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# **(Non)Standardization of Language in the Classroom**

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# What's most important about teaching a language?

- Culture
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Speaking fluency
- Listening comprehension
- And many other aspects

The list is quite long but rather than holding any one aspect above others, these are all very important skills in language acquisition.

# Why do we teach?

ACTFL standards are based in instructing students in the studies of a foreign language, with the goal being the ability to communicate effectively in that target language.

# Who is the class for? Who are we teaching?

It's for all our students; those who struggle, those who excel, and those who are learning at the targeted pace.

Each classroom has its own community of students that is very different from the next. One portion of the community often neglected in Spanish classrooms however, is heritage learners.

# Definition of “heritage learner”

“The term ‘heritage language learner’ is used to describe a person studying a language who has proficiency in or a cultural connection to that language.”

# Differentiation

Heritage learners may need different tools and exercises than some of their classmates, whether that's a longer time with grammar assignments or accelerated reading assignments; anything that would enhance their learning experience in the classroom.

Sometimes differentiation will include allowing and encouraging your students to use aspects of the Spanish language that hasn't been taught in class.

# Standardization of Language

The standardization of a language is “The perspective of one ‘correct’ way of speaking and multiple inferior ways of speaking is seen on both the level of language as well as the language of dialect.”

# Standardization of Language

Even in English, this is often an issue. There are many dialects and ways of speaking that are often looked down on, either because they are not “proper” or because they are not included in the curriculum. This means that what ends up being taught is often a “standard” form of the language.



# Multiculturality in the Classroom

Giving space for multiculturality in a classroom environment is imperative.

This includes, in a Spanish classroom, supporting and affirming our students' experiences with the language, whether that's a different set of vocabulary (e.g. "culebra" vs "serpiente" for snake).

# Multiculturalism in the Classroom

This also includes the different sets of societal rules that lead to different grammar choices – for example, while many classrooms teach informal (tú) usage as being prevalent, there are countries where even parents will talk to their children using formal (usted) language.

# Multiculturality in the Classroom

Encouraging space for many different dialects and usages of the language ensures that heritage learners don't begin to feel insecurities or a feeling of being "bad" at their/their family's cultural language.

They should not be alienated for the sake of teaching a "standard" version of the language.

# Supporting Heritage Learners

There are many ways to support every learner in our classes, including heritage learners. It should not be assumed that they will be fluent in the dialect being taught and the assessments should be flexible enough that it does not feel like a “gotcha!” when they exchange a vocabulary word for one that is already existent in their vocab.

# Resources

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