a component of a course that connects them to service-learning (for more information regarding learning communities as a model see Trujillo, 2009). Many of these various models are exemplified in the essays contained in this book, and serve as examples for curriculum integration.

Section I: Building Communities and Making Connections in Public Health

Health care in the United States has been a complex issue throughout the history of this country. Many people face challenges in terms of access to health care and others face many economic barriers. The Latino population is no exception to these issues. In addition, many Latinos are affected by language barriers, which have a direct impact in the type and quality of health care they receive. Glenn Martínez, in his essay on “Medical Spanish for Heritage Learners: A Prescription to Improve the Health of Spanish-Speaking Communities,” tackles the language barriers faced by this population. His essay describes an initiative that triangulates heritage language pedagogy, language for specific purposes, and community-based service-learning in an overarching strategy to improve communication for Spanish-speaking patients in public health settings. In addition, the essay presents connections between institutions of higher education and the local community, by highlighting a curricular design that re-orientes advanced language proficiency towards medical contexts. In doing this, Martínez, raises critical awareness of the impact of limited English proficiency in public health.

This essay is followed by Regina Morin’s exposition on “Making Connections: Spanish for Medical Purposes and Service-Learning.” With a similar approach, the author describes a course with an extensive community-based learning component, intended to increase field-specific linguistic competence, and develop an understanding of social and cultural characteristics of Latino patients. This model of a course highlights the connections made by students between their native language and culture and the target language and cultures by working directly with the Latino community. As such, students experience first hand the barriers and challenges faced by the Latino community and establish a critical approach to their own beliefs and attitudes regarding medical treatment in the U.S.

Pamela Anderson-Mejías’ piece on “Data Collection as Service Learning” closes the section with connections made between students and

the local community in the process of data collection. Students connect to Spanish speaking members of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas in the process of gathering data from community elders regarding language use, Hispanic heritage and family relationships. By incorporating this experiential learning component into a course students are not only developing valuable academic skills, but also learning about research methodology, social consciousness and guidelines for interacting with members of non-academic communities, which are vital to ensure human dignity and integrity. More importantly, the community is able to maintain and document an oral history of the narratives shared with the students, as part of the course project.

Section II: Building Communities and Making Connections with Indigenous Languages

Current linguistic research in speech communities must consider the ethical framework that allows a balance to exist between individual research and community collaboration. Cameron et al. 1997 and Rice 2004 exemplify a framework of community empowerment, which highlights a goal of collaboration between linguists as researchers and speech communities in which neither is acting solely for the benefit of self or other. Section II focuses on a set of three essays that examine the factors and complexities surrounding connections and the building of communities as they relate to indigenous languages. The section begins with Jansen and Beavert's essay on "Combining the Goals of Language Documentation and Language Teaching: A Yakima Sahaptin Case Study." This essay focuses on the concept of building and strengthening links between the academic institution and indigenous speech communities. The authors describe a language course and the elements in planning and teaching, which include the collaboration of both academics and members of a Native American community. In addition, the authors address the link between language documentation projects and classroom language teaching, suggesting that materials collected in a language documentation project can add richness and authenticity to a language classroom.

This first essay is followed by Brad Montgomery-Anderson's piece on "Creating Partnerships between the Indigenous Language Community and the University: The Experience of the Cherokee Education Degree Program." The author presents the Cherokee Education Degree Program (CEDP) as a unique example of cooperation between a state university and a tribe. The program trains future teachers in Cherokee Education as an effort to maintain and revitalize the Cherokee language through a

language-specific degree program. The CEDP represents a new model of connection to existing communities by creating a partnership that involves a number of mutually beneficial exchanges. In addition, the state university is actively involved in the building of a new type of language community that supports and contributes to the tribal language and culture.

Following the theme of language maintenance and the complexities that surround the maintenance of an indigenous language, the piece by Rivera-Mills and Merecías Cuevas closes the section by focusing on “Language Maintenance and Shift among Speakers of Mixteco in Oregon.” The essay focuses on an exploratory study that observes the maintenance and shift of the Mixteco language (originating in southern Mexico) across different age groups of Mixtecos residing in Oregon. Particularly, this study examines the use of the Mixteco language in alternation with Spanish and English within a sociolinguistic framework of domains of language use, language attitudes and the individual’s ability to use the language. The findings point to a language shift that is confounded by the presence of Spanish-speaking communities. The shift is three-tiered going from Mixteco to Spanish, Spanish to English monolingualism and eventually to English at the expense of the native language.

Section III: Building Communities and Making Connections with US Latinos

As the demographics of the Spanish-speaking population in the United States continue to grow exponentially, it becomes urgent for higher education to establish connections with Spanish-speaking communities in an effort to better understand the dynamics of these speech communities and the factors affecting the variety of Spanish they speak, the history behind it, and the language ideology that uniquely belongs to those who reside in the United States. The essays in this section examine these issues from various perspectives. Daniel Villa’s piece on “¿Cómo Que Spanglish!? Creating a Service Learning Component for a Spanish Heritage Language Program” begins the section by focusing on service-learning as a component for a course that provides opportunities for students of Spanish heritage to interact with the local Spanish-speaking community. The innovative aspect of this piece lies in the use of Southwest Spanish in public domains as a means of communication with the local Spanish-speaking community. Villa argues that Southwest Spanish, and other U.S. Spanish varieties, is not only suited for all public and private domains, but also represents a preferred variety for

communication among those who engage with Spanish speech communities in the United States.

This essay is then followed by Domnița Dumitrescu's piece on "Spanglish: An Ongoing Controversy." Indeed, her essay focuses on the controversy and ongoing debates about definitions attached to the term *Spanglish* and its role in U.S. Latino communities, and in institutions of higher education. The author presents a full array of definitions of the term by top scholars ranging from those who argue for the validation of the term, to those who see it as inappropriate and "as out of place in promoting Latino language and culture" (Lipski, 2008). Dumitrescu pays particular attention to the educational environment, which historically has been prescriptive in its approach to the teaching of Spanish and has seldom accepted Spanglish as having a legitimate place in academia. Dumitrescu's piece provides a solid foundation of varying perspectives on the topic, which will certainly continue to be debated.

This section closes with Nevin Leder's essay on "Critical Linguistic Consciousness in the Last American Colony: Educational Therapy for a Doubly Marginalized Population." This piece continues the polemic on what some consider non-traditional varieties of Spanish, focusing on Puerto Rican Spanish. Leder presents the historical dimension in the evolution of Puerto Rican Spanish, and how this variety has continued to drift away from the Iberian roots due in part to English influence, but also because of natural geographical and cultural isolation from Spain and the present influence of other languages and cultures. The result of these changes is an ongoing debate on how to teach English combined with a prescriptive attitude toward the teaching of Spanish. The author proposes a "critical linguistic consciousness" as an approach to developing language awareness and promoting student success for Puerto Rican students. The essay also provides narrative accounts of student success as they connect and embrace their own identity, language and culture.

Section IV: Building Communities and Making Connections through Education and Learning

This section emphasizes considerations to improve student learning through insights into building communities and integrating historical, linguistic, and socio-affective dimensions into the educational environment. The first essay of the section, "On Becoming a Borrowing: Integration, Diffusion and Attestation of English-Origin Nouns in New Mexico Spanish" by Jens Clegg, examines the process through which an English-origin word becomes a borrowed term in Spanish, and the role

that the speech community plays in determining its status and accepted use. Clegg researches over 1,800 English-origin nouns and measures their status as borrowings through sociolinguistic interviews with a New Mexico community of bilingual speakers of New Mexican Spanish. His analysis demonstrates how usage patterns of the speech community can and should be the measure of the status of a word, thereby guiding the integration of these words into the classroom.

This essay is then followed by Suzanne McFarland's piece on "Voces de la Comunidad de Aprendizaje/ Voices from the Learning Community: A Qualitative Analysis of Academic, Cognitive and Affective Outcomes of a Learning Community." In this piece, the author outlines the model of a learning community at an institution of higher education and goes on to compare and contrast the course content, planning process, student demographics, role of faculty, role of community, and student self-assessment with the traditional classroom model. In particular, McFarland's study relies on student interviews and reports about their experience in connecting with the local community. This essay represents an innovative model for learning and teaching that both builds a classroom community, while connecting the classroom to the local Latino community, and providing opportunities for student interactions with faculty, with each other, and with the local community. McFarland points to the students' transformative educational experience as a way of engaging them, and provoking in depth reflection on issues of identity and social justice.

The section closes with Arturo Fernández-Gibert's piece on "Language Politics and Communities in the United States: The Case of Pre-Statehood New Mexico, 1846-1912." This final essay provides a historical perspective on the multifaceted variables that contributed to the formation of a New Mexican community. Specifically, the author focuses on the language ideologies and politics expressed by *Neomexicanos* at a time when their ancestral language and culture were seen as a threat to the goals of the politics toward statehood. The essay presents language changes and social transformations in New Mexico's history that shaped the Spanish-speaking language community of the time, and still exhibits influence over present day New Mexican Spanish.

Final Remarks

The essays included in this book represent innovations, explorations, and transformations in higher education and academic research. They are an initial snapshot of where higher education is headed or should be

headed, at a time of globalization and a need to raise social and cultural consciousness. Our motivation for creating this edited monograph is to provide educators, scholars, researchers and community members information, ideas, and models of how to build communities in classroom environments, while at the same time connecting with local communities that can provide valuable input and information for curriculum integration. Institutions of higher education have the responsibility to serve local and regional communities in ways that are mutually beneficial. As we prepare global citizens we must challenge our students to become engaged in civic responsibility and social consciousness in order to successfully effect positive change. It is our hope that this book will serve as an initial seed that will blossom into additional models, information exchange, and transformative educational experiences.

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SECTION I:
**BUILDING COMMUNITIES AND MAKING
CONNECTIONS IN PUBLIC HEALTH**

MEDICAL SPANISH FOR HERITAGE LEARNERS: A PRESCRIPTION TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF SPANISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

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Introduction

The wide-ranging economic, security and social justice challenges of the 21st century have pressed language educators to search for innovative strategies to promote greater linguistic proficiency and enhanced cultural understanding in tomorrow's workforce. Many educators have turned to heritage language learners as a viable student population to meet these growing demands in the future (Ricento 2005). While Spanish heritage language programs have been in existence since the 1950s, it has not been until very recently that these programs have gained widespread recognition within the circles of professional associations, private and federal granting agencies, and the textbook publishing industry. This recognition, in turn, has led to a rapid professionalization of the field through the creation of national surveys and databases and through the diffusion of knowledge in specialized journals and monographs. The growing body of research in the field has helped practitioners to define instructional objectives, to refine pedagogical practice, and to lobby for administrative support within institutions and agencies. Guadalupe Valdés (2001) proposed four key instructional goals for Spanish heritage language educators. Valdés argues that heritage language teaching and learning should focus on the maintenance of immigrant and minority languages, the expansion of bilingual range within the heritage and the mainstream languages, the acquisition of prestige dialects of the heritage language, and the transfer of literacy skills from the mainstream language to the heritage language and vice versa. The articulation of these goals has helped practitioners to find unity and coherence in the body of research on heritage learners that dates back to the 1980s. New researchers have also

benefited from this conceptual map by fitting their individual research questions within a much broader research agenda.

Notwithstanding the significant gains made by the ongoing professionalization of the field of heritage language education in the U.S., many scholars continue to observe an unhealthy misalignment between community and academic interests within the field and to signal the impending problems that this misalignment entails. On the one hand, it can produce negative, unintended consequences for heritage language communities. In arguing for a more critical approach towards the teaching of prestige dialects, for example, Leeman (2005) points out that narrowly focused academic interests can often have significant negative repercussions for heritage language communities. She argues that pedagogical practice should expand its vision beyond the individual and should set its sights on the potential for transforming society. On the other hand, the misalignment of community and academic interests may result in a severe mismanagement of the knowledge-based resources that institutions of higher education should provide to their surrounding communities and to the public good. In discussing the issue of how new languages come into the curriculum, Wiley points out that university officials rarely look towards the resources of heritage language communities in their own backyards. “There is far more that universities can do,” he suggests, “by working directly with the heritage language communities in their midst” (2005, 600). The negligence and unintended consequences emerging from the misalignment of academic and community interests in heritage language education are urgent and significant challenges in the ongoing development of heritage language education in the 21st century.

A recent survey of Spanish heritage language programs in colleges and universities in California underscores the urgent need to address this issue in significant and substantial ways. The study conducted by Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, and Pérez (2006) suggests that the vast majority of programs surveyed included instructional practices consistent with the goals of language maintenance, expansion of bilingual range, acquisition of a prestige dialect, and transfer of literacy skills (196-199). In more detailed interviews with a subset of faculty and program directors from the institutions surveyed, however, the authors found that “Spanish instruction for heritage speakers had as its [only stated] purpose helping students to acquire the tools needed to continue the formal study of Spanish” (221). So, even while instructional practices fed into broad developmental goals, the achievement of these goals was geared towards the interests of the academic units that were providing the instruction. This self-serving characteristic of heritage language programs was made even more explicit

when the authors of the study asked faculty members about the relationship between heritage language classes and professional careers. The authors suggest that “program and course objectives are viewed from the perspective of departmental course and program requirements” and that “heritage speakers are seen as college or university students who needed to pass those courses to receive credit and to improve their Spanish for further study” (230). When the authors asked about what heritage courses might do differently to prepare students to use the language professionally, furthermore, they encountered surprising reactions. “One individual pointed out that English was the language that would be needed for professional work in California and not Spanish!” (230) The results of this survey indicate that heritage language programs have not yet come to fully embrace the transformative influence they can have on the heritage language communities that they serve. Instead, they continue to exacerbate a fundamental misalignment between institutional academic interests and heritage language community interests.

Institutional academic interests and heritage language community interests are not necessarily at odds with each other. On the contrary, heritage language programs and the students that they serve are critical agents in the capacity-building of heritage language communities. Heritage language programs play a pivotal role in educating professionals who engage their communities in meaningful ways. Through that engagement communities become empowered and equipped with the resources needed for continual economic, social, and cultural development. I would further argue that the future growth of the heritage language teaching profession in the U.S. depends on a proactive engagement of heritage language community interests and needs. We must resist our academic and scholarly urge to reproduce our own passions and interests in our students, and imagine instead an instructional program that is capable of achieving more than we had ever dreamed possible. We must focus our attention on the pressing societal problems that affect heritage language communities and determine the ways in which our instructional endeavor can bring innovative solutions to the most significant challenges facing heritage language communities today. In short, we must ask ourselves how heritage language education can be taken to scale to respond both to the language development needs of heritage learners as well as to the social and communicative needs of the community.

In order to achieve this overarching goal of uniting academic and community interests in heritage language education, I believe that we must look to other areas of development within the language teaching professions. The language for specific purposes movement, for example,

provides important models for the analysis of language and discourse in professional contexts and innovative methodologies for focusing language instruction on professional communicative needs (see Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993). In the interstices of heritage language teaching and language teaching for specific purposes, I believe that we can find bold new instructional paradigms that promise to unite academic and community interests and to incite robust language development for heritage language students and critical capacity building for heritage language communities.

In this paper, I describe the early development of an instructional project for heritage learners of Spanish at The University of Texas-Pan American. The instructional project identifies limited access to quality health care as an area of critical need within the heritage language community (see Carreira and Armengol 2001). Drawing on resources from the languages for specific purposes movement, we endeavored to create an innovative medical Spanish curriculum for heritage learners. I will identify the pressing community need targeted by this project, describe the salient components of the curriculum, and point out how the instructional goals of language maintenance, expansion of bilingual range, acquisition of a prestige dialect, and transfer of literacy skills are amplified when academic and community interests are intertwined in the pedagogical endeavor.

Health Disparities in Heritage Language Communities

Health disparities in the U.S. emerge as a result of differences in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (IOM 2003). Current research in the field of health disparities, however, suggests that language differences and limited English proficiency (LEP) are also important sources of unequal treatment (Timmins 2002). Recent studies indicate that 39% of Latinos reported communication problems in medical encounters (Anderson et al. 2004). These communication problems, furthermore, translate into acute disparities that result in higher burdens of illness, pain, and mortality for Latino populations. A study carried out in the emergency department of UCLA Medical Center, for example, revealed that Latino patients with long bone fractures were twice as likely as other patients to go without pain medication (IOM 2003, 65). Another study indicated that Latinos experience a 50%-100% higher incidence of diabetes than other patients and that even so, the disease appears to be more poorly managed among Latino patients (IOM 2003, 64). The poor health status of Latino communities as evidenced in higher incidence of chronic illness and mortality has significant consequences in both social and economic terms.

Over the past 10 years, the medical profession has taken the lead in responding to the increasing need for language assistance services in health care. The approach responds to the language and communication needs of the profession through compensatory strategies such as the use of translators and interpreters as well as language training programs for monolingual medical personnel (Anderson 2002; Downing and Roat 2002). While these interventions have increased provider and patient satisfaction and fostered greater understanding and more adept management of disease, they have not been widely adopted by health care organizations throughout the country. Many health care providers cite prohibitive costs and time constraints as a primary motivation for lack of adequate language services. As the cost of health care continues to rise in direct proportion to a growing LEP population that lacks access to preventive services and that disproportionately seeks out treatment in the most costly venues, the provision of language services will certainly become more expensive and even less accessible to the vast majority of health care providers in the areas of greatest need. These facts underscore the ultimate inadequacy of the compensatory measures presently in place and the urgent national need for alternative models that will ensure that future problems do not outpace present solutions.

Some research suggests that an infusion of bilingual and bicultural providers can significantly enhance access to quality health care for Spanish speaking patients. This conclusion appears to be borne out in regions with high densities of limited English proficient Latinos such as the U.S. Southwest. In California, for example, Latino physicians reported that over 55% of their caseloads consisted of Latino patients (IOM 2003). The Survey of Latino Professionals in California, furthermore, revealed that Latino physicians reported using Spanish on the job more than any other professional group (Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, and Pérez 2006). The ultimate viability of this solution, however, depends on the ability of the healthcare professions to significantly diversify in the future. At present, only 6% of licensed physicians are minorities (IOM 2003). According to the Survey of Latino Professionals, moreover, Latino physicians were among the least likely to read or write in Spanish and the least interested in improving their Spanish skills (Valdés, Fishman, Chávez, and Pérez 2006). These trends would seem to suggest that the relatively small Latino physician population will be unable to bear increasing numbers of Spanish speaking patients in the future. They also suggest that this already small physician population is rapidly undergoing language attrition and shift. If the infusion of bilingual and bicultural healthcare providers is to be a viable long term solution to the problem of language-based health

disparities, significant interventions on the part of the healthcare professions as well as on the part of the heritage language teaching professions will be necessary. In what follows, I will outline the conceptual design and curriculum structure of a program in medical Spanish for heritage learners. This program endeavors to equip a critical mass of pre-medicine, nursing, and other allied health students with advanced language skills, knowledge of language issues in healthcare, critical language awareness, and acute cultural competencies to address language-based health disparities in the future.

Medical Spanish for Heritage Learners

Medical Spanish for Heritage Learners is an innovative curriculum development project funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at The University of Texas-Pan American. It is designed to result in the nation's first academic minor in medical Spanish for heritage language speakers. The goal of the project is to create opportunities for future health care professionals to attain targeted language skills in Spanish and to gain critical awareness of the effects of multilingualism on population health. The University of Texas-Pan American is located in deep south Texas on the border with Mexico. The region is federally designated as a Medically Underserved Area and a Physician Shortage Area. High percentages of residents lack health insurance or any primary source of healthcare and over half the population is considered limited English proficient. The high demand for health care services in the region, moreover, has led to an influx of healthcare professionals who do not speak Spanish. This scenario makes UTPA the ideal location for the Medical Spanish for Heritage Learners project.

The MSHL curriculum consists of a four course sequence in medical Spanish that focuses on the context-based development of targeted language skills for healthcare professionals. The project embeds language development within a contextual framework designed to raise awareness of the impact of multilingualism on public health. The fundamental questions addressed throughout the course sequence include:

- How does limited English proficiency restrict access to health information, healthcare financing, and healthcare services?
- What policy measures exist to mitigate these restrictions and how effective are they?

We have found that students who enter the program already have intuitive awareness of these issues. Entrance interviews are conducted with each student who enters the program. Part of the entrance interview questionnaire asks students to describe their experience with language barriers in healthcare. One student responded to this prompt with the following narrative:

- Student: Sí, la mamá de mi esposa que acaba de fallecer lo hacía y ellos tenían muchos problemas cuando fueron al hospital, la pusieron en el hospital y no podían comunicarse bien con la gente médica al menos que tuviera un enfermero que también es sobrino de ella o yo allí. Entonces vi como ponían más atención a ella cuando estábamos presentes allí él o yo.
- Interviewer: Entonces ¿usted le ayudaba para comunicarse mejor con los doctores.
- Student: Sí, o con las enfermeras ... o nomás pa' que la respetaran un poco más.

One course in the four course sequence, Sociolinguistics and Latino Health, is designed to help students situate these experiences within wider patterns of institutional discrimination directed at non-English speakers in the U.S. healthcare system. This course covers issues such as language and inequality, language ideology, epidemiological effects of linguistic subordination, health policy, and language access measures in healthcare. In a pilot run of this course, students were asked to complete a survey that asked specific questions about how course content enhanced understanding of personal experiences within the healthcare system. The results of the questionnaire demonstrated that the course content achieved its intended goal of inducing critical thinking about personal healthcare experiences. The framework of critical awareness of the adverse population level health effects of limited English proficiency provides a unique theoretical foundation for the development of language skills, one that imbues the language learning process with a sense of purpose and urgency.

The development of language skills focuses on the development of three integrated linguistic competencies which include mastery of medical terminology in Spanish, development of medical translation and interpretation skills, and development of patient interviewing skills. Baseline measures in these core competencies were collected during the entrance interviews. In these interviews, students were asked to describe a disease that had affected them or a family member. The following examples illustrate student competency in discussing medical topics in Spanish. A student describing multiple sclerosis observed:

Mi mamá tiene múltiple esclerosis ... es un, como se dice, auto immune que por mucho tiempo, dependiendo en que tan fuerte está el problema, va deteriorating las, las células del, de la nuerona y en veces puede hacer como parálisis o cosas así pero, pero mi mamá tiene un caso muy bajo pero eso es lo que es, lo que pasa con eso

In this excerpt, we see that the student code-switches when faced with a technical term such as “auto immune” and that the term “mild” is expressed awkwardly as “*un caso muy bajo*.”

A student describing diabetes stated:

Muchos, mis familiares, mi abuelo, mi padre tienen diabetes ... pues es una enfermedad muy fea ya que, pues, tienes que cuidarte, o sea, alimentarte bien para que tu glu ... pos, tus ... tus, no sé como se dice en español ... los levels [niveles] niveles de azúcar y glucosa estén en un rango, como se dice range ¿rango? [en el promedio] sí en el promedio

Here the student demonstrates considerable hesitation in the expression of scientific terms such as *glucose*, *levels* and *range*; terms that are essential to an adequate and precise description of the disease. Finally, a student describing congestive heart failure said:

Mm, no sé como decirlo, era del corazón, que ya no estaba trabajando muy bien. It's a congestive heart failure, pero no sé como decirlo en español y pues sufrió desde 54, 55, estuve en tres o cuatro cirugías y luego ya estaba muy débil

Here, once again, the student demonstrates considerable hesitation in accessing scientific terminology. These examples suggest that students face considerable difficulties in discussing medical topics in Spanish and that they lack a fundamental mastery of medical terminology.

In order to address this difficulty we developed a curriculum that integrates the salient features of heritage language instruction, language instruction for specific purposes, and service learning. This triaged approach to language skill development initiates with genre awareness and from there expands outward to the development of literacy skills on the one hand and conversational skills on the other. Bhatia (1997) defines genre as “a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs” (13). Genres are thus significant acquisition units for students learning a second language for specific purposes. Genre-centered teaching highlights the existence of genres and brings students into participation in the genre as a way to encourage development (Johns 1997). Genre chains,

following Fairclough (2003), are “different genres which are regularly linked together, involving systematic transformations from genre to genre. Genre chains contribute to the possibility of actions which transcend differences in space and time, linking together social events in different social practices, different countries, and different times” (31). Genre chaining, as a pedagogical practice, facilitates the transfer of textual features across languages and genres (Martínez 2005).

Within our pedagogical approach, genre chaining is used as a means to ground the development of medical discourse in a variety of cultural and situational contexts. Genre chaining is realized through the identification of a series of interrelated texts within a “thematic unit.” The thematic unit consists of texts ranging from colloquial discussion of health and illness to scientific descriptions of particular diseases. One example of this kind of genre chaining can be observed in the thematic unit on tuberculosis.

The thematic unit on tuberculosis initiates with a reading from Tomás Rivera’s classic novel *...Y no se lo tragó la tierra*. The vignette that carries the same title as the novel is used as a way to introduce students to the theme of tuberculosis within colloquial discourse. The selection of Tomás Rivera’s novel is important because it reflects the cultural context of health and illness that students are likely to encounter in future professional endeavors and also because it resonates with the lived experience of many students who come from rural, migrant farm worker backgrounds. The following excerpt illustrates the emergence of the theme within the text:

La primera vez que sintió odio y coraje fue cuando vio llorar a su mamá por su tío y su tía. A los dos les había dado la tuberculosis y a los dos los habían mandado a distintos sanatorios. Luego entre los otros hermanos y hermanas se habían repartido los niños y los habían cuidado a como había dado lugar. Luego la tía se había muerto y al poco tiempo habían traído al tío del sanatorio, pero ya venía escupiendo sangre. Fue cuando vio llorar a su madre a cada rato. A él le dio coraje porque no podía hacer nada contra nadie. (Olivares 1992, 74)

The emergence of the theme of tuberculosis in this text calls students attention to major societal inequities related to infectious disease including forced quarantine and the public health system’s ineffectiveness in curing the disease. It also highlights the affective dimension of these inequities by linking them directly to *coraje* and anger. These issues lead to new questions about the nature of diseases such as tuberculosis. A second text within the thematic unit is designed to introduce students to the terminology used to discuss infectious disease within the genre of popular scientific discourse. The text comes from *Enfermedades que matan: Guía*

para principiantes and gives an overview of the natural history of the disease.

La tuberculosis (TB) es el ejemplo perfecto de una enfermedad mortal crónica ... la infección ocurre cuando las gotitas que contienen la bacteria son aspiradas y, con ello, entran en los pulmones. En 95 por ciento de los casos el sistema inmunológico se las ingenia para detener la infección. Sin embargo, las bacterias permanecen latentes durante años, a la espera de que el sistema inmunológico se debilite con la edad, por malnutrición o debido a una condición como el SIDA. (Richardson 2002, 19-20)

The study of the natural history of the disease gives students additional information to link back to the questions raised in the first reading. This information includes issues such as the heightened vulnerability of the poor in the face of this infectious disease. A third text in the thematic unit addresses these questions directly from an epidemiological viewpoint. The text comes from the annual report produced by the Pan American Health Organization Salud en las Américas.

La tuberculosis es una de las enfermedades más antiguas de la humanidad, cuyo tratamiento eficaz fue descubierto a mediados del siglo pasado. Sin embargo, aún dista mucho de ser erradicada como problema de salud pública en la región de las Américas. A pesar de que el control de la tuberculosis tuvo avances en la década de los noventa en la región, esta enfermedad prevenible, tratable y curable tiene una prevalencia de más de 466.000 casos y ocasiona más de 50.000 defunciones cada año. Aunque la tuberculosis puede afectar a todas las personas, independientemente de su condición social, los grupos de población más pobres y vulnerables (entre ellos los migrantes, los habitantes de zonas marginadas urbanas, los individuos privados de su libertad, las personas con VIH/SIDA y las poblaciones indígenas) llevan una mayor carga de enfermedad. (PAHO 2008, 125)

This text provides students with a scientific idiom through which to address the themes brought up in discussions centered on the previous texts within the unit. It presents technical terminology such as “*prevalencia*” and “*defunción*” and, at the same time, uses lexically dense, tightly packed grammatical constructions peculiar to scientific discourse. The thematic unit culminates through the presentation of genre-linking questions designed to encourage transfer of textual features from one context to another. Genre-linking questions include:

- ¿Por qué crees que la condición de trabajar en la labor precipita la infección?

- ¿Por qué crees que los grupos más vulnerables a la muerte por tuberculosis sean migrantes, habitantes de zonas marginadas urbanas, etc.?
- ¿Tiene razón el narrador en sentir odio y coraje frente a los efectos de la tuberculosis? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

Each question is thus designed to focus the students' attention on one text while eliciting information from all texts, simultaneously. As students work through these thematic units, they develop linguistic resources that help them in discussing medical issues.

The development of linguistic resources is tracked through a variety of activities including compositions on medical topics, patient interviewing practice, and medical interpreting exercises. Within compositions on medical topics, for example, we can see how the following student draws on the terminology in the various source readings in order to convey a precise description of tuberculosis:

La tuberculosis (TB) es una infección crónica bacteriana que suele infectar los pulmones, aunque a veces afecta también a otros órganos. La tuberculosis es principalmente una enfermedad que se transmite por el aire (por las expulsiones de aire de las personas infectadas al toser o estornudar).

While the student, in this example, draws on the key terms within the popular scientific genre, she develops grammatical constructions more similar to scientific discourse as can be seen in the use of the tightly packed nominal group “*una infección crónica bacteriana*.” Further examples of the development of medical discourse can be seen in the results of student interpreting exercises. Before exposure to a thematic unit, students tend to omit and synthesize information when interpreting medical concepts. The following example illustrates a mock medical interpretation encounter where the student reduces information due to a lack of sufficient linguistic resources.

English Text: Asthma is a condition in which the lungs are easily irritated. The small airways constrict and cause trouble breathing. Sometimes colds can bring it on. Sometimes cold air and exercise, sometimes allergies, sometimes all of them.

Student Translation: Asma es una condición en que los pasajes del aire se inflaman. En veces el frío lo atrae o ejercicio y alergias, en veces puede ser todos esos.

In this example, the student omits the doctor's first comment about the underlying cause of asthma, i.e., the irritation of the lungs. The student also fails to note that the constriction of the small airways is the reason for the difficulty in breathing. Finally, the student renders the trigger for asthmatic attack as an agent that comes from the outside using the phrase "*lo atrae*" to translate the phrase "can bring it on." After exposure to a thematic unit on asthma, however, the student translated the same phrase as follows:

Student Translation: El asma es un problema respiratorio que afecta a los pulmones. Ocorre cuando las vías respiratorias se constriñen, se hacen más apretadas, verdad, y así eso no permite que pase el aire. Así que eso causa un problema cuando ella está respirando. A veces el aire frío lo puede causar. El ejercicio y las alergias también o a veces todo al mismo tiempo pueden hacer que le de los efectos del asma.

In this second rendition, therefore, we can see how the student not only avoids omission and synthesis, but also how he draws on lexicogrammatical resources in order to convey the discourse with accuracy. The key elements of the doctor's description are presented in the Spanish rendition using appropriate terminology such as "*los pulmones*", "*las vías respiratorias*", etc. The phrase "can bring it on" is translated as "*lo puede causar*" thus providing a clearer diagnosis.

Amplifying Instructional Goals

The MSHL project contributes to all of the goals of heritage language teaching and does so in ways that are far more meaningful than traditional instructional paradigms. The goal of language maintenance is achieved because the curriculum provides opportunities for using the language that are critically important to students, their families, and their communities. Bilingual range is expanded through systematic and sustained attention to subtle pragmatic nuances and through intensive practice in medical interpreting. Acquisition of the prestige dialect of Spanish and more specifically of the professional register of medical Spanish is facilitated through sustained exposure to formal and professional terminology in meaningful contexts that bridges the gaps between culture, language, society, and health. Transfer of literacy skills is promoted through thoughtful meta-linguistic comparative analyses of health writing in Spanish across different genres. The medical Spanish for heritage learners project thus ties together each of the instructional objectives in heritage

language education within an overarching framework of purposefulness, utility, and community capacity-building.

Conclusion

The medical Spanish for heritage learners project is one example of the way in which heritage language programs and heritage language communities can become more aligned and integrated. The project, I believe, represents a mutually-beneficial relationship where the goals and objectives of heritage language learning are amplified through community participation and where the capacity of the community to deal with deep-rooted social problems is enhanced through academic participation.

The project is also an investment in the future both for heritage language programs and for heritage language communities. The project ensures increasing enrollments and more competent graduates and thus benefits the ongoing development of the heritage language program. The project also improves the language skills of those Latina/o students who are already contemplating entering the healthcare professions and it stimulates other students to pursue careers in these fields. This program will thus not only ensure that tomorrow's healthcare professionals are competent in Spanish but it will also widen the pipeline of Latino/a students entering the health professions in the future.

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