

RAISING DIALECTAL AWARENESS IN SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES

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Resumen: Muchos investigadores (Arteaga y Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez y Fairclough, 2006; Porras, 1997; Torreblanca, 1997; Villa, 1996) han propuesto estrategias para tratar la variación dialectal en la clase de español; sin embargo la enseñanza de español en Estados Unidos se ha basado en una variedad “estandar” establecida artificialmente, creando una brecha entre lo que se enseña y las variaciones existentes de la lengua. Además, algunos investigadores (Arteaga y Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez y Fairclough, 2006; Martínez, 2003) promueven exponer a los alumnos a variaciones en clases de lengua para principiantes; no obstante, otros creen que esto podría confundir a los alumnos (Salien, 1998). Dada la falta de acuerdo respecto a cómo y cuándo afrontar este asunto, se realizó una encuesta para obtener información sobre las creencias y las prácticas de los instructores de cursos iniciales en universidades estadounidenses. Los resultados indican que la mayoría de los instructores intentan difundir la existencia de dialectos o presentan las diferencias dialectales, aunque la mayoría de ellos lo hace solo ocasionalmente, y otros evitan el tema totalmente.

Palabras clave: Español, dialectos, actividades escolares, lengua en contexto, identidad.

Abstract: Several researchers (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006; Porras, 1997; Torreblanca, 1997; Villa, 1996) have proposed strategies for addressing dialectal variation in the Spanish classroom, yet the teaching of Spanish in the U.S. has been based on an artificially established standard variety, creating a gap between what is taught and existing variations of the language. Moreover, some scholars (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006; Martínez, 2003) promote exposing students to variation in introductory courses, whereas others believe this may confuse beginners (Salien, 1998). Given the lack of consensus regarding how and when to address this issue, a survey was conducted to elicit the beliefs and practises of introductory Spanish instructors at U.S. universities. Results reveal that most instructors raise dialectal awareness and/or present dialectal differences, although most do this only occasionally, and others avoid the topic altogether.

Key words: Spanish, dialects, classroom activities, language in context, identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although many researchers (Amberg & Vause, 2008; Arteaga, 2000; Arteaga & Llorente, 2004, 2009; Auger & Valdman, 1999; Fox, 2002; Gutiér-

rez & Fairclough, 2006; Salien, 1998) assert that incorporating dialectal variations in the foreign language (FL) curriculum is important, some oppose introducing variations in beginning levels (Salien, 1998) while others support it (Arteaga, 2000; Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006; Martínez, 2003). Furthermore, several suggestions have been made regarding which variety should be used for the teaching of Spanish in the United States. Torreblanca (1997) proposes the teaching of the Spanish of Mexico City since it would permit students to communicate with the largest number of speakers in the Hispanic world. Porras (1997) suggests teaching U.S. varieties of Spanish along with the “normaculta” or the “modalidad estándar”, since such an “upper class standard” will be more homogeneous than popular dialects. Villa (1996) and Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006), on the other hand, argue for the teaching of a local variety of the language whereas Arteaga and Llorente (2009) support the teaching of a “neutral” version of Spanish.

To complicate matters more, there are several factors that may limit the opportunities instructors have for addressing varieties of Spanish in the beginner-level classroom. Arteaga and Llorente (2009) suggest that Spanish instructors may not have a background in linguistics and Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) note that Spanish instructors might lack the training in sociolinguistics necessary to be able to address issues of dialectal awareness in the FL classroom. Moreover, the beginning Spanish curriculum does not normally allow time for addressing different varieties of the language and elementary Spanish textbooks do not include dialectal differences as a principal element (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006).

The obstacles to addressing dialectal variation in the classroom may result from the great division among scholars concerning the issue, which might be a reason for the lack of guidance instructors receive regarding how to approach it. Due to the limited research that has been conducted regarding instructor views and practices concerning dialectal variations and how these practices impact student learning and beliefs, this study seeks to ascertain instructor familiarity with dialects of Spanish, gather opinions and techniques regarding raising dialectal awareness, and uncover instructor views related to the effectiveness of the treatment of dialects in beginning Spanish textbooks in order to clarify what is typically encountered in the classroom. With this information, we will be able to determine instructor preparation, identify instructor attitudes toward dialectal variation that may shed light on whether or not linguistic bias is being transmitted, determine how often variation is being addressed, and distinguish effective techniques being used for the treatment of dialectal variation in the beginning Spanish classroom at colleges and universities in the United States.

2. IDENTITY, “STANDARD” AND VARIATION

The Spanish language is a great source of examples regarding dialectal issues, since there are countless social and regional varieties. Some of these varieties are quite divergent from each other, mostly concerning lexicon and phonology, but also concerning syntax and morphology. Thus, although the tendency in L2 Spanish classes in the U.S. has been to treat the language as one artificially established standardized version, it cannot be described as such.

According to Halliday (1985), one speaks a dialect because one belongs to a relevant grouping within society such as a particular region, class, caste, generation, age group, or sex, among others (Halliday, 1985:44). Identity is constructed based on daily interaction with members of the same community, generation, race or ethnicity, gender or community of practice, with whom discursive patterns and cultural models are shared. Moreover, “Any language spoken by more than a handful of people exhibits this tendency to split into dialects, which may differ from one another along all the many dimensions of language content, structure, and function: vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, usage, social function, artistic and literary expression. The differences may be slight and confined to a few aspects of the language, or so great as to make communication difficult between speakers of different dialects” (Francis, 1983: 1).

Along with the concept of dialects, a phenomenon called standardization should be considered. According to Milroy (2001), dialects do not exist independently from what is understood as standard variety. Indeed, the standard/non-standard dichotomy is itself driven by an ideology –it depends on prior acceptance of the ideology of standardization and on the centrality of the standard variety. Plainly stated, dialects cannot be labeled non-standard unless a standard variety is first recognized as definitive and central. In this conceptualization, the dialects become, as it were, satellites that have orbits at various distances around a central body –the standard (Milroy, 2001:534). When a certain variety becomes a reference point to the other varieties, it is called standard. Moreover, the standard variety usually plays the role of prescriptivism and its prestige is recognized by speakers of the language. The difference between the standard and the other varieties is precisely the fact that the standard variety functions as a reference point and it constitutes a classifying parameter to the linguistic status of the remaining varieties. However, given the pluricentric idiosyncrasy of the Spanish language, “every country that recognizes Spanish as a principal national language has its own center for establishing endocentric norms” (Villa, 2002: 227) and standardization of the language becomes impossible since the prestige varieties vary regionally (Arteaga, 2000).

In the case of the teaching of Spanish as a FL, analyzing the pluricentricity of the language and presenting the many varieties becomes quite challenging, mainly because the inclusion of certain varieties would imply the exclusion of others, although that has not stopped researchers from suggesting it. Torreblanca (1997) proposed using the Spanish of Mexico City to teach Spanish in the United States since he claimed it would permit students to communicate without difficulty (with the exception of vocabulary, which he noted is not a solvable problem) with the largest number of Spanish speakers. Villa (1996), in agreement with Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006), argued for the teaching of a local variety of the language, whether students are Heritage Learners (HLs) or FL learners of Spanish. Finally, Arteaga and Llorente (2009) recommend the teaching of an artificial standard or neutral dialect of Spanish. Interestingly enough, in university classrooms in the United States today, it is common to teach a neutral version of a mixture of standard varieties (Arteaga, 2000; Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006).

Nevertheless, we maintain that the exclusion of varieties or the artificial construction of a so called neutral version might indicate a certain degree of linguistic discrimination, taking into account that a dialect is spoken because it gives people a sense of belonging (Halliday, 1985). If a dialect is treated as inferior, such treatment is juxtaposed, and reflects upon the people that speak that dialect as inferior (Nieto, 2010: 43).

3. POTENTIAL ROAD BLOCKS TO INCLUSION OF LANGUAGE VARIATION

Cultural and dialectal awareness should be a key element in the FL classroom and neglecting the inclusion of these issues when planning curricula or selecting material might have an impact on students' learning processes and outcomes. However, for FL instructors, creating strategies to introduce these varieties in the classroom could be a very challenging task.

Instructors might have limited knowledge of dialectal variations (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006). For instance, those who are native speakers (NSs) or those who have been trained in a given dialect might not be aware of or familiar with the existence or characteristics of other varieties. Because of this, instructors might correct students based on their own preferred dialect, indicating as erroneous a certain feature that students produce that may have been taught by previous instructors that favored a different variation. Nevertheless, there may be several additional reasons that such correction of dialectal variation occurs. Arteaga and Llorente (2009) suggest that "many instructors lack a background in linguistics", "such instructors may be thus unaware of the

existence of dialectal varieties in Spanish or may hold a prescriptive view of language”, or “they may believe that one variety (often the one they speak) is superior to all the others” (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009: 7). If students were previously taught by another instructor favoring a specific dialect and neglecting the existence of others or explicitly indicating his/her preference for one variety over others, subsequent instructors might have to remediate the situation and instill in students the need for embracing all varieties.

Even when possessing the knowledge and willingness to address the existence of varieties, instructors might lack autonomy when designing or planning lessons. At the university level, lower-division classes are often taught by graduate teaching assistants (TAs) or instructors; however, curriculum and tests are often determined by coordinators or directors. Within the curriculum, there may not be enough time allotted to cover material (Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006). Since many textbooks do not include dialectal variations as a core element of their chapters (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009), instructors might be forced to limit themselves to only address the material included in the textbook since course syllabi tend to be organized around textbook chapters. Even if some textbooks do include information about dialectal variations, instructors may not be able to address these issues due to time/curriculum restraints (Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006).

Students may also be affected by how dialects are treated in the foreign language classroom in various ways. If students lack exposure to the diversity of the L2, they may encounter difficulties interacting with NSs when an authentic occasion for communication arises. If variations of the L1 and/or the L2 have not been discussed in the classroom, students might be unaware of the concepts of “languages” and “dialects” and the existence of dialectal variation. In addition, they could have the mistaken conception that dialects constitute an “inferior” version of a language, a non-pure form of a language, or a deformity.

Ignoring the existence of dialectal variation in the classroom affects all parties by depriving them of a holistic view of the linguistic and cultural diversity that makes up the so-called Hispanic world. The lack of awareness about the importance of respecting dialects could have a significant impact not only on the language learning process but also on the views students develop about the world and the people around them. It is expected that, by learning how language varies both geographically and socially, students will be more likely to understand that language is related to individual and social identity and that language is in constant change.

One source of linguistic diversity might come from instructors and students themselves. Given the number of Spanish instructors who are NSs of the language or non-native speakers (NNSs) that have adopted a particular variation, dialects

often appear naturally in the classroom. Along the same lines, the presence of HLs with different backgrounds and places of origin certainly contribute to enlarge linguistic diversity in the classroom. In the case of instructors, if one who speaks a particular variation fails to address the existence of other variations, his/her use of that variation might be recognized and even adopted by the students, but the existence of other variations might go unnoticed. Since the beginning level student is most likely not familiar with the diversity of the Spanish language, adopting a given dialect or using one's own might not indicate that a student has achieved dialectal awareness. Nevertheless, NS instructors and HLs are not present in every institution and/or classroom across the country. For these reasons, relying on the use of the instructor's dialect or counting on the diversity HLs contribute might not be possible everywhere and may not be sufficient.

4. TO RAISE OR NOT TO RAISE DIALECTAR AWARENESS

According to ACTFL, a focal point of the FL classroom is to acquire “the ability to communicate in meaningful and appropriate ways with users of other languages” (3). ACTFL's standards for teaching FL incorporate the goals of the 5 C's: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. However, in spite of the fact that presenting varieties of Spanish falls under all of the categories contemplated in the five 'Cs', raising dialectal awareness is not mentioned explicitly. Due to the many varieties of Spanish and their connection to the identity and culture of the speakers of those varieties, raising dialectal awareness is critical to students' “understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives” of the target cultures (ACTFL standard 2.1:4). Additionally, such awareness is essential to their “understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own” (ACTFL standard 4.1:4). Dialectal awareness allows students to expand their ability to make connections between their native languages and the language and dialectal variations they are learning, which falls under ACTFL's fourth “C”, “Comparisons”. In addition, proposing a discussion that briefly touches upon basic sociolinguistic information would contribute to establishing connections, the third “C”, since such knowledge would “... reinforce and further [students'] knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language” (ACTFL standard 3.1:4). Finally, raising dialectal awareness in the FL classroom prepares students to “use the language both within and beyond the school setting” (ACTFL standard 5.1:4), since it is fundamental in preparing students for interaction in the target language (TL) in authentic interactions outside the classroom. This notion is further supported by Fox (2002), who found that

“students will learn to comprehend the type of language to which they are exposed. Conversely, they will exhibit significantly less understanding of language to which they have not been introduced” (209).

Several scholars (Amberg & Vause, 2008; Arteaga, 2000; Arteaga & Llorente, 2004, 2009; Auger & Valdman, 1999; Fox, 2002; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006; Salien, 1998) have agreed on the importance of incorporating dialectal variations in the FL curriculum, yet some discrepancies exist with respect to when and how this should be done. While Salien (1998) considers that introducing dialectal variations in beginning courses could impose too much confusion for students, Arteaga (2000) maintains that it fosters comprehension and interaction with NSs. In fact, Arteaga (2000) recommends teaching certain phonological processes of some of the dialects so that students can distinguish the features and associate them with the dialect each one represents. She goes on to suggest that beginning Spanish students “be exposed to Spanish dialectal variation, while being encouraged to maintain consistency in their own pronunciation” and that “to avoid [this] mixing of dialectal features, it is imperative that instructors explain to students which features characterize a given dialect” (Arteaga, 2000: 345). Promoting consistency in dialectal choice does not imply imposing a given dialect, or making students choose one dialect over others; instead, it pushes students to recognize that certain features correspond to a given dialect and that mixing those features across dialects should be avoided. Students should feel free, however, to adopt any dialect in their output.

Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) point out some of the challenges that surface when addressing language variation in the FL classroom: time constraints, lack of good material, and lack of instructional expertise. However, despite the obstacles, they acknowledge that “... it would be impossible to develop productive abilities in the many different Spanish dialects” ... and suggest that “... increasing awareness of language variation and alternative dialects is worthwhile during the beginning stages of acquisition” (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 186). In addition, they maintain that not only regional variations spoken outside of the U.S should be presented in the classroom, but also those local variations spoken within the U.S. Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) state that “Ideally, students should be exposed to all varieties of the language, but taking into account the fact that more than 35 million Hispanics live in the United States, the local variety(ies) of Spanish should have priority” (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 186). We maintain that focusing on local varieties may be useful for students who reside in areas of the U.S. where Spanish is spoken, but it might posit a problem for beginning students that are not exposed to Spanish in their local areas or might lack the desire to interact with NSs. Provided that there are different realities in institutions across the country where students of Spanish do not have the opportunity to interact with NSs, we recognize

that different realities call for different expectations, and overall, the goal should be to raise awareness about the existence of variations, not narrow the focus to a few dialects used closest to home.

Along with Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006), Arteaga (2000) and Arteaga and Llorente (2009), we consider it important for students to be exposed to varieties of the language starting in beginning language courses and we agree that covering *all* varieties is not plausible in one (or several) language course(s). We concur with the necessity of addressing linguistic diversity in order to raise cultural and dialectal awareness and to establish the significance of an accurate understanding of the concept of dialect as a representation of identity.

While it is relatively easy to achieve a consensus regarding the importance of raising dialectal awareness starting in the beginning levels of language learning, it is no simple matter to determine which dialects or features should be presented to students and how. As Penny (2000) states “the definition of the term *variety* is no easy task [...], there is no linguistic basis upon which one geographical dialect can be delimited from others, nor are social dialects discrete entities which can be distinguished one from another” (Penny, 2000: 18). Although numerous scholars have offered maps and have placed varieties into given categories based on their particular distinctive features, we acknowledge that attempting to discern which varieties should be presented is contradictory to the concept of embracing diversity. If we were to suggest a given variety or a small group of varieties to be presented in the beginning levels, we would be segregating the varieties not included. We are aware of the no-win situation this posits and would like to note that the purpose of this paper is not to offer a solution to such a dilemma. Some authors, however, have suggested useful ideas to overcome this issue.

For instance, Arteaga and Llorente (2009) propose “actively presenting the morphosyntactic features of the most dominant dialect in the area where the Spanish language is taught” (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009: 151). They suggest actively teaching “vosotros” in Spain and passively teaching it in the U.S. since learners in the U.S. are more likely to encounter speakers that favor Latin American variations. We agree that “vosotros” should be taught as a feature that is present in several variations and we maintain that students need to be aware of that, regardless of their location. Nevertheless, if “vosotros” should be taught regardless of location, we maintain that “vos” should as well; however, the pronoun “vos” was not addressed in the morphology section of Arteaga and Llorente’s (2009) book. The authors state that they intend to include features used in Latin America when teaching Spanish as a FL in the U.S. but when they leave out the pronoun “vos” from the morphology section of their book, they exclude an important morphological

feature of the Spanish-speaking world, and thus the people who speak “voseante” varieties.

Arteaga and Llorente (2009) do mention “vos”, however, in a separate section related to register, stating that students –as young adults– might find it useful to associate “vos” with “tú”. “For many Spanish speakers, ‘vos’ is used in place of ‘tú’ for informal speech; this pronoun refers to the second person singular” (Arteaga and Llorente, 2009: 152). In addition, they recommend that students understand “vos” can be used in place of “tú”, but they “should not actively use ‘vos’ unless instructed to do so” (Arteaga and Llorente, 2009: 152). We agree that students should not be required to produce “vos”, or “vosotros” for that matter, in their own speech, since the dialect they adopt will be a result of student choice and/or circumstances. However, students should be made aware of both with respect to the meaning and pragmatic use of the pronouns, the different conjugations, and the regions where they are used.

The decision regarding which variation to focus on in the classroom could be even more difficult when it comes to lexical variation, for which Arteaga and Llorente (2009) suggest first addressing regionally unmarked terms (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009: 155) and certain lexical items that vary across regions for passive recognition. As for determining which varieties to introduce, they suggest that instructors promote “active knowledge of a standard variety of Spanish [...] a regionally and sociolinguistically neutral variety that cuts across regional and social differences” (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009: 3). Additionally, in order to avoid negative sociolinguistic judgment, they later suggest the term “academic variety” instead of “standard variety” to be used in the L2 Spanish class. They maintain that the terms that should be included in the instruction of an “academic variety” “depend on the region in which Spanish is being taught as an L2” (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009: 155). While we agree with raising awareness and addressing lexical variation for passive recognition, we find presenting students with a neutral or “standard/academic” variety counterproductive. Additionally, while we recognize that students are more likely to interact with speakers of regions closest to them; due to the current state of globalization and the large amount of student participation in study abroad programs, we do not find proximity to a region where Spanish is spoken to be a fundamental selection criterion. Since no dialect is more or less important than another regardless of the location where that dialect is spoken, we maintain that choosing to focus on dialects based on location is inconsistent with embracing linguistic diversity.

Although several researchers (Amberg & Vause, 2008; Arteaga, 2000; Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Auger & Valdman, 1999; Fox, 2002; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006; Nieto, 2010; Salien, 1998; Wiczorek, 1991) have written about the intro-

duction of dialects in FL classes and various scholars (Arteaga, 2000; Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006) that have worked with dialects of Spanish propose that dialectal awareness be fostered starting in beginning level courses, scarce information has been presented regarding how to do so. Therefore, we aim to expand on previous research and uncover instructors' beliefs and practices related to dialectal variation and to compare them to assertions made by investigators. To this aim, a survey was conducted with the objectives of determining instructor familiarity with dialects of Spanish; gathering their opinions regarding the importance of raising dialectal awareness; establishing whether or not they address dialects in the classroom; identifying how, why, and how frequently dialects are presented; and ascertaining whether or not they believe beginning Spanish textbooks effectively include dialectal differences. That said, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Do instructors consider it important to introduce dialectal variations of Spanish and/or raise dialectal awareness in the beginning level?
2. Do instructors present dialectal differences in beginning Spanish courses? If so, how, why, and how often?
3. Do instructors feel that textbooks effectively include dialectal differences?

5. Context and participants

The target population for our survey was beginning level L2 Spanish instructors in American colleges and universities. A total of 107 introductory level Spanish instructors from 14 different American colleges and universities completed the survey. The institutions selected ranged from public U.S. research universities where multi-section courses are mainly taught by graduate TAs to small private and public liberal arts colleges where the sections are taught by Professors or instructors/lecturers. This broad selection was intended to target a variety of situations and to contemplate some of the different variables involved in the teaching of Spanish as a FL in American institutions.

The participants were either teaching at the time of data collection or had taught a beginning level L2 Spanish class at an American college/university within the past 5 years. They were predominantly TAs (N=62) and instructors/lecturers (N=36), and the remaining participants (N=10) were associate instructors, adjunct professors, visiting assistant professors, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors. They were either native (N=43) or non-native (N=64) speakers of Spanish. The participants reported using different introductory Spanish textbooks including *Amistades*, *Arriba*, *Caminos*, *Como se dice*, *Dos mundos*, *En contacto*,

Fuentes, Nexos, Panorama, Puntos de Partida, Puntos en breve, Sabías que, Sol y viento, Temas, and Vistas.

6. Procedure

For this study, data was gathered from a self-administered survey anonymously completed online by instructors who were teaching or had taught a beginning Spanish course in the last five years. No specific groups were created and the design of the survey was descriptive and cross-sectional. Each participant was contacted via email, in which the purposes of the survey were explained and there was a brief description of the research being conducted. They were provided a link to the online survey and were asked to volunteer their time to complete the survey at their convenience.

The survey was piloted in the respective institutions with ten participants, and it consisted of fifteen questions, both open and closed in nature. As for the closed questions, the first three were nominal and were designed to gather demographic information regarding the participants' positions and institutions as well as whether or not they were NSs of Spanish. The subsequent questions were formatted differently to best elicit the information. Some were nominal YES/NO questions (e.g. Are you familiar with dialects of Spanish?). Others were ordinal questions structured on a 4 point Likert scale (e.g. How important is it to present dialectal differences in the classroom?). Open-ended questions were also included, formulated to compile more detailed information about the manner in which instructors introduce varieties in the classroom.

7. RESULTS

As shown in Tables 1 and 2 below, 96% of participants reported that they are familiar with dialects of Spanish. Most participants (approximately 95%) indicated that they present dialects to students and there were a variety of responses regarding why and how they do it. Some answers reflect the importance instructors place on helping students realize that "course/text materials are not the authority on Spanish" and "not everyone speaks one form of Spanish", as stated by some of our participants. In contrast, nearly 5% of the participants declared that they do not present dialectal variations in the classroom and provided reasons for their decision. One participant noted, "At such an early stage in learning their second language, I don't want to overwhelm the students with all the possible ways that an

idea can be communicated”. Another indicated his/her limitations by recognizing his/her lack of familiarity, “I am not a native speaker and I am not familiar with the dialects”. Others responded that “there really is only time to teach the ‘mainstream’ basics” and “I try to speak ‘standard’ Spanish, if such thing exists”. Lack of familiarity as well as concerns about the feasibility and usefulness of introducing dialects in beginning levels without overwhelming students with information has been noted in previous research (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006; Salien, 1998) and could be remediated by more in-depth instructor training.

Table 1:

Frequency of Response: Native Speaker, Familiarity with Dialect, Presentation of Dialectal Differences			
	Yes	No	Total
	%	%	
Are you a native speaker of Spanish?	43	64	107
Are you familiar with dialects of Spanish?	103	4	107
Do you present dialectical differences?	102	5	107

Table 2:

Presenting Dialectical Differences					
	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Often	Total
	%	%	%	%	101
Present Dialectical Differences	12	58	26	5	101

As illustrated in Table 3, nearly 51 % of instructors believe that introducing dialectal differences in the classroom is important, 33 % think it is somewhat important, 14 % consider it extremely important, and 2 % view it as not important.

Table 3:

Importance in Presenting and Raising Awareness					
	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Extremely Important	Total
Present Dialectical Differences	2	35	54	15	106
Raise Student Awareness	1	21	62	18	102

As seen above, the majority of instructors believe it is important to raise students' dialectal awareness. While 18% think it's extremely important, 60% say it's important, 21% indicate that it's somewhat important, and 1% state that it's not important. However, despite agreeing with the importance of raising dialectal awareness and presenting dialects to students, as indicated in Figure 2, the majority of the participants (58%) stated that they present them *only occasionally* to students in beginning Spanish courses.

Correlation coefficients were calculated to determine any statistically significant relationships among the three scaled questions. While all three correlations were statistically significant (see Table 4), the relationship between instructors' perceived importance of raising student awareness of dialectical differences was only of moderate strength with $r(94) = .29$, ($p = .01$).

Table 4:

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations for Scaled Variables			
	Frequency	Present Differences	Raise Awareness
Frequency	-	0.481*	0.292*
Present Differences	-	-	0.612*
Raise Awareness	-	-	-

Note: * = $p = .01$

In sum, although several of the participants that address dialectal variation in class expressed that they are unable to discuss varieties as much as they prefer due to time and curricular constraints and some have concerns about confusing beginning students, most participants strive to transmit a greater understanding of the world and the Spanish language through raising dialectal awareness and/or presenting the characteristics of different varieties. In this way, participant responses are very much in line with Standards in Foreign Language Learning, which aim for “knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom” (ACTFL 1999: 3). The overall goals of the Standards indicate that language learning is not about retaining rules or vocabulary lists, but rather about understanding language more broadly and critically, as should be done with the L1. Participant responses embody the Standards in that instructors report that they aim to “offer students a more universal understanding of the world around them”, make students “aware of the richness of the Spanish speaking world” demonstrate that “Hispanics and Latinos are not a homogeneous group”, “increase comprehension of the target language”, “prepare students to be linguistically flexible”, and show “that Spanish is a real language

used by real people” through addressing dialectal variation in their Spanish as a FL classes.

Regarding travelling or studying abroad, one participant said “I think it’s important to present students with a variety of input so that if they decide to study or travel somewhere, they are already aware of things to listen for”. Another noted, “I always suggest if they are going to study or travel abroad that they research the dialect before traveling, as what they are going to hear is rarely going to be ‘text-book Spanish from class.’” Two of the four participants that reported the desire to prepare their students for interaction with the local Hispanic community were from California, where that population is quite large. Both of those participants indicated that they focus on Mexican Spanish in their classes since their students “can practice anytime being in touch with the Mexican community” and ‘are very likely [to] interact with [a dialect of] Mexican Spanish in California’. These findings are consistent with Gutiérrez and Fairclough’s (2006) suggestion to incorporate variation in the classroom in order to prepare students to interact with NSs, specifically in local contexts: “When one teaches Spanish in the United States, the real world is out there. Instructors should provide the students with the right language tools through formal instruction, and bring the communities and their language varieties into the classroom. Better yet, they should have the students interact with the local Spanish community” (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 186). Although our participants did report exposing their students to different varieties in various ways including inviting Spanish speakers from several different regions to their classes, the results of our survey did not indicate that instructors require their students to interact with the local Spanish speaking community.

Several participants reported complex, thoughtful motives and effective ways to help students understand varieties of language. They aspire to avoid linguistic bias through demonstrating to students that “there is not just one ‘way’ to speak a language”, “that one way isn’t better than the other”, “that they [varieties] embody identities, heritages and regional differences but there is not one correct, prescriptive variety of Spanish”. Nevertheless, a couple of the responses reflect the dichotomy of Peninsular versus Latin American Spanish, revealed through comments such as “I also always try to let them know what verbs, vocab and grammar forms are more commonly used in Latin America as opposed to Spain”. We believe that instructors should clarify that this dichotomy is falsely constructed and that there are numerous varieties spoken in Spain and numerous varieties spoken in the different Latin American countries so that students understand that the so-called “Spanish-speaking world” is not composed of two opposing entities but rather of multiple cultures and dialectal variations.

One of the principal strategies used by the participants to introduce discussions about dialectal awareness is making comparisons and connections between variations of the English language. Some “reference how soda/pop/drink works in the US” while others “compare the differences between the English in the United States and that in England” so that “students understand the validity of other dialects/cultures as well as that of their own”. Using students’ L1 as a starting point for understanding language variation is an important strategy since, according to Amberg and Vause (2008), “If students have been taught since elementary school, for example, that grammar has one set of rules, then they are going to believe that any departure from such a standard is wrong” and these beliefs “often become obstacles to their ability to critically examine their own attitudes toward diverse linguistic varieties”. Therefore, the authors assert that the duty of language instructors is to help students “overcome these barriers” by “help[ing] our students become more critically aware of their own and others’ attitudes about language varieties” (Amberg & Vause, 2008: 231).

In addition to the comparisons and connections made between languages, many participants revealed that they employ creative classroom activities to do so. Nineteen participants reported utilizing authentic materials such as videos, movies, music, newspaper / magazine articles, literature, and native speaking guests; nevertheless, fourteen of those participants discuss dialectal variation related to those materials and five merely expose students to variations through these modes. Tarone and Swain (1995: 175) have recommended that students be exposed to sociolinguistic variation through authentic materials, especially through media. A couple of participants noted that they impersonate varying dialects at times and one said “Performing an exaggerated accent... makes them laugh, but also shows them which linguistic features to catch. They won’t be able to hear ‘normal’ accent variation, so you have to exaggerate it for them to understand.” One participant noted the invaluable contribution HLs make toward the discussion of cultural and linguistic diversity, noting “it is interesting to see how dialectal differences are used and presented [by Heritage Learners]”. Nevertheless, Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) point out that “...attitudes toward Spanish spoken in the United States and toward speakers of this Spanish variety are negative, which represents a tremendous problem when attempts are made to incorporate variation into the Spanish language classroom” (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 183).

For this reason, Potowski (2000) suggests training FL instructors for working with HLs, especially through raising awareness of language varieties, specifically varieties spoken by HLs, and educating instructors regarding the attitudes and identities associated with those varieties. We support this assertion and propose that this sort of training be extended to all FL instructors, whether they are

expected to work with HLs or not since, according to Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006), “There is no reason to establish one pedagogical norm for traditional foreign language students and a different one for heritage learners of Spanish, unless we evaluate the norms in a different way” (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 183). Additionally, since the “preeminence of Spanish as the second language of the United States (and as the first language in some areas) is guaranteed for the foreseeable future” (Lipski, 2008: 5), it is important for students of Spanish to recognize that “all forms of speech are worthy and that there are no ‘primitive languages’ or ‘corrupted dialects’” (Valdman, 2003: 58).

Despite the several participants stating that they do not go into depth regarding dialectal information and that they limit it to cultural discussions, various instructors point out that they address variation as it arises in class, whether based on the textbook, authentic materials, or the dialect they speak. One participant states “I...try to make them conscious about the particularities of my own way of speaking”. Another explains “I bring up dialectal differences when students prompt me with a question of why I might say one thing but the book says another or why some Spanish speaker they know speaks one way and someone else speaks another”. Along with participant comments such as these regarding the insufficient treatment of variations in textbooks, approximately 90% of participants indicate that beginning Spanish textbooks do not effectively include dialectal differences. Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) attest to that, saying “...most of the textbooks that are available today...privilege an invariant norm, which does not include the tools that will enable students to perform in the variety of contexts in which they will be required to perform outside of the classroom” (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 183). This is consistent with participant observations that textbooks present “standard” or “universal” language. Nevertheless, several participants use the limited language of textbooks to point out the lack of linguistic varieties presented in them and to encourage discussions regarding the existence of varieties, thus demonstrating to students that, as one instructor put it, “textbooks are not the authority on Spanish”.

Although addressing variation as it arises in natural classroom discussions and lessons can be effective, it can also be problematic. For example, one participant alludes to discussing variation “if students ask questions”. However, students are not likely to ask questions if they are not aware of the existence of dialectal differences and if they do not recognize that dialects constitute languages and are not their corrupted form. Therefore, we agree with Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006), that instructors must be trained in sociolinguistics so that they are prepared to create an appropriate atmosphere for students to be curious about language variation.

Participants most often address lexical variation in their classes, although discussions of phonological and morphosyntactic variation are also common. Some of the strategies for addressing lexical variation include “point[ing] out alternate terms or usages (‘Mucho gusto’ v. ‘Encantado’) if they seem to be common, important, but not too confusing”, preparing students to avoid misunderstandings due to lexical variation, for example “tell[ing] students not to say *coche* in Guatemala because it means pig while in Spain it means car”, and “list[ing] different dialectal uses (words) for the same meaning on the board”. One participant discloses that this is done “so they see that the language is constantly in change and that different parts of the Hispanic world perhaps use the same word to mean different things”. Pronunciation also occupies a relevant role for our participants. The phonological characteristics that participants reveal they focus on the most include “zheísmo / sheísmo” in which they address the [ll] and [y] in Argentina and “ceceo / seseo / distinción” in which they address the [z], [c], and in Spain and America. One participant also reports addressing aspiration and deletion of the /s/ in the Caribbean. Teaching students to recognize the aforementioned phonological characteristics in beginning Spanish courses is consistent with Arteaga’s (2000) suggestion for preparing students to effectively communicate with speakers from areas where different dialects are spoken while maintaining consistent pronunciation (Arteaga, 2000: 345). Finally, regarding morphosyntax, several participants mention that they use and discuss “vosotros” and some even mention “vos” but few go into detail regarding the pragmatic use and the morphosyntactic structure for either, as suggested by Arteaga and Llorente (2009) for “vosotros” and as we advocate for both.

A few participants indicated that they do not address dialectal variations in beginning courses for various reasons. Some say the variety they speak would not be as helpful for learners as a neutral variety would be and therefore believe a neutral or “standard” variety should be taught in introductory courses. This belief is consistent with what Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) acknowledge as a “pared-down version of Spanish [that] is often taught in the classroom” (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 186) and the “neutral” variety that Arteaga and Llorente (2009) suggest be taught. Nevertheless, we concur with Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) when they suggest that “to avoid just teaching a ‘sanitized standard’ Spanish, sociolinguistic variation should be incorporated into the classroom” (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 186).

Additionally, some participants do not feel qualified or familiar enough with different variations to be able to present them (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006). A few participants reported that “it just doesn’t come up in class and its absence from books leads to its absence from class”. Others are con-

cerned that addressing variations might confuse and/or overwhelm beginning students and therefore prefer to use their limited class time to cover what is included in the book and teach grammar and vocabulary. Concerning overwhelming beginning students, Salien (1998) indicates that introducing dialectal variations too early could cause confusion. However, Gutiérrez and Fairclough (2006) acknowledge that since "...at the beginner's level we cannot expect complex communicative abilities", it "is the best time to start incorporating awareness of other dialects and cultures" (Gutiérrez and Fairclough, 2006: 186). Additionally, Martínez (2003) states "I see no particular reason why we should wait until a student has mastered the standard variety before informing her/him of the reasons why the standard exists in the first place" (Martínez, 2003: 4). Auger (1999), referring to the teaching of varieties of French, says "we must begin early on, even in beginning secondary school courses" (Auger, 1999: 408).

Finally, many participants report that the introductory curriculum does not allow time for addressing dialectal variation and some coordinators even discourage it. Therefore, we propose that this issue be addressed in the preparation of future instructors and we strive for a consensus to be achieved among administrators regarding the importance of dialectal variation starting in beginning courses.

8. DISCUSSION

The central concern of this study was to determine instructor beliefs and practices regarding raising dialectal awareness and presenting dialectal differences in beginning Spanish courses in American institutions of higher education. Based on the results of the survey, Spanish instructors consider it important to present dialectal variations and attempt to incorporate them in their classes. Still, the majority of the participants stated they actually do it only occasionally. While they would like to address dialectal variations in their classrooms, in reality, instructors face curricular constraints that often lead them to briefly focus on principal lexical items, phonological features, and morphosyntactic variations.

There is an important need for consciousness-raising among administrators and instructors so they understand that dialectal differences should not be treated as an additional piece of "cultural information" but as a core element of language learning. We concur with Arteaga and Llorente (2009) who have stated that "the most important linguistic aspect of Spanish that instructors and students of Spanish need to understand is the notion of variability (regional/sociolinguistic)" (Arteaga and Llorente, 2009: 2-3). Therefore, we advocate for providing instructors with the tools needed to address these issues before they begin teaching.

Familiarity with the notion of variability, even when not achieving familiarity with all distinctive features of every variety, would greatly benefit the development of lesson plans that foster the inclusion of linguistic diversity. The results of this survey reveal that although instructors believe that including dialectal variations and propagating the concept of linguistic diversity is important, the majority of participants lack the time, materials, and agreed upon notion regarding how to go about it. This should be, therefore, a principal concern of administrators, course coordinators and instructors as well as textbook publishers.

Turning to our final research question regarding the treatment of dialectal variations in textbooks, instructors feel that textbooks fail to effectively address these issues. According to our participants, several class discussions regarding dialectal variation stem from the lack of inclusion of variation in beginning Spanish textbooks and the presence of “standard” or “universal” language. This is consistent with Gutiérrez and Fairclough’s (2006) observation that textbooks utilize an “invariant norm” and does not adequately prepare students to utilize the language out of the classroom.

We advocate for dialectal awareness as a pivotal element in the language class and call for more agreement within the field regarding the importance of the issue as well as further preparation regarding how to address it. We maintain that having a clear understanding of what dialects are and how to present them to students is essential for addressing the existence of dialects in the classroom. Several scholars (Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Gutiérrez, 1997; Gutiérrez & Fairclough, 2006; Nieto, 2010; Potowski, 1999; Roca, 1997) have called for training of Spanish TAs in sociolinguistics to “promote awareness and respect for the diverse varieties of Spanish” since “knowledge about dialects can reduce misconceptions and the accompanying negative attitudes” (Gutiérrez, 1997: 36). More specifically, Gutiérrez (1997) maintains that TAs and pre and in service teachers “must be made aware of the concept of dialect, the social function of dialects, and attitudes toward dialects” (Gutiérrez, 1997: 36) to be able to work with HLs appropriately. We argue that such training is not only important for instruction of HLs, but for *all* instructors of Spanish in order to dispel linguistic bias among *all* students of Spanish from the outset.

Therefore, we recommend that teacher education and graduate programs in F/SLs, whether those programs include HLs or not, recognize the importance of raising awareness of dialectal variation to the overall objectives of the teaching and learning of languages. It is imperative for teacher training programs to address basic linguistic and sociolinguistic principles as well as dialectology of the language of focus so that it can be incorporated into the course curriculum and individual lesson plans. Additionally, FL teachers should understand how the TL is

really spoken and why, and “resist the temptation to create an opposition between the ‘real world’ and the classroom” (Nieto, 2010: 50).

To promote dialectal awareness among TAs, we suggest some strategies that supervisors can use in their teacher training seminars. For example, TAs could brainstorm or look at lists of vocabulary in their L1 used to refer to one thing, for example “you all”, “y’all”, “y’uns”, “you guys”, etc. and “pop”, “soda”, “coke”, etc., and discuss which term they think is more correct. Later, a discussion could ensue highlighting that the term most closely related to each student’s background is typically viewed as more “correct” when, in reality, this is a social construct since words themselves do not hold any degree of correctness on their own. As suggested by Potowski (2000), discussions such as these should be conducted in TA training sessions to help dispel any linguistic bias they may have, whether conscious or not, and whether HLs will be present in their classes or not.

Instructors must recognize and be able to address sociolinguistic issues of language such as dialect, variation, identity, and power. Even when thorough knowledge of all features of every specific variety is not feasibly obtainable; instructors should be aware of the existence of varieties in order to gain a greater understanding of the richness of the language. Later, they should impart this understanding to students and avoid correcting the use of a specific variation based on a standard, prestige variety (Nieto, 2010: 42).

9. CAVEATS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study should be evaluated taking into consideration the limitations they present. First, question three of the survey was poorly formulated, primarily due to the vague construction it presented. The question read: “Are you familiar with the dialects of Spanish?” and the problem was posited by the term “familiar”, since the concept of familiarity is subjective. The majority of the participants stated that they consider themselves familiar with the dialects of Spanish, but we the researchers cannot determine to what degree. “Familiarity” could be understood within a wide spectrum, ranging from whether participants have heard about the existence of dialects but do not know any distinctive features, to knowing many variations of the language quite thoroughly, or to possessing the expertise to present them in a FL classroom, and all the different options in between.

Second, even though question six was designed as an open-ended question meant to provide flexibility so that participants could freely describe their teaching practices regarding the inclusion of dialects, it presented some complications upon coding and analyzing the results. The question read: “While teaching, do you

present dialectal differences to your students? If so, why and how do you do it?” Although the question aimed to identify why and how instructors present dialectal differences, it did not specifically elicit the treatment of lexical, morphosyntactic, or phonological features. When analyzing the results, we observed that many of the participants had noted they work with some of the aforementioned features, but since we did not particularly ask about them, we could not account for them as categories, quantify responses, or establish differences and similarities amongst practices. Lastly, it would have been helpful to formulate the final question “Do books effectively include dialectal differences?” in a way that would have elicited responses regarding which textbooks most effectively incorporate dialects into the main content.

Although our survey targeted instructors teaching beginning levels, further research could shed light concerning the situation of instructors in upper level courses. Additionally, future research could explore pedagogical approaches for presenting dialectal differences, and possibly gather students’ impressions, either concerning dialects or concerning the activities themselves, after implementing the activities.

10. CONCLUSIONS

A standard, idealized and artificially constructed variety has generally been used in the teaching of Spanish as a FL in colleges and universities in the United States. As a consequence, students are limited in exposure to the richness of the Spanish language. Ignoring the existence of dialects in textbooks, teacher preparation, curriculum development, and the classroom setting deprives generations of students and instructors of awareness of language differences and the corresponding representations of respective cultures and identities.

By raising awareness regarding dialectal varieties of Spanish starting in beginning courses, students will be more prepared to recognize the existence and the importance of dialects and ultimately to interact with NSs, whether abroad or within their own country. This goal simultaneously represents the willingness to avoid language discrimination and to take an active role in embracing diversity. We aim for change in the long run that strives for the incorporation of dialectal awareness in instructor training and curriculum development. It is imperative that linguistic and cultural diversity be addressed by coordinators and administrators in FL departments in order to raise awareness and promote inclusivity through curriculum design and material selection as well as instructor training. In addition, due to the difficulty this issue presents in beginning L2 Spanish university classrooms in

the U.S., further research is necessary to determine which varieties should be presented and which approaches are most effective for doing so.

Finally, we consider it important for publishers to produce textbooks that incorporate not only exposure to various dialects, but also inclusion of different aspects of those dialects in instruction and activities that facilitate dialectal awareness. We applaud Arteaga and Llorente (2009) for their review of the treatment of dialectal variations in beginning textbooks for university Spanish classes and we suggest that future research evaluate additional textbooks and investigate which activities most effectively address dialectal variations in order to motivate prospective authors to grant importance to this topic in their textbook writing.

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