Spanish heritage speakers and university-led service learning: Promoting student agency, identity work, and reflection.

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Abstract

When institutions of higher education apply a practicum-oriented pedagogical approach to credit bearing coursework, they frequently focus on community service learning or other iterations of volunteerism. Service learning courses often times overlook the disparate socio-political inequalities of the two participating groups. The service learning project we developed with our Spanish heritage speakers who taught Adult ESL at a local public library draws on three relevant lines of inquiry: critical language teaching, language socialization, and action research pedagogy. We review the research that informed our curricular decisions and describe some of the activities that evoked reflective dialogue with Spanish heritage speakers as we worked collaboratively on managing the ESL program at the library.

1. Introduction

One of the unfortunate casualties of Dallas' austerity policies in 2009-10 involved the public library system which had offered longstanding Adult ESL (English as a Second Language) classes at nearly all of the city's library branches. Funds that had supported Adult ESL and other family literacy programs were completely eliminated from the budget. By 2011, families who sought English language resources overwhelmed other volunteer programs in the city and ultimately failed to find one that could accommodate their schedules and childcare needs. One of the local branch managers approached our (co-authors') university to collaboratively develop English family literacy courses at a bustling library in a predominantly Spanish-English bilingual neighborhood. Having taught English and Spanish in foreign and second language contexts, we felt qualified to lead the program with the help of university students and library staff.

The program started in early 2012 with the 20+ families from the neighborhood who had been enrolled in the library's ESL program before the budget cuts had taken effect. Between three university professors, six undergraduate students, and one library staff, we managed to offer two levels of ESL and an eventful children's literacy program. During each of the following years, we have expanded and improved the program. Undergraduate volunteers have taken leadership roles in structuring the children's Spanish and English literacy program while working in concert with two other non-profit groups dedicated to teaching early literacy. The Adult ESL courses have been augmented to include three levels and are led by both undergraduate

and graduate students who are enrolled in a service learning course at the university. In recent semesters, we have secured grant money for student stipends which has helped offset the loss of income they may experience by not working on Saturdays in order to teach at the adult ESL program. We have managed to include some university students in the on-going research projects that we have been conducting at the public library. A small group of students presented with us at two regional conferences related to teaching English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education. The research collaborations also help the students with their own projects that are linked to capstone courses, our annual student research day, and other field-experience assignments required in upper-level classes at the university. Over the course of five years, about 85 university students have worked in the program which has served over 300 Spanish-speaking families in South Dallas.

Although there are several topics that are worthy of attention, in this paper we intend to limit our discussion to the university course materials that we developed with our Spanish Heritage Speakers (henceforth SHSs) and their engagement with socio-linguistic, -cultural, and -political concepts as they relate to teaching English to immigrant adults. The term "Spanish heritage speaker" is an umbrella concept that may encompass 4th generation monolingual English speakers whose ancestors originate from a Spanish-speaking country as well as Spanish–English bilinguals who may have started their English language learning in the U.S. as late as high school or as adults. Although the individual backgrounds of our SHS university students are certainly not nearly as homogenized as some public discourses would portray them to be, they all share the following commonalities: (a) their parents immigrated to the U.S. as adults; (b) their parents spoke to them in Spanish their entire lives; (c) they self-identify as balanced bilinguals; and (d) they are all first-generation college students. As with many labels of ethnic identity, the SHSs may identity with most or all of the major umbrella terms (e.g., Latino, Hispanic, Spanish speaker, Spanish heritage speaker, Spanish-English bilingual) while also making more nuanced socio-linguistic distinctions within various emergent speech communities (e.g., TexMex, *Mexicano/a,* Mexican-American, Chicano/a, Spanglish speaker).

For those who are not trained in applied linguistics or sociology, working with constructs such as ethnicity, gender, language, class, and culture, may seem periphery, especially when "teaching English" is the stated goal. Therefore, the bulk of the current article unpacks some of the more successful activities that brought university students to a stronger understanding of the issues that indelibly influence the project of second language teaching and learning. None of these activities had a silver bullet effect on the SHSs' conceptualization of social stratification in immigrant and heritage contexts; however, as many educators will attest, the introduction of thought-provoking materials that challenge conventional thinking may be resisted at first only to be integrated later on, perhaps after the course has been completed.

As a reflective study of our own program development, the following sections are organized chronologically, from focusing on university student retention to introducing concepts and theories from applied linguistics. As participants in the action research model (Phillips & Carr, 2006), we assessed the effectiveness of the activities and materials implemented throughout the semester in order to prepare for the following semester. We measured "effectiveness" in two ways: through focus group interviews with the adult ESL students who participated in a separate ongoing research project we had been conducting and from the essays that had been written by the SHS university students as part of their coursework. In section 5 we explain the rationale for the four activities that have helped our SHS university students understand the identity work and investment (Norton 2011) of the adult ESL students in their classes. As a

way to bring university students to a deeper understanding of these issues, the concepts first need to be applied to their own situation and identity work as they navigate social worlds in two different languages. With their own lives as a point of reference, many of the concepts they had applied to their own identities as language learners were used to think about the identities of their adult ESL students. After all, what they had in common was Spanish as their L1 and English as their L2. We conclude the paper by recognizing that no one formula will suffice for all service learning situations involving SHSs. Our discussion of the four activities intends to inspire spin-offs, modifications, improvements, and dialogue.

2. Service learning in higher education: Student retention and graduation completion rates

When we first began to develop the Adult ESL program with our SHS students in 2011, we were guided by the extensive work already established in the service learning literature which outlines three essential factors for the longevity and overall success of university-led initiatives. The service that is performed should (a) be aligned with the actual needs in the community; (b) be relevant to the university students' lives and academic learning, and (c) improve student agency and preparedness (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Levesque-Bristol, Knapp, & Fisher, 2010; Tinto, 1997, 1998). A significant amount of research centers on different strategies for collaborative and active learning which has been shown to improve not only student engagement and academic self-efficacy, but also student persistence to graduation (Astin, 1984, 1992; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Tinto 1997, 1998). In the following subsections, we describe in more detail how these three general components can be integrated into a service learning curriculum and our attempts to implement them in our Adult ESL program at the library.

2.1. Community need

When university students who participate in a service learning project view the activity as something other than fulfilling an authentic need for the target community, they tend to lose motivation and interest. Once a strong need is identified and the complexity of the issues is understood, the service-learning experience has the potential to teach students different coping strategies that require action and engagement. Self-efficacy, self-confidence, communicative competence, and leadership skills are often times developed when challenging problems are confronted (Astin, Vogelsgang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Bean & Eaton, 2002; Zull, 2002).

In our ESL program, a sense of urgency and community need was ubiquitous. In 2011, when several hundred families were suddenly without any affordable resources for English language learning, registration consisted of 120-150 families in a line stretching around the parking lot two-three hours before the library opened. A short interview and written pre-test were administered for placement as well as for the library's annual report. SHSs commented frequently how they were impressed with the demand and desire on the part of Spanish-speaking families. They also expressed pride in being able to accommodate to these demands and register students by using their communicative skills in both English and Spanish.

2.2. Relevance to students

Successful service learning courses explicitly address how their own engagement and inter-

pretations of the ESL students' needs can be integrated into the planning and executing of the project (Levesque-Bristol, Knapp, & Fisher, 2010). Active engagement tends to help participants understand the importance of the course materials and their application to actual relationships and people. Dialogue and reflection have been used to facilitate students' sense of competence and self-efficacy in other programs that have been cited in the literature (Levesque-Bristol, Knapp, & Fisher, 2010; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Norton, 2011). Our intention was to develop our own materials for the SHS university students in a manner that would encourage genuine dialogue, inquiry, and reflection.

Since many of the university students were education, counseling, social work, and sociology majors, they were highly motivated to engage with the community and enroll in the service learning course that we had developed. The other source of motivation might be explained by the student's' own background: over 85% of the university students who taught Adult ESL came from Spanish-speaking immigrant families themselves. They expressed a strong desire to help those who reminded them of their families. It was not uncommon for our university students to enroll their parents in one of the three ESL classes.

2.3. Improve student preparedness

While motivation and buy-in from the university students is based on identifying a real need and applying their skill set in a productive manner, the tasks need to be achievable and students should feel prepared for the challenge (Brewster & Fager, 2000; Hart & King, 2007). It is a difficult balance to maintain since the application of their knowledge is related to their sense of agency, control, and decision-making powers. Although university students are not always afforded the time for the training they would need to reach the preparedness of practitioners in the field, the effective use of reflection offers participants a method to self-assess and locate areas of growth (Sheckley, Allen, & Keeton, 1993).

The SHSs who work in our program are given the freedom to design and co-teach their own ESL class. In other words, they are not simply expected to lead English Language Learners (ELLs) through a series of exercises in a textbook, even though the *Ventures* ESL series (Bitterlin, Johnson, Price, Ramirez, & Savage, 2013) was used as a guide. We prepared them with three separate workshops reviewing the current techniques and methods for language teaching. Though not a requisite for enrollment in the service learning course, several students had taken a course on second language acquisition before participating at the library. Nonetheless, balancing *student agency* and *a communicative-oriented English language curriculum* is where we fell short as leaders of the program and university course work. Some semesters, SHSs expressed to us that they did not have enough guidance in leading language activities or responding to English grammar questions from the adult learners. It also happened that in other years different undergraduate students lost interest due to a sense that the professors in charge of the program were too involved in their classes and thus did not allow them to take full control of the teaching activities. Notwithstanding, about half of the SHS student-teachers over the years have evaluated the program as "life changing", "best course they have ever taken at the university", and "most important work they have ever done". Although we have not examined the correlation between those university students who have taken the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and other linguistics courses at the university, our general assessment is that success was partially determined by the composition of the adult ESL class (e.g., great camaraderie and friendship were developed among the adult learners) and the linguistic attitudes of the SHSs who led them

(e.g., positive, *si se puede* dispositions tended to create ideal learning environments). Striking a balance between *mentoring* and *SHS agency* usually required us to communicate more openly with students by assessing their needs and levels of support throughout the semester.

2.4. Service Learning and University Student Retention

Service learning courses that are designed around active and collaborative learning have been observed to help students connect different types of academic content (e.g., counseling services, tenants' rights, access to health care, filing taxes, educational resources) to situations outside of the classroom, enhance learning outcomes, and increase persistence to graduation rates (Astin, 1984, 1992; Tinto, 1997, 1998, 2006). In other words, when active learning in the community is taking place, students tend to stay at the university and graduate. Given the collective efforts our university had made to improve student retention and graduation rates, one of the objectives of our service learning course involved student's academic engagement and overall commitment to graduating college. We tried to achieve this goal by creating an inclusive environment and basing the curriculum on the components discussed above.

3. Latino university students and Latino communities: Strategic essentialism and reflections of self-identification

As we have mentioned, the university students who participate in the Dallas Public Library family literacy program are primarily SHSs whose parents are themselves immigrants and monolingual Spanish speakers. In attempting to steer more of our efforts toward a genuine inquiry of the needs and support systems of the Spanish-speaking participants, we erroneously assumed a sense of *strategic essentialism* (Spivak, 1988; Spivak & Harasym, 1990) among our university students under socio-ethnic labels such as "Hispanic", "Latino", and "Spanish-speaking immigrant". Strategic essentialism refers to the identification as a member of a group for the purpose of grassroots political organizing or procurement of resources or recognition (Bucholtz, 2003). Although many students could cite overt similarities between the Adult ESL students and their own parents, other areas of overlap were not typically identified during the semester. We had imagined, quite naively, that our bilingual undergraduate students would intuit how to teach English or how to develop relationships of mutual understanding during the challenging moments of language teaching and learning.

Several SHSs interpreted the service learning goals from assimilationist perspectives perhaps due to the stated goal of the project: to teach English to Spanish-speaking participants. Our bilingual students, as with any social actor, conceptualized the complex dynamics of social interactions and macro categories in various and sometimes unpredictable ways. They certainly did not interpret the ESL subject in a unified or simplistic manner, but rather maintained ambiguous and seemingly contradictory beliefs regarding Adult ESL learners—at times idealizing the personhood of immigrants to the United States (e.g., recognizing their cultural traditions) while other times reifying a racialized discourse from deficient models of education (e.g., the shame of living in the U.S. for x number of years and not having learned English yet).

No matter how "noble" our initial objective was (i.e. to create an authentic dialogue that truly met community needs), we could not deny a level of cultural objectification on our part in which we reduced the student's own complex subjectivity in the name of strategic essentialism. As early as the mid-1990's, Stavans (1995) observed how Latino youth, perhaps due to

the ambivalence created through living with hyphenated identities, are exchanging notions of a collective identity for more protean indexes of class and consumerism. As pedagogues, we still had a responsibility to share with our university students, information and research that would challenge many of the commonly held beliefs about language learning and social identity.

Yet, while introducing conceptually difficult ideas, such as the relationship between language and power, we also wanted to recognize and validate their voice as an asset that had been established through their own experiences in, and observations of, their own neighborhoods and families. Our curriculum therefore intended to present critical notions of social identity as they related to socio-political structures, including stratifications in societies that they might have experienced themselves. Such reflexivity was a vital foundational component since the SHSs would have the opportunity to connect their perspectives to themes that were presented in the service learning course. We developed this pedagogical approach so that students might maintain a strong sense of agency (as opposed to the top-down leftist dogmatism that professors are typically accused of) while they engage in materials that have a relevant application to their efforts not only in the community, but in their own personal lives and identity work.

4. Critical theory, language socialization, and action research

Considering that a significant number of community service projects in American universities involve teaching ESL to immigrant communities, the curricula of these courses should focus on challenging the status of monolingual ideologies in the United States (Rabin 2009). This is especially important when the service learning courses are taken by SHSs who often times view English competency as a requisite to civic participation and social mobility. For that reason, our design of the Adult ESL service learning course for SHSs was brought together by three important movements within the literature: (1) the *critical approach* to community based learning that holistically links language to social identity, right-to-speak agency, and self-efficacy (Leeman, 2005; Lowther Pereira, 2015); (2) studies in the field of TESOL that have examined the identities of ESL students and the complex trajectories of English language learning in the immigrant context (Menard Warwick, 2005; Norton & Toohey, 2004; Norton 2011); and (3) the *action research model* with the aim of empowering our students to become social researchers of their own classrooms (Phillips & Carr, 2006; Stringer, Christensen, & Baldwin, 2010; Wallace, 2000).
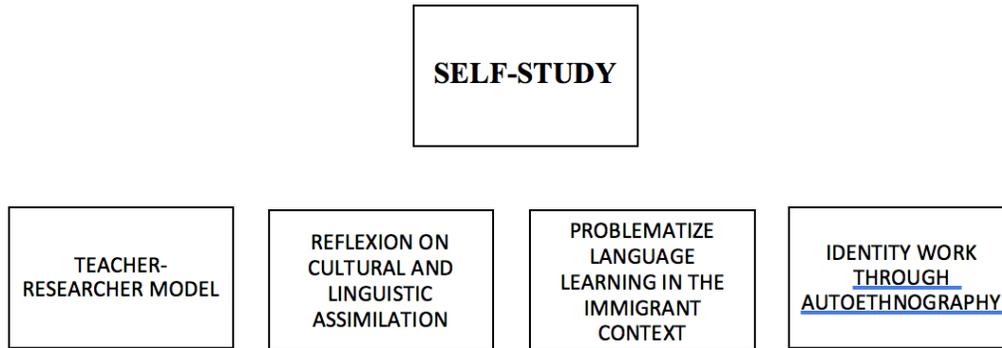
Action research has been defined as "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (Elliott, 1991: 61). Mainly employed in the field of education as a way to professionally develop pre-service teachers, action research involves the systematic interpretation of teaching practices and learning environments. Although there are many ways in which a teacher can enact the tenants of a research practitioner, the process typically involves: observing aspects of the classroom that can be improved; gathering and analyzing data about a particular pedagogical issue; communicating relevant information to colleagues and students; and using the outcomes to work towards improving the learner's performance (Stringer et al., 2010). In our course design, we employed the action research model so that our SHSs would learn about the issues that surround the language learning context for these particular participants without depending too heavily on preconceived notions of ideal(-ized) learning practices. The goal is to draw from what we learn to create not only more effective learning opportunities, but social change through a better understanding of the resources and needs of second language learners.

5. Instructional tools for a service learning course

The course that we designed for our undergraduate SHSs who would teach ESL at the library community service program is conceptualized as a process of self-study where our undergraduate SHSs apply concepts of reflective pedagogy and social identity to their own experiences as language users and political actors.

SELF-STUDY

TEACHER-RESEARCHER MODEL	REFLEXION ON CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ASSIMILATION	PROBLEMATIZE LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE IMMIGRANT CONTEXT	IDENTITY WORK THROUGH AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Using the teacher-researcher model, students understand their potential as ethnographers and researchers of their own communities where they reflect on the process of cultural and linguistic assimilation, learn how to problematize language learning in the immigrant context, and examine the structural aspects that have influenced their relationship with different (K-16) educational institutions. The following activities in this section provide more explanation and detail for the instructional tools that are used to achieve these learning objectives.

Activity #1: **What is the teacher/researcher model?**	
TEACHER	**SOCIAL RESEARCHER**
Step 1 Begin with your image of a good "teacher". Start by defining a "good teacher" in your notebook or journal. **Step 2** Brainstorm as many different qualities, attributes and skills you associate with someone who is a good teacher. **Step 3** Draw a picture of a "good teacher" **Step 4** Then, compare and contrast your text definitions to other people's drawings.	**Step 1** Now consider your image of a "researcher" (more concretely a "social researcher") in your notebook or journal. **Step 2** Brainstorm as many different qualities, attributes and skills you associate with someone who is a good researcher. **Step 3** Draw a picture of a "good researcher" **Step 4** Compare your definition to your drawings
Follow up: What themes appear among the drawings? In your definition of a good teacher, did you include any attributes you might associate with research? Is the concept of "research" one you associate with good teaching?	**Follow up:** How does your definition as "researcher" compare or contrast with your definition of "teacher"? What themes seem to be present? Why do you think these similarities and differences exist?

From: (Phillips & Carr, 2006: 10-12)

Step 5 Draw a Venn Diagram that explains the similarities between a teacher and a researcher (Phillips & Carr, 2006:12).
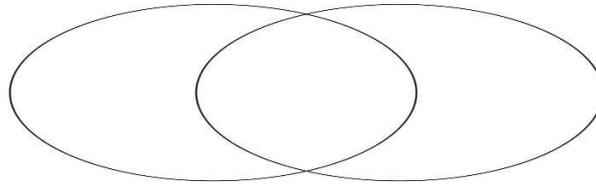
In developing our version of the action research model we were guided by Phillips and Carr (2006) who focus on the shared characteristic of research and teaching practices. The action research approach maintains that effective teachers need to use many of the skills that are employed in the research process. As an inductive approach, the activity begins with students drawing two pictures on two separate pieces of paper: one of a teacher who is teaching in a classroom and the other of a researcher conducting research. The drawings function as an ice-breaker since many people do not see themselves as artists. Their final renditions are typically not what they had envisioned before starting the two drawings and as such they approach these two relatively serious topics with a certain degree of lightness.

Nonetheless, they are encouraged to provide as many details as possible to serve as a springboard for explaining how they understand the process of teaching and research. The Venn diagram aides in organizing the principal differences and similarities. From this ice-breaking activity, we lead a discussion that demonstrates the effectiveness of applying research ideas to accommodate student needs and levels of proficiency. We devote several classroom meetings to discussing methods of data collection, contextualizing data, framing hypotheses, developing a need analysis, and using expert voices when communicating information. Outside the classroom, students complete several online journals that guide them to reflect on research concepts and their application of these concepts in different teaching environments.

Activity #2: Reflection on Cultural and Linguistic Assimilation

Step 1: Journal. Describe how you learned each of the languages you know. Interview your parents or family members and describe their experiences.

Step 2: Journal/ Debate. "Anzaldúa (1987) denounces the cultural domination of English in the United States. But her critics, including those who support English language measures, argue that a common language is essential to unite our democracy. Which position has more resonance in your experiences?" (Barber & Battisnoti, 1993: 261)

Step 3: Which are the common images associated to Spanish spoken in the United States? With English? Are there better dialects of Spanish? How would you characterize Spanglish in the mix of different Spanish dialects?

Step 4 Fractal recursivity (Irvine & Gal, 2000) means that some type of ideological opposition such as the opposition between Spanish and English is reconstituted in another level (a different dialect). Use the concept of "fractal recursivity" to comment on the following examples:

- o "If you do not speak English you should go back to your own country"

- o "Sometimes when I am in the United States some people have told me that I am not Mexican because I don't speak the language"

- o "For me Puerto Rican Spanish is the ugliest dialect in the world"

Step 5 Watch the following scene from the movie "Selena"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNE9yDtkgYk

1. Have you ever thought that you were either not "Latino" enough or not "Anglo" enough? Which is the part of your identity that you would say is "Latino" and the part of your identity that you would say is "Anglo"?

2. Some critics have claimed that the success of Selena is related to the fact that it appealed "to the flexibility of youth, to a Pan-Latino identity that mixes nationalities, cultural traditions, degrees of assimilation and acculturation" (Kleinhans, 1998), In which ways can we say that nobody's identity is completely "pure" or "authentic"?

The second activity is a self-reflection of the students' own language attitudes and ideologies towards different varieties of English and Spanish. Students are asked to describe their own language learning trajectories and interview a family member or friend who arrived to the U.S. with low English proficiency. Collectively, students' work reveals a range of struggles and issues related to learning English and maintaining Spanish in their families. Critical pedagogy has been successfully employed in language classrooms, and in our case, it functions as an essential building block to overcome highly prescriptive notions of language teaching and work through misguided language myths. Leeman, Rabin, and Román-Mendoza (2011) observed how "students of all linguistic backgrounds empathized with each other's struggles to be heard in society, and they showed a great interest in the experiences of local Spanish speakers, particularly regarding topics of globalization, immigration, and language" (296). We observed how many of our own SHSs were not aware of the immigration stories from their fellow classmates or even their own family members. Many DACA students in the Dallas area first discovered they were undocumented (and not U.S. citizens) when they turned 16 and were not allowed to obtain a driver's license from the state of Texas. Parents do not often communicate difficulties they encounter while migrating; their children, who might have been too young to remember or simply not born yet, grow up without hearing about their struggles and hardships. A school assignment that requires students to sit down with a relative or parent and ask them direct questions about their experiences in the U.S. tends to bring to the fore topics and stories that had previously remained unexamined and untold. In a classroom setting, these stories can be shared and later contextualized in a larger landscape of employment, education, culture, social class, racism, political turmoil, and life trajectories.

Do we need a common language to improve democracy in the United States? The objective of this question is to extrapolate the singular (i.e. the personal experiences of immigrants) to manifestations of monolingual ideologies. It is typically assumed that "one language with one culture" is essential for the survival of a nation-state. SHSs tend to agree though they grapple with how particular language attitudes influence their daily lives. While they seem to comprehend the language barriers and societal pressures confronting their families, many recapitulate the importance of English for social cohesion, linking low proficiency to individual laziness, backwardness, and immigrants' unwillingness to partake in what they view as the "inevitable" task of learning English. SHSs also tend to blame low language skills in English on the pervasiveness of Spanish linguistic enclaves in the Dallas area. A common complaint from anti-immigrant discourses is often echoed during these discussions:

> *No comprendo cómo después de tantos años en el país [los inmigrantes]*
> *no pueden hablar la lengua con toda la ayuda que se les da.*

> "I don't understand how after so many years in this country, they
> aren't able to speak the language with all of the help that is given
> to them."

Some research reports have been published on the ideological heterogeneity among immigrants from Latin America regarding the topics of immigration (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010) and Spanish-English bilingual education (Norton, 2000). SHSs have been raised in an era in which political discourses have denied the existence of structural inequities in American society while favoring values of individualism and self-realization (Davis, 1992). We typically extend the discussion of standard language ideology to forms of discrimination against those whose accent differs from the norm (Lippi-Green, 1997). We present our students with the question: *Are there better dialects of Spanish? How would you characterize Spanglish in relation to different Spanish dialects?* The objective of these questions is to connect ideologies that essentialize one language as an inherently superior code to the suppression of language variation of any kind. SHSs begin to link how attitudes about language variation are never solely about the language per se, but rather intricately intertwined with identity and power (Holguín Mendoza & Cabal Jiménez, 2016; Woolard, 1998). Questions about Spanglish deeply touch the language beliefs of many our SHSs who view it as an inauthentic and diminished speech form. Overcoming deeply ingrained values of linguistic separation between Spanish and English can certainly be challenging even for SHSs who frequently employ code-mixing and code-switching. However, the benefits in the context of Adult ESL reach far beyond refining their skills as English language instructors as they often reevaluate and reimagine their own status as a bilingual speaker.

Activity #3 Language learning in the immigrant context
Step 1 How is language learning **in the adult ESL context** related to motivation? Do you feel that our ESL students are motivated to learn the language? If our ESL students are thoroughly motivated, which social conditions impede them to learn the language?

Step 2 Bonny Norton argues that "a student can be highly motivated but he/she may not be invested in the language practices of a given classroom [or social situation] if they are homophobic, racist, sexist etc." (Darvin & Norton, 2015:37). Explain the concept of *investment* and compare it to the concept of *affective filter*. Have you ever been in a class where the attitudes changed the dynamics of the class?

Step 3 Ask your ESL students to keep a diary. In this diary they have to talk about who they speak English to and what happens when they speak it. Ask your students to keep a notebook in which they explain their experiences learning the language. After 3 weeks, allow the students to talk in the classroom about their notes in the notebook (adapted from Norton, 1995). Afterwards, write your own ethnography about what you discovered. In this ethnography respond to questions such as:

1. How would you characterize the experiences of ESL adult students with different interlocutors? How do those experiences make them feel?

2. Which are the sacrifices our students have to make to attend class every Saturday?

3. Have any of your ESL students told you how they feel when their children speak English and they cannot participate in the conversation?

4. In which domains do they feel that their lack of fluency affects them negatively?

5. Many of our adult ESL students have already spent more than 10 years in the country and they have not learned the language. What types of insights have you been able to gather through their journaling that have allowed you to better understand why this occurs?

Step 4 Many of the usual Hollywood characters appear in the film *Stand and Deliver*: the tough *cholo*; the struggling student who must juggle work, school, and family responsibilities; and the quiet girl who does not care about most the official content of the class. As the plot develops, a large texture of motivations and complex stories emerge: The rough *cholo* is shown to be a caring son for his mother and Raquel watches her siblings while her mother works nights. Are you familiar with stories that express similar obstacles when learning a second language? What do these stories tell us about assimilation and English language learning?

Step 5 Comment on the next quote:

> "Just as the level of relations between groups, a language is worth what those individuals are worth, so to, at the level of interactions between individuals, speech always owes a major part of its value to the person who utters it" (Bourdieu, 1977:652 quoted in Norton, 1997:409)

How is this sentence related to what our ESL students experience in the classroom?

In conceptualizing their own language practices from a sociolinguistic perspective, SHSs are strongly drawn to topics relating to second language acquisition (SLA), perhaps since they are open to reconfiguring their own language learning histories. With this being stated, most

SHSs begin the semester with many misconceived notions of how a first or second language is acquired. For that reason, activity #3 frames the ESL learner through SLA conceptions have adopted social-constructive notions of learning (Block, 2007; Ciriza, Shappeck, & Arxer, 2016; Gordon, 2004; Norton, 1997; Norton & Toohey, 2004). Different from cognitive and acculturation models of SLA (Rumbaut, 2005; Schumann, 1986), post-constructivist perspectives that focus on the language socialization examines the ways in which social inequality shapes the ESL learner's identity and overall learning influences, such as, interacting with trustworthy interlocutors (Norton, 1995).

Norton (2000) draws on Bourdieu's concept of the "right to speak" to explain how for many immigrants the nature of participation in interactions is marked by their marginalized position in society which in turn conditions the way they are perceived as both interlocutor and speaker. The nature of adult learner identity remains interrelated to a group's socio-political status and often times leads to feelings of inadequacy, inhibition, and low self-esteem when acquiring the target language. She underscores the importance of motivation and *investment* to enhance learner agency and overcoming the challenges they may experience in their lives.

Using autoethnography as a pedagogical tool, undergraduate SHSs examine the social positionings of the Adult ESL students throughout the semester (activity #3, steps 2 & 3). As part of the university coursework, we discuss articles that reflect on issues of language socialization: how inverting traditional language transmission hierarchies (i.e. children becoming "experts" of the target language, in this case, English) can cause friction within the family (Auerbach, 1989; Ciriza, Shappeck, & Arxer, 2016); how gender roles might constrain women's L2 development (Rockhill, 1993); and how women might create spaces where they contest particular gendered identities (Gordon, 2004). SHSs gain a deeper understanding of their ESL learners' affective dispositions towards language learning which encourages them to reflect on their own constraints and potentials in language choice in bilingual contexts. They begin to appreciate just how instrumental societal attitudes are in creating relationships with English interlocutors who would afford them with ample opportunities of modified input and access to crucial socio-pragmatic knowledge.

Activity #4 Examining the self through autoethnography
Step 1: Autoethnography has been defined as "writing about yourself as a member of a larger social group" (Camangian, 2010). Guidelines for students' writing autoethnographic narratives: (1) examine social injustice; (2) connect experiences with communities that withstand social injustice; and (3) articulate the problem and/or offer a strategy for social change.   **Purpose of Autoethnographies**   Autoethnographic narratives require the teacher-researcher to draw from his/her own experience, placing the self-in-relation-to, for example, a topic of study. Autoethnographic narratives can be used to: •   Increase self-awareness (critical self-reflection)

- Challenge previously held assumptions
- Locate one's self in social, cultural, and structural contexts
- Connect or interweave stories from the past with selfdiscovery in the present
- Enhance compassion and empathy
- Theorize models and strategies for social change

Assignment Objectives:

1. To read and write for relationships by uncovering imbedded assumptions.
2. To analyze and critique assumptions around social group differences (gender, race, class, sexuality…) to better understand one's connection and relatedness to groups (e.g., recognizing your position as a member of a particular group in relation to others).
3. To engage in an intellectual inquiry of the cultural and social context of the experiences.
4. To know the self as a cultural by-product (e.g., How is what you are experiencing an emergent cultural practice?).

For this assignment, you are asked to write a 3-5 page autoethnography, a narrative in which you examine the following:

Think about your education from the perspective of the sociological imagination. You are an educated university student who has worked really hard to be where you are at. Let's think about how many of these efforts were related to your own personality (e.g., hard work) and how others might have been related to your social class, social network, ethnicity and gender. For this project, write your personal story and highlight the moments when higher sociological structures—gender, social class, ethnicity and networks—have clearly steered you in a particular direction.

Another activity during the course involves an autoethnography in which students reflect on their educational trajectory, that is, how larger sociological structures (social class, social networks, ethnicity, gender, age, educational attainment of parents) might have helped/hindered them in the process of becoming university students. Understanding one's own achievements as anything other than a personal accomplishment is challenging due to a tendency in society to whitewash how particular social structures can create concrete opportunities, rewards, and disadvantages. Studies that have looked into teaching sociological structures have observed how "resistance towards concepts of inequality in society come both from advantaged students … and disadvantaged ones who may want to deny the existence of prejudice, discrimination, and other structural barriers to their success" (Davis, 1992: 233). Furthermore, when comparing their experiences to those of their Adult ESL students, they tend to use individual deficiencies as an explanation of poverty and low English competency, placing unwavering stock in versions of an American Dream for those who earn it.

Davis (1992) recommends the use of film and guest speakers as a method to introduce a wider societal perspective on the complexes of macro-social phenomena in interactional exchan-

ges. The movie *Stand and Deliver* is exemplary for such objectives since it presents the lives of characters with whom our SHSs tend to identify. Yet there exists a more vexing socio-political dilemma centered on how poverty and educational inequality can lead to academic failure among Latinos. The activity asks students to conduct their own participant-observation study of language learners and English interlocutors to enhance their "awareness of the subtle ways in which power differences are reflected and reinforced in the course of verbal and nonverbal interaction" (Davis, 1992:234).

SHSs who have both taught several weeks in the Adult ESL program and who have followed the guidelines of this autoethnography assignment have a strong tendency to focus on the resources and experiences of the public library branch where the classes are held. Dallas Public Library branches have the lowest funding per capita and the fewest weekly operating hours when compared to other peer cities in the United States (Micciche, 2014). It is not surprising that the focus of most autoethnographies center on the available library personnel for the children's program, the issues of space in relation to community need, the budget for ESL materials on the library's main stacks, and the lack of ESL textbooks and dictionaries for the class itself. Since all of the participants were conscientious of the larger picture of budgetary procedures for local government entities, a clear connection could be made between the misguided rhetoric of a political class and the direct results of an underfunded library system as well as a second language learner population that has been completely ignored in budgetary debates. The SHSs were capable of understanding the link between a marginalized ethno-linguistic group and structured racism that consistently steers resources away from them.

6. Conclusion

In the vein of self-reflection, we examined our own development as researchers and teachers in the social sciences and understand the monumental challenge of situating socio-linguistic phenomena into larger categories of dialectical meaning making. Only in severely reductionist models is the task of interpreting real time interactions straightforward and unambiguous. Introducing our university students to these contemporary concepts and methods of qualitative research is a laborious obstacle to overcome, especially when undergraduate students had not been trained and mentored in prior coursework. Nonetheless, we find it essential for SHSs to engage with the materials we have discussed in this paper since avoiding pertinent issues of identity, class, language ideologies, and social stratification would only diminish the experience of community-engaged education.

Through the current discussion and continued dialogue in the *Service Learning and Spanish Heritage Speaker* literature, our goal is to forward an approach for building responsible relationships between institutions that work with immigrant communities. If the political activism that promotes social change can be characterized as a journey, then hitting the road on the first day involves both reflection and an intimate understanding of the processes in self-identification and the perception of others (c.f. Tiley-Lubbs, 2009; Parra, 2013; Lowther-Pereira, 2015). Through deliberate or unintentional practices of cultural essentialism, too many assumptions about group characteristics are made about members who identify under the same ethnic label. Therefore, it is a fruitful endeavor to discuss how individual and group identities are constructed in the context of immigration in the United States. Learning more about the kinds of classifications to which SHSs tend to situate themselves, how they believe they should be seen by others and for which purposes, challenges the notion of a homogeneous Americanization of their ethnic

identity. The SHSs who participated in the program and who are studying to one day teach in an area school, the ESL teaching experience prepares them to confront many of the assimilationist practices that have been naturalized and seemingly unquestioned by other practioners in the field, many of whom are SHSs themselves. Most SHSs maintain strong values of cultural expression and Spanish-English bilingual speech practices. Yet, understanding the tasks that reify a hidden curriculum of cultural homogenization is challenging not only for recently certified teachers, but for all educators, not limited to, though including the authors in the current study.

Our emphasis on key sociolinguistic principles (e.g., voice, right-to-speak, and regimes of language and power) centers around the inclusive/exclusive patterns of participation in the political process. The activities created for this service learning course seek to demonstrate how the validation of *voice* exists in relation to the power awarded to a linguistic variety in society. Recognizing the voices of our Adult ESL students starts with modeling it through the relationships we create with our university students. As we explain in this article, mediating the discourses from the body of research in sociolinguistics with our SHSs' affective and ideological dispositions is difficult to achieve particularly as we advocated a pedagogy that validated their own experiences and perspectives. Fortunately, the journey of social activism does not end with the semester.

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