

## **Herencia – Spanish as a heritage language: new paradigms & partnerships for study abroad in the 21st century\***

**ANTONIA I. CASTAÑEDA\*\***

### **Herencia: a heritage language disavowed**

Though often not recognized, Spanish is a heritage language for a significant part of the United States, including Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and the Western states carved out of the Mexican cession after the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848<sup>1</sup>. The California state constitution of 1849, for example, stipulated that “All laws, decrees, regulations and provisions which from their nature require publication, shall be published in English and Spanish<sup>2</sup>”. Yet thirty years later, when California re-wrote its state constitution in 1879, it passed an “English-only” law requiring English-only instruction in the public schools and eliminated Spanish language rights<sup>3</sup>. In 1918 — during the era of WWI xenophobia and fears about the loyalty of non English speakers — Texas, and a majority of other U.S. states, enacted statutes that made the speaking of any

language other than English on public school grounds illegal. English-only laws were the bedrock of “Americanization schools” and programs in educational and other institutions<sup>4</sup>.

Thus, for children in the Southwest who were part of the historical Spanish speaking populations of Nuevo Mexicanos, Tejanos, and Californianos, and for children of Mexican immigrants who came to the U.S. during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1930), speaking Spanish in school was a punishable offense — a “crime”. At times the punishment was psychological, children were made to stand in a corner with dunce caps for hours, or to wear an “I will not speak Spanish” sign around their neck all day. At other times the punishment was corporeal, teachers and school administrators hit children with paddles, rulers, or other objects. At still others, it was economic; children were

\* Prepared for the annual conference of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), October 28-31, 2006, San Antonio, Texas.



\*\* **ANTONIA I. CASTAÑEDA** acaba de se aposentar como Professora Associada de História na Universidade de St. Mary's. Originalmente de Crystal City, Texas, ela se mudou para o estado de Washington quando era menina, seguindo as colheitas com a sua família. Fez a faculdade de Espanhol na Western Washington State University, e o mestrado em Estudos Latino Americanos na Universidade de Washington. Em 1990 ela completou o doutorado em História na Stanford University. A professora Antonia Castañeda é especialista em estudos chicanos e estudos da mulher. O seu trabalho sobre gênero na Califórnia colonial recebeu ampla atenção, e recentemente sua pesquisa tem se concentrado no estudo das mulheres migrantes do século XX.

fined a penny-a-word for speaking Spanish on the playground, in the hall, or in the classroom. At all times, it was demeaning. What U.S. educational institutions and personnel communicated to generations of Spanish speaking Mexican American and Mexican children, was that the Spanish language, those who spoke it, and everything about them was wrong, was not good, was unacceptable, was un-American. For generations, educational institutions disavowed the language and heritage of Mexican origin and other Spanish speaking people of the United States.

### **Paradigm shifts: the chicana/o civil rights movement & civil rights legislation**

The Chicana/o movement and civil rights struggles of the 1960s to end linguistic, educational, racial, political, economic, social, cultural and other inequalities, gave rise to student-led walkouts from public schools in Crystal City and San Antonio, Texas; Los Angeles, California, and in numerous other cities thorough out the United States. Students, their parents and communities fought for the students' right to speak Spanish, to have Mexican American teachers and counselors, to learn Mexican American History, to participate in all academic, sports, and extra curricular activities in the public schools on an equal basis with Euro-American students. Mexican American civil rights and other organizations, including the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the American G.I. Forum; the newly formed Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), filed suits, mobilized political action committees, lobbied congressional representatives, ran for office, and pressed educational, civil rights, and

social justice issues at every turn. Slowly, the English-only teaching requirement imposed by state law began to change due to Federal Civil Rights Legislation, which superseded state laws. The states had to revise language policies.

- 1964: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirmed students' right to meaningful and effective instruction, and prohibited discrimination in federally funded programs.
- 1968: Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act provided federal funding to encourage local school districts to try approaches to incorporate native-language instruction. As a result, most states began to enact bilingual education laws, or at least began to decriminalize the use of other languages in the classroom<sup>5</sup>.
- 1974: The Equal Educational Opportunity Act, endorsed the principle of the Lau v Nichols case (1975) which required schools to take "affirmative steps" to overcome language barriers impeding children's access to the curriculum.

### **New paradigm: spanish for native speakers classes and heritage language programs**

The Civil Rights movements and legislation of the late 1960s, early 1970s, including affirmative action, broke through educational barriers, enabling the first critical mass of Chicanos/as to gain access to U.S. colleges and universities. In the academy, we challenged intellectual and academic constructs rooted in discrimination, exclusion, and denial of our own, and thereby also the U.S.'s linguistic and historical antecedents. We established Chicano Studies Programs and

Departments, we became students and faculty in all academic fields, including in Departments of Spanish and Portuguese. We claimed our right to Spanish and began to change the curriculum as well as the paradigm with respect to Spanish in the U.S. precisely because we came from Spanish speaking homes, whether we actually spoke Spanish or not; and because the standard pedagogy and curriculum in Spanish departments did not acknowledge or value our linguistic and cultural heritage. In the earliest incarnations (late 1960s, early 70s) we wrote curriculum, developed, and taught courses of "Spanish for Native Speakers" as part of Chicano Studies and Ethnic Studies curriculum. In some colleges and universities, we convinced Modern Language and Spanish departments to include our courses in their language curriculum; and taught the courses, usually as graduate students, in these departments.

By the mid 1970s, socio-linguists, professors of language and literature, and other scholars working on pedagogy, theory, and curriculum initiated a new interdisciplinary field Spanish as a Heritage Language, in Departments of Modern Languages, and most particularly in Departments of Spanish. While largely focused on language, these programs include curriculum in the history, literature, popular culture, visual and performance art, religious expression of Chicana/o and U.S. Latina/o populations. Two of the major programs in place since the mid 1970s are the Sabine Ulibarri Spanish as a Heritage Language Program (SHL) at the University of New Mexico and the Heritage Language Program at the University of Arizona.

### **21st century paradigms: international heritage learners programs, study abroad in Spain & the Americas**

Until recently, the paradigmatic model of study abroad programs in U.S. colleges and universities centered on language learning, and on sending students to learn a "foreign" language in the "foreign" country where that language is spoken. That model is changing due to convergence of multiple economic, social, and political forces nationally and internationally – immigration, globalization, demographic and thus linguistic shifts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. One significant dimension of the changing study abroad universe is that U.S. students for whom Spanish is a heritage language, are going to Spain, Mexico and other Spanish speaking countries in increasingly larger numbers. The students, their home institutions and the host institutions are acutely aware that Heritage Learner Students come with a wealth of linguistic abilities and capabilities which a traditional study abroad program that focuses only on "foreign" language acquisition is woefully inadequate. In most cases, heritage language students, whether they speak Spanish or not, are already bi-lingual and bi-cultural. In many cases their familial realities are transnational. Moreover, European scholars and universities have long been interested in Chicana/o Studies (more recently, Latina/o Studies) and, in some cases, like the UIEN, have developed M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Chicana/o Studies. Dr. Jose Antonio Gurpegi, Director of the UIEN, initiated the first graduate program in Chicana/o Studies in a Spanish University in the 1990s. He and colleagues in other universities in Spain form part of a consortium that holds a scholarly conference in Chicana/o Literature every two years; the most recent one was in May, 2006.

In partnership, U.S. sending institutions and Spain's receiving or host institutions, in this case the IUIEN, are creating new linguistic and cultural dialogues based on the strengths of Spanish as a Heritage Language and Mexican Americans/US Latinos as Heritage Learners. Heritage learner students in study abroad programs are building capacities to connect with and to reconstruct their histories and their linguistic and cultural legacies and identities. Their faculty and administrators at the home and host institution are creating new academic paradigms to include an expansive curriculum that not only offers language courses, i.e. Spanish as a heritage language, but also courses in history, culture, religious studies, economics, political science, and sociology in Spanish and related courses at the home institution that students may take in either English or Spanish. One example of this expanded curriculum is the new course I developed and taught at both the IUIEN and at St. Mary's. Entitled *Franjas, Fronteras y Borderlands: From Al Andalus to Brownsville,*

*Matamoros,*" the course examined socio-cultural issues of conflict and coexistence on the Islamic, Christian, Judaic borderlands of Medieval Spain and the 19th century Catholic-protestant U.S. Mexico borderlands.

We have great possibilities as well as great challenges before us. In partnership with institutions in Spain, Mexico, Central and Latin America, Hispanic Serving Institutions in the United States have opportunities and responsibility to take a leadership role in creating programs to ensure that our students are trans-culturally literate, knowledgeable, and responsible global citizens. As HSIs we are in a pivotal position to draw upon our students' Hispanic heritage to develop innovative and exciting international heritage learners programs in Spain, Mexico, Central and Latin America, as well as in our home institutions. This is a propitious moment to create new paradigms and partnerships, consistent with the historical and contemporary linguistic and demographic reality of the United States and the Western Hemisphere.

<sup>1</sup> Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Person Longman, 2004) 6th edition.

<sup>2</sup> Article XI, Section 21, Constitution of the State of California, 1849. California State Archives. [www.ss.ca.gov/archives/level3\\_const1849txt.html](http://www.ss.ca.gov/archives/level3_const1849txt.html). Accessed 6.2.2007.

<sup>3</sup> Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of California, 1878-1879 (Sacramento: 1880-1881), vol. 2: 801-802.

<sup>4</sup> Otto Santa Ana, *Tongue Tied: The Lives of Multilingual Children in Public Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Neither the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 nor the Lau decision of 1974 provide a federal mandate for bilingual education, however a few states did mandate it under certain circumstances; now nullified by No Child Left Behind Act of 2002.