Attending to the Needs of Heritage Language Learners in Mixed Classrooms

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I. Overview: Five Principles for teaching mixed classes

1. Know your learners
    i. As members of a category of learners (HL v. L2 learners; beginning v. advanced learners);
    ii. As individuals

2. Choose and use materials with a view towards making learning meaningful, engaging, and accessible to all learners.

3. Make students active partners in learning and teaching.
    i. Make strategic use of HL and L2 learners' complimentary strengths and needs.
    ii. Use Macro (top down) and Micro (bottom up) approaches. Address the difficulties associated with each approach for both types of learners.
    iii. Teach learning strategies.

4. Build pathways to learning for all learners through the use of
    i. Differentiated Instruction;
    ii. Formative assessment;
    iii. Learning strategies;

5. Design courses and curricula that make linguistic and demographic sense.
    i. Build maximally homogeneous classes through placement.
    ii. Accept and embrace diversity in the classroom.
    iii. Use formative assessment to revise curricula and syllabi.

II. Selecting and making effective use of materials

Reading I: "My Name" by Sandra Cisneros from *The House on Mango Street*

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the

Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing. It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse--which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female-but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong. My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild, horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it. And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window. At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name Magdalena--which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least- - can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.

ACTIVITY I

Discussion 1.1: From the point of view of teaching HL learners, what are the strengths of "My Name"? In a MIXED class, what challenges does a reading like this present? How can you get around this?

Reading: United Mexican States

Official Name: United Mexican States

Geography
Area: 1,964,375 sq. km. (761,600 sq. mi.); about three times the size of Texas.
Capital--Mexico City (22 million, estimate for metro area).
Climate: Tropical to desert.

People: Population: 113,724,226. Mexico is the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world and the second most-populous country in Latin America after Brazil. Ethnic groups: Indian-Spanish (mestizo) 60%, Indian 30%, Caucasian 9%, other 1%.   Religions: Roman Catholic 76.5%, Protestant 6.3%, other 0.3%, unspecified 13.8%, none 3.1%.   Education: Years compulsory—11, Literacy--91.4%.

Government   Type: Federal republic.   Independence: First proclaimed September 16, 1810; republic established 1824.   Constitution: February 5, 1917.   Branches: Executive--president (chief of state and head of government). Legislative--

bicameral. Judicial--Supreme Court, local and federal systems. <u>Administrative subdivisions</u>: 31 states and a federal district.

History: Highly developed cultures, including those of the Olmecs, Mayas, Toltecs, and Aztecs, existed long before the Spanish conquest. Hernan Cortes conquered Mexico during the period 1519-21 and founded a Spanish colony that lasted nearly 300 years.   Independence from Spain was proclaimed by Father Miguel Hidalgo on September 16, 1810.   Mexico's severe social and economic problems erupted in a revolution that lasted from 1910 until 1920 and gave rise to the 1917 constitution.

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ACTIVITY I

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<u>Discussion 1.2</u>: From the point of view of teaching L2 learners, what are the strengths of "The United Mexican States"? In a MIXED class, what challenges does a reading like this present? How can you get around this?

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ACTIVITY II
Making materials meaningful for HL *and* L2 learners.

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What are the positive features of the materials assigned to your group, as it pertains to mixed classes? What themes or uses of these materials will maximize their appeal to HL and L2 learners?

<u>Strategies:</u>

a. Think in terms of comparing and contrasting elements of the target culture and American culture (Taking *Little Red Writing Hood* by way of example, in the target culture, would the grandma live across the forest? Would a little girl be allowed to walk across the forest by herself?).
b. Think in terms of adding "insider" information or perspectives to the material (Example: Almanac style presentation of a country. What else do you wish were part of a general overview of your HL country? What about the US?)

III. Addressing issues of language

A. HL and L2 learners' linguistic knowledge

Language as A function of…	HL learners	L2 learners
Context of learning	Primarily the home	School
	Language: informal, oral, non-standard, spontaneous	**Language:** formal, standard, academic, rehearsed, controlled

Timing of learning	Early years, diminished or discontinued upon the start of school.	Adolescence, early adulthood
	Language: Similar to the language of children	**Language:** Adult-like with respect to certain features
Amount of input	Limited, relative to native speakers.	Limited, relative to native speakers and HL speakers.
	Language: Incomplete knowledge of the HL (late acquired features)	**Language:** Incomplete with respect to certain feature, particularly those acquired early in life.
Type of input:	Oral, informal, spontaneous	Formal, focused on form, controlled
	Language: Implicit knowledge	**Language**: Explicit knowledge of the rules

ACTIVITY III

Design an activity for paired work by HL and L2 learners that is mutually beneficial to both learners. Consider the following strategies:

1. Mix tasks that require intuitive knowledge or spontaneous use of the target language (hard for L2 learners), and tasks that require meta-linguistic knowledge or the use of the written or academic registers (hard for HL learners);
2. Hold both students accountable for contributing to the task (assign the harder task to each type of learner);

Type of knowledge required in basic activity	**Learner comparison (stronger > weaker)**	**Sample add-ons to make the activity more challenging for the stronger learner**
Intuitive, spontaneous use of language	HLLs > L2Ls	A writing component. An activity with explicit manipulation of language (e.g. analysis of vocabulary or verb forms)
Academic language	L2Ls > HLLs	An activity that uses colloquial language (e.g. a skit, brokering task)
Colloquial language	HLLs > L2Ls	An activity that takes it to a higher register (e.g. write a letter to the editor, write a summary)

Home vocabulary	HLLs > L2Ls	A formal debate. An activity with explicit manipulation of language (e.g. write a glossary of key home vocabulary)

C. Using macro- and micro- approaches

Teaching domains	Micro-approaches	Macro-approaches
Vocabulary	Carefully controlled and selected	Dictated by function and context
Reading	Small texts, gradually increasing in volume and complexity	Fairly large and complex texts from the beginning
Writing	Sentence level, gradually advancing to paragraph and then longer	Longer texts from the beginning. Integrated emphasis: content, stylistics, grammar, spelling
Speaking and listening	Initially restricted, gradually increasing in length and complexity	Full range of native input (movies, news stories, newspaper articles, etc.)
Culture	Initially isolated and decontextualized	Full range of topics, integrated

Adapted from Kagan and Dillon (2003)

Strategies:

a. HL learners find micro- approaches confusing because they lack the meta language of instruction and/or a mental map of the instructional objectives. Provide them with both through the use or the KWL chart, graphic organizers, etc.
b. L2 learners find macro approaches inaccessible because they lack the fluency to decipher spontaneous language on their own. Help them do that by pre-teaching vocabulary, tapping into background knowledge, etc. Use the Text-to-self connection and other tools to make readings meaningful.

IV. Tools of Differentiation

1. **The text-to-self connection** asks learners to pick out something of interest in a reading or activity and write a reaction. Below are of three sample activities.

Pick a passage from the text and copy it here:
1. This passage reminds me of _____
2. I agree or disagree because _____
3. I find this interesting because _____

2. Learning agendas: A learning agenda is a list of exercises or activities that must be completed during a certain period of time. Students work independently, pacing themselves and availing themselves of assistance, as needed. In mixed classes, agendas offer a way for some students to engage in meaningful work, while the instructor gives specialized instruction to other students in the class.

3. Centers: Locations (physical or virtual) that contain additional resources for students. Resources include exercises, grammar explanations, sample work, information about additional sources.

4**. Visual checks and Exit cards**

Visual checks engage all students in responding to a prompt using a gesture such as thumbs up or down or flashing a sign. The information gives immediate feedback to the instructor about learners' state of understanding.

Exit cards help learners reflect on their own learning and the organization of the material and they help teachers adjust their practices so as to enhance the potential for learning. Near the end of a class period, the instructor poses a prompt that students must respond to on a 3 x 5 index card and turn in as they exit the classroom. Examples of prompts are: (1) describe an "Aha!" moment from today's lesson, (2) identify a point that remains unclear to you, (3) briefly discuss a contribution that you or another student made to a group activity, (4) design a graphic organizer of the material presented, (5) describe two "big ideas" and two secondary ideas worth knowing from this unit, (6) explain how you see today's lesson connected to your everyday life.

The information gathered through the checks for understanding and exit cards can form the basis for grouping students or assigning individual work by interests and needs. For example, learners with similar needs or interests can work together on an activity that is fine-tuned to their needs or they can meet with the instructor for a mini-lesson.

ACTIVITY IV

Design a differentiated activity for using your materials in a mixed class. Explain how this activity differentiates instruction and how it fits into the model of teaching mixed classes that is being presented.

5**. Formative assessment:**

	Formative assessment	**Summative assessment**
<u>Purpose</u>	To improve instruction and provide feedback to students	To measure student competency
<u>When administered</u>	Ongoing, throughout unit	Endpoints (chapter test, final exam)
<u>Student use</u>	To self-monitor understanding, Identity gaps in understanding and strengths	To monitor grades and progress toward benchmarks
<u>Teacher use</u>	To check for understanding, modify their own teaching to enhance learning	For grades, promotion
<u>Program use</u>	To modify the curriculum and program	To report to external entities

ACTIVITY V

Consider how your differentiated activity works as formative assessment. What kind of information can it give you, the instructor, to help you modify your teaching to enhance learning? What about the learners? How does it help them become independent learners? For example, does it give them a map of instruction and/or help them understand their needs and strengths?

For further reading
Differentiated Instruction:

Tomlinson, C. A. (2009). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2003). *Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom. Strategies and tools for responsive teaching.* Alexandria VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Formative assessment

Carreira, M. (2013). Formative Assessment: The third leg of the assessment stool. *The Heritage Language Journal,* Vol. 10, No. 1.

McMillan, J., Cohen, J., Abrams, L. Cauley, K., Pannozzo, G. & Hearn, J. (2010). Understanding Secondary Teachers' Formative Assessment Practices and Their Relationship to Student Motivation. Eric Digest, ED507712.

HL and L2 learners' complimentary skills:

Bowles, M. (2011). Exploring the role of modality: Second language -heritage learner interactions in the Spanish language classroom. *The Heritage Language Journal,* 8, No. 1.
Carreira, M. and Potowski, K. (2011). Pedagogical Implications of Experimental SNS Research. *Heritage Language Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1.

Montrul, S. (2011). Assessing differences and similarities between instructed second language learners and heritage language learners in their knowledge of Spanish Tense-Aspect and Mood (TAM) Morphology. *Heritage Language Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1.

Micro- and Macro- approaches:

Kagan, O. & Dillon, K. (2009). The professional development of teachers of heritage language learners: A matrix. In M. Anderson & A. Lazaraton (Eds.), *Bridging context, making connections: Selected Papers from the Fifth International Conference on Language Teacher Education* (pp. 155-175). Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

Wu, M-H & Chang, T-M (2010). *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 25/2: 23-33.http://www.gse.upenn.edu/sites/gse.upenn.edu.wpel/files/archives/v25/Wu& Chang.pdf