The Place of Nonstandard Spanish in the Classroom: Beyond the "Separate but Equal" Approach

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Language instructors understand that the key component of their work is to teach their students to master a standard, prestigious variety of language that will gain them access to academic success and respect in the professional world. Many, however, can't help but suspect that in evaluating their students based on their ability to perform in this standard, prestige variety of the language, they are really re-enforcing unfair socio-economic power dynamics. This suspicion, or even sense of guilt, may be particularly present in the case of the non-native (read "gringo") Spanish instructor who teaches Spanish to native and heritage speakers. Even native Spanish speaking instructors may be aware that in enforcing the use of "correct," "proper" or "academic" Spanish they are affirming the system in which privilege belongs to an elite group which is often identified by ethnicity and language use. As Sato (1989) affirmed, "second dialect speakers consistently underachieve academically" and their educational experiences "are no doubt tied to generations of socioeconomic and ethnic stratification in American society." (p. 260). The good instructor is thus paradoxically charged with building students up (i.e. assimilating them) by breaking them down (i.e. correcting non-prestige behaviors and ways of thought).

So how does the Spanish instructor go about teaching a standard variety that will increase the students' social mobility while managing to somehow break, or at least not explicitly perform, the cycle of paternalism and socioeconomic stratification in the classroom?

In the ongoing debate over the treatment of nonstandard dialects in the classroom, most educators today believe in additive bidialectalism, an approach that treats the acquisition of the standard as the acquisition of a second dialect, instead of as a remediation of the nonstandard dialect spoken in the home (Sato, 1989, p.260). The basic ideology behind the approach is one of "value the home dialect, but teach the standard." Fairclough (2003), in a brief survey of the research on the place of *Spanglish* in education, concluded that:

> una pedagogía bidialectal parece ser el camino más indicado a seguir por aquéllos que tienen como tarea la enseñanza del español al estudiantado bilingüe (español/inglés) de Estados Unidos. Mientras que el vernáculo debe apreciarse por su valor emotivo y por reflejar la

identidad del individuo, el estándar debe inculcarse por su valor instrumental. (p. 197).

But, how can we say we really claim to "value" what we do not dare bring into the classroom? The approach, at least as practiced by many educators, is essentially contradictory and reminiscent of the "Separate but Equal" principle. Gay (2002) has stressed that teachers must go beyond "mere awareness of, respect for and general recognition of the fact that ethnic groups have different values or express similar values in various ways" (p. 107). To simply remind students that one must "value the home dialect," is quite superficial when relegating all nonstandard speech to private family life.

It is my position, therefore, that instructors who teach Spanish as a second dialect to native or heritage speakers must go beyond simply reminding students that their home dialects are valued. Culturally aware instructors must first understand and be able to teach sociolinguistic principles of language variation as related to identity and socioeconomic power in order to contribute to students' views of themselves (Valdés, 1995, p. 310). Next, teachers must acquire detailed, factual information about the varieties spoken by the students in their classrooms, in order to truly appreciate the students' contributions as well as help *add* to their rich knowledge base instead of *correcting* it or treating it as erroneous. Finally, we must free the nonstandard Spanish dialects from the secret, hidden world to which they've been relegated by admitting them into the public, prestigious realm of academia in the form of course materials, class activities and projects. We can use the nonstandard as a point of entry for developing standard mastery; we can

de-stigmatize the speech of our students while teaching them the standard in a richer, more meaningful context.

What follows is a review of current research in language variation and identity, along with a more in-depth study of nonstandard U.S. Spanish, especially the phenomenon known as *Spanglish*, and finally a set of pedagogical and ideological recommendations for the instructor who is considering inviting nonstandard Spanish into the classroom.

Sociolinguistic Principles of Language Variation

First, it will be necessary to establish a set of definitions of the linguistic terms that will be used from this point forward, such as "dialect," "variety," and "standard." The term "dialect," to begin with, has no real scientific or objective definition (Fairclough, 2003, p.200). According to Trudgill (1974), the term "dialect" is not particularly easy to define. He has stated that the term "refers, strictly speaking, to differences between kinds of languages which are differences of vocabulary and grammar, as well as pronunciation," and has gone on to mention regional and social dialects as examples of specific, identifiable differences. Trudgill (1974) used the term "variety" to refer neutrally to "any 'kind of language' we wish to talk about without being specific," and added that "the term *dialect* can be used to apply to all varieties, not just to nonstandard varieties" (p. 5). Trudgill's definition of variety is the one that will be used for the purposes of this paper. As for "dialect," however, Halliday's (1985) definition is more precisely suited to a discussion of U.S. Spanish. He has explained that "[a] *dialect* is the variety you speak because you 'belong to' (come from or have chosen to move into) a particular region, social class, caste, generation, age group, sex group, or other relevant grouping

within the community" (p.44). In any language, the "standard" is the prestige variety which is normally taught in schools. A standard dialect is "imposed from above over the range of regional dialects," and cannot be legitimately considered superior to any other variety (Trudgill 1974). Although the term "standard" with ideas of formality and correctness, Train (2003) reminds us that a critical perspective on language includes "the recognition that standard languages are constructed in terms of linguistic ideologies and sociocultural practices," and not in terms of "the reality of observable language use" (p. 5).

Therefore, in the context of this article, a nonstandard variety of Spanish will refer to any and all varieties that differ from hegemonic, prestige varieties of Spanish. The term "nonstandard" will be used interchangeably with "vernacular." The term "dialect" will be reserved for references to the varieties used by particular identifiable language communities, such as 'Miami Cuban Spanish' or 'New York Puerto Rican Spanish.'

Language and Identity

We can use language to express or *perform* our identities, but first our language *forms* our identities. We judge ourselves and others based on the use of language as it constitutes group membership. To repeat Halliday's (1985) observation, we speak a dialect because 'we belong.' Ellison (2006) emphasized that "language is the key to a person's identity because it is so often taken as a biological inheritance that its association with ethnic paternity is both frequent and powerful." In other words, to see another's language use as inferior is to see that person as being biologically inferior as well. When looked at in this light, it is easy to see one of the main reasons why nonstandard dialect users have historically underachieved

academically—in the classroom their dialect is considered inferior, therefore they themselves are inferior. The implications of identity and language in the self-esteem of children, for instance, are great. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) has written passionately and frankly on the subject of how people's perceptions of her language as "incorrect" have affected her identity:

Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself (p. 124).

There is an undeniable, permanent link between language use, identity and biological inheritance. It is because of this link that it is crucial for language instructors to make well-informed decisions on the treatment of nonstandard language in their classrooms.

Language and Power

As Trudgill (1974) has shown, the standard dialect in a given society is in no way linguistically superior—it has simply been imposed on society by those with the power and money. Even though it is the language of the elite classes that is imposed on the rest of us, it is often the middle class that appropriates itself of the upper-class dialect, and enforces its use in schools and homes (Keller 1976, Trudgill 1974). Sayer (2008) showed that this treatment of certain groups' dialects as superior is so omnipresent that "many *mexicano* parents in the Chicago area prefer not to teach their children Spanish because they are conscious that their *rancherado* or bumpkin variety is denigrated" (p.109), and that even "[f]rom an early age, children have a sense of which is the prestige language, and which is the subordinated one"

(p.96). Keller (1976) has remarked that middle class "abhorrence" of and "disdainful attitude" toward nonstandard varieties comes from their association of nonstandard speech with the monodialectalism and low social status of the uneducated class (p. 23)—a sector from which those of the middle class wish to separate themselves as much as possible. The middle, fairly educated class is adept at the standard and nonstandard varieties, and is able to switch between registers according to their context. The uneducated sector does not control the standard, or what Keller (1976) refers to as the "lingua franca," and is unable to switch. While it is unfair that one group's dialect be deemed superior and used as a sort of *shibboleth* in school, work, and other social situations, the hard social reality remains: "all people who only speak a vernacular are condemned to limited social mobility in any society." (Keller, 1976, p. 28). Language instructors are clearly responsible for training their students in the standard variety of Spanish and therefore increasing their ability to compete in society, but they must find a way to do so that does not communicate the inferiority of the student and their heritage.

Nonstandard Spanish in the U.S.
Historical and Demographical Context

As the Hispanic population of the U.S. grows, so does the number of heritage Spanish speakers whose unique linguistic situation (that of being bilingual with little-to-no formal education in their first language) confounds language educators and defies linguistic classification. According to projections from the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), the percentage of Hispanics will have risen from around 5% in the 1970's, years during which Chicano studies exploded in universities across the country, to around 16% in 2010, the year in which millions

of Latinos await President Obama's promised Immigration Reform Act while Arizonians and protestors nation-wide fight against a controversial bill aimed at publicly identifying and detaining illegal immigrants (Archibold, 2010). According to further projections from the Census bureau, around 66% of Hispanics in the U.S. today were born here (2000), which for the majority means that they have learned a nonstandard, U.S. dialect of Spanish and have had little to no access to formal Spanish-language education.

Heritage and Native Speakers

As Beaudrie, Ducar and Relaño-Pastor (2009) affirm, there exists a "broad range of bilingual competencies" within the growing Hispanic population in the U.S. (p. 157). Of the some 35 million native Spanish speakers living in the country, 30 million are considered to possess some level of bilingual competency, and 18 million are considered to speak both English and Spanish "very well" (United States Census Bureau 2007). There is a slight distinction to be made, within this largely bilingual population of Spanish speakers, between native speakers and heritage speakers. For the purposes of this article, I will follow Cook's conclusion that the only "indisputable element in the definition of native speaker is that a person is a native speaker of the language learnt first" (p.187). Therefore, all those who learned Spanish first are native speakers of Spanish. It is important to clarify that native speakers possess varying degrees of literacy and "display regional, occupational, generational, class-related ways of talking" (Kramsch, 2003, p.251). The term native speaker will not be used here to describe some ideal speaker whose use of the language is "correct." Claire Kramsch (2003) attests that the idea of the native speaker as "arbiter of grammaticality and acceptability

of language [...] is in fact an imaginary construct" (p. 255). Rothman (2007) explains that heritage speakers comprise one particular subsection of native speakers and, like all native speakers, "are exposed naturalistically to the heritage language; however, this language is by definition a nonhegemonic minority language within a majority-language environment." In other words, the native Spanish used at home is a "nonhegemonic minority language" in U.S. society, where English is the hegemonic language. Rothman underscores that "[s]ince the heritage language is the family language used and heard in restricted environments, there are varying degrees of deterministic consequences for the complete acquisition and / or maintenance of the heritage language" (p. 360). Heritage speakers possess such a broad range of bilingual competency precisely due to the fact the Spanish is learnt and used in "restricted," or private and principally non-institutional environments.

Edstrom (2006), for example, describes heritage speakers in this context as "individuals from Spanish-speaking families in the United States who grow up using the language to varying degrees and in varying contexts but who do not necessarily acquire a formal register." Furthermore, not all heritage speakers are fluent in the heritage language, but as Katz (2003) argues, "[m]ost researchers agree that many of these speakers should be considered native speakers" (p. 132). The term *native speaker,* especially within discussions of language, power, and the stigmatization of nonstandard dialects, should not be limited to describing those who possess a mastery of a standard variety of Spanish.

US Spanish Dialects

The Spanish-speaking community of the Unites States is endlessly heterogeneous. The group of bilingual Spanish speakers in the country, according to Sánchez (1994), "is the most widespread and the most complex because individuals exhibit various levels of language proficiency in two languages and various patterns of language choice according to function and domain" (p. 3). Here standard and nonstandard varieties from over 20 countries co-mingle and compete amongst one another and with all of the varieties of English. Some of the most recognizable nonstandard dialects in the U.S. today are Cuban Miami and New York Puerto Rican Spanish, as mentioned earlier, Afro-Spanish, several regional dialects of Chicano Spanish, such as Border, Texas, New Mexico, Chicago, and Arizona, and the many, highly controversial varieties of *Spanglish,* such as *Nuyorican Spanglish* and *Tex-Mex* (Anzaldúa 1987, Bernal Enríquez 2003, Fairclough 2003, Stavans 2000a, Stavans 200b, Zentella 1997). *Spanglish*, broadly defined, is a type of language interaction, the result of continued contact, conflict and language mixing between Spanish and English in the U.S. (Muysken, 2001).

Spanglish.

There is tremendous variation within the phenomenon that is known as *Spanglish* across Latino communities. Some researchers have referred to *Spanglish* as a dialect (Ardila 2005, Keller 1976, Sayer 2008) others as an interlanguage (Ardila 2005) and some have even defended its status as a new, hybrid language, or Creole (Sayer 2008, Keller 1976, Stavans 2000a).

Zentella (2002), warned against the tendency to over-generalize about Latinos and Latino language use, and Sayer (2008) explained that in the metropolitan Phoenix, Arizona community where he did his study, political pressure against providing services in

Spanish and educational pressure to assimilate has kept *Spanglish* from becoming stabilized and grammaticized, and therefore he considers Phoenix *Spanglish* be a dialect (p. 99). In other communities, however, where the Spanish-speaking neighborhoods are well-established, the populations are long-term, and there is a marked resistance to assimilation, *Spanglish* is becoming more grammaticized and could be considered a stable language in the future. These long-term communities include *Nuyoricans* (Zentella 1997), *Nuevomexicanos* (Bernál Enriquez 2003) and Texas Chicanos (Anzaldúa 1987). The reason that many researchers support the idea that *Spanglish* could become stable, grammaticized and creolized is that in these long-term communities new, young generations are speaking it without having had contact with both languages (Ardila, 2005, p. 66). In other words, there is a new generation of monolingual *Spanglish* speakers. Fairclough (2003) has explained that the process of grammaticization in which "[e]sta nueva lengua puede adquirirse directamente aunque la persona no tenga la conexión social o étnica con la lengua minoritoria [English] o bien no posea el conocimiento de las lenguas en cuestión," will continue to accelerate as the number of Hispanics born in the U.S. continues to rise, but that for now "el *Spanglish* […] sigue siendo algo esporádico, muy personal y sumamente difícil de cuantificar" (p. 200). The phenomenon known as *Spanglish* along with its linguistic characteristics varies from region to region, household to household, person to person.

As mentioned, some researchers view *Spanglish* as an interlanguage (Ardila 2005), which is a language spoken at a linguistic border. While it is true that there is close contact between Spanish and English at the Mexico-U.S. border, and that the *Spanglish* spoken there could be called an interlanguage, what about the case of the *Spanglish* spoken in New York, where the only border is with English and French Canada? Ardila (2005) suggested that "[w]hat is unique with Spanglish is that it is not spoken in a linguistic border. As a matter of fact, there is not an evident linguistic (and geographic) frontier. The "border" is everywhere in the United States. The two are interwoven" (p. 64). Ardila's "border" is not a geopolitical one, but rather is cultural, linguistic, and often racial. Once again the inextricably tangled nature of identity, language, and biological inheritance is exposed.

Linguistic features.

Spanglish then can be broadly defined as the language mixing of Spanish and English in the U.S. In this language mixing, Spanish is the "superstrate" (Sayer 2008) because it is the more "dominant" language in the mix; in other words, Spanish contributes more syntax and lexis. The main linguistic features of *Spanglish* are code-switching, calques, loan words, and semantic extensions.

Code-switching (1a) and code-mixing (1b) will be used here to refer to the introduction of unassimilated loan words or entire loan phrases into a discourse. In *Spanglish,* this would mean the insertion of an English word or phrase into Spanish speech, without adapting the word morphologically or phonologically to Spanish grammar. Ardila (2005) distinguished between code-switching and code-mixing, explaining that "code-switching means that at a certain point, the speaker changes the language, and continues talking in another language. The switch is produced when beginning a new sentence, and usually a new topic," whereas "[c]ode-mixture (or code alternating) means that within a single sentence, two languages are mixed and may alternate" (p. 70). The following

examples illustrate the difference between the two:

(1a) *Vicky me cuida.* She's my babysitter. (Zentella, 1997, p.58)[1]

(1b) *Tú estás metiendo* your big mouth. (Zentella, 1997, p.45)

Calques (2a-b) are the literal translations of one language to another (Fairclough, 2003, p. 186), or the syntactical structure of one language being mapped onto another (Sayer, 2008, p. 97). Calques can be one of the aspects of *Spanglish* that most irritate formally educated native Spanish-speakers.

(2a) *Ese avión está supuesto a* [is supposed to] *llegar a las 3.* (Ardila, 2005, p. 75).

(2b) *Y luego vino pa'tras* [he came back]. (Sayer, 2008, p. 103).

The use of loan words (3a-b) from English, or borrowing, often applies to the introduction of any English word or phrase, whether or not it is morphologically or phonologically adapted to Spanish (Fairclough, 2003, p. 186). In this paper, however, the term "loan words" is used strictly to signify those words and phrases that *are* adapted to Spanish grammar. This could mean a verb like "to park" being adapted morphologically to Spanish in the form of "parquear," or a word such as "stop" being adapted phonologically to "es-TŌP." To avoid confusion, the rest of the English words and phrases that are not adapted are referred to in this paper strictly as code-switches.

(3a) *la huayfa* [morphological adaptation of "the wife" in order to convey importance of gender] (Sánchez, 1994, p. 33).

(3b) *aberaje* ["average" using Spanish phonological form] (Ardila, p. 72, 2005).

Semantic extensions (4a-b) occur in *Spanglish* when a pre-existing Spanish word loses its original Spanish meaning in favor of the English meaning of a lexically similar word.

In other words, those "false cognates" or "falsos amigos" that we so often warn our non-native Spanish students about become true cognates.

(4a) *una ganga*: a "deal" in Standard Spanish, a "gang" in *Spanglish*

(4b) *pretender:* to "want to get or be something" in Standard Spanish, to "pretend" in *Spanglish.* (Ardila, 2005, p. 69).

It is interesting to note that Ardila (2005) classified code-switching and borrowing as "superficial phenomena" of *Spanglish*, and calques and semantic extensions as "deep phenomena" that eventually lead to changes in the organization of Spanish.

Source of controversy.

Spanglish is a source of controversy not only because of its resistance to classification as already discussed, but especially in terms of its validity as a way of speech, its propriety in public and private spheres, and its merit as an organized system of language.

First of all, there are those who worry about the effects of *Spanglish* on the Spanish language and on Latinos in general. Language purists such as González Echeverría believe that *Spanglish* is slowly corrupting the Spanish language by gradually and permanently deforming its grammar and turning it into a chaotic, irregular tangle of dialects or even idiolects. Beyond the worry for the future of the language itself, is the somewhat more legitimate concern that *Spanglish* is a quotidian, painful representation of "imperialistic exploitation" and "United States domination" (Keller, 1976, p. 28). González Echeverría agrees, concerned that we will all end up speaking "McSpanish" (Osio 2002, p. 1). Patrick Osio, in an article for the *Houston Chronicle,* accused *Spanglish* of more than representative of, but also as trapping its users, in a lifelong cultural and economic

limbo. To Osio, *Spanglish* is an "aberration" and those who use it in the classroom belong in "the hall of education-shame" (2002, p. 1). González Echeverría (1997) wrote his own article, this one for the *New York Times,* stating that "The sad reality is that Spanglish is primarily the language of poor Hispanics, many barely literate in either language [...]They lack the vocabulary and education in Spanish to adapt to the changing world around them" (p. 116). What Echeverría and Osio are worried about, in the always adept words of Stavans (2000b), is that there might be entire new generations of Latinos "who, no longer fluent in the language of Cervantes, have not yet mastered that of Shakespeare" (p. 64). As mentioned earlier, those who master a standard dialect clearly enjoy greater social and economic mobility than those who are unable to switch between dialects. It is interesting, however, that both Osio and Echeverría, in different ways, argue for the total suppression or eradication of *Spanglish*. Stavans (2000a) comments that he is "not at all surprised that the dissemination of Spanglish in the United States has given way to an atmosphere of anxiety and even xenophobia" (p. 556), and that only studying *Spanglish* will we discover its function and vitality.

On the other side of the controversy are those who defend their right to call *Spanglish* a legitimate language. Among them is Anzaldúa (1987), who has said in defiance:

> *Somos los del español deficiente.* We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic *mestizaje*, your *burla*. [...] Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing (p. 124).

Many also point out that *Spanglish* has psychological and cognitive significance as "una metáfora para una nueva forma de vida, un nuevo espacio cultural, cuyas fronteras parecen no tener límites" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 189), and political significance as it allows users to express group affiliation and solidarity.

Spanglish is also stigmatized because the practice of code-switching is commonly perceived as evidence of a deficient vocabulary (Sayer 2008). Those who have not studied the phenomena assume that *Spanglish* means having to rely on words from both Spanish and English, because one is not educated or fluent in either. The practice of switching codes due to a gap in vocabulary is known as "crutching." (Sayer, 2008, p. 97). As we already know, however, *Spanglish* involves more than mere code-switching—it includes calques, semantic extensions, and borrowing, and many other linguistic phenomena that are described in detailed grammar studies such as that of Zentella (1997). She found that the children in her study were not "semi- or a-lingual hodge-podgers, but adept bilingual jugglers. They followed rules of what and where to switch that were shared by several Latino communities" (58). In other words, the two languages are not simply mixed at random. Users follow rules about how the languages can and cannot be combined.

In fact, several studies have found that the strongest bilinguals tend to be the "most prolific code-switchers," (Sayer, 2008, p. 104) and that "aquellos que poseen un buen dominio de ambos idiomas tienden a producer CC [cambio de códigos] con mayor frecuencia" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 193). The idea that those who practice code-mixing are compensating in order to fill in the gaps in

their vocabulary is a common misconception that could lead to misunderstanding in the classroom.

As Sayer (2008) has reminded us, the "sociolinguistic description of code-mixing contrasts sharply with commonly held misconceptions about bilinguals' mixing practices as evidence of laziness or sloppiness" (p. 100). Code-switching is not simply crutching; it is a way for bilingual speakers to maximize their rich linguistic resources to highlight reported speech, reflect social power relations, and mark their identities.

Heritage and Native Spanish Speakers in the Foreign Language Classroom

Problems and Benefits

Although the nonstandard dialects such as *Spanglish* are legitimate, vibrant languages, one still needs to master Standard Spanish for practical reasons, among them, in order not to be the victim of discrimination in a job interview or by a scholarship committee. Although discrimination is wrong in the first place, we still must admit that it exists and protect ourselves from it. More and more native Spanish speakers are beginning to enroll in Spanish as a Foreign Language classes seeking to perfect their use of a standard Spanish, for that very reason.

Educators and students alike encounter the various and inevitable problems that occur when the native speaker attends a Spanish class designed for the non-native speaker. For instance, Felix (2009) has noted that these classes "present Spanish as a foreign language stripped of the notions of culture and heritage that characterize human language" (p.145). In other words, Spanish is presented as the language of the "other," as an ethnographical artifact, instead of as the language of the students' forefathers and ancestors. Felix also found that when the instructor is not a native Spanish speaker,

there is often a juxtaposition of roles in the classroom—the instructor expects the heritage speaker to act as a leader or an informant (p. 156). Another, obvious problem arises when the instructor does not value the student's speech as legitimate, oftentimes because the instructor is not familiar with some of the terms used in that student's dialect. This is a problem that requires much care, especially since Felix (2009) found that most heritage speakers already enter the classroom with feelings of embarrassment. One student shared: "[w]hen I took the class I did feel slightly embarrassed because I'm Hispanic. I felt I never should have had to be in a classroom learning what should have come naturally" (p. 158). The foreign language instructor in charge of such a classroom must be aware of the heritage student's unique situation in the foreign language classroom.

There are, however, many benefits for all when a heritage speaker joins the foreign language classroom. With the right classroom environment, the student may feel empowered, instead of embarrassed, due to her first-hand knowledge. The student can discover that what is a part of her heritage can also be an excellent advantage in school and work. The other students benefit when a heritage speaker is able to challenge them in class discussions. Diversity in the classroom is unavoidable. As instructors we can choose to see a diverse group of students as an obstacle, or as an advantage, an additional tool to help guide students towards self-discovery and academic maturity.

Recommendations for Instructors

In order to effectively use students' nonstandard dialects as a resource, instructors must have a clear understanding of sociolinguistic principles of language variation as related to identity and socioeconomic power. Train

(2003) discusses the field of Critical Language Awareness (CLA) as key to the professional development of language educators as it "marks an attempt to problematize the notions of accuracy and 'appropriateness'" based on native-speaker norms that reflect only the language practices of a dominant group in society" (p. 15). The culturally aware instructor is one who understands why certain dialects are favored over others, the arbitrary nature of "correctness" in language, and how a student's relationship with language affects his self-esteem.

Beyond being an essential component of language instructor education, CLA must be introduced to language students as well. Students who do not understand the processes of language variation and standardization simply memorize the "correct" forms in an uncritical manner, without developing the knowledge and confidence necessary to make conscientious choices about language use. Once students begin to see the target language less as some static ideal and more as a dynamic, ever-changing reflection of a web of social relations and environments, they will be much more able to cope with the ambiguities that tend to torment them as language learners. Martínez (2003) argues for a "robust model of CBDA [classroom based dialect awareness] that is capable of transmitting a deep-seated understanding of language variation at the elementary levels of heritage language instruction." Martínez shows that "heritage language pedagogy can be considerably enriched if dialect awareness is the first thing that students are taught instead of the last" (p.4). Language instructors must engage students in critical conversations about language variation if they are to effectively address nonstandard speech in the classroom.

Furthermore, instructors should be informed about their students' dialects and must know how to affirm those in the classroom. As Ellison (2006) pointed out, "[t]eachers' conceptions of students' abilities and expectations for students from different backgrounds lead to differential treatment of students in classrooms" (p. 134). Edstrom (2006) stated that in order to be able to give sensitive feedback and provide an equitable environment, the educator must understand how Spanish is spoken in the "real world" and why it is spoken that way (p. 337). To add to Edstrom's idea, I believe the language instructor should also resist the temptation to create an opposition between the "real world" and the classroom. Language exists in the real world, along with all of society's contradictions, complications, and nonstandard speech. Instead of denying or suppressing these complications, the way some critics would wish for the disappearance of *Spanglish,* instructors should use them as material for constructive exploration and discussion on language.

Finally, I recommend that instructors integrate nonstandard dialect texts into their class materials, in order to affirm the legitimacy of nonstandard dialects as well as put into practice the concepts of CLA. Comparative analyses of dialects are particularly well suited to the objective of critical language instruction. For example, instructors could choose a poem written in nonstandard Spanish, perhaps a poem in *Spanglish* by Gloría Anzaldúa, and ask students to explicitly analyze the differences between the poem's language and the standard Spanish taught in the textbook. Students could even identify instances of calques, code-switching, and loan words. Once students identify the nonstandard features of the language used, they could enter into a discussion about the possible political implications of the writer's concious use of a nonstandard dialect. Martínez (2003), in a review of Spanish

textbooks for heritage learners, indicates some of the activities that most meaningfully incorporate dialect awareness into the language lesson. Martínez highlights an activity designed by George Blanco, Victoria Contreras, and Judith Marquez, in which "students are asked to find the names of a set of items in three distinct geographical regions. They are also told to ask their informants which form they consider to be most 'correct.'" This activity, Martínez observes, points to "the arbitrary nature of linguistic variation" and "the fact that the most correct term is usually the term most closely associated with one's own sociolinguistic experience and upbringing" (p. 5).

Edstrom (2006) has agreed that students also benefit from opportunities to actually produce their nonstandard dialects in classroom activities (p.337). For instance, in a weekly journal evaluated strictly on content, students could be encouraged to use their own voices. The journals could be used in combination with other writing exercises that are evaluated based on the grammar skills presented in the textbook (as well as use of an academic register). These exercises would be completed with the understanding that the textbook presents one particular local standard of Spanish that students will be asked to master during the course. Students will understand, of course, that the Spanish presented in the textbook is not the only "correct" Spanish.

The key to integrating nonstandard language into the classroom is to be able to say the students' dialects are legitimate, and really mean it. Bernal-Enríquez (2003) has explained the damaging effects of a superficial appreciation of nonstandard dialects, saying that by telling the student, "*Tú dices 'nadien'; en el español estándar se dice 'nadie'*" (p. 106), the instructor is justified in wanting to teach the other way to

say "nobody," but all the student hears is that her way of speaking is not valid. In order to avoid this all too common trap, instructors must rid themselves and their students of the pervasive and false notion of the existence of an inherently superior standard Spanish.

Conclusion

As Fairclough (2003) has explained in reference to preparing students for careers, "el empleado ideal debería manejar perfectamente el inglés y el español estándar, como también las variedades locales del español, inclusive el *Spanglish*" (p. 199). Instructors are aware that their duty is to provide Standard Spanish education in the FL classroom, and generally favor a bidialectal approach in order to provide the standard while valuing the vernacular. In order to create a true valorization of the vernacular, however, instructors must not be afraid to allow it to enter the classroom in the form of materials and activities. Instructors should rid themselves and their students of false notions about language mixing and laziness, and try to actually use *Spanglish* as a pedagogical resource, whether working solely with native and heritage speakers or in a traditional FL classroom with non-native speakers as well. As researchers in sociolinguistics continue to study the place of the vernacular in education, we will most likely begin to see more methodologies published with ideas for incorporating the nonstandard dialects of students. Of course, the eventual goal is to break down the traditional ideas of language and social class and become a more equitable society in general.

Notes

1   Taken from Zentella´s (1997) study of the speech of New York Puerto Rican children.

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