Doing critical language pedagogy in the heritage language classroom: Objectives, tasks, and outcomes

Ellen J. Serafini, Ph.D.
George Mason University

DMV Spanish Heritage Language Symposium
University of Maryland-College Park
April 21, 2018
Overview

• Introductions
• Critical (Language) Pedagogy: What is it?
• Application to Spanish Heritage Language (SHL) contexts
  – Objectives
  – Task & Curricular Design
  – Outcomes
• Hands-on Critical Task Design
• Reflection, Conclusions & Future Directions

My context

Your context(s)
Introductions

• How many of you have ever taught or are currently teaching Spanish heritage speakers?
  – Level? Mixed setting or course designed for Spanish heritage speakers?

• How many have heard the term ‘critical language pedagogy’? What does it mean to you?
  – Share with a neighbor.
Full disclosure

What Critical Language Pedagogy means in practice & how I implement it continues to evolve...

*Student*
- L2 speaker of Spanish >> Bilingual speaker of Spanish
- Teaching methods courses (L2-centric)
- Sociolinguistics graduate courses
  - *E.g., Language Variation & Change; Language Attrition; Language & Identity*

*Teacher*
- L2: Public & private secondary & university contexts (14 years)
- HL: Private secondary & public university contexts (6 years)
  - Currently: SPAN 315 – Spanish for Heritage Speakers
  - Mixed HL & L2: All upper-level courses (50/50)

*Teacher educator*
- Language Teaching Methodology
- Bilingualism and Bilingual Education
- Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)
CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS

“...the understanding of how language is imbued with social meaning and power relations” (Leeman, to appear 2018, p. 1)
Language is not only a tool for communication...

Construct identity

Varies over time, space, and context

Attitudes and ideologies >>

Stigmatization and discrimination
‘Ain’t’

Low socioeconomic status

Southern varieties of English

Informal settings

Socially stigmatized

Identity work
Critical Language Awareness (CLA) (Fairclough, 1992)

Language as a tool for linguistic and social empowerment...

- Linguistic stigmatization of English varieties (e.g., African American Vernacular English-AAVE; foreign accented English)
  - Critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983)
  - Critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 1999)
  - New literacy studies (e.g., Gee, 1996, 1998)
    - See Leeman (to appear 2018)

- CLA as a pedagogical framework in (S)HL education (e.g., Leeman, 2005; Martínez, 2003)
  - Awareness of social, political and ideological aspects of sociolinguistic variation >> Power dynamics
  - Heritage students analyze linguistic and social hierarchies and question status quo
  - Promote learner agency and choice in/outside the classroom and ultimately, social justice (Leeman, 2005, 2014; to appear 2018; Leeman & Serafini, 2016)
(Advocates of)
Critical approaches in SHL contexts

- **Instructed SHL/mixed contexts** (e.g., Correa, 2011; Lacorte & Canabal, 2005; Leeman, 2005; Martínez, 2003)

- **SHL/mixed service learning** (e.g., Leeman, Rabin & Román-Mendoza, 2011; Martínez, 2010; Martínez & Schwartz, 2012; Parra, 2013; Pereira, 2015; Serafini, in preparation; Villa, 2010)

- **SHL six-course curriculum** (Holguín, 2018)
Sociolinguistics in SHL Education: Nothing new!

- Sociolinguistics key to the foundation and future (Carreira & Kagan, 2018; Carreira, Chik, & Kagan, 2017)
  - Shift from *deficit* >> *difference* (e.g., Aparicio, 1997; Valdés, 1995)
    - ‘Non-standard’ varieties of Spanish “…are treated as needing correction or eradication” (Martínez & Schwartz, 2012, p. 37)
- Recognize legitimacy of all varieties >> *Expansionist-based* approaches
- Need for specialized HL tracks and differentiated instructional strategies in mixed classroom settings (Carreira, 2016)
- Need for HL (& L2) teachers to understand basic sociolinguistic principles (Beaudrie, Ducar, & Potowski, 2014) & to be aware of their own perceptions & attitudes (e.g., Lacorte & Canabal, 2005)
Beaudrie, Ducar & Potowski (2014)

HL teachers should understand:

- Differences between "languages" and "dialects” (geographic variation)
- Notion of speech register (contextual variation)
- Natural features of languages in contact (geographic/social variation)
- “Standard" language ideologies
- Language change and attrition; intergenerational language shift to English (temporal variation)
Leeman & Serafini (2016)

i) Principles & Social Meaning of Variation
  >> Relationship between Language & Identity

ii) Sociolinguistic Functions of Translanguaging Practices

iii) Language Attitudes & Ideologies

iv) Multilingualism Inside & Outside US
  >> Sociopolitical considerations

Translingual competence (MLA report, 2007) >>
Critical translingual competence
Key difference

• Similar **starting points** >> Different **end point**

  - Focus on geographic variation and **contextual appropriateness**
  - Expand linguistic repertoires/registers to include prestige or ‘standard’ varieties and formal registers

**versus**

  - Focus on **social** variation
  - Expose, analyze, & challenge linguistic and social hierarchies
  - Promote learner agency in making linguistic and other choices
Exclusively focusing on geographical and contextual variation or conflating it with social variation ignores real consequences at an individual and societal level (Leeman, 2005, 2014, to appear 2018; Leeman & Serafini, 2016)
Discerning Learning Objectives

The Why

Traditional?
Sociolinguistically informed?
Critical?

Analyze use of U.S. Spanish contact varieties in social media
Use Ud. Commands in making a request
Write a formal letter using appropriate contextual register

Identify and challenge language ideologies surrounding U.S. Spanish contact varieties in social media

Understand dialectal differences in Spanish in Latin America
Traditional

*Use Ud. Commands in making a request*

Sociolinguistically informed?

*Understand dialectal differences in Spanish in Latin America*

*Write a formal letter using appropriate contextual register*

*Analyze use of U.S. Spanish contact varieties in social media*

Critical

*Identify and challenge language ideologies surrounding U.S. Spanish contact varieties in social media*

**How?**
Task & Curricular Design

The How: Examples

1) 2 ‘critically-oriented’ sample tasks
   • Pre-, during, and post-task phases (Willis & Willis, 2007)

2) Example of critical service learning curriculum (Serafini, in preparation)
Task 1

Objetivos

- Comprender un artículo periodístico sobre el español y el bi/multilingüismo en los Estados Unidos
- Resumir la tesis principal del/de la autor/autora
- Identificar y analizar la(s) ideología(s) lingüística(s) subyacente(s)
- Opinar sobre el tema y explicar por qué concuerda o no con la postura tomada

Descripción

Navega Google para buscar un artículo periodístico que abarque el tema de la lengua en la sociedad y/o el bi/multilingüismo, específicamente en relación al español en el contexto estadounidense. Selecciona tu artículo de uno de los sitios a continuación (>> las páginas de opinión, o las Op-Eds, ofrecen buen material para analizar):

- El Tiempo Latino (DC)
- Washington Hispanic (DC, MD, VA)
- NYT en español (Nueva York)
- El Nuevo Herald (Miami)
- La Opinión (Los Ángeles)
- La Raza (Chicago)

Luego, redacta un breve comentario sobre el artículo para compartir con tus amigos en Facebook (150 palabras máximo). Primero, deberías resumir el contenido, resaltando la tesis principal del/de la autor/a. Luego, identifica y analiza cualquier ideología lingüística que subyace su postura. Finalmente, opina sobre el tema y explica claramente por qué concuerda o no con la postura expresada por el/la autor/a. Se deberá escribir el comentario en español o Spanglish, lo que te resulte más natural, empleando un registro apropiado para este contexto escrito informal.
Task 1

• Examples: See Handout

• In pairs, decide to what extent these sample posts meet Task 1 learning objectives.
Outcomes

What?

TASK 1
Las ideologías lingüísticas en la prensa: Compartir y comentar un artículo en Facebook (50 ptos)

Contenido ___/ 20

Se logran los objetivos generales de la tarea
La selección del artículo es apropiada
El resumen y la tesis del artículo son claros
El análisis del contenido es objetivo
La opinión expresada es relevante y bien justificada

Comunicación y pragmática ___/ 20

La brevedad y la claridad del comentario
El registro y tono empleado

Lengua ___/ 10

El uso de estructuras gramaticales apropiadas
El uso de vocabulario apropiado y ortografía
El uso de la acentuación escrita, signos de puntuación, etc.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Tema principal: La relación entre la lengua y la identidad; la variación contextual y social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>En clase miramos el video titulado &quot;Fake Latinos&quot; en el Huffington Post Live sobre la cuestión de la relación entre la lengua y la identidad. Primero, compara y contrasta brevemente las opiniones variadas de las panelistas, Angélica Martínez, Gina Espinosa, Melissa Mark Viverito y Sarah Inés Calderón. Ahora, piensa en la identidad y cómo la defines tú. ¿Estás de acuerdo con lo que opinan ellas? ¿Por qué sí o no?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finalmente, explica cómo la identidad se construye a través de la lengua y da uno o dos ejemplos personales. ¿Qué rol desempeña la variación contextual y social de la lengua?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conteo de palabras: Un mínimo de 300
Critical Service Learning SHL Context

- **SPAN 480 – Spanish in the Schools (Fall 2016)**
  - Formal partnership between the Department of Modern and Classical Languages (MCL) and the Alexandria City Public School District (ACPS)
  - 7 HL learners; 6 L2 learners

- **Objectives:** Facilitate critical civic engagement in public education among advanced Spanish students through service learning in a Spanish-English dual language immersion elementary school
  - In response to local need: Provide support for Spanish literacy development

- i) In-class instruction, ii) critical reading and reflection, iii) **critical service learning tasks**
  - Classroom observations (1st-2nd grade)
  - Stakeholder interviews (e.g., vice principal, language acquisition specialist, Spanish literacy coach, & English/Spanish dual language teachers)
  - Work as classroom aides
    - (Critical) biliteracy task (**Clic, clac, MUUU Vacas escritoras**)

  Serafini (in preparation)
I. **Demonstrate** knowledge of the historical and sociopolitical context of bilingual education in the U.S. as well as core sociolinguistic concepts related to language use and language learning in bilingual settings;

II. **Analyze** different models of bilingual education and pedagogy in terms of promoting bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy for both language minority and language majority students, with special attention to the maintenance of home language and culture for the former group;

III. **Cultivate** a critical awareness of the linguistic, cultural, affective, and educational needs of language minority students in a school setting and how these differ from those of language majority students;

IV. **Compare and contrast** the perspectives of different stakeholders in dual language education (e.g., in-service teachers, administrators, and parents) and identify factors underlying any similarities or differences found;

V. **Reflect** on individual and collective role in society in ensuring equal access to education for all children with the ultimate goal of realizing social agency and change within one's local community;

VI. **Refine** the ability to effectively communicate in oral and written Spanish and demonstrate pragmatic and sociolinguistic awareness in educational settings.
(Critical) biliteracy task

**TASK 1: Critical biliteracy task (7.5%).** In small groups, students will apply principles of dual language and critical language pedagogy to design and carry out a task designed to promote biliteracy. Depending on the grade level, number of students, and other relevant factors, tasks might take the form of a mini-spelling bee, a book club, interactive storytime, etc. Importantly, one of the task objectives should be to raise students’ critical language awareness about a topic discussed in class (e.g., language variation, language attitudes and ideologies, etc.).
Critical service learning in the news

- Spanish students participate in service learning at a local dual language school
Resistance to ‘Critical’: Some anecdotes

• “I just want to fix my Spanish.”
• “I need to improve my spelling and know where to put written accents.”
• “I don’t like to be negative. I’m an optimist.”

Possible reasons for resistance?

Internalized language ideologies? Privilege?
Your turn!

• Critical task design in pairs
  i. Pick a topic
     i. *Think about your students’ socioaffective/linguistic/academic needs*
  ii. Define objectives
     i. *Think about promoting critical language awareness and why/how that would serve their needs*
  iii. Design task
     i. *Think about how to meet objectives in terms of what students will do in pre-, during, and post-task phases*
  iv. Specify task outcomes (& assessment)
i. Pick a topic

i) Principles & Social Meaning of Variation

>> Relationship between Language & Identity

ii) Sociolinguistic Functions of Translanguaging Practices

iii) Language Attitudes & Ideologies

iv) Multilingualism Inside & Outside US

>> Sociopolitical considerations

Other?
ii. Define 1-2 critical learning objectives

• Primary focus on meaning and content
iii. Design task (& share)

See Handout: Pre-, during, and post-task phases (Willis & Willis, 2007)

- Share your task with another group
  - Is it critical?
  - Is it appropriately targeted for learner population?
  - Can it be improved? How?
Reflection

• How has your understanding of critical language pedagogy changed (if at all)?
• How can you incorporate critically oriented learning objectives, tasks and outcomes within your own teaching contexts/curricula?
  – Possibilities & constraints
• How might you confront resistance (including your own)?
Conclusions and Future Directions

• As SHL educators, what is (or should be) our ultimate goal?

• **Empower** (S)HL learners to realize the power of their bilingualism/biculturalism & effect positive social change
  
  • Empower teachers with knowledge of **basic sociolinguistic principles** (Beaudrie, Ducar, & Potowski, 2014)
  • **Critical training** (via modules, etc.) (Lacorte & Canabal, 2005)
  • Build HL (& L2) students’ **critical translingual competence** (Leeman & Serafini, 2016): Transformative potential
    – Foster student agency
    – Pursue social justice and ensure full participation in society
¡GRACIAS!

Questions? Comments? eserafi2@gmu.edu

¡GRACIAS!