Working With Diversity in the Spanish Heritage Language Classroom: A Critical Perspective

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ABSTRACT: This article reflects on the notion of diversity and its implications for the Spanish Heritage Language (SHL) classroom. In doing so, I follow proposals on SHL education, multilingualism, multiculturalism and sociolinguistics that call for a critical, dynamic and historical perspective on diversity. I elaborate on the relevance of such approch for the SHL classroom, and the new pedagogical possibilities it brings to our work. The final goal is to provide teachers with conceptual tools to generate inclusive learning environments where we all —heritage and foreign language learners, along with teachers— engage in critical discussions about our place in today's diversity, and how we are all contributing to the future of the Spanish language in our communities.
Keywords: diversity, critical awareness, Spanish, heritage learners, pedagogy.

El trabajo con la diversidad en el aula de español como lengua heredada: Una perspectiva crítica.

RESUMEN: Este artículo reflexiona sobre la noción de diversidad y sus implicaciones para el aula de español como lengua de herencia (SHL por sus siglas en inglés). Al hacerlo, sigo propuestas sobre la educación SHL, multilingüismo, multiculturalismo y sociolingüística que proponen un acercamiento crítico, dinámico e histórico a la diversidad. Explico la relevancia de tal enfoque para el aula SHL y las nuevas posibilidades pedagógicas que aporta a nuestro trabajo. El objetivo final es proporcionar a los docentes herramientas conceptuales para generar entornos de aprendizaje inclusivos donde todos —estudiantes de herencia y lenguas extranjeras, junto con los docentes, participemos en debates críticos sobre nuestro lugar en la diversidad actual y cómo todos participamos en la construcción del futuro de la lengua española en nuestras comunidades.
Palabras clave: diversidad, consciencia crítica, español, aprendices de herencia, pedagogía

1. INTRODUCTION

A common question I have been asked by college and high school Spanish language teachers has been how to work with the broad range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds Spanish heritage language learners (hereafter SHLLs) bring into the classroom. In a first attempt to answer this question, my interlocutors and I quickly invoke the creativity and dynamism of the Spanish-speaking world. The tendency is to think about linguistic diversity in terms of geographical variation and about cultural diversity in terms of products and practices—mainly food, music, art, and traditions. However, although this understanding of

diversity appeals to teachers and to students, it has important limitations for our work in the classroom.

On the one hand, if we teach a mixed class with SHLLs and foreign language learners (hereafter FLLs), such an approach can reinforce the "restricted and restricting tourism discourse and shallow treatment of diversity as multiplicity, not difference" (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015, p. 22) generally used in language textbooks. On the other hand, in Spanish heritage language courses (SHL), while linguistic diversity is likely to be acknowledged, it usually refers to the educated varieties mainly spoken by upper middle classes in the urban capital cities throughout Latin America and Spain (Leeman, 2020).

Regional variation and popular uses of the language brought by SHLLs to the classroom —learned from their families and as a result of their bilingual Spanish and English upbringing— are often stigmatised and, as Otheguy (2015) points out, some of those uses are not even considered part of a possible popular variety of Spanish in the United States (p. 303). Some academic publications go as far as portraying them as a threat to the supposed unity and purity of the Spanish language (for instance, see Lynch & Potowski (2014) and Piña-Rosales (2014) for a debate on the Academia Norte Americana de la Lengua Española (ANLE) book *Hablando bien se entiende la gente 1*).

The way we tend to conceive cultural diversity in SHL classes has also its shortcomings. We are inclined to talk about and present traditions, products, and practices from our countries of origin as part of a wonderful and palatable "folklore." However, we seldom remember the historicity behind such traditions, products, and practices: centuries of encounters, colonialism, and the slave trade. Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, Europeans, Asian-descendants, mestizos, gender-diverse people and lower socioeconomic urban and rural communities all are part of the diversity of the Spanish-speaking world. Such limited and unexamined understandings of the many facets of diversity —class, racial, and gender dimensions (May and Sleeter, 2010, p. 9)— and how they relate and intersect with history and language usage can prevent teachers from designing an inclusive learning environment for students from all backgrounds, thus contributing to perpetuate the inequitable multilingual learning process many SHLLs have experienced throughout their lives, as racialised minorities in the United States (Ortega, 2019; Prada, 2019; Martínez & Train, 2020).

Drawing from critical approaches to heritage language instruction (Leeman, 2018; Leeman and Serafini, 2016; Parra, 2016a; Beaudrie et al., 2020) and critical multiculturalism, multilingualism, and anthropology (May & Sleeter, 2010; García & Wei, 2014; Menezes de Souza, 2016; Blommaert, 2013; May, 2014; Flores, 2000; Rosaldo, 1993), the purpose of this article is, then, to reflect on the notion of "diversity" that should guide our work in the SHL classroom, in order to avoid contributing to the history of systemic oppression and subordination that Prada (2019) considers defining of heritage speakers' lived experiences (p. 307). Following Berlak and Moyenda (2001), a critical reflection would allow us to name and actively challenge racism and other forms of injustice, instead of simply recognising and celebrating differences and reducing prejudice (p. 92).

I propose that embracing such critical reflection on diversity is a meaningful and urgent three-fold contribution to our classrooms: first, it could inform the design of learning environments to critically engage with narratives of colonialism in the Spanish-speaking world and in the United States; second, it could allow for critical reflections around issues of belonging and membership to the Latinx and the Spanish-speaking community in the

United States and as an international community; and third, it could facilitate discussions around issues of equity, inequality, and social justice that concern not only SHLLs, but also FLLs (Prada, forthcoming, Kramsch, 2014), thus contributing to a broader educational process for all students, so important at these times when the effects of racism and health and social disparities and inequities for minority communities are more visible than ever.

This article has three parts. In the first part, I will reflect on the complexity of the diversity that SHLLs bring into the classroom, which is in itself a reflection of the Spanish-speaking world's colonial history. Furthermore, using a vignette from a Latina student's final paper, I will illustrate how this colonial past is reproduced in a Spanish class to the detriment of the student's learning process and sense of ethnolinguistic identity. In the second part, I will summarise some of the main theoretical changes in the conceptualisation of named languages, cultures, and identities that provide us with an approach to diversity that is closer to the realities of SHLLs. In the third part, I will reflect on the implications of these contemporary and critical perspectives on diversity for our SHL classroom, the relationship with our students and our pedagogical practices. I will end by reflecting on the fact that a critical take on diversity will not be effective nor productive unless we, as teachers, reflect on our positionality within the diverse Spanish-speaking community and in relation to our students. The final goal is to generate learning environments where we all —teachers, SHLLs, and FLLs— engage in critical discussions about our place in today's diversity, and how such diversity in all of its complexity contributes to the future of the Spanish language and our many communities.

2. Tʜᴇ ᴅɪᴠᴇʀsɪᴛʏ ᴏꜰ sᴘᴀɴɪsʜ ʜᴇʀɪᴛᴀɢᴇ ʟᴇᴀʀɴᴇʀs

The term "Spanish heritage learner" (hereafter SHLLs) is a term that puts under an umbrella a broad group of bilingual Latinx youngsters who are interested in studying the Spanish language in a formal academic setting. SHLLs include students with backgrounds from different countries of the Spanish-speaking world, mainly from Latin America and the Caribbean, and from what Flores (2000) calls Spanish "resident minorities" (Puerto Rican and Mexican-American communities) in the United States. SHLLs also include different generations of children of immigration (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2001): immigrant children that arrive very young to the United States; U.S.-born children of immigrant parents; and second- and third-generation Latinxs who maintain cultural and community bonds with their cultural ancestry both in the United States and in their countries of origin. SHLLs include diverse racial backgrounds, ethnicities, gender identities and social classes.

Coming from families with ties to different countries in the Spanish-speaking world, SHLLs speak different varieties of the Spanish language that pertain to the specific country, and are characteristic of particular regions and towns. SHLLs Spanish also reflects the families' socio-economic status and educational levels (Valdés & Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998). Such varieties include lexical, textual, illocutionary and socio-pragmatic competencies (Valdés, 1997, p. 30), related to the dialect they have learned, contexts of use, and stylitic variation (Leeman, personal conversation). At the same time, these Spanish "functional proficiencies" (Valdés, 2001) are in dynamic interaction with the speakers' proficiencies in English, which also includes pragmatic and cultural knowledge coming from the specific English-speaking communities they grow up in.

By the time they arrive to our classrooms, the majority of SHLLs have been exposed to contact between Spanish and English, and also to contact with dialects of Spanish through their continuous interactions with members of their households, communities, peers, and schools. Additionally, SHLLs may bring more Spanish literacy experience than other students, depending on the educational opportunities they were provided in their home countries before immigration, or their family literacy practices in the United States (Reyes, 2011). SHLLs also have a wide range of cultural knowledge coming from their families' own cultural traditions (think about the traditions that can be brought by people from the 22 countries that comprise the Spanish-speaking world, including the United States): food, music, cultural and religious practices.

2.1. Diversity in the school setting

Unfortunately, in the United States, SHLLs have scarce, if any, formal educational opportunities to engage with the rich linguistic, cultural and historical backgrounds they have inherited from home. Given the combination of socioeconomic circumstances that limit the possibilities for many Latinx children to access schools with quality education—including housing discrimination, racism, oppression, marginalisation, and a system of *de facto* segregation (Perea, Padilla-Martínez & García-Coll, 2018, p. 276)—and the anti-immigrant sentiments that historically have undermined bilingual education (Crawford, 1993; Nieto, 2009), Latinx children often lack the opportunity to acquire academic literacy skills in Spanish, along with a full awareness of the significance of the contributions of their cultures of origin to U.S. history and society.

In general, Spanish language classes are rarely concerned with the fact that SHLL diversity includes not only cultural and linguistic dimensions, but also racial, social, ethnic and gender identities that, as Flores (2000) reminds us, are tied to "colonial relations underlying hemispheric inequalities that are not only the historical logic of Latino immigration but also the position and conditions of [them as] Latinos here in this [U.S.] society" (199). As teachers of Spanish, it is important for us to be aware of this history of colonial relations and its continuation in various forms of oppression and subordination that can define SHLLs' lived experiences (Prada 2019). For example, when Latinx youth have the opportunity to enroll in Spanish classes in higher education, they usually find a learning environment designed for FLLs. It is well documented that these classes are not optimal for SHLLs as their goals do not address SHLLs strengths, needs nor interests (Valdés, 2005; Potowski, 2002; Potowski & Carreira, 2004; Parra 2013, among others). Furthermore, the FLL textbook industry has a history of serving neo-liberal corporate interests (Kramsch, 1988, p. 68) that mask deep issues of race and class that are part of all of our Spanish-speaking communities (Bori, 2018). They reproduce dominant discourses about language and cultures with ahistorical meanings (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015, p. 16), promoting a commodification and value-added perspective on learning languages (see Leeman & Martínez, 2007 for an analysis of textbooks for Spanish heritage learners). They privilege the learning of "standard" or prestigious Spanish through grammatical rules as the main and sole goal (Leeman 2018), and are taught by teachers who generally lack the training to work with SHLLs. These academic experiences end up undermining SHLLs' understanding of their linguistic heritage, family, and self-esteem, as the following vignette from an essay by a Latina student shows:

> I grew up in a Spanish-speaking family recently immigrated from Mexico; I did not believe then that I needed to take Spanish classes at school as it was my family's primary language. In my senior year of high school, I decided to take a Spanish class for the first time and there I realized that the Spanish I had grown up with was very different from academic Spanish. I asked my parents for help in my Spanish homework, hoping that they would understand all the grammatical rules that confused me; And it was when I realized that they had not learned the rules either, but the same Spanish from home that I had learned from them. I ended the academic year thinking that my Spanish was something that I needed to fix — that I needed to learn all the formal terms and use of vosotros.

Without a doubt, the vignette speaks to the importance and need of being inclusive of Spanish geographical and social variation in the classroom—maybe the teacher could have commented on the fact that this student spoke Mexican Spanish that uses the "ustedes" pronoun, instead of "vosotros." But, it is the last line—"Acabé el año académico pensando que mi español era algo que yo necesitaba arreglar"—that shows that bringing diversity into our SHL classrooms is not just a matter of adding different ways of saying things. As the vignette illustrates, and research has shown (Showstack, 2012), our work is charged with symbolic power with deep implications for students' perceptions of their own linguistic abilities and sense of ethnolinguistic identity. Thus the need to embrace a critical approach to diversity and its place in the teaching of the Spanish language. Such an approach requires that teachers problematise the traditional notion of diversity—as the sum of homogenous groups, organised by fixed categories, and under the illusion of equal relations among them—to embrace one that reflects the complex realities and colonial history of Latinx communities, and the Spanish-speaking world.

3. Conceptualizing today's diversity

The increase and dynamism of (mostly urban) multilingual and multicultural communities as a result of the intensification of internal and international migrations due to globalisation, has led to new levels and kinds of diversity that have prompted scholars to question old, structural ways of thinking about cultures and languages—as clear-cut, delimited entities, in one-on-one relation to nation states. Blommaert (2013, p. 11) states that "the study of language in society, [has shifted] from multiplicity to complexity." What does this mean for us, Spanish teachers?

3.1. Linguistic diversity

Working with Spanish linguistic diversity—in particular in the United States—puts us in complex terrain. The broad range of Spanish-English linguistic knowledge SHLLs have, has been conceptualised within different frameworks: from those who take monolingualims as a point of refernece to propose differneces as deficits (Montrul, 2008), to proposals that conceptualise Spanish-English bilingualism as a range or continuum of oral and written "functional proficiencies" (Valdés, 2005) of both languages, to most recent contemporary

views that separate themselve from notions of named languages, "Spanish" and/or English to propose notions such as "repertoires" and "resources" in relation to situated specific communicative needs and goals (Pennycook, 2007; Blommeart 2013; García and Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García & Wei, 2015; García & Otheguy, 2019). These repertoires are the specific set of lexical and structural features that a person has learned throughout their life. According to some researchers, these repertoires are equivalent to what linguists call "idiolects." Otheguy, García and Wei (2015) define it as "a person's own unique, personal language, the person's mental grammar that emerges in interaction with other speakers and enables the person's use of language" (p. 289). These authors continue to propose that people who have been exposed to two languages can have bilingual idiolects that "contain more linguistic features and a more complex socio-cultural marking of which features to use when and where" (p. 292). These repertoires allow for complex linguistic practices, or *translanguaging* (García & Wei, 2014), where speakers, when allowed, fully deploy their bilingual and bicultural repertoires according to their communicative needs without necessarily distinguishing which resources come from which named language. For us teachers, the important thing is not to identify which resources come from which named language but to become aware of the fact those repertoires reflect: a) students' biographies (Blommaert, 2010); b) the diversity within one single "speech community" (Blommaert, 2013); and c) that the forms of diversity are not equivalent but *stratified* and *unequal"* (Blommaert, 2013, p. 5).

3.2. Cultural diversity

A similar post-structural proposal has been made for the study of cultures. As with named languages, the idea of self-contained cultures paired with nation-states is not a reflection of what most world communities are today, and in fact it has never been (Menezes de Souza, 2016). Moreover, following the work by Ortiz (2008), May and Sleeter (2010) caution us that the idea that cultures are out there for us to study them through their products, practices, and superficial understandings of their histories "ends up constructing imagined cultures that romanticise difference and create fiction, a process that can happen even when narrators are members of the ethnic group they are describing" (p. 5).

In a call to avoid essentializing and typologizing (stereotyping) of cultures, Rosaldo (1993) has proposed a "processual approach" to analyze cultures to understand "how ideas, events, and institutions interact and change through time" (p. 93). Along these lines, Velez-Ibañez (1996) emphasizes the importance of considering the dynamism among and within cultures. For instance, in his deep analysis of the cross-border territory between Mexico and the United States, Velez-Ibañez states that such dynamism includes what he calls "bumping" of bodies, ideas, practices, inventions, and conflicts between the various actors and groups in a process of rejection and acceptance. The bumping involved in the cultural processes is symbolic between value systems, languages, and institutions—families, schools, workplaces—and between different positions of power. For Velez-Ibañez, physical and ideological walls are built through these processes, creating defining inequalities among groups (p. 214). But Velez-Ibañez (1996) also reminds us that the different groups are also involved in a rich process of cultural creation, re-creation, and accommodation that, over extended periods of time, create highly adaptive and imaginative cultural systems that include cross-border homes, compound homes, different ways of conceiving gender roles, parenting,

reciprocity, trust, and cross-border identities, visual arts, music, and border literature. This rich and complex view of cultural systems includes what Moll et al. (1992) defined as "funds of knowledge": "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). Therefore, a contemporary approach to cultural diversity in the SHL requires revisiting the dynamic historical circumstances under which some products, practices, and traditions came about, the participation and "bumping" of different groups in their making and their transformation through time.

The abovementioned poststructuralist perspectives on languages and cultures assumes, then, that people living in multicultural and multilingual communities—SHLLs included—are not the sum of two separate "cultures" and "languages," but grow up drawing from the different cultural and linguistic systems available to them (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005, p. 10; del Valle, 2000). Contrary to frameworks that emphasize deficit, the main underlying premise of contemporary proposals on language and culture is that "people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge" (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005, p. x). Educators and researchers following this view embrace a commitment to recognise and validate the multilingual skills and practices of minorities and migrants not as "incomplete" states of two or more languages (Montrul, 2008; Polinsky 2011) or as states of transition to the dominant language, but as valid discursive practices in their own right (García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García & Wei, 2015; García & Otheguy, 2019; Prada, forthcoming).

3.3. Identities

Taking into account contemporary theories on languages and cultures is also central for our teaching work since they highlight the relation between language choices and speakers' sense of identity (Le page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Hall, 1996; García & Wei, 2014; Potowski & Matts, 2008) at the centre of the SHL endeavor (Potowski, 2012; Parra, 2016b).

Research has shown that multilingual contexts, more than monolingual ones, are particularly intricate to understand this relationship since the process of deciding what resources to choose and draw from the different cultural and linguistic systems available to enact or perform one's identities is not a neutral nor a free process. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) argue that such choices "are inseparable from political arrangements, relations of power [in regard to ethnicity, social class, gender and race], language ideologies, and interlocutors' views of their own and others' identities" (p. 1). A critical perspective on multiculturalism (May & Sleeter, 2010) would not support a notion of hybridity (e.g. Bhabha, 1994) that presumes the opportunity to freely select from a range of possibilities. Rather, authors like May and Sleeter (2010) would argue for a perspective where "individuals and groups are inevitably located, and often *differentially* constrained, by wider structural forces such as capitalism, racism, colonialism, and sexism" (p. 6). Thus, multilingual speakers —throughout their lives— form their identities while navigating complex systems of uneven power structures and continuously negotiating a sense of belonging, backward and forward, between their own communities and the mainstream culture.

To bring another layer of complexity, I believe it is important to consider that individuals will respond and navigate differently to the various social demands and challenges

they encounter in their multilingual environments. For instance, Potowski's in-depth eth-nolinguistic study of the MexiRican community —children of Mexican and Puerto Rican intermarriages— in Chicago, Illinois (2016) concludes that "there is no one way to speak or be MexiRican" (p. 3) or one way to construct a MexiRican idenity (see also De Genova & Ramos Zayas, 2003 and Rúa, 2001).

In sum, the theoretical shifts outlined above provide us with a basis to approach diversity from a more comprehensive and critical perspective that include its many dimensions and its social and historical complexity. As Flores (2000) proposes: "Rather than as slices of cross-sections, the various groups and their association may be seen in dynamic, relational terms, with traditions and continuities weighing off subtly against changes and reconfiguration through participation in social situations" (197).

4. DIVERSITY IN THE SPANISH LAGUAGE CLASSROOM

Choosing to embrace a critical understanding of diversity has deep implications for the SHL classroom. Rosaldo (1993) advises about the fact that the moment classrooms become diverse, change begins: new pedagogies, new courses, new texts and new ways of reading (p. xiii). It is particularly important for teachers to note that "once diversity is valued as an intellectual and human resource, teachers cannot be equally versed in all texts and issues" (Rosaldo, 1993, p. xiv). In my view, this has three important implications for our work in the SHL classroom.

First, given the interrelation of linguistic and cultural diversity with our colonial past and global present, the content of our SHL classes would benefit in significant ways from an interdisciplinary and critical perspective on the history of the Spanish language, and the contributions that diverse cultural communities have made to the Spanish-speaking world, including those in the United States. In the SLA field, Kramsch (2014) has already called for a "more reflective, interpretive, historically grounded, and politically engaged pedagogy than was called for by the communicative language teaching of the eighties" (p. 302). Second, the fact that a teacher "cannot be equally versed in all texts and issues" (Rosaldo, 1993, p. xiv) calls for a change in the teacher-student dynamic. As I have suggested in previous work (Parra 2014, 2016a), following the tenets of critical pedagogy (Freire 2005; Giroux 1991), educators should step back from their position of power and be prepared to generate "epistemological curiosity" (Freire 2005), facilitate critical dialogue and reflections, and to engage in a process of co-construction of knowledge with all students. Finally, Rosaldo (1993) warns that by introducing diversity in the classrooms, the teaching-learning process will be slowed down: consensus or agreements will be harder to reach; the process will also probably be less comfortable for the teacher than the old one (when they were the only authority). However, Rosaldo (1993) reassures us that "the decisions made will find broad support and prove more effective in the long run" (p. xii), which for our SHL classroom could be translated not necessarily in the "learning" of grammatical rules, but in a new critical understanding of how the Spanish language has come to be as we know it today, and a bigger motivation to continue its study and use. In what follows, I will present some ideas for facilitating discussions around issues of diversity from a critical point of view in the SHL classroom.

4.1. Pedagogy and language diversity

As a starting point to integrate linguistic variation into the class, Leeman and Serafini (2016) propose that "rather than imposing any particular language variety (monolingual or otherwise), language [educators] should seek to prepare students to understand [geographical, social and contextual] variation and to interact with speakers of familiar and unfamiliar varieties" (p. 65). For example, identifying different features between U.S. varieties and monolingual varieties from other Spanish-speaking countries can be a point of departure for such preparation (e.g. the use of indicative, instead of subjunctive; the use of preterite instead of imperfect; expressions that have resulted from the contact with English). But teachers need to take a step forward by pointing out that such differences are characterised by some as "errors" or "mistakes" while others like Otheguy (2015) call them "points of divergence between [second-generation Latinxs'] Spanish and that of the previous generation—due to normal intergenerational language change accelerated by conditions of language contact" (p. 302). Some important questions can then be posed around this linguistic diversity: What are the underlying assumptions of each characterisation? What are the implications for assuming a "mistake" or a "point of divergence" for our interactions with speakers? What is the role of class and race in such interactions? (Flores & Rosa, 2015). As Leeman and Serafini propose (2016), it is not simply about promoting students' "understanding of the status quo but rather to enable [them] to challenge the status quo" (p. 65).

Translanguaging practices can also serve similar critical awareness purposes at the discourse level. What are students and teachers' reactions towards these complex practices? A critical perspective will follow García and Otheguy (2019, p. 11) when they propose that our task as teachers is not to correct, eradicate or compensate students' discursive practices. Our role, these authors suggest, is to give visibility and validation to the use of this translanguage, *while at the same time* fostering critical reflections that identify its "co-presence" with instances where named languages (e.g. Spanish) are used. Furthermore, García and Otheguy (2019, p. 11) call on educators to give young people access to dominant language resources, especially to what Blommaert (2013) calls "highly *specific bits of language*— such as standard orthographic literacy, control over advance professional jargons, specific accents and so forth" (p. 5), so relevant in the school systems, but inaccessible to many SHLLs in the United States. Important questions to pose around translanguaging: Why can't SHLLs have access to school-related Spanish language usage, while FLLs have such access through Spanish FLL classes? and Are translanguaging practices part of the diversity of the Spanish-speaking world?

4.2. Pedagogy and cultural diversity and identities

The teaching of culture has been, for many decades now, a central part of the SHL teaching field and classroom (see for example Alarcón, 1997: Aparicio, 1997). Many educators have implemented different strategies and content to compensate for the shallow and neo-liberal views of culture in traditional language textbooks (Beaudrie, et al., 2014; Burgo, 2017; Heidenfeldt, 2015; see Parra 2017 for a review on SHL textbooks), bringing into the classroom cultural "funds of knowledge" from students' communities. I believe that it is paramount to continue building pedagogical content that brings to light the voices, stories,

struggles and histories of diverse Latinx communities that arise from the interstices of fixed categories: people of mixed racial heritage and ethnicities, undocumented immigrants, people with diverse gender identities, and those with cultural roots in Spanish-speaking countries who do not speak Spanish.

Flores (2000) argues that it is important to understand that when working with differences we need to assure that social identities, actions, and alliances are adequately grounded in the specific historical experiences and cultural practices that people recognise *as their own*, with appropriate attention to the sometimes acute class and racial cleavages that crosscut any hasty presumption of equivalence (p. 198) (my emphasis). Therefore, as Rosaldo (1993) points out, the inclusion of diversity does not mean to only bring texts *about* these communities but we need to find the texts *by* their members. Committed and critical work with diversity in the language class should be guided by lived experience and historical memory *within* the diverse communities (Flores, 2000, p. 198).

Along these lines, the following are some resources that can be used as an entry point to facilitate discussions about the intersection of the Spanish language with race, migration status, and gender identities and how diverse communities are problematizing current labels such as "Latinidad" and its membership definition. As Aparicio (2001) points out, even when Spanish has been portrayed as the common denominator among Latinxs, "the linguistic diversity within this sector continues to be hybrid, fluid, and politically contingent" (p. 41).

   a. The video "A Conversation with Latinos on Race," with Joe Brewster, Blair Foster and Michèle Stephenson (2016) provides an entry point to appreciate and discuss the intersection between race, language use and identity among Latinx. https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000004237305/a-conversation-with-latinos-on-race.html

   b. Hablas Español BBC is a journalism project that explores the use of Spanish in different parts of the United States. It includes a series of interviews to members of diverse Latinx communities, including Blaxicans, LGBTQ[+], and Mexicans that do not speak Spanish, as well as some experts in the field. The project also has a Facebook page and a play list on Spotify with songs from diverse Latin American and Latinx artists. https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-50228425

   c. The article "The problem with Latinidad," by Miguel Salazar provides an interesting springboard to question the term Latino as an inclusive label of all members of this community. The author addresses the fact that young black and indigenous people do not embrace the term since it does not represent their historical legacy. https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/hispanic-heritage-month-latinidad/

   d. The poetry, installations and adornments of Afro-Indigenous Mexican poet Alan Pelaez Lopez also explores topics of inclusion and exclusion through labels that ignore our colonial past. http://www.alanpelaez.com/about-me/

Finally, since Spanish teachers are usually trained within the SLA field, I consider it pertinent to connect current goals in this field to the discussion of SHLL diversity. For instance, authors such as Ortega (2014) and Kramsch (2014) has proposed that in our era of globalisation, the notion that should guide our teaching is not the monolingual native speaker but the multilingual individual. For them, the goal of language education is "to

strive to make our students into multilingual individuals, sensitive to linguistic, cultural, and above all, semiotic diversity, and willing to engage with difference, that is, to grapple with differences in social, cultural, political, and religious worldviews" (p. 305). It is at this point where in-class discussions about diversity in the Spanish-speaking world —from a critical perspective— can bring FLLs' attention to the fact that most of their Latinx classmates *are* multilingual individuals but are far from being included and acknowledged as such in our classes, academic discourses, workplaces, and textbooks. The question is then, who gets to be recognised as a "multilingual and multicultural speaker"? And who gets to be recognised as part of the Spanish-speaking world?

5. FINAL REFLECTIONS

As we embrace new theoretical and pedagogical possibilities to conceptualise diversity in the SHL classroom, I would like to take one more step in our reflections: the task won't be complete without a deep reflection of an understanding of *our* —teachers'— place within this diversity. As Beaudrie et al. (2020, p. 3) state: "teaching professionals must grapple and reflect upon the sociopolitical and economic asymmetries that are part of the U.S. Latinx experience, as well as their own positionality with respect to such macro-level language issues" (p. 3).

Following Rosaldo's (1993), I want to underline that such reflections require important work on our part. They produce "a range of feelings, from intimate to distant that need to be addressed" (Rosaldo, 1993, p. xiv). In my many conversations with teachers and colleagues, I have identified that one prevalent feeling is fear, fear of "losing" the Spanish language to "incorrect uses" —"points of divergence" (Otheguy, 2015)— used by young Latinx. I believe that such fears can be dissipated by revisiting the history of the Spanish language—a history that Lara (2005) sees as one of "constant regeneration" between its oral and written traditions that have informed each other through centuries (p. 185). The current idea of the "Spanish language," states Lara, is led by an ideology that privileges certain varieties over others, and includes certain speech communities but stigmatises and excludes others, responding to an imaginary that does not reflect the reality of the language within communities such as the SHLLs in the United States and other bilingual communities within the Spanish-speaking world. Lara (2005) proposes that a contemporary approach to the Spanish language would benefit from the idea of unity not based on a nationalistic ideologies, but based on the inclusion of all the communities that conform the Spanish speaking countries —including bilingual ones— and by understanding how they contribute to the regeneration of the language (p. 185).

As 38% of Hispanic adults in the United States are Spanish-dominant, and another 38% are bilingual, mainly young Latinxs (Taylor et al., 2012) —and the Instituto Cervantes projects the United States to be second largest Spanish-speaking country after Mexico by 2060 (Fernández Vítores, 2019)— our teaching work is more relevant than ever. Away from limited views of diversity and harmful language ideologies, it can pave the way to recognise the diversity and contributions of U.S. Spanish-speaking communities to the next chapter in the history of the Spanish language. As Rosaldo (1993) suggests, a critical interdisciplinary approach to diversity aims to create a space for historically subordinated perspectives

otherwise excluded or marginalised from official discourse in an attempt to valorise [their] subordinate forms of knowledge (p. xviii). Not to romanticise difference (May and Sleeter, 2010) but to generate new meaningful narratives rooted in reality, in a social justice stance and in solidarity in this case with diverse Latinx youth. Such narratives can only be possible when the lines of social and historical differentiation are fully in view (Flores, 2000, p. 198).

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