

**Spanish Heritage Language Learners: Meeting These
Students' Unique Needs**

Mary Genao

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East Stroudsburg University

East Stroudsburg, PA

Appendix A

Letters to Administrators and Teachers



Department of Professional and Secondary Education
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania
Stroud 209
200 Prospect St.
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301-2999
570-422-3363

October 27, 2015

Administration
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Dear Administrators:

I am a graduate student at East Stroudsburg University currently seeking a Pennsylvania Teaching Certification in Spanish as well as a M.Ed. in Secondary Education. As part of my curriculum, I am currently taking course PSED 515: Educational Data. As part of the requirements for this course, I must complete an educational research project pertaining to my content area, under the direction of my faculty advisor, Dr. James Vagliardo. I have decided to design my project to answer the following questions: What are the unique needs of heritage language learners in secondary Spanish classes? What are high schools doing to meet those needs?

In order to collect the data needed to find these answers, I am asking Spanish teachers at several schools in the area to voluntarily complete a survey about their experiences having heritage Spanish speakers in their Spanish classrooms, and their insights on the ways to best meet their needs. All information collected is anonymous and any identifying information that may be obtained in the surveys (such as names, school affiliations, and IP addresses) will not be collected and will not be disclosed in the findings. The electronic survey will be transmitted using SSL encryption to protect data. This research is collected for the sole purpose of being presented to the faculty and students of PSED 515 at East Stroudsburg University, however, a copy of the findings will also be sent to participating high schools.

I have enclosed several packets containing information about the survey and the web address needed for access. I would greatly appreciate if you could distribute the packets to instructors at your school that teach either Spanish as a Foreign Language or Spanish for Native/Heritage Speakers.

I truly appreciate your assistance in my research. I look forward to receiving the valuable insights of your teachers and sharing my findings with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by email at mgenao@live.esu.edu. Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Genao
Student, Graduate College



Department of Professional and Secondary Education
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania
Stroud 209
200 Prospect St.
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301-2999
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Dear Fellow Spanish Language Educator:

I am a graduate student at East Stroudsburg University currently seeking a Pennsylvania Teaching Certification in Spanish as well as a M.Ed. in Secondary Education. As part of my curriculum, I am currently taking course PSED 515: Educational Data. As part of the requirements for this course, I must complete an educational research project pertaining to my content area, under the direction of my faculty advisor, Dr. James Vagliardo. I have decided to design my project to answer the following questions: What are the unique needs of heritage language learners in secondary Spanish classes? What are high schools doing to meet those needs?

In order to collect the data needed to find these answers, I am asking Spanish teachers at several schools in the area to voluntarily complete a survey about their experiences having heritage Spanish speakers in their Spanish classrooms, and their insights on the ways to best meet their needs. All information collected is anonymous and any identifying information that may be obtained in the surveys (such as names, school affiliations, and IP addresses) will be protected and will not be disclosed in the findings. The electronic surveys will be transmitted using SSL encryption to protect data. This research is collected for the sole purpose of being presented to the faculty and students of PSED 515 at East Stroudsburg University, however, a copy of the findings will also be sent to participating high schools.

I have attached to this letter instructions and the web address to take the survey. I would greatly appreciate if you could take the time to fill out the survey by **November 11, 2015**.

I truly appreciate your assistance in my research. I look forward to receiving your valuable insights and sharing my findings with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by email at mgenao@live.esu.edu. Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Genao
Student, Graduate College



Department of Professional and Secondary Education
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East Stroudsburg, PA 18301-2999
570-422-3363

November 2, 2015

Administration
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Administrators:

Along with the letter I previously sent you about collecting survey data from your Spanish teachers, I have also chosen [REDACTED] High School to do additional research.

I am asking permission to look at which Spanish courses heritage language learners in your schools have taken in order to see if there are any patterns in their continuing Spanish studies. I will not record any names or other identifying information, and any confidential information seen by me will not be recorded or used in the study.

I would appreciate you granting me access to this very limited amount student record data.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mary Genao
Student, Graduate College



Teaching Heritage Language Learners in Spanish Classes

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research. Hopefully, the findings will give us an insight into the unique needs of heritage language learners in Spanish classes, and it cannot be done without your help!

There are 28 questions, and the survey usually takes less than 20 minutes to complete.

You will remain anonymous in this study. The researcher will not be able to identify you or your affiliated school. The survey will be transmitted using SSL encryption to protect data. IP address tracking is disabled.

You can access Survey Monkey's [Privacy Policy](#) and [Security Statement](#).

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific question.

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of the research records or data, and all data will be destroyed in 3 years.

By submitting this form you are indicating that you have read the description of the study, are over the age of 18, and that you agree to the terms as described.

If you have any questions, or would like a copy of this consent letter, please contact me at mgenao@live.esu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Mary Genao

* 1. Do you wish to continue with this survey?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Teaching Heritage Language Learners in Spanish Classes

Demographics

2. What is your age?

☐ 18-29

☐ 30-39

☐ 40-49

☐ 50-59

☐ 60+

3. Do you identify as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I prefer not to say

4. What language did you first learn to speak? (Select all that apply)

☐ English

☐ Spanish

☐ Other (please specify)

* 5. For how many years have you taught Spanish?

☐ 0-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-15 years

☐ 16-20 years

☐ 20-25 years

☐ 25+ years

☐ I do not teach Spanish

☐ I do not wish to answer

6. What is your self-rated level of Spanish language proficiency?

☐ Novice

☐ Intermediate

☐ Advanced

☐ Superior

☐ Native

7. What is your highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Bachelor's degree

- ☐ Bachelor's degree + at least 15 graduate-level credits
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Master's degree + at least 15 graduate-level credits
- ☐ Doctorate



Teaching Heritage Language Learners in Spanish Classes

Teacher training

From this point forward, for the purpose of this study, HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS (HLLs) are defined as students who grew up speaking and/or hearing Spanish at home but have primarily received formal schooling in English.

8. Had you learned about heritage language learners during your initial teacher education (prior to being certified?)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. Have you learned about HLL since receiving your initial teacher education (after certification)? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Yes, in a Master's program course
- ☐ Yes, in a Doctoral program course
- ☐ Yes, in a school in-service
- ☐ Yes, in an Act 48 qualifying seminar or conference
- ☐ Yes, in another professional development course not listed
- ☐ Yes, through a textbook or curriculum program
- ☐ Yes, through my own independent study
- ☐ No

10. Briefly describe what you learned about teaching HLL either in your initial teacher education or from the program(s) you selected in Q7. If you answered NO to both Q6 and Q7, please leave this box blank.



Teaching Heritage Language Learners in Spanish Classes

Attitudes and Experiences

11. Have you had HLL in your Spanish classes?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. Based on the description of HLL defined for this study, do you believe that these students have different educational needs and challenges compared to other Spanish language students?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I'm not sure

13. Please indicate the three biggest challenges you believe these students face in Spanish classes.

1

2

3

14. On average, what grades have HLL students in your class earned compared to their non-HLL peers?

Much lower grades

Lower grades

Same grades

Higher grades

Much higher grades I have not taught HLL

☐☐☐☐☐☐

15. What specific types of differentiation (if any) do you provide specifically to HLL students in Spanish classes (not IEP-related differentiation, but rather changes or supports specific to Spanish because of their status as a HLL)?

16. In general, do you tend to expect more out of HLL in Spanish classes?

☐ Yes

☐ No

17. In your opinion, do you feel that a HLL taking Spanish classes as a way to preserve and/or increase academic fluency in Spanish is vital to their education?

☐ Yes, it is vital

☐ No, it is not vital, but there are benefits

☐ No, and it's not necessary

☐ I'm not sure



18. Does your school offer a Spanish course specifically for HLL?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes, but it may be removed in the near future
- ☐ No, but it is being considered
- ☐ No, and it is not being considered
- ☐ No, but it has in the past
- ☐ No, and I don't know if it is being planned or not

19. If your school does not offer this type of course, do you believe they should?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ My school already offers this course

20. How do you think having a HLL Spanish class can benefit these students?

21. How do you think having a HLL Spanish class can be detrimental to these students?



Teaching Heritage Language Learners in Spanish Classes

Scenarios

For the following questions, please read the scenario and tell how you would respond to each situation.

22. Maria is was born in Colombia, and moved to the U.S. at age 7. Almost all of her formal schooling has been in English in U.S. schools. She speaks Spanish at home with her family. She is in your Spanish IV class and is frustrated that often times the Spanish you teach in class is slightly different than what she speaks at home. How would you feel about this?

- ☐ I would be annoyed. The variety of Spanish I teach is the standard variety, therefore this student should be fine with learning it.
- ☐ I would feel neutral.
- ☐ I would be sympathetic. I place equal importance on all varieties of Spanish.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

23. Consider the previous situation about Maria again: She is a HLL with roots in Colombia and gets frustrated about the variety of Spanish you teach since it is different from what she speaks at home. What would you do?

- ☐ Attempt to have her adjust her Spanish.
- ☐ Incorporate vocabulary from Colombian Spanish into my lessons.
- ☐ Teach vocabulary from multiple varieties of Spanish.
- ☐ There would be no difference in my teaching style.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

24. Imagine that you want to assess the current Spanish proficiency of HLL at the beginning of the school year. How would you do so?

- ☐ I would give them a traditional paper-and-pencil test.
- ☐ I would design an assessment that involved an oral presentation and writing a paper.
- ☐ I would not assess my students at the beginning of the school year.
- ☐ I would use some other assessment (please specify)

25. Imagine that you are teaching a class with several HLL. Because they grew up speaking Spanish in their homes, these particular learners believe that they are already fluent and do not need to pay attention and work to improve their Spanish. How would you handle the situation?

- ☐ I would work directly with the students to address inconsistencies in their Spanish.
- ☐ I would not directly address their inconsistencies, but would instead focus on increasing their overall participation.
- ☐ I would not work directly with the students, but would attempt to fix the problems indirectly.
- ☐ There would be no difference in my teaching style or approach.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

26. David is in your Advanced Placement Spanish Language class. He was born in the U.S. and has received all of his schooling here. His parents are from the Dominican Republic and only Spanish is spoken in their home and with other family members. When assessing David's oral assignments, you can hear that he speaks Dominican Spanish. He is very bright and his fluency is pretty complete as he correctly uses a wide variety of words, phrases, conjugations, tenses, etc., and always presents well thought out responses. When assessing his writing, it becomes obvious that he did not have formal schooling or much practice in written Spanish, as he tends to write words as he hears/speaks them in Dominican Spanish. For example, he spells "mujer" as "mujel", "somos" as "somo" and other consistent spelling errors. The other non-HLL students in the class do not have these spelling issues, but often times make grammatical and vocabulary mistakes not seen in David's writing. What do you do?

- ☐ I would score David's writing assessments with high marks, and then work directly with him to fix these spelling errors.
- ☐ I would score David's writing assessments with high marks and mark the errors on page, but not work directly with him on it. He is bright enough to see those mistakes and correct them.
- ☐ I would score David's writing assessments with lower marks because the words are wrong, and then work directly with him to fix these errors.
- ☐ I would score David's writing assessments with lower marks, and not work directly with him on it. He is bright enough to see those mistakes and correct them.
- ☐ Other (please specify)



Teaching Heritage Language Learners in Spanish Classes

Additional comments

27. Do you have any additional comments or insights about teaching HLL in Spanish classes that you think will be helpful to this study?

28. Would you consider yourself to be a HLL of Spanish?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I prefer not to say



Teaching Heritage Language Learners in Spanish Classes

Thank you so much for your time and participation! Your input is greatly appreciated!
MUCHAS GRACIAS

Data Collection Sheets from Riverside and Thomas Jefferson High Schools

Data Collection – HLL Spanish Classes

 High School– no HLL classes

Student #	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
1	I	II		
2	II	III		
3	II	III	IV	AP
4		I	II	
5	II	III	IV	AP
6		II		
7	I	II		
8	I	II		
9	I	II	III	
10	II	III	VI	
11	II			
12	I	II		
13		I	II	
14	II	III, IV	AP, GI	GII
15	I	II	III	
16	III		IV	
17	I	II		
18	II	III		
19	I	II		
20	I	II	III	
21	I	II		
22	I	II		
23	II	III	IV	
24	III	IV		AP
25	III	IV	FI	AP, FII

Took IV or AP = 8

IV indicates either level IV class offered

AP indicates either Advanced Placement class
offered

F indicates a French class

G indicates a German class

Data Collection – HLL Spanish Classes

High School– 3 levels of HL classes

Student #	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
1		HLI	HLII	HLIII	AP
2		HLI	HLII		
3		HLI	HLII	HLIII	
4		HLI	HLII	HLIII	AP
5		I	II	III	IV
6		HLI	HLII		
7		HLI	HLII	HLIII	
8		HLI	HLII	HLIII	AP
9		HLII	HLIII	IV	AP
10		HLI	HLII		
11		HLII	HLIII	IV	AP
12		HLIII	IV		AP
13			HLII	HLIII	IV
14		HLI	HLII	HLIII	IV
15		HLII	HLIII		IV
16			HLIII	IV	AP
17				IV	AP
18		HLII	HLIII	IV	AP
19		HLI	HLII	HLIII	
20			HLI	HLII	
21		I	II	III	IV
22		I	II	III, IV	AP
23		HLII	HLIII	IV, FI	AP, FII
24		HLII	HLIII	IV	
25		HLII	HLIII	IV	
26					

Took IV or AP = 17

HL indicates lower level Heritage Language Spanish course

AP indicates either of the Advanced Placement courses offered

F indicates a French course