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**The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures' Initiative on Teaching**

**Spanish as a Heritage Language:**

**Bringing Together a New Teaching and Learning Community**

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Topic: Heritage Spanish Teaching at Harvard

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### Abstract

This report presents a summary of the activities between 2011 and 2014 that comprise the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures' (RL&L) Initiative on Teaching of Spanish as a Heritage Language. This initiative includes two symposia, one new course, two collaborative research projects, a permanent seminar, and a lecture series. This report intends to provide a model for developing similar initiatives that help practitioners and researchers form new communities of practice to advance the field of teaching Spanish as a heritage language.

Key words: Heritage Spanish, heritage language pedagogy, collaborative research, initiative, seminar.

**The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures' Initiative on Teaching  
Spanish as a Heritage Language:  
Bringing Together a New Teaching and Learning Community**

The United States is undergoing unprecedented demographic changes in which the Latino population has increased to more than 50 million, according to the 2010 Census. Latinos are also the youngest and fastest growing ethnic group, with record-high enrollments in high school and college in 2012 (Fry and Taylor, 2013).<sup>1</sup>

As the young Latino population becomes more prominent in our higher educational institutions (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, and Provanski, 2007), a greater number of students referred to as “Spanish heritage learners” (hereafter SHLs) are enrolling in Spanish language classes (Beaudrie, 2011). This growing presence has motivated ample research in the last two decades on the specific strengths, needs, and interests of these students, in order to serve them better and to help them reach their linguistic and cultural goals (for a review of the main areas of research and growth in the field, see Beaudrie and Fairclough, 2012). According to a survey by Beaudrie (2011), the number of courses for SHLs offered at the university level has increased by 40 percent (169 programs throughout the country) in the last ten years.

The availability and magnitude of these programs tend to correlate with the size of the Hispanic population that a particular university serves. Therefore, the majority of the programs are in the Southwest region of the country (Beaudrie, 2011). Nonetheless, as Latino youth are also enrolling in many universities on the East Coast, language

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programs at universities in this part of the country face the challenge of offering suitable options to these students. To support SHLs in meaningful, effective, and sustained ways, language program directors, course supervisors, and teachers in these institutions need intellectual and financial support to access and incorporate the latest theoretical and pedagogical recommendations into their departments and daily classroom practices.

The purpose of this report is to present the efforts and advances made in Harvard's Department of Romance Language and Literatures (RLL) between 2011 and 2014 as part of the national theoretical and pedagogical trend of teaching Spanish as a heritage language. This work has crystalized in the RLL's Initiative on Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language under my supervision and coordination, with the goal of placing Harvard as a national and international center contributing to this crucial intellectual and cultural innovation in Spanish teaching in the U.S.

The RLL Initiative aims to create a community of teachers and researchers in the Boston area who collaborate to a) develop educational resources and materials to strengthen and broaden Latino students' linguistic, cultural, and professional knowledge of Spanish; b) develop a research agenda to contribute to the theoretical and pedagogical efforts in the field; c) contribute academic articles and handbooks regarding best practices in the classroom.

Between 2011 and 2014, this initiative has hosted two symposia, designed and implemented the first Spanish course for Latino students at Harvard University, and conducted two international and interdisciplinary collaborative research projects, one on the reading skills of SHLs and the second on the narrative skills of SHLs. Finally, a permanent seminar and lecture series in collaboration with the Observatorio de la lengua

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española y culturas hispánicas is also an ongoing part of this initiative. I describe each component in the following sections.<sup>2</sup>

### **Symposia**

In 2011 and 2012, with the support of Provostial funding, I organized two symposia that brought leading scholars in the field of heritage language pedagogy to Harvard. The purpose of both symposia was to educate and update participants on the main theoretical issues and latest research on pedagogical innovations for teaching Spanish as a heritage language. In the following paragraphs, I describe both symposia and the ways in which each contributed to the development of the initiative.

**2011 Symposium: “Sharing Knowledge, Finding Pathways: Developing Pedagogical Resources for Spanish Heritage Speakers.”** The purpose of this two-day symposium was to initiate a productive dialogue among language faculty at Harvard and from local colleges and high schools, with the goal of evaluating and enhancing current and future educational resources for Spanish heritage speakers. Leading scholars and researchers in the field presented their work on key issues, such as the benefits of bilingualism, the vulnerable areas in the linguistic system of heritage speakers, the influence of language ideologies on curriculum design, assessment, and placement, and the importance of the connection between practitioners and researchers. Although the symposium presentations focused primarily on new directions in research and the teaching of Spanish as a heritage language, the presentations were relevant to all other heritage languages as well.

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The first presentation of the symposium,<sup>3</sup> by Maria Polinsky (Department of Linguistics, Harvard University), “When L1 Becomes an L3: Adventures in Re-learning,” presented and analyzed patterns of acquisition in heritage speakers who choose to re-learn their home language when they are young adults. Polinsky offered examples of observational studies in the classroom and experiments on re-learning to suggest that even a rudimentary knowledge of a heritage language creates advantages in phonology and lexical learning that foreign language learners do not have. Therefore, she highlighted the importance of supporting heritage language maintenance from very early ages, in order to prevent significant decline in language abilities from childhood to adulthood. Polinsky emphasized communication between researchers and teachers as a key factor in finding effective strategies to support such linguistic development.

Nonetheless, even though heritage speakers tend to have phonological and lexical advantages when re-learning their language in the classroom, SHLs often share with foreign language learners (hereafter FLLs) a linguistic profile at the morpho-syntactic level that is too similar to differentiate the two groups. Silvina Montrul (Department of Spanish, Italian & Portuguese, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) addressed this question with her talk, “Linguistic Knowledge in Second-Language Learners and Heritage Speakers: Where are the Differences?” Montrul showed that recent studies present mixed results on the advantages for SHLs of early acquisition of morpho-syntax, when compared to late FLLs of Spanish who have comparable proficiency. Some studies find no advantages (Au et al., 2002), whereas others do find some, depending on the linguistic structures and tasks students perform as part of the experiments (Montrul, 2010, Montrul, Foote, and Perpiñán, 2008). In her presentation, Montrul revisited this question

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and presented her latest experimental studies on knowledge of gender agreement in speech perception and production. Her results confirmed that early language experience and the type and modality of input received do confer some advantages on SHLs compared to FLLs, especially in oral production (Montrul, Foote, and Perpiñán, 2008, Montrul, in press) and in tasks that minimize metalinguistic awareness.

Polinsky's and Montrul's presentations stated clearly the importance of supporting early heritage language development. Nevertheless, to provide comprehensive linguistic support, such efforts need to be embraced by all members of our communities. With her lecture, "Bilingual Benefits," Doris Sommer (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University) called on the symposium audience to go beyond the concept of speaking two languages as a challenge and to perceive bilingualism as a "decided intellectual advantage regarding the philosophy of language, aesthetic appreciation, and political belongings." Sommer emphasized this view as a way "to counterpoise years of worry for heritage speakers with a measure of new self-esteem."

Key to embracing the positive conceptions of heritage languages within our institutions is the teachers' own conceptions of language shaping the curricula that Latino students encounter in the classroom. This was one of two main topics included on the second day of the symposium.<sup>4</sup> In her presentation, "Language as Linguistic Knowledge versus Language as Social Practice: The Challenges of Curricularizing Language for Heritage Language Students," Guadalupe Valdés (Stanford University School of Education) problematized the definitions of "teaching" and "learning" language that permeate and guide curricular decisions affecting both SHLs and FLLs. Valdés presented an overview of the current debates on the nature of language. She elaborated on the fact

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that applied linguistics and second language acquisition perspectives tend to work from a more cognitive and linear perspective of language, compared to studies on multilingualism, which emphasize the social use of languages beyond the strict learning of grammatical rules. Both perspectives differ from each other in ideological positions and implications that teachers need to be aware of when designing curricula for heritage learners and establishing expectations for students.

Along with curriculum design, another challenge for teachers of heritage learners is placement. Kim Potowski (Department of Hispanic & Italian Studies at the University of Illinois Chicago) addressed this topic in her lecture, “Developing an Online Placement Exam for Spanish Heritage Speakers and L2 Students.” This presentation described the methodology behind the development and piloting of an adaptive, online placement exam for FLLs and SHLs. Potowski gave particular attention to the structure of the exam and the linguistic strategies employed to distinguish heritage speakers from FLLs.

Rebeca Barriga Villanueva (Centro de Estudios Lingüísticos y Literarios, El Colegio de México) gave a lecture on a different but related topic, regarding Latino and ethnic minorities’ attempts to develop their heritage language, entitled “The Consequences of the Contradictory and Ambiguous Language Policies for Speakers of Indigenous Languages in Mexico.” Barriga Villanueva presented an overview of how language policies in Mexico have had a long-term impact on the overall cognitive, linguistic, and social development of speakers of indigenous languages. Drawing from the history of language policies in Mexico, Barriga Villanueva's presentation focused on three crucial issues that have impacted indigenous school-aged children: asymmetrical bilingualism, intercultural misunderstandings, and the difficulties that emerge from



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illiteracy. Although Latino youth and indigenous populations in Mexico differ in important ways, Barriga Villanueva addressed questions that pertain to any minority group in the process of understanding and developing its heritage language: How does the educational system respond to the needs of this population? What is the status of their language in terms of their writing and reading skills? What are the teachers' attitudes towards understanding the strengths and needs of these students? How do parents face their children's linguistic challenges? What are the issues that block the possibilities of embracing diversity in schools with indigenous populations? How can we break the barriers of discrimination and segregation?

The last event of this symposium consisted of a panel with the guest speakers. To summarize the two-day event, the experts reflected on and dialogued with the audience about recent innovations in the areas of heritage language linguistics, heritage language pedagogy, and the ideological and cross-cultural dimensions of curriculum design for Spanish heritage classes. The presentations made it clear that, although the field is rapidly expanding, more research and especially more connections between teachers and researchers are sorely needed to move forward.

The symposium proved to be an effective way to a) initiate a conversation in the Department of RLL about Harvard's Latino students' needs for heritage language and culture courses and b) form an academic agenda for future administrative and pedagogical strategies to design and offer such courses.

Moreover, an unexpected, successful outcome of the symposium was the gathering of Spanish language faculty from more than ten institutions in the Boston area.

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In effect, we began to form an energetic community of educators committed to teaching Spanish to Latino students and to finding new pathways for meeting the challenges and needs of SHLs. These faculty members were from RLL, the Foreign Language Advisory Group at Harvard, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, MIT, Boston University, Tufts University, UMass Boston, Emmanuel College, Brandeis University, University of Rhode Island, Cornell University, Westminster College, and representatives from the Framingham and Boston Public Schools.

**2012 Symposium: “Applying Innovative and Effective Pedagogy for Spanish Heritage Speakers in the Classroom.”** This gathering drew upon the theoretical foundations presented in the 2011 symposium and took a significant step forward. The 2012 event focused primarily on the new pedagogical directions and practices that are being implemented in higher education classrooms. The topics covered included the contribution of sociolinguistics to students’ development of metalinguistic awareness, differentiated teaching to address the needs of all students, and biliteracy and academic writing development in SHLs. The symposium also included a panel of teachers from universities in the Boston area who had attended the 2011 symposium and were eager to present on the Spanish programs for SHLs at their respective institutions.

The symposium opened<sup>5</sup> with the presentation of María Polinsky (Department of Linguistics, Harvard University) and Siena R. Leslie (graduate student in the Department of Linguistics, Harvard University), “Linguistics in the Heritage Spanish Classroom.” Leslie examined how methodology focused on explicit instruction of sociolinguistic knowledge—mainly dialectal variation and registers—is a vital topic for SHLs and can

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be used to improve the teaching of heritage Spanish and to increase students' metalinguistic awareness. Leslie argued that in SHL classrooms, sociolinguistic research and linguistic exercises should be used to supplement the curriculum. These exercises help students combat their tendency to have a damaged sense of linguistic identity, specifically the belief that the type of Spanish that they and their families use is “wrong.” SHLs should be taught that the many dialects and registers of Spanish are all linguistically correct and that language variation should be viewed in terms of linguistic prestige, not “correctness.” Leslie proposed a series of supplementary problem sets that encourage SHLs to think about structural patterns in their daily use of Spanish, so that they can learn to generalize linguistic patterns. She proposed her model as a starting point for creating similar curricular supplements for heritage languages other than Spanish.

More teaching experiences with SHLs were presented in the panel titled “How We Teach: Heritage Spanish Courses in Today’s University Classroom.” The panel was composed of the following language faculty: Elena Gonzalez Ros (Brandeis University), Zoila Castro (Rhode Island University), Marta Rosso-Olaughlin (Tufts University), and Doris Sommer (Harvard University). The goal was for the guests to discuss their Spanish heritage language courses, tracks, or courses on related topics such as *Bilingual Arts*, which is taught by Sommer. It was clear from the panel’s presentations that addressing all students’ needs in one classroom—with different levels of oral and written Spanish proficiency—was a major challenge for most of the teachers. Teachers need to find adequate support within their institutions so that they can offer courses at appropriate levels for SHLs.

María Carreira (Department of Romance, German, and Russian Languages and

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Literatures, California State University, Long Beach and Co-Director, National Heritage Language Resource Center, UCLA) addressed these administrative and pedagogical challenges in her presentation, “Student Needs Meet Institutional Practices: Findings From the National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC).” Carreira presented two NHLRC projects as the focus of her presentation. The first was a national survey of heritage language learners at the post-secondary level of education. This survey examined the linguistic, affective, and social needs of these learners vis-à-vis their home language. The second project was a program database that looked at how post-secondary language programs serve the needs of these learners. A comparison of the findings of these two projects led to critical insights on the current strengths and weaknesses of heritage language education and programs. Carreira emphasized the importance of better understanding the characteristics of SHLs in order to advocate for more specific courses for this population around the country.

As outlined in the panel and in Carreira's presentation, one of the biggest challenges in the heritage language classroom is students' individual differences. How can a teacher effectively address the different language skills that SHLs bring to the classroom or the needs of SHLs and FLLs in the same classroom? With her workshop, “A Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language with a Focus on Classroom Strategies, Curriculum Development, and Program Design,” Carreira provided teachers with an ample repertoire of activities to address individual differences in everyday classroom practices.

The topic for the second day of the symposium<sup>6</sup> was biliteracy development and academic writing of SHLs. With her lecture, “The Role of Language Education in

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Developing Advanced Literacy in Spanish as a Heritage Language in the United States,” María Cecilia Colombi (Department of Spanish and Portuguese, UC Davis) examined the potential offered by the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach for designing curriculum for Spanish second-language learners and heritage speakers. The SFL framework particularly emphasizes the meaning making of language for understanding different genres of text and discourse. Language is treated in functional terms. Therefore, productive language teaching involves students’ use of the resources of their language in light of the demands of particular social contexts and audiences. Colombi also emphasized the role of explicit instruction of genre/register as a way of promoting students’ awareness of discourse semantics and lexico-grammatical features of academic language. In sum, with its explicit focus on language use, SFL allows for the development of advanced literacy in a heritage language in an educational context. The last event of the symposium was Colombi's workshop “A Functional Approach for Teaching Writing,” in which she provided the audience with insightful ways to connect the SFL approach with concrete literacy activities and practices in the classroom.

Two main conclusions derived from the 2011 and 2012 symposia: 1) There is a pressing pedagogical need to provide Latino students with a learning environment that serves as a platform to build on the different degrees of “functional proficiency” (Valdés, 2005) that they bring into the classroom, and 2) literacy is the area in which SHLs need the most support and specific guidance. It is crucial that teachers of Spanish as a heritage language understand how Latino students develop proficiency in reading and writing different genres, in order to support and scaffold such development efficiently. In particular, researchers and teachers should be in continuous dialogue to seek to

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understand “how different types of skills transfer [between languages], how best to bring about an efficient and effective carryover of such skills in both reading and writing, and what kinds of materials best accomplish the task” (Valdés, 2001, p.30).

### **Course: Spanish 35: Spanish for Latino Students**

I designed and implemented in fall 2013 the first Spanish course for Latino students at Harvard, which was an outgrowth of the presentations and dialogue fostered by the 2011 and 2012 symposia and was supported and approved by RLL faculty. The course was “Spanish 35: Spanish for Latino Students” at the intermediate to advanced level and was structured around three main goals for students: a) to build on students’ previous knowledge of Spanish to expand their oral and written interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communicative skills; b) to guide them in the process of strengthening their use of academic Spanish, oral and written; and c) to strengthen their sense of community and identities as young Latinos of the twenty-first century.

Spanish 35 was designed based on the theoretical and pedagogical trends presented in the symposia and in more recent literature in the field: meaningful content (Webb and Miller, 2000; Arens, 2012), including topics on family migration, linguistic history, language and identity, and Spanglish; a functional approach to grammar (Colombi, 2003; Hornberger, 2003); critical pedagogy (Aparicio, 1997; Giroux, 1991, New London group, 1996); critical language awareness (Correa, 2011; Ducar, 2008; Irwin, 1996; Leeman, 2005; Leeman and Rabin, 2001; Martínez and Schwartz, 2012); differentiated instruction (Potowski and Carreira, 2004); and the integration of the arts in the foreign/second language classroom (Parra, 2013).<sup>7</sup>

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Given that literacy is the area in which SHLs need the most support, I decided to include a reading program that covered two main goals: on the one hand, to provide students with effective reading strategies to enhance fluency and reading comprehension that encouraged them to become "multicultural readers"; on the other, to allow for differentiated instruction (Potowski and Carreira, 2004) in which “teachers provide specific ways for each individual to learn as deeply as possible and as quickly and possible, without assuming one student’s roadmap for learning is identical to anyone else’s” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 2).

Therefore, instead of adopting one of the popular, standard textbooks, with a one-model-fits-all approach and an accompanying online packages (i.e., the QUIA, iLRN platforms), we integrated into Spanish 35 a group of experts on reading and the innovative and research-based software *Lectura Inteligente (LI)*, which was developed by professors Araceli Otero and Rosa del Carmen Flores from the School of Psychology at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Flores and Otero, 2012; Flores, Otero, and Lavallée, 2010).

### **Software *Lectura Inteligente***

*LI* is based on the most recent research on reading; therefore, it integrates the different perceptual, cognitive, motivational, and social mechanisms involved in the processes of reading. Its main objective is to help students to become fluent, strategic, and professionally literate readers.

*LI* offers many advantages for Latino students: a) It is already in Spanish; b) It includes initial assessment, lessons, exercises, and specific strategies to improve reading

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speed and comprehension, as well as final evaluation tools; c) *LI* strategies include three groups: i) “before-reading activities” (activation of previous knowledge, revision of vocabulary, and frame of reference for interpretation of text); ii) “reading activities” (monitoring comprehension); iii) “after-reading activities” (summary of what was learned and overall review of text comprehension); d) *LI* gives immediate and individual feedback to the reader, so each student can write and evaluate her/his own answers as s/he moves through the program. As a result of the initial assessment, students get a profile and a series of options to improve based on their specific needs, with specific strategies offered by the program. In this way, each student works to improve her/his own reading profile; e) *LI* incorporates resources to make the process of reading attractive and interactive; f) *LI* is flexible. It enables teachers to incorporate texts from different genres and to adjust the readings to the needs of the specific course.

A customized version of *LI* was developed to meet the goals of Spanish 35: *Lectura Inteligente Herencia Latina (LIHL)*. Every theme reviewed and discussed in class had a counterpart in the software. Reading and writing activities in class were paired with activities in *LIHL* to strengthen students’ written and reading academic skills in Spanish.

### **Harvard-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Collaborative Research**

#### **Project**

The Harvard-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) Collaborative Research Project (María Luisa Parra, Harvard University, Araceli Otero and Rosa del Carmen Flores, School of Psychology, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)<sup>8</sup> is



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an ongoing collaboration based on the team's deep commitment to the education of both Mexican and Latino college students. Funded by the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, the Harvard-UNAM team is much in tune with the mission of both universities to develop interdisciplinary collaborative projects to support academic excellence in all our students. In particular, this collaboration aims to strengthen and expand students' academic horizons on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, as it contributes to educational resources for supporting students' Spanish literacy skills.

The year-round collaboration has been fruitful. This teamwork made possible the design of Spanish 35 along with the adaptation and implementation of *LIHL* and the design of the diagnostic and final assessments. The collaboration also included a mid-semester visit to the Harvard campus by the UNAM faculty team, to assess the implementation of *LIHL*. During this four-day visit, researchers worked closely with Latino students in the classroom to conduct an initial assessment of *LIHL*'s efficiency and students' progress. The results of students' progress in their oral and reading skills (in the first semester of the implementation of Spanish 35) were presented at the Second International Conference on Heritage/Community Languages at UCLA (Parra et al., 2014). Preliminary results showed a significant change in students' reading proficiency (words read per minute and comprehension) and self-evaluation for reading and writing academic texts. Students finished the course highly motivated to continue using Spanish in both their personal and professional lives (Parra, Otero, Flores, and Lavallée, forthcoming).

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**A New Community of Practice.** One of the most productive outcomes of the Harvard-UNAM collaboration has been the multidimensional and multidirectional learning experience that the researchers have had throughout their continuous dialogue and teamwork. Sharing a background in psychology and bringing our own areas of expertise—in linguistics and pedagogy for Spanish as a heritage language, intercultural studies, and reading—allowed us to form what Lave and Wenger (1991) called a “community of practice,” in which members of a professional community develop personally and professionally as a result of their continuous group efforts, sharing of information, and dialogue.

### **Seminar: Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language: Theory and Practice**

In the spirit of expanding our community of practice, I decided in the fall of 2013 to organize a permanent seminar as part of the RLL Initiative on Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language. By promoting the active participation of teachers from universities in the Boston area, the seminar aims to be an avenue for the study, development, and implementation of the latest pedagogical and linguistic research on teaching Spanish as a heritage language.

The seminar, *Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language: Theory and Practice*, which is co-sponsored with *El Observatorio de la lengua española y las culturas hispánicas en los Estados Unidos* from the Instituto Cervantes, addresses four areas: 1) assessment and placement, 2) biliteracy development and academic writing, 3) curriculum design and differentiated teaching, and 4) Spanish heritage learners and community service learning.

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The main goals of the seminar are a) to further develop a working group of language faculty members from higher education institutions in the Boston area who are interested in evaluating and contributing to pedagogical and linguistic research on teaching Spanish as a heritage language, and b) to enhance the work of this group by inviting, each semester, a prominent specialist in one of the specific areas mentioned above. The goal is to foster a dialogue that expands the theoretical understanding and pedagogical repertoire of the working group, as a way to strengthen our own practices and find ways to contribute new knowledge to the pedagogy of Spanish as a heritage language.

The outcomes of the seminar are expected to be 1) the consolidation of a community of practice of researchers-teachers of Spanish as a heritage language in the Boston area; 2) the development and integration of new pedagogical practices in current courses for SHLs; 3) the generation of new course initiatives, research agendas, handbooks, and academic articles that contribute to this growing field.

**Seminar Projects.** Concrete projects have been developed as part of this seminar. The *syllabi guidelines project* analyzes syllabi from seminar participants, which will serve as a starting point for developing a proposal for theoretical and practical guidelines to be used by language faculty when designing their syllabi for courses on Spanish as a heritage language.

Another project is a *working bibliography* of the most-cited references for each theme covered in the seminar. Outreach to the teaching community is at the center of the working group's interests. Therefore, the seminar will also serve as a platform to develop the project *adopt a high school*, in which the seminar participants will reach out to one

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instructor teaching SHLs at their local high school, to provide mentoring in curriculum, pedagogy, and design of community projects. We expect that academic articles and handbooks will be produced as a result of our meetings and joint work.

**Lecture Series.** The RLL Initiative on Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language and El Observatorio co-sponsor a lecture series, as part of the seminar, in which invited guests give a lecture open to the public and the teaching community of the Boston area.

### **Partnership with Existing Institutions Devoted to the Study of Spanish as a Heritage Language**

As the field of Spanish as a heritage language rapidly expands, the RLL Initiative on Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language seeks to build partnerships and to join the efforts of existing institutions, groups of practitioners, researchers, administrators, and policymakers already devoted to the study of Spanish as a heritage language.

A main partnership has been established with El Observatorio de la lengua española y culturas hispánicas of the Instituto Cervantes. A stable and creative partnership has been developed between the RLL Initiative and El Observatorio, which hosts the permanent seminar at its office space and provides intellectual and logistical support. The seminar benefits mainly from the perspectives and experiences of El Observatorio's executive director, Professor Francisco Moreno-Fernandez.

Other partnerships will be developed in the coming years with leading groups such as the National Heritage Language Resource Center (at the University of California,

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Los Angeles) and the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

Along the lines of these groups, the RLL Initiative on Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language aims to provide resources and space not only to students but also to the community of teachers and researchers who wish to participate and contribute to the well-being and linguistic, cultural, and social growth of Latino youth. The RLL Initiative is also a model for interdisciplinary collaboration and a model for connecting academic institutions with communities. Our ultimate goal is to develop a more productive, informed, and interdisciplinary dialogue that provides teachers, administrators, and researchers with the integrated view necessary to promote the maintenance of the Spanish language in various contexts and in dialogue with the different actors within our society (Parra, forthcoming).

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## RLL INITIATIVE

- pedagogy: A journey of professional collaboration and learning. *Presentation at the Second International Conference on Heritage/Community Languages*, UCLA, March 7-8.
- Parra Velasco, M.L. (2013). Expanding language and cultural competence in advanced heritage- and foreign-language learners through community engagement and work with the arts. *Heritage Language Journal*, 10(2),115-142.
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<sup>1</sup> Fry and Taylor from the Pew Hispanic Center report that 69 percent of Latino high school graduates in the class of 2012 (this is seven in ten Hispanic high school students) enrolled in college, compared to 67 percent of Whites. This represents a 49 percent increase over Latinos who graduated in 2000.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed description of each component, PPTs, articles, and videos from the symposia and lecture series, as well as a description of the progress of ongoing research projects can be found at the initiative website: <http://hwpi.harvard.edu/heritagespanish/home>.

<sup>3</sup> Welcoming remarks on the first day of this symposium were given by Professor Virginie Greene, Chair, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Stacey Katz Bourns, Language Program Director, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, gave the welcoming remarks at this event.

<sup>5</sup> Welcoming remarks to this first session were given by the C. Douglas Dillon Professor of the Civilization of France, Susan Suleiman.

<sup>6</sup> Welcoming remarks on the second day of the symposium were given by Dr. Stacey Katz Bourns, Language Program Director, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University.

<sup>7</sup> A complete description of the course will be forthcoming in Parra, Otero, Flores, and Lavallée.

<sup>8</sup> The research assistants for this project were Glenda Quiñonez, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, and Scabé Ibarra, School of Psychology, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.