

# Teacher candidates and heritage language learners: Effects of explicit instruction in a methods course

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# Introduction

- Limited amount of time spent on educating teacher candidates about heritage language learners
  - Textbooks: Typically a few pages with exception of Beaudrie, S., Ducar, C., and Potowski, K. (2014).
  - In class: Typically only a few minutes. Some exceptions in graduate programs.

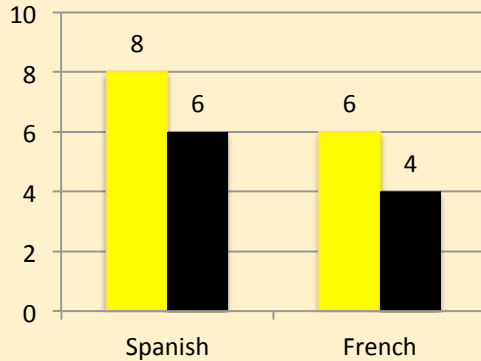
# Background

- Growing number of heritage speakers enrolled in foreign language courses in the U.S.
- Needs of heritage learners differ from those of L2 learners (Váldez, 2001)
- Preparing instructors to teach HLLs (Beaudrie, S., Ducar, C., & Potowski, K., 2014; Kagan, O., & Dillon, K., 2009)
- Reflective practices help teacher candidates learn (Geyer, 2008)
  - Teacher candidates should reflect on “nature of the heritage learner as well as the nature of heritage language learning” (Kagan, O, & Dillon, K., 2009, p. 157).

# Current study

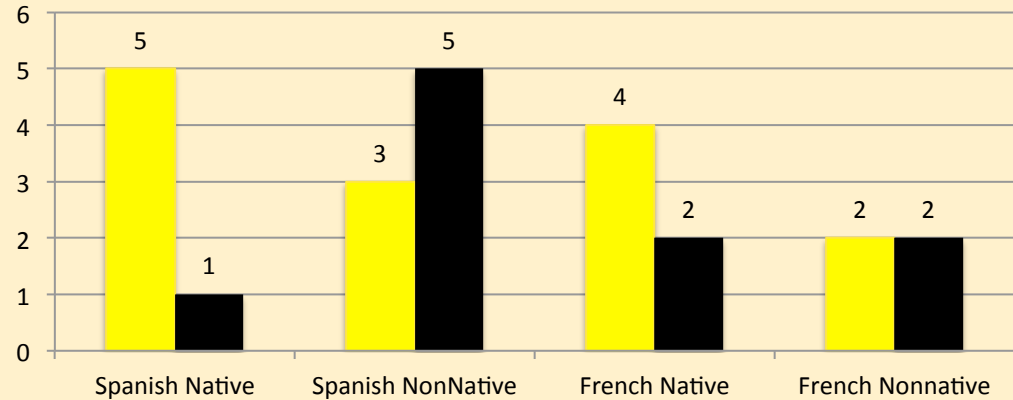
- Research Question: Will explicit instruction improve how teacher candidates view, instruct, and assess HLLs?

# Participants



■ Spring 2014  
■ Spring 2015

- 2014: 14 participants
  - 2 in-service
- 2015: 10 participants
  - All pre-service
- Ages 19-45



■ Spring 2014  
■ Spring 2015

# Instruments

- Pre-instruction: Reading quiz and Questionnaire
- Explicit instruction: In-class for 1 hour and 15 minutes
  - Lecture with active participation using information from the National Heritage Language Resource Center.
  - Topics discussed: Definitions of HLLs, registers, varieties, using oral skills to build literacy, differentiated instruction, authentic texts, grouping strategies, mixed classes, and assessments
- Post-instruction: Assignment and Questionnaire

# Results

- Questionnaires (Pre and Post)
- Assignment - activity and reflection

# Questionnaires: Pre and Post

- **Open ended** - 4 questions about what is a heritage learner (2 questions in post)
- **Likert Scale (1-7)** - 4 questions about interest level and preparedness in teaching heritage learners
- **True/False** - about heritage learners



## How are HLLs and L2s different? Pretest: HLLs....

1. Prior experience with the language exposed to at home, while L2 learners learn in classroom (12)
2. Specific skills: Speak fluently/ communicate with ease. Less fluent in writing and understanding grammar rules. Less fluent in reading (8)
3. Culture: Firsthand insight to culture / Slight advantage in the exposure to language and culture (2)
4. Differentiation in activities (2)
5. Stronger personal connection to language and more motivation to learn it
6. They do differ
7. Don't know
8. May speak other languages
9. Need help refining the language rather than learning it

## How are HLLs and L2s different? Posttest: HLLs....

1. Prior experience with the language exposed to at home, cultural background (16)
2. Bilinguals to a certain extent (7)
3. Specific skills: More advanced in speaking and listening, same level in grammar and writing/ may not be able to read or write, Misspellings and lack of use of all verb forms taught (5)
4. Culture: Understand/knowledge of the culture (4)
5. Language may be more informal / different vocabulary forms than taught in class (2)
6. Comprehend material in class quickly and can get bored more easily
7. They become code shifters

# No prior experience (N = 5)

## Pre

Previous exposure. Could be to a specific dialect.

More of a pre-understanding of a language from growing up around the language and culture

Comes in with a basic or more than basic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and especially pronunciation.

Have had exposure to the language prior to learning it in the classroom that other learners would not have had, which might provide for a more fluid education experience.

The HLL speaks the Spanish language because they heard it at home from their parents. The learners in the foreign language classroom acquired the knowledge by taking classes in formal school settings.

## Post

HL have a family/cultural background in the target culture.

Have a family member who they can speak with in the native language.

Heritage learners may not be fluent but have parents/guardians/family that speaks the language so they have been exposed to it from a young age.

HLLs grew up being exposed to the language they are choosing to learn (whether it be spoken in the household or otherwise), where as second language learners had no prior exposure.

Heritage speakers is a person who has been raised in the United States and they understand and speak understand a second language besides English.

# How you would teach HLLs and L2s differently? (Posttest)

1. Differentiating: All students learn differently / more challenging assignments (10)
2. Culture: Share culture with the class / sensitive to aspects of culture and language that I teach if I had a heritage speaker (which I do) / help them understand that their [cultural] knowledge is valued (8)
3. Specific skills: HLLs may need more of a challenge regarding speaking and listening comprehension, but more scaffolding when it comes to reading and writing. / Focus on the form. Struggle with spelling, writing and reading. (2)
4. HLLs as leaders: Teach vocabulary. Teacher is freed up to provide more scaffolding to struggling students.(2)
5. Work in groups to help L2 learners with conversation and understanding.
6. Enrichment and expansion on literacy skills and linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence.
7. I would make sure to be thoroughly prepared for a lesson so as not to embarrass myself or offend them.
8. Open to their contribution to add to my own knowledge of the language.
9. Cultural assignments.... to.
10. Base my teaching on standards for HLLs.
11. Variety of assessment techniques.
12. Collaborate with other professionals.

## No previous experience:

1. Differentiate: Create more challenging activities for them to complete in class, so they will not get bored or distracted because they already have the knowledge about a lesson that non-native speakers don't have. (5)
2. HLLs as leader: Lead discussions on aspects of their culture we may be unfamiliar with. / teacher will learn from HLL. (2)
3. Specific skills: Expose them to new vocabulary and ensure that their spelling and grammar is correct since most of what was learned prior was probably aural or spoken language.

# Likert Scale 1-7 (strongly agree)

	Pre	Post
1. I <b>feel prepared</b> to teach a Spanish or French high school class with <b>only</b> heritage or native speakers of the target language.	4.23 4.00 <b>4.14</b>	4.92 5.22 <b>5.05</b>
2. I <b>feel prepared</b> to teach a Spanish or French high school class with heritage/native speakers of the target language <b>and</b> non-native speakers of the target language.	5.31 5.22 <b>5.27</b>	5.77 6 <b>5.86</b>
3. I <b>am interested</b> in teaching <b>both</b> heritage/native speakers of the target language and non-native speakers of the target language.	6.62 6.78 <b>6.68</b>	6.15 6.78 <b>6.41</b>
4. I am interested in teaching high school Spanish or French.	6.85 6.33 <b>6.63</b>	6.46 6.56 <b>6.50</b>

# True/False

	Number Incorrect	
	Pre	Post
1. Heritage language learners always have two parents at home who speak the heritage language most of the time.	3/24	4/24
2. Heritage language speakers are born outside of the U.S.	1/24	1/24
3. Heritage language learners have a cultural and/or linguistic connection to a non-U.S. culture and language.	0/24	0/24
4. Heritage language learners are neither native speakers of the target language nor second language learners of that language.	7/24	2/24

# Assignment - Instructions

- *Design an activity that **aligns to the standards for heritage learners**. This will be for a mixed class. Include the assessment of the activity. State what kind of assessment it is. Be sure to include the rubric or other assessment instrument.*
- *NOTE: You may take something from your lesson plan or micro-teaches and adapt them to work in a 'mixed' classroom with both heritage/native speakers and non-native speakers.*
- *1. Pick a theme*
- *2. Fill out chart (**Standards, activity steps, assessment, material**)*
- *3. In 1-3 paragraphs, **describe how your activity is appropriate for a mixed class**. You could discuss differentiation and/or grouping here, among other ideas.*

# Assignment: Themes

## Spring 2014

- HLL as expert/leader/teacher
  - “cultural experts and ambassadors”
  - Expose L2 learners to culture
  - “deepen their critical thinking skills learning how to teach others”
  - “make them feel more important... like they are actually learning something new in the class.”
  - “deepen their knowledge of their culture”
- Heterogeneous groups
- Homogenous groups
- Differentiation
- **Focus on writing instruction**

## Spring 2015

- HLL as expert/leader/teacher\*
  - Share personal info so they “can feel knowledgeable about a topic that is certainly familiar to them”
  - “have the heritage speakers share their background knowledge about the cultures...to show an extra authentic perspective to the other students.”
- Heterogeneous groups\*
- Homogenous groups\*
- Differentiation\*
- **HLL as learner**
- **Expand sociolinguistic knowledge of HLLs**
  - \* No previous experience (N = 3)



# Discussion

- Will explicit instruction improve how teacher candidates view instruct, and assess HLLs?
  - More prepared to teach HLL and L2 learners and more interested. (pre to post)
  - Better understanding of heritage learners. (pre to post)
  - Ability to incorporate HLLs into their activities: mostly related to grouping or sharing of culture
  - Overall positive attitudes toward HLLs and embracing their cultures and knowledge.

# Conclusion and Future Directions

- Explicit instruction seems to help.
- Assessments of student teachers are placing more emphasis on heritage learners.
- Follow teacher candidates into the field.
- Determine other ways to instruct and assess teacher candidates on HLLs.

# Works Cited

- Beaudrie, S., Ducar, C., & Potowski, K. (2014). *Heritage Language Teaching: Research and Practice*. McGraw Hill.
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# Comments or Questions

- Feel free to email Angela George  
[ageorg30@kennesaw.edu](mailto:ageorg30@kennesaw.edu)
- What kind of differentiation did they talk about? (I could break it down to themes and subthemes, since many just mentioned differentiation and did not explain.)