

A READING STUDY OF SPANISH HERITAGE SPEAKERS

Kristi Hislope, Ph.D.

Email: khislope@ngcsu.edu

Abstract

This descriptive study investigates the self-reported reading habits and levels of ability in reading of ten heritage speakers of Spanish enrolled in Spanish classes at Purdue University.

Participants also read a four page magazine article in Spanish which had an input flood of 47 tokens of the present subjunctive and were asked to answer comprehension questions and present subjunctive recognition questions. The researcher hoped that through this focus-on-form reading article the participants would have a positive change in recognition of the grammatical form which is undergoing simplification in U.S. Spanish. Results for this small sample warrant more explicit focus-on-form instruction and activation of background knowledge, even on a familiar topic, for heritage speakers.

Introduction

Reading in a foreign language can be an arduous task depending on the way we approach the text we are reading. Teacher assumptions of how students are reading affect reading outcomes as well. Instructors may believe students are understanding and interpreting a text in much different ways than they really are. If teachers are using a text to teach grammar and students are focusing on content then neither student nor teacher goals will be met through the exercise. With heritage speakers of a language teachers may assume, often times erroneously, that they are “expert” readers because they may have grown up speaking the language or have at least a passive knowledge of it unlike their second or foreign language classmates. In this study heritage speaker is defined by the researcher as an individual who

spoke or understood Spanish as a child but was never formally educated in Spanish before high school. The present descriptive study reports and discusses reading issues as self-reported by ten heritage speakers of Spanish in relation to their reading habits in English and in Spanish. The participants also read a four page Spanish article (see Appendix A) with excessive occurrences (a focus-on-form technique called input flood) of the Spanish present subjunctive to see if it would trigger written production of the form and to see if there was an effect on recognition of the form in writing. Participants' performance on comprehension and recognition exercises (see Appendix B) of the present subjunctive are discussed in this paper. The discussion will give insights to Spanish language teachers who have these heritage speakers in their courses.

Previous Research

L1 Versus L2 Reading

Bernhardt (1991) claims that many reading processes in first language (L1) and second language (L2) are identical (p.174). However, L1 students have a broader knowledge base than students reading an L2. Bernhardt proposes a sociocognitive view of L2 reading which considers the following textual elements: linguistic (semantics and syntax), structure, pragmatic nature, intentionality, content and topic (p.15-16). All of these elements interact with the individual reader who makes his/her own “decisions about what is important in texts and makes sense of it or ‘reconstructs’ it according to those decisions” (15). “As a result, the input text and the output text are...different entities” (15).

Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991) outline a procedural model for integrative reading (p.73-76). Their model integrates both reader- and text-based processing stages. Thus, they consider the knowledge readers bring to the process and how this knowledge may be distorted from the cultural assumptions of the text. The model deems comprehension as a “synthesis of text and reader views” (74).

As will be shown later, the participants in the current study read Spanish magazines, letters, and cards from family members most often or what Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991) call entertainment literature. In a discussion of entertainment literature versus more serious

literature, Swaffar, Arens and Byrnes claim that the major difference between the two kinds of literature is that serious literature is not formulaic (p. 213). Thus, when second language learners read literary texts “they must make inferences not only about what the text says, but it how it says it – its metaphors, ordering of information, omissions, and narrative point of view” (p. 213-4). They also discuss another challenge that learners face when reading in a foreign language: unfamiliar cultural allusions (p. 214). They state that in popular literature the content and context are familiar to the reader. “Rather than challenging the reader to think, these entertainments offer the reader an escape from having to think” (p. 214). Heritage speakers *may* have an advantage over traditional L2 students with cultural knowledge and a better understanding of values and references associated with the culture of the language being studied. However, this may not be the case. Teachers should not be too quick to assume that students with Hispanic surnames or that have grown up speaking Spanish in the home will automatically understand all cultural references. They still have grown up in American society. As a result, “heritage speakers often have a very limited and sometimes negative understanding of their own culture” (Samaniego and Pino 2000, p. 50). Also, depending on the country of origin of the literary work, Hispanic students will not have the same cultural knowledge of all countries where Spanish is spoken. Spanish-speakers are not a homogeneous group culturally or linguistically. Teachers need to allow Heritage students to discuss in class what they do know about the cultural aspects of the text to be read. Such discussions serve to activate background knowledge and act as advance organizers for other students in the class. In this way, they will feel as if they are bringing something to the discussion and will learn about cultural differences from other Hispanic groups. In short, we need to exploit any knowledge they have.

Processing skills and transfer from the dominant language to the less dominant language are also issues in L2 reading. Samaniego and Pino (2000) advocate teaching reading strategies such as anticipating, predicting, scanning, skimming, reading between the lines, etc. to heritage speakers (p. 40). They state, “Even when these students have already mastered these skills in English, they need to be made aware that the same skills can be used in Spanish” (p. 40-41).

They point out that reading is important to broaden their vocabulary, improve writing skills and grammatical accuracy, develop critical thinking skills, and expand overall knowledge (p. 42).

Focus-on-Form for Grammar Acquisition

In regards to grammatical accuracy, the popularity of the communicative approach to teaching has brought with it a decrease in attention to grammar instruction in the classroom. As a result, many students leave our classrooms with a certain level of fluency, but many times with little accuracy. Because of this concern of sacrificing production accuracy in an attempt to simply be able to express our ideas in order to communicate, there has been a fairly recent return to “teaching” grammar. One method of teaching grammar is called focus on form. If used effectively this method could be useful for heritage speakers who many times use “non-standard” grammatical forms. Williams and Evans (1998) define focus on form (FonF) as “...instruction that draws learners’ attention to form in the context of meaningful communication” (p. 139). Lee and Valdman (2000) claim that focus on form (FonF) has “...the goal of accurate as well as meaningful learner production” (p. xi). For those who feel that FonF is a return to the teaching of traditional grammar, Sanz (2000) argues, “Focus on Form does not mean we are going back to the drill and kill classroom because FonF does not imply constant, indiscriminate grammar explanation and practice. FonF means precisely the opposite: setting limits on what is explicitly taught” (p. 17).

Drawing students’ attention has been referred to as consciousness-raising and input enhancement. As well, terms such as awareness, detection, attention, consciousness, and noticing are issues in FonF research (see Tomlin and Villa 1994). Doughty and Williams (1998) say that until we know more we can assume that multiple encounters are necessary for engaging learning processes such as noticing a form in the input (p. 253). Schmidt (1990), in his “noticing hypothesis”, argues that for acquisition of a target form in the L2 to take place, first the learner must notice it. “Having attention oriented toward some aspects of language increases the likelihood of, but does not guarantee the activation of...*detection*” (Tomlin and Villa 1994, p.190). Detection here is used similarly as the term “noticing”. Smith (1970) expresses a

similar notion. He states, “[F]orms may be noticed perceptually, but not linguistically. Although learners may notice the signals, the input may nevertheless be nonsalient to their learning mechanisms”.

There are implicit and explicit methods of FonF to attempt to draw student attention. In implicit FonF, “the aim is to *attract* learner attention and to avoid metalinguistic discussion, always *minimizing any interruption* to the communication of meaning” whereas in explicit FonF, “the aim is to *direct* learner attention and to *exploit pedagogical grammar* in this regard” (Doughty and Williams 1998, p. 232). There is much debate in the field on how explicit FonF should be. The more explicit the FonF is, the more obtrusive it is, while implicit FonF is less obtrusive. Leow (2000) (cited in Lee and Valdman 2000) claims that

...a considerable amount of SLA [second language acquisition] research indicates that implicit procedures for awareness enhancement, such as input flooding (providing numerous exemplars of the feature in the input) or writing enhancement (highlighting the targeted feature by various typographical devices), prove to be less effective in accelerating acquisition and advancing language development than a variety of types of explicit approaches...(p. xiv).

Doughty and Williams (1998) claim the opposite. They state, “...it is sometimes possible to aim more or less implicitly to attract the learner’s attention to linguistic features and promote the processing of these features without providing any sort of explicit guidance...” (p. 236).

In the present study the most implicit FonF technique, input flooding was used. The rationale was that this type of FonF mirrors the type of reading heritage speakers are already doing in Spanish. The researcher wanted to see if using an article with unobtrusive present subjunctive would influence the reader in any way.

The Subjunctive in U.S. Spanish

It is generally recognized that in varieties of US Spanish there is an increased use of the indicative mood in contexts where the subjunctive would normally occur in “standard” Spanish (Torreblanca 1997, p. 135). Sánchez (1972) claimed, “The tendency of not using the subjunctive according to the norm exists in the Mexican-American dialect especially in the cases of verbs of negation or doubt...” (p. 57) (translation mine). Torreblanca (1997) claims that US Spanish is following the popular tendency of a language to morphologically simplify (p. 137). Silva-Corvalán (1994) also agrees. She defines simplification as “a complex process involving the expansion of a form to a larger number of contexts (i.e., generalization) at the expense of a form undergoing simplification, which is used with increasingly lower frequency” (p. 257). However, Silva-Corvalán points out that loss is occurring in other dialects of Spanish as well. She states that “the phenomenon of gradual loss of mood distinctions...represents part of an evolutionary trend in Spanish and other Romance languages” (p. 268). She lists several standard varieties of Spanish such as Argentinean, Mexican, Paraguayan, Uruguayan and Venezuelan that are in the process of simplification of subjunctive forms (p. 268). Investigating this process of simplification is important to the present study since the present subjunctive is the form under scrutiny in the reading passage and exercises. Implicit focus on form is used to study this process. Sanz (2000) agrees that we should focus on forms that are difficult to acquire such as the Spanish subjunctive, *ser* “to be” and *estar* “to be”, and aspects related to word order (p. 17).

Spanish Reading Studies of Heritage Speakers

Empirical studies on Spanish reading by heritage speakers is almost nonexistent. Faltis (1984) discusses the relationship between what kinds of reading and writing activities are assigned in textbooks and by teachers compared to the reading and writing that these students actually report doing outside of the classroom. He found that instructors perceived reading as more important than writing. Students reported reading and writing nonacademic Spanish texts in their communities, but 82% of the activities assigned by instructors were academic topics.

This mismatch of beliefs and usage shows that these students are not receiving the practice they need for the kinds of reading and writing they might use in their communities. Santos, et al. (2000) also address this issue, within an L2 context, by questioning, "...[H]ow do the methods and techniques we teach connect up with social activity outside the classroom" (p. 4)?

We need to make sure that we do cover the types of reading that Heritage speakers do most outside of class. However, we also need to move them into a more serious reading in order to develop critical thinking and analytical skills in Spanish. We also hope that through reading heritage speakers may acquire a second, more "standard" dialect if they hope to use their Spanish outside of their community in more formal settings.

Methodology

Procedures

On the first day of the experiment participants were asked to fill out a detailed questionnaire. Over the course of the experiment, participants completed a pre-test, immediate posttest after reading a passage and a delayed posttest (see Appendices A and B). All three tests were identical except for comprehension questions of the reading article on the immediate posttest. Three weeks elapsed between each test. In this study, background information related to the reading habits reported by the participants, passage comprehension questions, and whether reading a passage with implicit FonF has an effect on their recognition of the form will be discussed.

Participants

Ten participants were recruited from names solicited from Spanish instructors teaching first through eighth semester Spanish at Purdue University. Instructors were asked to submit names and phone numbers of students they suspected were heritage speakers. Fifty-nine forms were sent out, and twenty-five were returned with thirty-one names of potential participants. The researcher contacted each one by telephone to determine if they fit the criteria of heritage speaker as defined by the researcher, namely that they spoke or understood Spanish as a child

but were never formally educated in Spanish before high school. In the end, sixteen qualified as heritage speakers and ten volunteered to participate in the study.

Table 1 gives background information on each participant. They are labeled as M or F for male or female participant in order to retain their confidentiality.

Table 1. Participants' Age and Geographical Background Information.

Participant	Age	Place of Origin	Maternal grand- parents/Mother's place of origin	Paternal grand- parents/Father's place of origin
M1	21	Goshen, IN	Goshen, IN	Coamo, Puerto Rico
M2	20	East Chicago, IN	Nuevo Leon, Mexico/ East Chicago, IN	Colima, Mexico
M3	19	East Chicago, IN	Guanajuato, Mexico	Guanajuato, Mexico
M4	30	Chicago, IL	Zacatecas, Mexico	Zacatecas, Mexico
M5	20	Chicago, IL	Zacatecas, Mexico	Zacatecas, Mexico
F1	19	Chicago, IL	Jalisco, Mexico	Jalisco, Mexico
F2	20	Munster, IN	Michoacan, Mexico	Michoacan, Mexico
F3	19	Chicago, IL	Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico	Yauco, Puerto Rico
F4	20	East Chicago, IN	Puerto Rico	Puerto Rico
F5	19	West Los Angeles, CA	Zacatecas, Mexico	Zacatecas, Mexico

All participants are between the ages of 19 and 21, except for M4, who is 30. All are from northern Indiana or Chicago, IL, with the exception of F5 who was born in California and moved to Lafayette, IN, as a young teenager. M1 is the only participant who has a parent, his mother, that is not Hispanic. Seven participants are of Mexican heritage, and three are of Puerto Rican heritage.

Table 2 presents the participants' classifications, their majors and the Spanish class in which they are or were previously enrolled.

Table 2. Classifications, Majors, and Spanish Class Enrollment.

Participant	Classification	Major	Spanish class enrolled in ¹
M1	Junior	Law and Society	241, 302
M2	Junior	Computer Engineering	301
M3	Freshman	Engineering	301
M4	Senior	Mechanical Engineering Tech.	201
M5	Sophomore	Pharmacy	241, 301
F1	Freshman	Engineering	301
F2	Sophomore	Psychology	302
F3	Sophomore	Elementary Education	202
F4	Junior	Accounting	401
F5	Freshman	Undecided	302

¹201-202 are Spanish Level III and IV (second year Spanish)

241 is Introduction to the Study of Hispanic Literature

301-302 are Spanish Level V and VI (third year Spanish)

401 is Spanish Level VII (fourth year Spanish)

Participants were asked if they considered themselves native Spanish speakers and how they define nativeness. M1, M3, F1 and F3 do not consider themselves natives although they all fit their own descriptions of what they consider a native speaker to be. These questions were separated intentionally on the questionnaire to see if discrepancies in definition and self-labeling would occur. They were asked why they were taking a Spanish course now and what their goals were in taking the course. Not one mentioned reading. Writing, speaking, and grammar were all listed along with “I enjoy it” (F2) and “to get an ‘A’” (M2). When asked if their goals were being met in taking Spanish classes, M3 answered “partially” stating “Because only saw improvement in my grammar and spelling. I didn’t really learn to understand what I read”. F3 states, “I think the class helps me in the reading and grammar portion, but not in the speaking as much”. M3 is one year ahead of F3. The researcher thought he would have practiced reading more than F3.

Analysis and Discussion

The following tables present the participants' responses to questions related to their reading practices in English and in Spanish. Because one of the purposes of the original study

was to test the written production and recognition skills of the Spanish present subjunctive after being exposed to it in a reading passage, it was important to investigate the reading habits of the participants. If they are already reading a lot in Spanish and we expect input flooding to be effective on their skills, then we need to see what kind of reading they are already doing.

Participants were asked if they read certain materials in Spanish and how often they read them.

These results are tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3. Materials Read in Spanish and How Often the Materials Are Read.

Part	newspapers	books	magazines	letters/cards	internet
M1	no	daily	monthly	no	no
M2	no	no	no	no	no
M3	no	no	monthly	monthly	no
M4	monthly	monthly	monthly	monthly	monthly
M5	monthly	monthly	monthly	monthly	no
F1	no	no	no	weekly	weekly
F2	monthly	monthly	monthly	monthly	weekly
F3	no	no	monthly	no	no
F4	when I come across it	weekly	weekly	whenever family writes me	no
F5	weekly	monthly	monthly	monthly	daily

Eight of the ten participants report reading magazines while seven report reading letters or cards in Spanish. The internet ranks last with only four reporting reading Spanish on the internet.

Only M2 reports not reading in Spanish on any of the categories listed. This is interesting since he considers himself a native Spanish speaker. However, M2 also reports reading very little in English (Table 4). Even F3, who reported feeling uncomfortable using Spanish in all situations, reports reading magazines in Spanish. Participants were given the opportunity to list other types of reading they did in Spanish. No other types were listed.

Table 4 presents reading self assessments in Spanish and in English on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being low ability and 4 high ability, as well as how much they claim they read in English and the importance they place on reading in Spanish and why.

Table 4. Self Ratings on Reading Abilities, Frequency and Importance of Reading.

Part	Spanish Rating ¹	English Rating	How much do you read in Eng?	Is it important to be able to read in Spanish and why?
M1	2	4	A lot	Yes, it's part of becoming bilingual.
M2	3	4	Very little	Yes, it's very important in learning.
M3	3	4	Very little	Yes, so I can be informed.
M4	2	4	A lot	Yes, because of so much diversity.
M5	3	3	some	Yes, it teaches you to speak and write Spanish better.
F1	4	4	A lot	Yes, it is part of my culture.
F2	4	4	A lot	Yes, I feel that I should be well cultured and know my native language very well.
F3	3	4	A lot	Yes, it's important to know another language, a useful skill in American society today.
F4	4	4	A lot	Yes, the more you know the better or easier things are.
F5	3	4	some	Yes, it's my language and it's very helpful.

¹1= low ability in reading, 4= high ability in reading

All rate English a 4 (high reading ability) except for M5. However, he rates himself equally in both languages in reading ability. F1, F2, and F4 also rate their abilities equally with a 4 in both languages. Of the participants assessing themselves equally, only F1 does not claim to be a native Spanish speaker. M4 presents an interesting profile. He is the only male who reports reading in Spanish in all categories, however, he rates himself with only a 2 in ability. M1 also rates himself with a 2 in Spanish reading ability, yet he only reports reading two of the five categories in Table 14. As for amount of English reading, participants had to chose “very little, some, a lot”. Only M2 and M3 report doing very little reading in English. No matter the amount they report reading, they all rank themselves with high reading ability with the exception of M5. All participants believe it is important to be able to read in Spanish. However, they all generalize their reasons except for M5 who states, “It teaches you to speak and write Spanish better.”

To determine if the participants already had been exposed to the present subjunctive in a class, they were asked on the questionnaire “Have you been instructed in the difference between *hablo* (I talk, present indicative) and *que yo hable* (I talk, present subjunctive). They were not given translations or the paradigm name. Other pairs were used as distractors. They had to answer “yes, no, don’t know”. Only four participants reported receiving instruction in the differences between the two: M1, M3, M4, and F1.

The reading passage was a magazine article that chosen from a Spanish language textbook for its high occurrence of the present subjunctive (47 tokens), it’s familiar topic (family relationships), and fairly easy reading level. It’s content was four pages in which students were interviewed and answered questions about their relationships with their fathers. Only one study participant asked the researcher for the meaning of a word in the passage. It was a vocabulary item that did not interfere with comprehension of the passage.

Comprehension activities on the immediate posttest were used as distractors so that participants would think they were being tested on the contents of the reading passage whereas the initial goal of the larger study was to look at the subjunctive. The participants were told to read the passage at their own pace and that they would answer some questions after reading. They were given no more instructions than that.

Table 5 reports the results of the comprehension exercises from the immediate posttest. Activity A is a true/false exercise based on what the participants read in the article. Activity D asks students to read some sentences from a previous exercise and list them if they could have appeared in the article they read. This activity calls for them to use some lower level analysis skills to determine which of a set of sentences are content appropriate to the article.

Table 5. Number of Correct Responses on the Comprehension Activities.

	Activity A (7 total items)	Activity D (4 total items)
M1	5	3
M2	5	3
M3	5	4
M4	3	3
M5	4	3

F1	3	1
F2	6	3
F3	7	3
F4	7	2
F5	5	3

All participants scored higher on the True/False exercise with the exception of M4 who scored equally on both. The two participants enrolled in a literature course (M1 and M5) did no better than the other participants on activity D. The only participant (M3) who scored perfectly on activity D is not in the highest level Spanish course and is one of four who does not consider himself a native speaker. Thus, level of Spanish and self reported nativeness do on seem to effect the scores. The fact that students are not able to extrapolate information from a fairly easy text and see if other information could be included there may partly be a reflection of instructional methods. If we are only focusing on reading content in language courses then students are not being taught to read more analytically or to apply the knowledge elsewhere. Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991) address the issue in scholarly approaches to literature. They state, “They [L2 students] interact with the instructor’s comprehension of the text rather than their own, thereby reducing their view of literature to that of a story line and a compendium of cultural facts” (215). They see their role as passive. The researcher believes this happens in entertainment literature and when they are asked to do more than reading for comprehension, they do not perform well.

Only two students performed perfectly on the true/false questions which were directly related to content. Perhaps because they were not told explicitly what they would have to do, they did not know what to read for. However, reading for content is normally one of the first things we do as learners.

F3's performance is worth pointing out. She reports not feeling comfortable using Spanish at all, yet she performs perfectly on one of the comprehension exercises. On the written production exercise (not discussed in this paper), she scored zero on all tests. Thus,

from her results alone we can conclude that production and recognition are two very different skills.

The participants did not perform as well as expected over-all on the comprehension exercises. The amount they report reading in Spanish does not seem to effect scores. For example, M2 who reports no reading in Spanish performs the same on both activities as F5 who reports reading in every category (table 3). The participants were not given explicit instructions as to what they would be doing when finished with the passage. Also, they were not told in any way or was it pointed out in the text that they would be focusing on a grammatical structure. With this group, focusing their attention could prove to be more beneficial both in comprehension and in present subjunctive mood production and recognition. The reading was simple, and they did not perform well. The topic of the article relates to family values. They all have background knowledge on that topic. If we give our students a completely unfamiliar topic without supporting exercises to activate background knowledge we can only imagine the dire outcome.

Recognition skills of the present subjunctive were also examined in three multiple choice tests in which participants had to choose the English sentences that best expressed the idea of eight Spanish sentences containing the present subjunctive. Although the written production of the form is not analyzed or discussed here, it is worth mentioning that the participants who scored very low on the production task performed better on the recognition task with the scores showing less dispersion on the recognition tasks. No participants received a perfect score on any of the recognition tasks. Table 6 presents the number of correct recognitions of the meaning of the Spanish present subjunctive and the corresponding percentages. There were 11 total items in this multiple choice task. Eight of the items contained subjunctive forms. The other three items were distractors which are not included in the count of correct forms or percentages. Participants had to choose between two English translations of the Spanish sentence containing the subjunctive.

Table 6. Number of Correct Subjunctive Recognitions and Percentages.

Part	PreT	ImPT	DelPT	Total # correct in all 3 tests	PreT%	ImPT%	DelPT%
M1	3	2	6	11	37.5	25.0	75.0
M2	4	5	4	13	50.0	62.5	50.0
M3	4	4	5	13	50.0	50.0	62.5
M4	5	4	5	14	62.5	50.0	62.5
M5	5	4	5	14	62.5	50.0	62.5
F1	7	4	5	16	87.5	50.0	62.5
F2	4	4	4	12	50.0	50.0	50.0
F3	3	5	6	14	37.5	62.5	75.0
F4	4	5	4	13	50.0	62.5	50.0
F5	3	5	4	12	37.5	62.5	50.0

F1 has the highest recognition score, 16, with the lowest score being 11 for M1. The most astonishing result is for F3. She scored 0 of a total of 39 on the production task, yet 14 out of a total of 24 on this task, which is a great improvement in comparison to the other participants. F3 reports that she has not received instruction in the present subjunctive, yet she is able to recognize it at times. M1 has the lowest score of 11 but reports that he has received instruction on the form. Thus, self-reporting on instruction of this form does not seem to effect recognition skill.

Table 7 presents an item analysis of each present subjunctive item in the recognition task. It reports the number of participants that correctly recognized each present subjunctive translation into English.

Table 7. Number of Participants Answering the Recognition Item Correctly.

Test	Item#1	2	4	5	7	8	9	11
Pretest	9	4	3	10	0	6	8	2
ImPT	9	5	4	10	0	5	8	1
DelPT	10	9	4	10	0	5	9	2

In items number five and seven all of the participants recognized the present subjunctive correctly and incorrectly respectively. A closer look at the items shows that item five is a subjunctive adjectival clause whereas item seven is a subjunctive adverbial clause. However,

like item five, items two and eleven are both adjectival clauses. These three items all show very different patterns in the three tests. Item two shows a pattern of improvement, item eleven is recognized infrequently as correct, whereas the adjective clause in number five is recognized correctly by all the participants. Item seven, which was never recognized correctly, is an adverbial clause as is item one which has a high number of recognition. Items four, eight, and nine are subjunctive noun clauses. Several participants expressed dismay to the researcher because the recognition task did not have “direct translations” into English of the Spanish sentences. The researcher responded that many times a direct translation is not possible between languages and that the participant should choose the English sentence that best expressed the Spanish one. These comments were especially true of item eleven which is reproduced here:

11. Mis padres buscan un apartamento que tenga un garaje.
 - a. My parents are looking for an apartment that has a garage, and they think it will be hard to find one.
 - b. My parents are looking for an apartment that has a garage, and they think they will find one.

Several participants commented that the first part of each choice was the correct translation but that the second part confused them. For item number eleven, choice “a” is correct. Participants commenting on this sentence were having trouble distinguishing the two semantically.

Conclusions

The results of this study cannot be generalized because of the small number of participants. However, we can discuss some trends that appear in the findings. With this group, reading in Spanish appears to be more of an L2 activity for them based on the generally poor comprehension scores. This only adds extra evidence to the argument that heritage speakers not be considered “expert” native readers. Instructors should not assume that they do not need to do pre-reading activities with heritage speakers. The comprehension results of the present study *may* have turned out quite differently if the students had been instructed with pre-

reading activities. Every reader has some background knowledge on family relationships regardless of whether they are positive or negative feelings toward the subject. These readers did not use that knowledge to their benefit.

The participants in this study also could not determine if the information included in a given set of sentences contained details that were appropriate for the article they had just read. Thus the analytical skills they are being taught (or not being taught) need to be called into question.

As for teaching grammar through reading exercises, these participants were generally unsuccessful with recognizing the meaning of the present subjunctive form in isolated sentences. Participants in this study were only given one reading with an input flood of the form. More studies need to be conducted using multiple exposures to readings to test for effectiveness of this method. Differing degrees of explicitness also need to be tested with heritage speakers. For example, continue using an input flood but highlight the forms in some manner or highlight and instruct on the semantic distinctions between the indicative and the subjunctive. With heritage speakers wishing to acquire an additional more “standard” dialect it is imperative that they can use subjunctive forms. We need to take steps to move these students from being able to recognize the form to actually being able to use it.

Most heritage speakers read entertainment literature in Spanish. We should begin with the types of reading they do and gradually move them into more literary pieces. With enough training in reading for comprehension, analytically and for grammatical structures, they will begin to make their own connections and reading will become a more useful adventure for them in all arenas.

References

- Bernhardt, E.B. (1991). Reading development in a second language: Theoretical, empirical, and classroom perspectives. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Doughty, C., & Williams, J. (1998). Pedagogical choices in focus on form. In C. Doughty, & J. Williams (Eds.), Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Faltis, C. J. (1984). Reading and writing in Spanish for bilingual college students: What's taught at school and what's used in the community. Bilingual Review, 11,1,21-32.
- Leow, R. P. (2000). Attention, awareness, and focus on form research: A critical overview. In J. Lee & A. Valdman (Eds.), Form and meaning: Multiple perspectives. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Samaniego, F. & Pino, C. (2000). Frequently asked questions about SNS programs. In AATSP Professional Development Series Handbook for Teachers K-16, Spanish for Native Speakers. Fort Worth: Harcourt.
- Sánchez, R. (1972). Nuestra circunstancia lingüística. El Grito 6,1,45-74.
- Santos, T., Atkinson, D., Erickson, M., Matsuda, P.K., & Silva, T. (2000). On the future of second language writing: A colloquium. Journal of Second Language Writing 9,1,1-20.
- Sanz, C. (2000). What form to focus on? Linguistics, language awareness, and the education of L2 teachers. In J. F. Lee & A. Valdman (Eds.), Form and meaning: Multiple perspectives. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Silva-Corvalán, C. (1994). The gradual loss of mood distinctions in Los Angeles Spanish. Language Variation and Change 6,3,255-272.
- Smith, P.D. (1970). A comparison of the cognitive and audiolingual approaches to foreign language instruction: The Pennsylvania foreign language project. Philadelphia: Cambridge University Press.
- Swaffar, J.K., Arens, K.M., & Byrnes, H. (1991). Reading for meaning: An integrated approach to language learning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Tomlin, R.S. & Villa, V. (1994). Attention in cognitive science and second language acquisition. Studies in Second Language Acquisition 16,183-203.

Torreblanca, M. (1997). El español hablado en el suroeste de los Estados Unidos y las normas lingüísticas españolas. In M.C. Colombi & F.X. Alarcón (Eds.), La enseñanza del español a hispanohablantes: Praxis y teoría. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Williams, J. & Evans, J. (1998). What kind of focus and on which forms? In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Kristi Hislope is assistant professor of Spanish at North Georgia College and State University. She received her Ph.D. in Spanish Linguistics from Purdue University in 2001. Her research areas are Spanish as a heritage language and second language, second language acquisition, literacy, bilingualism, and ESL.

Appendix A - Portion of Reading Passage

¿Qué significa, para ti, tu padre ? Mesa redonda con jóvenes adolescentes

¿Cuántas veces tiene el padre la oportunidad de saber lo que piensan de él, realmente, sus hijos? Como la respuesta podría ser: ¡ninguna!, decidimos reunir a un grupo de jovencitos adolescentes - y, por tanto, con una capacidad crítica ya desarrollada - y los animamos a que hablaran, sin cortapisa, de ese gran personaje que les dio la mitad de la vida. Sus opiniones trazan un retrato bastante exacto de muchos padres actuales. ¿Se reconoce usted en él?

¿Qué significa para ti tu padre?

GERARDO: Alguien a quien se debe respetar; es una persona que nos enseña a lo largo de la vida. También representa el apoyo económico, el papá da todo lo material. A veces, aunque uno no esté de acuerdo con él y cueste mucho trabajo, por ser su hijo debe hacer el intento de respetarlo.

MELANIE: Para mí es algo diferente que para los demás, porque yo vivo con él desde hace dos años (mi mamá vive fuera de México); entonces, la única, la figura más importante que tengo es la de mi padre. En este tiempo, él se ha convertido sobre todo, en mi amigo, y siento que así debe ser un padre. Este también es la figura económica; debiera ser un apoyo (emocional) para los hijos, pero muchas veces aunque comprenda, no sabe cómo expresar, cómo

transmitir lo que está sintiendo; por eso con frecuencia uno se siente distanciado de él.

CÉSAR: El padre es quien nos dio la vida, la persona que más respeto y al que más cariño se le debe tener pase lo que pase. Mis papás están separados, yo vivo con mi mamá, pero los quiero igual a los dos. Aunque mi padre no esté cerca, sigue siendo un respaldo. ¡Así debería ser un padre! No creo que haya motivos tan grandes que justifiquen perderle el cariño y el respeto.

ANGELES: Pienso que tengo mucha suerte porque como mi papá hay pocos. Es un buenísimo amigo y cuando lo necesito siempre me ayuda; haya hecho algo bien o mal, él está para ayudarme, no para reprocharme. Me ha enseñado muchísimas cosas ¡y qué bueno! porque no va a estar todo el tiempo conmigo y es importante que me deje su sabiduría. El es una de las dos personas a las que quiero mucho; la otra es mi mamá. Por ningún motivo pienso enojarme con él. Además, si uno se lleva siempre bien con su papá, creo que aunque haya algún problema se llega a un arreglo.

adapted from an article found in: Lee, James F., Alex Binkowski, and Bill VanPatten. Ideas: estrategias, lecturas, actividades, y composiciones. McGraw-Hill: New York.

Appendix B - Samples from Test Sections

A. Las siguientes personas formaban parte de una discusión en un artículo de un periódico sobre miembros de la familia. Llena los espacios con la forma correcta del verbo entre paréntesis para completar sus respuestas a la pregunta, ¿Cómo podría ser el papá ideal?

Francisco: Mis padres están divorciados. Mi mamá es muy buena gente. Si ella (casarse) _____ otra vez, que (ser) _____ con alguien que le (tratar) _____ como reina. Esto es lo importante. De mi parte, prefiero un padrastro que no (trabajar) _____ todo el tiempo, que le (gustar) _____ pasar tiempo con su familia y que (comunicarse) _____ con nosotros para mantener un ambiente familiar abierto y amable.

B. Llena los espacios con la forma correcta del verbo entre paréntesis.

1. Mi padre me aconseja que yo (ponerme) _____ el cinturón de seguridad en cualquier coche que me monte.
2. Quiero un papá que (ser) _____ un apoyo emocional para mí aunque un papá así tal vez no me (comprender) _____ muchas veces.
3. El líder de la mesa redonda del artículo cree que los adolescentes (tener) _____ buenas opiniones de los papás.
4. Siento que los papás no (poder) _____ gastar más dinero para regalos para sus hijos.

C. Traducciones. Escribe la letra de la oración en inglés que mejor traduce la idea de la oración en español.

- _____ 1. Mi padre me llamará tan pronto como sepa el horario de su vuelo para la Navidad.
 - a. My father already knows his Christmas flight schedule, and he will call me as soon as he can.
 - b. My father doesn't know his Christmas flight schedule, but he will call me as soon as he does.
- _____ 2. No hay nadie que sea más feliz que mi papá.
 - a. There is no one in the world that is happier than my dad.
 - b. There is no one here that is happier than my dad.
- _____ 3. Mi padre prefiere que yo no fume.
 - a. My father prefers that I not smoke even though he thinks I won't.
 - b. My father prefers that I not smoke even though he knows I will.
- _____ 4. Es verdad, Papá, aunque tú no lo creas.
 - a. It's true, Papá, although I know you don't believe it.
 - b. It's true, Papá, although I don't know what you believe.