

## **Expanding Language and Cultural Competence in Advanced Heritage- and Foreign-Language Learners through Community Engagement and Work with the Arts**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to describe the methodology and pedagogical practices of an advanced language course, *Spanish and the Community*, that addresses the strengths and needs of both Spanish heritage language learners and foreign language learners in classrooms that contain both populations, i.e., in mixed classrooms. Focused on the Latino experience in the United States, the course's main goals are to advance translingual competence, transcultural critical thinking, and social consciousness in both groups of students. Three effective and interrelated pedagogical approaches are proposed: (a) community service as a vehicle for social engagement with the Latino community; (b) the multiliteracies approach (New London Group, 1996), with emphasis on work with art; and (c) border and critical pedagogy drawn from several authors in the heritage language field (Aparicio, 1997; Correa, 2011; Ducar, 2008; Irwin, 1996; Leeman, 2005; Leeman & Rabin, 2001; Martínez & Schwartz, 2012) and from Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire's work. The effectiveness of this combined approach is demonstrated in students' final art projects, in which they: (a) critically reflect on key issues related to the Latino community; (b) integrate knowledge about the Latino experience with their own personal story; (c) become aware of their relationship to the Latino community; and (d) express their ideas about their creative artifact in elaborated written texts in Spanish (the project's written component).

### **Introduction**

As demographics change and more Latino students enroll in our language classes, new pedagogical trends are developing that emphasize the importance of differentiating the needs and strengths of Spanish heritage language learners (SHLLs) from those of foreign language learners (FLLs). Curricula and pedagogical practices are being designed to take into account the particular characteristics and motivations of each group (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Colombi & Alarcón, 1997; Potowski, 2002; Potowski & Carreira, 2004; Valdés, 2001, among others). However, since most institutions of higher education do not offer separate tracks or courses for SHLLs, mixed classrooms, i.e., those that contain both SHLLs and FLLs, are the most common setting for Spanish language teaching (Lynch, 2008; Ingold, Rivers, Tesser, & Ashby, 2002). Within this scenario, language teachers face the particular challenge of creating an environment where both groups benefit from the instruction and two particular sets of goals are achieved: on the one hand, the development of FLLs' translingual and transcultural competence (Modern Language Association, 2007); on the other hand, the development of sociolinguistic awareness and the expansion of SHLLs' bilingual range (Valdés, 1997).

In recent years, special attention has also been paid to the theory and practice of enabling FLLs and heritage learners to attain advanced levels of proficiency in their target language (see, for

example, the volume dedicated to this subject by Byrnes and Maxim (2004)). In their efforts to enhance this learning experience, language teachers often struggle to find pedagogical practices that combine differentiated teaching for SHLLs (Potowski & Carreira, 2004) with “a sense of belonging to a community” for FLLs (Blyth, 1995, p. 150). Two questions arise, then, for language teachers: First, what kind of content would engage both groups in a meaningful language learning experience? Second, what pedagogical practices should they use so that each group benefits appropriately from the classroom experience?

The purpose of this article is to describe the methodology and pedagogical practices of an advanced language course titled *Spanish and the Community* (hereafter Sp59) taught at Harvard University.<sup>1</sup> The course includes both SHLLs and FLLs, and the contribution I am aiming to make here involves a proposed pedagogical model that draws on similarities, more than differences, between SHLL and FLL students, with the purpose of enhancing their strengths as language learners and goals as young college students. At the same time, the course aims to promote respect and awareness of the important differences each group possesses as U.S. citizens.

Three effective and interrelated pedagogical approaches frame this course: (a) community service as a vehicle for social engagement with the Latino community; (b) the multiliteracies approach (New London Group, 1996<sup>2</sup>), with emphasis on work with art; and (c) a border and critical pedagogy framework drawn from several authors in the heritage language field (Aparicio, 1997; Correa, 2011; Ducar, 2008; Irwin, 1996; Leeman, 2005; Leeman & Rabin, 2001; Martínez & Schwartz, 2012) and from Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire’s work. The effectiveness of this combined approach is demonstrated in a final art project, where students create an installation in which they: (a) critically reflect on key issues related to the Latino community; (b) integrate knowledge about the Latino experience with their own personal story; (c) become aware of their relationship to the Latino community; and (d) express their ideas about their creative artifact in elaborated written texts in Spanish (the project’s written component).

This article has three sections. In the first, I give a course overview and describe its content. In the second, I present the pedagogical frameworks that sustain the curriculum design and class dynamics. Finally, I illustrate in some detail the final art project, using student vignettes to exemplify the conceptual and creative processes engaged in.

### ***Spanish and the Community: An overview***

Sp59 has been part of the Spanish curriculum at the university for over twelve years. It began as a result of a university-wide effort to integrate theory and practice into undergraduate education by expanding learning experiences beyond the walls of the classroom (Derek Bok Center, 2007; Parra, Liander, & Muñoz, 2011, November).

Sp59’s curriculum has also responded to the larger university mission (Paesani & Willis Allen, 2012, p. S55) to provide students with the necessary tools and experiences to become *informed global citizens* (Modern Language Association, 2007, p. 2; Wurr & Hellebrandt, 2007). The course has met this objective by presenting a learning environment inside and outside the

classroom for students to (a) advance their translingual and transcultural competencies (Modern Language Association) in Spanish while (b) engaging them in a process of critical thinking that heightens their social consciousness about the cultural and especially linguistic contributions of the Latino community to mainstream American culture. The course limits its enrollment to 15 students and meets twice a week for an hour and a half. During class time students engage in discussions around class materials, which include a variety of texts, videos, film and music. The materials we use in class come not only from a variety of media but from Latino writers from differing linguistic backgrounds (Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban-Americans, Salvadorans), as well as sociolinguists who have studied the wide range of varieties of Spanish in contact within the U.S. context and the social contexts that potentially make Spanish language maintenance possible. Class discussions are complemented with written assignments (compositions and journals) where students elaborate on class topics and link their classwork with their community experience. Students also volunteer for four hours a week in organizations serving the Latino community.

Sp59 was originally designed for FLLs. This group of students has long been interested in becoming more knowledgeable about the Latino community and in experiencing meaningful opportunities to use their Spanish skills outside the classroom. In most recent years, some Latino students have also started to enroll in this course, in part because Sp59 is “the College’s only Spanish-language course that focuses primarily on the study of Latinos in the United States” (Gatusso & Mirabal, 2012, September 27, *¿Que significa ser Latino?* para. 12) Latino students are interested mainly in advancing their literacy skills, since their oral proficiency is generally advanced. They are also interested in the community service component of the class. In general, within a group of 10 students, one or two are Latinos, and the rest of the students come from non-Latino ethnic backgrounds.

In order to enroll in the class, students need to demonstrate an intermediate to high level of Spanish proficiency (they must have an equivalent of four years of Spanish). We follow two important steps in accepting students. First, each student has to fill out an application form in Spanish where we gather information about: (a) their previous experience with Spanish (which courses they have taken and where); (b) whether they have had a chance to use their Spanish outside the classroom and, if so, when and where; (c) their experience with community work; and (d) their expectations about the course and why they are interested in the Latino community. What students write in this application is a first step in the process of selecting who will be admitted into the course. Only students with an intermediate to advanced written proficiency are invited to the second step, which is an interview with the instructor(s). The interview complements the written application since it gives us the opportunity to assess each student’s oral Spanish proficiency.

This enrollment process has two main advantages. First, it maximizes the possibility of a more homogenous group in terms of oral and written language proficiency, although there is always a range of variation in which, for instance, SHLLs usually have the advantage of native-like pronunciation and sometimes a higher level of oral proficiency. Second, the written application and interview are also sources of information regarding the students’ particular interests and

abilities. This is important because we try to match, as far as possible, students' interests with the kind of community organization they will be working with. I will elaborate on this later on.

What brings all students together in this course is both their interest in the Latino community and their interest in community service. Even when SHLLs are part of the Latino community they benefit, like their FLLs peers, not only from advancing their oral and written language proficiency but from developing awareness of Spanish variants, understanding what kinds of linguistic phenomena Spanish undergoes once it is in contact with English, the social, political and cultural meaning of Spanglish, and learning in more depth about the Latino community in terms of its heterogeneity and richness.

### **Course Content**

Sp59 content is structured around the complexities of Latino history and of Latino-Americans in the United States. Special attention is given to the diverse processes of Latino-American immigration and their impact on Latino identity, language, and culture. Themes studied in the course include border crossing, demographics, cultural identity, Spanish in the U.S. and bilingualism, Latino children and education, Latinas, Afro-Latinos, and the future of the Latino community. These themes are organized throughout the semester in a progression that follows the most common pattern in the process of immigration: leaving home for border crossing, making contact with U.S. agencies and individuals, finding new opportunities, language negotiation, and forming a new cultural identity in what is likely to be a home for future generations. Although some materials that cover these topics are in English, all discussions and written assignments are in Spanish.

### ***Spanish and the Community: Pedagogical Frameworks***

Two main frameworks have been proposed as providing common ground upon which teachers can develop curricula for both HLLs and FLLs: (a) the National Standards in Foreign Language Education (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996); and (b) a literacy-based approach (Kern, 2004).

The adoption of the National Standards (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996) has moved the fields of foreign and heritage language teaching toward a broader conception of communication—beyond traditional teaching of grammar and the four language skills—to incorporate not only *interpersonal* but also *interpretive* and *presentational* modes. Moreover, by organizing language courses around meaningful *content*, students are given an opportunity to learn about a different *culture*, to *compare* it with their familiar one, and to *connect* with a native *community*. This approach is known as the 5 Cs approach.

In addition to this emphasis on communication and content, some scholars (for example Byrnes & Sprang, 2004; Colombi, 2003; Hornberger, 2003, and Kern, 2004) have proposed a literacy-based framework in combination with a genre-based approach to break through what some feel is the *glass ceiling* of the communicative approach. According to Byrnes and Maxim (2004), such a glass ceiling

makes it difficult both for learners and teachers to develop the kinds of second [and heritage] language capacities that we generally associate with language use in a range of public settings, in the conduct of civic and political and economic life, in research and public policies, or in the creation of cultural products that are heavily language-dependent . . . all areas of language use that we associate with advance capacities. (p. ix)

Within this innovative framework, literacy is conceived neither as a matter of coding and decoding language structures (grammar) nor of vocabulary but in terms of language use as a social practice (Kern, 2004). A literacy-genre approach situates texts within a specific sociocultural context that supports the “relational factors that influence the particular meanings that speakers, readers, and writers produce” (Kern, 2004, p. 3). The traditional *boundary* between oral and written modalities of language is reconceptualized so that texts incorporate aspects of the oral and written dimensions of discourse (Colombi, 2003; Byrnes & Sprang, 2004).

For language teachers working with advanced FLLs and HLLs, the combination of the 5 Cs and literacy frameworks offers a rich source of curriculum design within which to continue scaffolding the cultural and language competencies of students. Combining the two frameworks conceives of language use and meaning—oral and written text—within a sociocultural community of speakers.

However, in recent years, there has been important work that calls for the integration of other frameworks for both FLLs and SHLLs (or HLLs in general) that a) incorporate critical pedagogy to foster critical thinking around topics students are learning about, including language uses (Correa, 2011; Ducar, 2008; Irwin, 1996; Leeman, 2005; Leeman & Rabin, 2001; Martínez & Schwartz, 2012) and b) provide opportunities that take the language learning experience beyond the classroom walls to connect students with actual communities of speakers, as in community service learning experiences (Hellebrandt & Verona, 1999; Lear & Abbot 2008; Thompson, 2013; Wurr & Hellebrandt, 2007, among many others). Sp59 integrates both these frameworks, as I will describe in the following pages.

### **Critical Pedagogy and Critical Language Awareness in Sp59**

The selection of topics covered in Sp59 meets the call for a more meaningful, responsible curriculum (Webb & Miller, 2000; Arens, 2012) and is also ideal for bringing in a critical pedagogy framework.

One of the main goals of critical pedagogy (CP) is to provide students with learning opportunities to develop their social consciousness and voice in order to take constructive action towards positive change (Freire, 2005). This critical framework has become particularly important for the teaching of Spanish to heritage students as a way to empower them and give them the questions, space, and “voice” to problematize and become aware of their surroundings, in particular the power structures they live under and are educated in (Aparicio, 1997; Correa, 2011; Ducar, 2008; Irwin, 1996; Leeman, 2005; Leeman & Rabin, 2001; Martínez & Schwartz, 2012). For some authors CP is particularly important in helping heritage students reflect on the

complex sociopolitical aspects of the Spanish language in the U.S., its varieties and dialects (Martínez, 2003; Leeman, 2005) *vis à vis* a common discourse that privileges a standard Spanish, the latter being more a construct than a reality (Rodríguez Pino & Villa, 1994; Villa, 1996).

CP also validates students' linguistic practices entailed by the characteristics of the Spanish they learned at home (Valdés, 2001) and the language contact phenomenon (e.g., code-switching, transfers, calques, and interferences) that typically occurs when Spanish is in contact with English (Correa, 2011; Potowski & Carreira, 2004; Leslie, 2012). It also allows students to become aware of the range of registers that they can benefit from acquiring in the Spanish language (Carreira, 2000; Valdés & Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998). Finally, situating students' linguistic practices in their social contexts can contribute to what Aparicio (1997, p. 225) sees as the first step in the process of "decolonization." In the context of Sp59, we can interpret this term as a process whereby students become aware of the cultural and linguistic power of English over Spanish and gain a sense of validation for their linguistic practices in Spanish, as well as develop a sense of independence and pride in using the Spanish language without a sense of shame for not speaking it "correctly." Readings such as the essay "How to tame a wild tongue" by the Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa (1990) and the introduction to *Growing up bilingual* by Ana Celia Zentella (1997) are some of the readings that, even if in English, follow the call of authors such as Leeman (2005) and Leeman and Rabin (2007) to emphasize the connection between the Spanish language and the central issues of politics, ideology, culture, race, ethnicity, gender and class. Therefore, in Sp59 we always incorporate what Ana Celia Zentella calls an "anthropolitical linguistics perspective" (p.4) that never loses sight of the complex, sometimes harsh realities in which Latino immigrant groups (or any immigrant group, for that matter) raise their children.

This incorporation of CP benefits FLLs in similar ways by helping them become aware of the difficult social circumstances under which some immigrants live. CP also helps FLLs become aware of the range of Spanish language variants in the United States and their sociocultural applications (Aparicio 1997, p. 226), as well as the political implications of different language practices within the Latino community. As Katz (2003) states: "American students need to be made aware of these kinds of issues in order to understand the implications that speaking or not speaking a particular language can have for many people" (p. 153).

In summary, with the CP approach we are aiming to foster a dialogue where students learn to "address texts as social and historical constructions" and to "enable [students] to read critically not only how cultural texts are regulated by various . . . discursive codes but also how such texts express and represent different ideological interests" (Giroux 1991, p. 248).

### **Community Service Component in Sp59**

There is probably no better place to learn about all the linguistic matters mentioned above than the community itself. The Sp59 community service component is one of the main attractions for both FLLs and SHLLs given that they are highly motivated to engage with the Latino community and learn from it. Most students already have some previous experience working in

community service (although not necessarily with the Latino community per se) and some students have also traveled to Latin America. For others, this course will be their first direct contact with a broader Latino community beyond family or friends.

Community service learning (CSL) experiences are a powerful model and effective pedagogical resource that provide students with experiences and tools that broaden their education goals. Following Varona (1999), CSL “actively engages students in the learning process and bridges the gap between theory and practice while connecting students with the community (and vice versa) to accomplish worthwhile and meaningful goals” (p. 69).

CSL experiences have long been advocated for FLLs in order to make the language class experience more meaningful (Hellebrandt & Verona, 1999; Lear & Abbot, 2008; Thompson, 2013; Wurr & Hellebrandt, 2007). CSL experiences have also been suggested as one of the most effective ways to enhance SHLLs' meaningful language experiences and promote critical thinking (Leeman, 2005; Martínez & Schwartz, 2012; Samaniego & Pino, 2000; Trujillo, 2009). Moreover, as Leeman, Rabin, and Román-Mendoza (2011) suggest, CSL experiences “foster students' development of identities as ‘legitimate’ (as opposed to deficient) speakers of Spanish” (p.1). More importantly, and quoting Martínez and Schwartz (2012): “Community engagement provides students with a level of motivation and investment in language learning that would be difficult to achieve in a classroom setting alone” (p. 46).

Language courses that include a community-service component achieve two main goals. First, they find a way to bring together language and community that results in a “boon for the [communities] standard” (Lear & Abbot, 2008, p. 77),<sup>3</sup> which is otherwise almost impossible to achieve within the classroom limits. Second, student involvement with the community demands a step beyond “learning by doing” by emphasizing *the process* of learning through critical reflection (Freire, 2005). Such experience not only complements the classroom's theoretical work but brings students to a different level of understanding about the community and facilitates the advancement of transcultural knowledge. For HLLs, a community-based curriculum provides a very effective pathway to “harness the wealth of knowledge and experiences these students bring to the classroom” (Carreira & Kagan, 2011, p. 62), in particular the different degrees of “functional proficiency” (Valdés, 2005) and cultural knowledge that HLLs already have.

Another major advantage of incorporating a CSL component in language classes, as suggested by Thomsen (2006) and Parra, Liander, and Muñoz (2011, November), is the fact that students bring their experiences back to the classroom and connect their meaning to the class readings and discussions. Given that the themes discussed in Sp59 are aligned with those pertaining to the community, every class is an opportunity for students to make connections between theory and practice and integrate what they learn in a more meaningful way.

The thread that ties together classwork and community experience is the Spanish language. The back and forth between classroom and community allows the teacher to organize the teaching of Spanish around two basic tasks: (a) advancement of students' language skills; and (b) critical

discussions about the Spanish variants and uses students are exposed to in their volunteer work. These multilingual settings give students optimal opportunity to broaden their perspective of Spanish as well as the phenomenon of code-switching and its role in Latino identity, culture, education, and politics. The next two quotes from students' journals show the kinds of linguistic and cultural reflections students can achieve through their experiences with the community. One FL student writes about her experience in a bilingual junior high classroom and the different meanings she is learning about words she already knows:

La mejor palabra que he aprendido en su salón/aula es “guagua”; sabía que significaba “infante,” pero ahora sé que también puede significar “autobús.” ¡Todavía estoy esperando escuchar otras cosas lingüísticas interesantes!

*The best word I have learned in her classroom is “guagua”; I know it means “infant”, but now I know it can also mean “bus.” I am still waiting to hear other interesting linguistic things!*

In the following example, a Mexican-American student talks about what she has learned about music and reggaetón lyrics talking to a young Salvadorian immigrant:

Me introdujo a un artista de reggaetón de la Republica Dominicana y a un rapero de El Salvador. En particular, me interesó la música del rapero de El Salvador. La letra de una de sus canciones hablaba de la situación económica de su comunidad, de la violencia que los rodea, y en general de muchos de los problemas socioeconómicos que se encuentran en Latino América.

*He introduced me to a reggaetón artist from the Dominican Republic and to a rapper from El Salvador. In particular, I was interested in the music by the Salvadorian rapper. The lyrics from one of his songs talked about the economic situation of his community, about the violence that surrounds them and, in general, about the many socioeconomic problems that Latin America has.*

Given the continuous back and forth between classroom and community, theory and practice, Parra, Liander, and Muñoz (2011, November) have proposed the alternative term “Inter-Active” language course that aims to facilitate a continual reflection on and integration of the differences and similarities between students and members of the Latino community.<sup>4</sup> This inter-active work contributes to students' knowledge at different levels—linguistic, cultural, social, political and cognitive—in important ways, as I will illustrate in the section on the final project. Two students speak to this in their course evaluations:

The integration of our work outside the classroom with themes in the course was very helpful as well as interesting.

This was definitely the best way not only to improve my Spanish but to learn more about the Latino and Latino immigrant experience, and to connect abstract concepts and social theories with real-world examples.

### **A Word about Community Work and Logistics**

Although work with the community is one of the main appeals of this course, it is also the most challenging one for the instructor in terms of logistics and extra work. The majority of organizations that have collaborated with Sp59 have changed over the course of 12 years since the course was first implemented in 2002 (Parra, Liander, & Muñoz, 2011, November), but some have a long history of partnership with the class, although their staff might not be the same. Non-profit organizations are, in general, the first target of government budget cuts in times of economic crisis. Therefore, staff and programs tend to change often, sometimes from one semester to the next. The result is that every semester the person in charge of the course has to look for new organizations to partner with and to ensure enough spots for student volunteers through the semester. As the current person responsible for Sp59, I look for organizations in areas that serve- the Latino community and that are as accessible as possible to students by public transportation. In the last three years, I have personally contacted the leaders of various organizations and program coordinators by e-mail to set up appointments. I visit the organizations, meet the program coordinators and have conversations about the goals of the course and the work students could do, and also ensure that the organization actually is a good setting for our students. The only requirement we ask for is that the work students do is in Spanish. Every semester we work with an average of seven organizations, and we send one or two students to each one of these, depending upon how many students we have per semester and on the organization's needs.

There are three main areas in which students currently work within these organizations: education, legal matters, and advocacy.<sup>5</sup> Supervisors have always reported benefits from our students' contributions and are grateful for the students' excellent and committed work with the community. Some students stay on at their organization after the semester ends and some have even been hired to continue their work for a few more months.

I consider two main factors to be fundamental in order for this kind of course to succeed: a) Limited enrollment. With a small class, instructors can ensure a place for every student in an organization and also have quality communication with students' supervisors. b) Trained instructors who are sensitive to students' individual differences, interests, and goals, not only on a linguistic and cultural level but also on a personal level (Carreira, 2004; Parra Velasco, in press). As we will see later on in more detail, the combination of classwork, guided by a critical pedagogy framework and community service, brings to the surface many personal reflections and stories from students. Therefore, as other authors have suggested, students need to feel that

the classroom is a “safe space” (Correa, 2011; Ducar, 2008) where knowledge is shared and constructed by the interaction and dialogue between students and teacher (Rodríguez Pino & Villa, 1994).

### **The Multiliteracy Approach and Work with Art in Sp59**

I draw from one last framework to structure the Sp59 curriculum: the multiliteracy approach proposed by the New London Group (1996). I believe this approach has many advantages when elaborating and presenting on complex realities such as the Latino community.

For example, in examining the experience of Latinos in the United States, a major topic in Sp59 concerns the exploration of Latino identity: Who are the Latinos? How did they become a vital part of U.S. culture and society? In his book *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*, Juan Flores (2000) addresses these complex questions through the concept of the *Latino imaginary*. The author states:

“imaginary” does not signify the “not real”...; it is the community represented “for itself,” a unity fashioned creatively on the basis of shared memory and desire, congruent histories of misery and struggle, and intertwining utopias.” (p. 198)

Given this shared history, we asked: How can we present to students this *Latino imaginary* and the heterogeneous yet shared experiences of migration and settlement, marginalization and creativity of Latinos in the United States? In view of this rich complexity, we have found that the multiliteracy approach (New London Group, 1996) allows us to analyze the different media through which the Latino community has represented its history and cultural and linguistic identities. We follow the position of the New London Group that

multiliteracies create a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes. (p. 5)

For example, when studying the themes of immigration and border crossing, we work with the following materials:

- a film titled *Alambrista and the US–Mexico Border* by Robert Young, (1977/2003);
- an academic article by David Carrasco (2004) about the film, titled “Dark Walking, Making Food and Giving Birth to *Alambristas*: Religious Dimensions in the Film”;
- music from the film (“Corrido del Alambrista”);
- print art by Ester Hernandez, titled “Sun Mad Raisins” (1982).

The presentation of this variety of materials is the first step in introducing students to the complex topic of immigration and identity. However, real progress toward meeting the goals of the course—advancing translinguistic and transcultural competencies and critical thinking among students—is accomplished by applying four pedagogical principles proposed by the New

London Group (1996) to guide productive tasks. These principles are: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice:

(a) *Situated practice*. Because our goals as language teachers are to further the development of translingual and transcultural competence within a particular community of speakers, it is important to organize teaching contexts and learning opportunities around concrete goals that directly relate to such a community so students can draw on the experience of meaning-making in life worlds, the public realm, and the workplace. This is language use in the *here and now*, for concrete and meaningful purposes. For example, when exploring the impact demographic changes in the Latino community are having at the national level, we ask students to present the particular Latino demographics of their natal states. Interesting trends between different states are discussed and compared.

(b) *Overt instruction*. Students benefit greatly from the “metalanguage” provided in the classroom (i.e., explicit instruction and comments provided by the teacher about the aims of the course, what is being taught, and the methodology used). The goal is to promote awareness of and control over what students are learning (New London Group, 1996), “so that the teacher and students can identify, talk about, and learn the various elements that contribute to particular meanings in communication” (Kern, 2004, p. 4). Students develop part of this metalanguage through their work with a variety of class materials (reading, film, songs, art), and also through the back and forth between the class space and volunteer work. We can see an integration of the metalanguage in some of the students’ writing assignments, when using verbs like *discutir* (to discuss), *representar* (to represent), *ilustrar* (to illustrate), *significar* (to mean), and phrases like *me doy cuenta* (I realize), all of which become part of the class discourse as we get deeper into our analysis of the Latino experience. Many of these words are cognates and we assume that they are most likely part of an academic vocabulary students already have in English but are now transferring to a new learning experience and making new connections in Spanish. With these connections also comes new awareness and possibilities of analysis of other’s and one’s own experiences.

(c) *Critical framing*. The multiliteracy approach fits very well with our class goals because, like many of the authors already mentioned in previous sections (Aparicio, 1997; Correa, 2011; Ducar, 2008; Irwin, 1996; Leeman, 2005; Leeman & Rabin, 2001; Martínez & Schwartz, 2012), it also considers the importance of bringing in critical framing as part of the class dynamics. This encourages reflection and analysis through language in order to ensure “theoretical and personal distance” from what has been learned (New London Group, 1996, p. 87). This distance allows students to “constructively critique [their new knowledge], account for its cultural location, creatively extend and apply it, and eventually innovate on their own, within old communities and in new ones” (New London Group, 1996, p. 87). Critical framing organizes students’ knowledge from the perspective of the *there and then* (Kern, 2004). A good example of this process of “taking distance” is the following excerpt from a student’s final paper. The student reflects on her identity as Mexican-American from California and as a Latina, and how she has gained awareness of the meaning of both depending on who is she talking to and where (I have put in bold the expressions that the student has use to express her process of “taking distance”):

**Me he dado cuenta** que por el cambio geográfico que hice en atender Harvard, mi comunidad imaginaria ha tenido que cambiar de mexicana a latina. En casa nunca fue necesario tratar de definir latinidad o la unificación de la comunidad latina porque no era la principal preocupación. Primeramente, y quizá únicamente, era mexicana. Ahora **he notado que** dependiendo en quien esta preguntando y donde estoy, me identifico como mexicana o como latina. **Escojo la palabra** que me va a dar la bienvenida a la comunidad en cual me encuentro.

*I have realized that because of the geographical change I underwent when I came to Harvard, my imaginary community has had to change from Mexican to Latina. At home, it was never necessary to try to define "latinidad" or the unification of the Latino community because it was not the main worry. First, and probably exclusively, I was Mexican. Now I have noticed that depending on who is asking and where I am, I identify as a Mexican or as a Latina. I choose the word that will give me the welcome to the community I am in.*

(d) Transformed practice. Students need to apply what they have learned through the process of critical reflection. Teachers need to provide opportunities in which students focus on the process of meaning-making at a different level from where they started. Meaningful actions, with a new sense of awareness about the language and culture they are (re)learning, are the tools by which students become designers of social futures.

In sum, the combination of rich class materials with the multiliteracy pedagogical principles results in the possibility of a dialogue through which interactions among text, students, and teacher revitalize the entire class experience.

### **Working with Art**

The inclusion and use of certain aesthetic forms in Sp59 is based on my conviction that art has the potential to significantly enhance student learning in and appreciation of the target language. Art constitutes a powerful and complex meaningful text with the potential to increase student literacy levels (i.e., knowing how to interpret and produce a variety of texts, including description, narration, and interpretation, around art; Seidel, Thisman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009). I have found this to be especially so when art is used in object-based teaching and in learning that demands student engagement in meaning-making and hands-on creativity. In the context of the foreign and heritage language course, *working with art* brings to bear perspectives that expand the limits of monolingual understanding (Parra & Di Fabio, 2012).

As some authors have argued, art and images can play an effective role in language classes as a "point of entry into a web of other texts and images whose analysis starts to sensitize students to

and socialize them into the broader cultural narratives” (Barnes-Karol & Broner, 2010, p. 428) of the foreign and heritage language. Art and images provide an avenue for the teaching of culture (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996) while at the same time increasing transcultural understanding as the “ability to comprehend and analyze the cultural narratives that appear in every kind of expressive form” (Modern Language Association, 2007, p. 4), art being one of them.

Art has then a prominent place in Sp59. Paintings and print and digital images by Latino and Latino-American artists illustrate central themes of the course and enrich the learning experience of students. Different art forms (poetry, photography, painting, sculpture, and music) have each become windows to the *Latino imaginary* and drive the development of language competence. Students relate this art work to class materials and to their own experiences through what Barnes-Karol and Broner (2010) propose as “intentional practice with academic language” (p. 428). For example, after watching the film *Alambrista and the US-Mexico Border* by Robert Young (1977/2003), mentioned above, students come up with a list of themes presented in the movie. The central theme of the film is the work of immigrants picking crops in the fields and the terrible conditions they work under, an example being their exposure to pesticides without much protection. This theme relates to the art work of Esther Hernandez, “Sun Mad Raisins” (1982), that mimics the design of the well-known Sun-Maid raisins box. However, instead of a maid, Hernandez paints a skeleton. The artist also adds the text: “SUN MAD Raisins unnaturally grown with Insecticides.” This image provides students with the opportunity: a) to reflect on the connection between food we find in the supermarket and workers’ labor conditions, b) to discuss with a critical perspective the role of traditional images that tend to hide or trivialize central issues in the production of the food we eat, c) to become familiar with the resources that Latino artists use to represent in symbolic ways the brutal reality of many field workers, and d) to become aware of the different ways in which we—audience/consumers—might be implicated with such a reality.

### **Visit to the Art Museum**

An important activity that complements the work with art in Sp59 is a visit to the university art museum. A guided visit is designed specifically for this class. Museum educators walk students through three art pieces: the first is a chair by Doris Salcedo (Colombian, 1958); the second is a composition of 16 polaroid prints by the Latino artist Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons (Cuban-born, 1959); and the third is a sculpture (a string of lights) by Felix Gonzalez-Torres (Latino-American, 1957–1996). Each artist emphasizes the complexity of the immigrant experience and identity.

As an example of the pedagogical approach, consider what happened when we carefully observed Doris Salcedo’s chair. Nine students were part of this exercise. The museum educator engaged students in a dialogue about the chair: She asked in Spanish, “What do you see? What is the chair made of? What is the story of the chair? What do you think the chair is thinking or feeling?” The museum educator also talked about the artist’s Colombian background and the story of violence she portrayed with the chair. For the last part of the exercise students were given a blank card on which to write a sentence that “the chair would say.” When we returned to

the classroom, I asked students to put the cards on the floor and organize them in a poem. Students engaged in a dialogue, playful and creative, trying to give all the sentences a coherent yet poetical order. They came up with the following:

*Poem to Doris Salcedo Chair*

La silla siente la desesperación	<i>The chair feels the desperation</i>
Estoy cansada, muy cansada.	<i>I am tired, very tired</i>
Ya no sirvo a la familia Que solía vivir aquí. Estoy rota, dañada Por la violencia que Destruyó mi familia	<i>I am not useful anymore to the family That used to live here I am broken, damaged Because of the violence that Destroyed my family</i>
Lo sentaron por tanto Tiempo que se Hundió en mí	<i>They sat him for such a long time that he sank in me</i>
Siento el dolor y La transformación de mi país	<i>I feel the pain and The transformation of my country</i>
Me duele Todo el cuerpo Y me siento triste	<i>It hurts All of my body And I feel sad</i>
Quería parar los gritos y La pelea—las promesas sin esperanza, pero no hice nada.	<i>I wanted to stop the screaming The fight—the promises Without hope, but I didn't do anything</i>
Hay mucho dolor en todas partes de mi cuerpo y por eso falta color en mi vida.	<i>There is a lot of pain in All of my body and That is why color is missing in my life.</i>

The poem conveys students' deep connection to the art piece through the history of violence and sadness that the chair, whoever sat on it, and the whole country endured during the years of Colombia's civil war between the government and the guerrillas. Moreover, the students connected very well among themselves while doing this exercise, and were able to organize all the separate phrases into a coherent and powerful text.

After the visit to the museum, it was clear that students were developing new possibilities of self-expression and self-exploration that were worth nurturing further.

**Sp59 Final Art Project**

Strongly influenced by the work that resulted from the museum visit, I decided to expand on the possibilities of student work with art. Instead of following the traditional method of assessing students' progress by means of a final written essay, I involved students in a more creative and productive project that nevertheless required intensive language work.

How might students express in Spanish what they had learned about the *Latino imaginary*, Latino history—inside and outside the classroom—in concrete yet creative ways? I was interested also in discovering what transformations they had undergone in learning through their classroom work and their work with the Latino community.

I found the answers in the fourth multiliteracy principle of transformed practice, in which students as meaning makers become designers of social futures. I was guided by Freire's (2005) pedagogical framework that argues "authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication" (p. 77). Furthermore, dialogue and communication must assume active participants (not givers and receivers) who will engage in a process (*praxis*) derived from the use of the "word's two dimensions: reflection and action" (Freire, p. 87).

Given this framework and the analysis we had undertaken in class of the various materials described above, I decided to ask students to design<sup>6</sup> their own art installation to represent what they had learned about themselves through their exploration of the Latino community in the United States. This exercise aimed to provide students with an opportunity to find a "voice," as Giroux (1991) puts it, "not merely as an opportunity to speak, but to engage critically with the ideology and substance of speech, writing, and other forms of cultural production" (p. 249). It was my hope that this final exercise would help students locate themselves in relation to Latino realities in a national or local setting, thereby encouraging them to dialogue with Latino society and beyond, in part through the vehicle of Spanish.

Students constructed their projects around themes that mirrored those studied during the semester, though these were open-ended:

- my *imaginary* (which images represent you?)
- migration (family diaspora)
- the border (physical/psychological/emotional)
- identity
- languages in contact

I did not consider the production of an art object alone to be sufficient to assess students' progress. I found advancement in oral and written discourse to be necessary for assessing translinguistic and transcultural competencies. For these reasons, the final project consisted of

three parts: (a) production of the actual art object; (b) completion of a written essay; and (c) oral presentation of the project to the class. The interconnections among these three parts—art, written text, and oral discourse—is beautifully described by Italo Calvino (1988): “We may distinguish between two types of imaginative process: the one that starts with the word and arrives at the visual image, and the one that starts with the visual image and arrives at this verbal expression” (p. 83).

The written essay itself had two parts. The first was an actual description of the project that included what students created, what materials and colors (if any) they used, and an account of the process they underwent while conceptualizing and constructing their projects from beginning to end. The second part of the essay consisted of an explanation of what the art object represented, as well as a discussion of the theoretical concepts (from class) and aesthetics students had integrated into their project.

In the following section, I use vignettes from student work to illustrate some of the projects designed in the spring semester of 2012; these vignettes underscore the effectiveness of the combined approach used in Sp59.

In Sp59 students were provided with available designs through the various images, art works, and literary pieces we worked on throughout the semester as well as from the museum visit. The vignettes indicate, first, student thinking processes while designing the projects and, second, the *redesigned* or final products, and reflections upon these.

### **Student projects: The design process**

For their final art project, students designed a wide variety of art objects: from poems, spoken word poetry, blackout poetry, paintings, collages, musical compositions, lesson plans for children, videos, installations (including an *identity box*), and PowerPoint and Prezi presentations. Themes focused on were the process of immigration, identity, stereotypes, the Spanish language and its relation to identity, education, and English.

As the following vignettes show, the process of designing their project was exciting although not always easy. They struggled at first with choosing ideas for their projects and with how to materialize these. Some students were even uncertain of the results. They needed time to think:

El proceso creativo fue muy difícil. Primero, no tenía ninguna experiencia con la poesía de palabra hablada [...] Segundo, fue sorprendentemente difícil para finalizar un tema para mi poema, porque tenía que ser personal, pero algo que el público pudiera entender y relacionarse al mismo tiempo [...]. Después de semanas de dificultades de escribir algo significativo, en el último día, las palabras fluyeron con naturalidad y casi sin esfuerzo.

*The creative process was very difficult. First, I didn't have any experience with spoken word poetry. . . . Second, it was*

*surprisingly difficult to come up with a theme for my poem because it had to be personal, but also something the public could understand and relate to. . . . After weeks of difficulties trying to write something meaningful, just the last day, the words flowed naturally and without effort.*

Two students interested in the relationship between Latina and American female identities made a collage out of cuttings from a women's magazine. The cuttings were arranged to form the profiles of two women facing each other. One was made of Latina images, the other of female Anglo images. A butterfly was flying in between the two profiles. Although the art project was made by both students, each wrote a separate essay. One of them wrote:

Fundimos los lápices de cera con un secador. No podíamos predecir exactamente dónde iban a caer los colores. De una manera similar, cuando empezamos el proyecto, no sabíamos exactamente lo que íbamos a aprender de la experiencia de crear el producto final y de las reflexiones de nuestra experiencia en la clase.

*We melted the crayons with a hair dryer. We couldn't predict exactly where the colors would fall. In a similar way, when we started the project, we didn't know what we were going to learn from the experience of creating the final product and from the reflections in class about our experiences.*

Two other students also created a joint project, a remarkable musical composition. The composition combined a classical violin piece by Bach and the rhythms of a trombone playing salsa, which was their way of redesigning bilingualism, code-switching, and Spanglish. The project brought particular challenges to the students:

[Mi compañero] y yo no teníamos mucha experiencia directa con estos temas. [...] teníamos que abordar el tema desde una perspectiva más familiar –[...] la música [...]. Una base familiar, un nuevo ambiente: al principio, esta situación nos presentó con muchos problemas. ¿Cómo podríamos escribir un dueto para un instrumento de cuerda y otro de cobre? ¿Si mezcláramos la música del violoncello y la del trombón, sonaría totalmente incoherente?

*[My classmate] and I didn't have much direct experience with these themes. . . we had to approach the theme from a more familiar perspective –. . . music. . . . A familiar basis, a new environment: at the beginning, this situation presented us with a lot of problems. How could we write a duet for a string instrument and for a copper one? If we mixed the music from violoncello and from a trombone, would that sound totally incoherent?*

### Connections between Class Materials and Students Insights

An important part of the written essays was the connections students made between the concepts introduced in class, the community experience, and their own thinking about themselves. One student wrote three versions of his poem – in Spanish, English, and in Spanglish. He projected the Spanish and English versions onto two contiguous walls and placed himself in between to read the Spanglish version (“la representación más auténtica de lo que pasa en la realidad”) (*the most authentic representation of what happens in reality*). This student, reflecting on Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of “border,” wrote about his connections and cultural and social insights:

En este curso, hemos enfocado en la cultura latina y el concepto de Anzaldúa sobre la nueva frontera [...] un espacio psicológico. [...] Sin embargo, mis experiencias trabajando con pobres me han mostrado que hay una frontera más grande que la frontera entre dos culturas [...] la nueva frontera enorme entre los ricos y los pobres.

*In this course, we focused on Latino culture and on Anzaldúa’s concept about the new border...a psychological space...However, my experiences working with the poor have showed me that there is an even bigger border than that between cultures...the new enormous border between rich and poor.*

Another student working on the concept of identity made an installation consisting of two pieces of cardboard placed in a corner of the classroom with multiple pieces of a broken mirror glued onto them. The mirror pieces on the cardboard were clustered to form different shapes, yet there were spaces in between the multiple mirror pieces. The student called these spaces *fronteras*, borders. In her essay, she discussed the logic of this arrangement, which not only involved her as the creator but also required the spectator to complete the interpretation of the piece:

“Arreglé los pedazos en una forma total para crear un sentido de movimiento. La forma exacta está para la interpretación de cada espectador.”[...] Quería capturar dos sentimientos subyacentes de la clase: el flujo de la indentidad y el conflicto entre diferentes partes. [Me] relaciono mucho con las frustraciones de autores Latinos o Chicanos que existen entre dos culturas y lenguas. Como Esmeralda Santiago escribe en “Cuando era Puertorriqueña”, mis dos identidades—estadounidense y china—son integrales para mí, pero no forman una identidad sin costura.

*I arranged the pieces to create a sense of movement. The exact form is to be decided by the spectator’s interpretation...I wanted to capture the underlying feelings of the class: the identity’s flow and the conflict between the different parts. [I] relate a lot to the*

*frustrations of Latino or Chicano authors that exist between two cultures and tongues. As Esmeralda Santiago writes in “Cuando era Puertorriqueña,” my two identities—American and Chinese—are integral to me, but they do not form an identity without seam.*

For a third-generation Spanish heritage learner (who identified as Anglo), the documentary *Speaking Tongues*, which portrayed stories of children attending a bilingual program in the San Francisco area, captured opposing perspectives on bilingualism and thereby triggered her personal reflections:

Empecé a reflejarme [reflexionar]<sup>7</sup> en mis razones para ser una estudiante de español. Si la mayoría de las personas educadas pueden hablar inglés ahora, porque [por qué] debo aprender otra lengua? Estos pensamientos me molestaban mucho y por eso, decidí enfocar mi proyecto en [...] la educación bilingüe [desde el] punto de vista de una estudiante anglohablante quien está aprendiendo español.

*I started to reflect on my reasons for being a student of Spanish. If most educated people can speak English today, why should I learn another language? These thoughts really bothered me and that is why I decided to focus my project on . . . bilingual education [from the] point of view of an English-speaking student who is learning Spanish.*

### **The Redesigned: Students’ Final Thoughts**

Students included in their essays powerful final thoughts about their own personal and social growth as a result of learning Spanish in this pedagogical style. Sometimes they conveyed a personal realization, sometimes a deeper understanding of their surroundings and their place in the community. The students composing the piece of music that enacted the complex relationship between Spanish and English wrote:

Al final, tenemos una mezcla de música que podemos aplicar de manera más amplia. No es una mezcla perfecta, pero tampoco es el bilingüismo ni la relación con la comunidad latina y el resto del país. Como a veces pensamos que nuestra tarea era imposible, a veces parece que la situación entre las comunidades—muchas diferencias y poca comunicación—nunca va a mejorar. Pero cuando esto sucede, cuando la teoría y el conflicto entre las diversas opiniones nos parecen ser demasiado, solamente tenemos que usar nuestros ojos: el spanglish, el bilingüismo, la comunidad latina en general, nos rodean.

*In the end, we have a mix of music that we can apply in a broader way. It is not a perfect mix but neither is bilingualism nor the relation between the Latino community and the rest of the country. In the same way as we sometimes thought our task was impossible, it sometimes seems that the situation between communities—too much differences and little communication—is never going to improve. But when this happens, when theory and conflict between different opinions seem to be too much, we only need to use our eyes: Spanglish, bilingualism, the Latino community in general, surround us.*

One of the students interested in Latina and American female identity concluded that her understanding of the complexities that identity entails began but didn't end with the class. The variety of textures created through different collage materials represented an unfinished understanding of what identity means:

Durante la clase, empezamos nuestro viaje de entender la complejidad de la identidad pero no hemos terminado. [...] La textura de los materiales emerge un poquito del cuadro como nuestro entendimiento de la complejidad de la identidad.

*During class, we started our journey towards understanding the complexity of identity but we haven't ended yet...the texture of the materials emerges a little bit from the painting like our understanding of the complexity of identity.*

One student worked in a two-way bilingual school. For her project she designed a lesson plan that involved the children in an exercise about language and identity. She noted in her essay that education is an effort that requires both teacher and children working together: "Necesita ambos lados para funcionar." (*We need both sides to function*). Despite her hard work guiding kindergarten-age children to talk about language and identity, she was left so highly motivated by their enthusiastic responses that she assembled a collage in the form of a tree; the leaves were made of colored paper cuttings in the shape of the children's hands and drawings. She concluded that:

Este proyecto es un símbolo de la esperanza que tengo para la comunidad Latina y también la influencia que el español como idioma tiene con las mentes inquisitivas de los estudiantes. El concepto de un sistema de dual inmersión todavía me fascinaba mucho, pero cuando tuve esta oportunidad a explorarla, me volví muy animada y ahora agradezco lo que aprendí.

*This project is a symbol of the hope I have for the Latino community and also for the influence that Spanish as a language has in the inquisitive minds of students. The concept of a dual*

*immersion system already fascinated me but when I had this opportunity to explore it, I became really enthusiastic, and I am thankful for what I learned.*

The student who wrote about the concept of border as not only a psychological space but as a socioeconomic divide then reflected upon his own French-Canadian identity, which he had embedded in his poem:

En este curso, he pensado sobre si es importante tener una identidad cultural porque no me importan mucho mis raíces. Mis padres y mis abuelos no son de un país extranjero como menciona en el poema y no valoro mis raíces francés canadiense. No obstante, al final de este poema llego a la conclusion que actualmente [de echo] tengo una identidad cultural muy fuerte. Esta identidad, como la identidad de los latinos en los EEUU está mezclada.

*In this course, I have thought about the importance of having a cultural identity because I really don't care much about my roots. My parents and grandparents are not from a foreign country, as I mention in the poem, and I don't value my French Canadian roots. Nonetheless, at the end of this poem I reach the conclusion that, actually, I do have a very strong cultural identity. This identity, like the Latino's identity in the USA, is mixed.*

Finally, the third-generation heritage student reflected on the process of creating her art project in the form of a painting entitled “La Comunicación es el Canal del Intercambio” (“Communication is the Channel for Exchange”). After interviewing her second-generation Mexican-American father who didn't speak Spanish but encouraged her to do so, the student wrote:

Me divertí mucho en este proyecto porque tuve que reflejarme [reflexionar] en una manera sincera de las aplicaciones de lo que aprendimos este semestre. Me afectaron mucho. Personalmente, este curso me ha alentado que continuar con mis estudios de español [...] ¡Es crucial aprender español ahora para que comunique con mis vecinos!

*I had a lot of fun in this project because I had to reflect sincerely on the application of what we learned this semester. This impacted me a lot. Personally, this course has encouraged me to continue my studies in Spanish. . . . It is crucial to learn Spanish now so I can communicate with my neighbors!*

## Conclusions

In their book *In Other Words*, Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) state:

The exciting challenge for teachers and learners of a second language, from a cultural perspective, is to construct a context for creative and meaningful discourse by taking full advantage of the rich personal, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the participants. (p. 203)

As I have argued in this essay, this challenge is especially exciting when working with SHLLs and FLLs together.

In this article I have described a methodology that creates the kind of learning environment in which both groups find not only a nurturing of their linguistic, cultural, and personal backgrounds but acquire voices to express what they have learned about the Latino community—and, even more, to express what they have learned about themselves in relation to that community and beyond.

Moreover, a critical pedagogy framework and a broad understanding of literacy that incorporates the multiliteracies perspective as a window to access the *community imaginary*, in conjunction with a community service component, provides valuable and meaningful learning opportunities for FLL and SHLL students. The combination of these powerful approaches leads students to integrate their classroom and community experiences in more personally significant ways.

When given an opportunity to express such knowledge through art, students not only exhibited comprehension but also creativity. Through a variety of media they found different ways to express themselves, thereby gaining “access to the evolving language of work, power, and community, and fostering the critical engagement necessary for them to design their social futures” (New London Group, 1996, p. 60).

“Language of work, power, and community” clearly played a central part in student projects. Although presenting a detailed linguistic analysis of each student vignette is outside the limits of this work, it is clear that students developed the necessary linguistic resources to express complex, sophisticated reflections.

There are, however, two persistent questions. The first refers to ways in which FLLs and SHLLs benefit from each other’s presence and interactions in a class like Sp59, besides strengthening their grammar (e.g., expressing elaborated thoughts through complex grammatical structures like compound verb tenses in the past and the subjunctive) and expanding their vocabulary (i.e., understanding and using words and phrases from different Spanish variants and registers) (Bowles, 2011; Katz, 2003). This calls for future research that could include the assessment of

other dimensions of FLL and SHLL interactions—attitudes towards one another, expectations—that might contribute or influence their translingual and transcultural competence.

The second question refers to how far students advanced by the completion of the course. As the vignettes of the students' final projects showed, the class work resulted in more productive and effective language functions, such as description, narration, analysis, and interpretation. We also find a powerful example of this growth in one student's spoken word poem. Despite being “un estudiante en una clase avanzada” (“*a student in an advanced class*”) he still noted “nervous tension when I talk in Spanish.” During his volunteer work, when he was asked by many Latino clients whether he was Chinese or Japanese (he was Korean-American), he would take note of their surprise when he answered them in Spanish. In his final project he highlights his awareness of new confidence and competence:

Al principio, esto me molestaba,  
Que los latinos tenían un estereotipo de mí como asiático,  
Pero después, me di cuenta, que esto era fantastico,  
¡Porque podía hablar sin tartar de ser perfecto!

Sin la presión de impresionar, por fin superé mis preocupaciones,  
aprendí a dejar la aprensión y hablar con imperfección.

Of course, I'm still not fluent.  
Pero a través de esta clase avanzada, espero haber avanzado en dos cosas: mi conocimiento de la lengua española y el bienestar de la comunidad Latina.  
Muchas gracias.

*At the beginning, this bothered me,  
That Latinos had a stereotype about me as an Asian  
But later, I realized that this was fantastic,  
Because I could talk without trying to be perfect!  
Without the pressure of having to impress, finally I overcame my worries, I learned to leave aside the apprehension, and speak with imperfection.*

*Of course, I'm still not fluent  
But through the advanced class, I hope to have advanced in two things: my knowledge about the Spanish language and the wellbeing of the Latino community.*

*Thank you.*

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**Notes**

1. Spanish and the Community was first taught at Harvard in Spring 2002 under others' supervision (see Parra, Liander, & Muñoz, 2011, November, for a history of this course within the institution). However, the data I present in this article refers only to the last three years during which time I have been course head. The main procedures for enrolling students and the community component have remained the same over the previous 10 years. In the last two years, however, I have restructured the curriculum and introduced the work with art, including visits to a museum and the design of a final art project.
2. The New London Group was a team of ten literacy scholars from Australia, Great Britain, and the United States. They held their first meeting in New London, Connecticut.
3. The "communities" standard for foreign language learning (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996) aims for students to "participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world" (The Five Cs of Foreign Language Education, para.6). The communities standards are: Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting. Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment (Communities, para. 1 & 2).
4. Even when SHLLs are the Latino community, depending on their background (Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Cuban-American, etc.) they represent a part of it. The opportunities with the community and class readings enlarge SHLLs perspectives about other Latino group experiences in the U.S.
5. Students work mostly as tutors to young recent immigrants or to children in kindergarten or middle school. Some students also assist teachers with GED or math classes in Spanish for adults. Other students assist immigrant workers finding information about unemployment and immigration rights. Yet others work as translators between American lawyers and immigrant clients. Sometimes students are in charge of answering the phone and providing information about the organization's work. Students have done some work developing websites and brochures for the organizations and others have also participated in political rallies and helped register Latino voters.
6. I emphasize the word design because it is grounded in the multiliteracy approach central to Sp59. The New London Group (1996) proposes that design or the process of designing involves three elements: exposure to available designs; the process of designing; and the redesigned. "Together these three elements emphasize the fact that meaning-making is an active and dynamic process, and not something governed by static rules" (p. 74).
7. We will use the convention of square brackets to provide the standard form of a word or phrase next to the one that students have used. For example, here the word that the student used, "reflejarme," is not the standard one in this context. "Reflexionar" (to reflect) is the correct choice.