

Preparing the Heritage Language Educator: A Needs Analysis of Advanced Placement

Spanish Teachers

by

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## ABSTRACT

As the Hispanic population in the United States continues to grow, Spanish teachers are increasingly responsible for incorporating heritage language (HL) research and practice into their curriculum design. However, many language teacher preparation programs in the country are not tailored to equip future HL educators, focusing instead on second language acquisition with limited offerings in HL pedagogy. This study conducts a needs analysis assessment by using survey data from 51 in-service teachers and conducting interviews with a subset of these teachers. Employing mixed-methods analysis, the data were examined through descriptive statistics and a grounded theory approach, framed within Latinx Critical Race Theory. Data analysis of survey responses reveals a significant gap in HL pedagogy training, with teachers having minimal formal preparation and encountering several challenges such as developing their SHL students' literacy skills and addressing varying levels of proficiency, among others. In tandem with these findings, analysis of interview data highlights teachers' lack of confidence in addressing the needs of SHL students, insufficient support from their school districts in financing ongoing education to address SHL student needs, and the detrimental effects of negative attitudes towards SHL learners' varieties, among others. These challenges are attributed to both insufficient teacher training and systemic issues within educational systems, which often neglect the needs of Latinx students. Thus, teachers advocate for the integration of HL-focused training in teacher preparation programs to address these challenges. Additionally, pedagogical implications are discussed considering the most pertinent findings from this research. The results of this study yield significant implications for the fields of language teacher development and HL education,

emphasizing the pressing need for comprehensive HL pedagogy training to better support the diverse needs of SHL students. By addressing these challenges and providing targeted professional development, educators can enhance the educational experiences and success of HL students.

## DEDICATION

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

At present, Hispanic students constitute 28% of enrollment in preK-12 public schools in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). This demographic trend is observable in world language classrooms across the nation's schools, where a growing population of heritage language (HL) students are enrolling in Spanish courses (Carreira et al., 2019). Consequently, Brown and Thompson (2020) report that a significant majority of high school students who take the Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish exams are HL speakers. While initially designed for Spanish second language (L2) learners, this student population now constitutes a minority of exam participants. In 2014, they comprised 38.1% of test-takers in the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam in 2014 and only 20.6% in the AP Spanish Literature and Culture exam (Brown & Thompson, 2020). To provide Latinx students with sufficient support and an equitable opportunity to obtain high scores on the AP exams, educational institutions need to provide adequate training of language teachers in HL teaching methodologies.

As reported by Brown and Thompson (2020), HL students tend to achieve higher scores on the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam compared to L2 students. Conversely, the outcome is reversed for the AP Spanish Literature and Culture exam. This disparity may stem from various factors, such as limited exposure to written materials in the HL and a lower frequency of formal Spanish coursework undertaken by students before enrolling in an AP Spanish course. Educators are urged to implement strategies informed by HL pedagogy, leveraging students' existing language skills as a

pathway to academic written Spanish (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Several studies have documented a positive correlation between participation in AP courses and subsequent college success (Handwerk et al., 2008; Murphy & Dodd, 2009; Warne, 2017; Speroni, 2011; Wyatt & Mattern, 2011). Furthermore, research has shown that students who are granted AP Spanish credit, the majority of whom are Latinx, surpass university graduation rates compared to those without such credit, contributing to the narrowing of the achievement gap (Reeder, 2020).

Recognizing the critical role that well-prepared educators play in the academic success of HL students, it becomes evident that targeted professional development for AP Spanish teachers is essential. Teachers equipped with specialized training in HL pedagogies can better address the unique needs of HL learners, particularly in developing their literacy skills and enhancing their academic Spanish proficiency. By focusing on strategies that leverage HL students' existing oral skills while systematically building their reading and writing capabilities, educators can create more inclusive and effective learning environments. Consequently, prioritizing teacher training in HL methodologies is a crucial step towards providing equitable educational opportunities for Latinx students, ultimately contributing to their long-term academic and professional success. Thus, the present dissertation study addresses a gap in the literature by examining the needs of AP Spanish teachers who primarily teach HL students, as well as their professional and educational profiles. To do so, the study analyzes survey and interview data. The section that follows provides an overview of the issue.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

In the context of Spanish, the most widespread HL in the United States, there was a 53% increase in the Latinx population from 2010 to 2022, surpassing the growth of any other racial or ethnic group (Pew Research Center, 2023). Moreover, this demographic surge extends beyond regions traditionally characterized by high Hispanic populations (Irwin et al., 2023). This population growth has had a significant impact on the education system at all levels. According to the U.S. Department of Education's 2023 *Condition of Education*, the Hispanic student population in schools continues to increase. This ongoing growth underscores that prospective Spanish teachers must receive training that extends beyond conventional L2 acquisition principles and pedagogical approaches (Ducar, 2022). Furthermore, providing more opportunities for dual-language education at a younger age would help prevent some of the issues that HL programs try to address later on.

Language departments and teacher training programs must adjust to the evolving landscape of Spanish in the United States due to the rising enrollment of HL learners in Spanish classes (Carreira et al., 2019; Brown & Thompson, 2018). Therefore, it is imperative for both current and prospective language teachers to undergo training in HL pedagogy to effectively meet the needs of all students in their classrooms. This demographic shift also highlights a discrepancy between existing practices in many teacher training programs nationwide and the evolving needs of students. In the United States, educational initiatives have historically focused on teaching Spanish as an L2 and have shown limited regard for the Spanish-speaking communities within the country (Pascual & Cabo & Prada, 2018; Leeman & King, 2015; Alvarez, 2013). While there is a growing number of programs catering to the needs of HL speakers as learners (Beaudrie

& Marrero-Rivera, 2024; Carreira, 2017), the training of teachers for this demographic remains barely addressed.

Valdés (2000) defines an HL learner as someone who “is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken. The student may speak or merely understand the heritage language and be, to some degree, bilingual in English and the heritage language” (p.1). Consequently, even as students from the same cultural background, HL speakers are a very heterogeneous group of students, as even students from the same cultural background exhibit distinct linguistic profiles (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Because of language policies in certain states which prioritize English acquisition at the expense of developing students’ literacy skills in their first language, many HL students spend most of their academic trajectory in English as a second language (ESL) classes, often delaying Spanish language study until their high school years (Escobar & Potowski, 2015). In the United States education system, which predominantly favors subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1984), HL students encounter disparities in educational opportunities compared to their Anglo counterparts. Research (Thomas & Collier, 2002; Hakuta, 1986) suggests that instruction in a child's native language not only supports cognitive and academic development but also aids in second language acquisition by facilitating the transfer of literacy skills from the native language to the second language. Consequently, while Anglo students are afforded the chance to cultivate literacy skills that can subsequently help in acquiring an L2, ESL students are deprived of the opportunity to develop literacy skills in their native languages.

In the United States, the educational needs of Latinx HL speakers are still considered secondary to those of students learning Spanish as an L2 (Torres et al., 2018;

Pascual y Cabo & Prada, 2018; Leeman & García, 2007). This results in language teacher preparation programs largely overlooking the presence of HL speakers in language classrooms and inadequately equipping pre-service teachers to support the academic success of these students. This is a disservice not only to students but also to teachers, considering that teaching is inherently stressful (Schrier, 2008). Inadequate preparation exacerbates this stress, dampening teachers' enthusiasm, impacting mental well-being, and increasing the risk of burnout (Acheson et al., 2016). This burnout factor is significant given the current challenges facing the world language teaching profession, including a shortage of new teachers entering the field (Swanson & Mason, 2018) and high rates of teacher attrition (Farrell, 2016). Amidst these challenges, insights from a study conducted by Novella and Bustamante (2023), which delved into the experiences of Latinas initially enrolled in world language teacher preparation programs at two educational institutions in the United States who later became in-service Spanish teachers, shed light on the positive impact of academic preparation in HL pedagogy. Findings indicated that both participants and their HL students benefited from the academic preparation in HL pedagogy. Participants reported that learning about language varieties and registers helped them appreciate their own and their students' varieties. They recognized code-switching as a natural behavior of bilingual speakers and have incorporated it into their teaching practices. This change has increased student participation in class. Some participants now prefer to teach grammar using a contextualized inductive method rather than traditional pedagogic practices aligned with communicative and proficiency-based teaching. Furthermore, participants' training in sociolinguistics and Spanish for HL speakers as part of their academic programs instilled

confidence in their Spanish language proficiency as in-service teachers and ultimately aided in overcoming feelings of inadequacy.

The inclusion of modules on HL pedagogy and teaching within language teacher training curricula is imperative to ensure educators' confidence and to prepare them for the reality in which they will teach (Ducar, 2024). In addition, the expansion of the Latinx population beyond regions with historically large Latinx populations, such as Florida and the Southwest, to states like Georgia, Louisiana, and Michigan, partly due to the increase in oil-related jobs (Passel et al., 2022), underscores the need for such teacher training. Recognizing the distinct linguistic and affective needs of HL speakers compared to L2 learners, it is essential for Spanish teachers to be equipped with the knowledge base and skill set to meet the needs of both student populations. Nonetheless, a problematic assumption persists regarding the efficacy of teachers trained solely in L2 acquisition and methodology for teaching HL students (Potowski & Carreira, 2004). This assumption suggests a belief that teachers trained in L2 methodologies will inherently be effective HL instructors, without the necessity of receiving specific training tailored to the unique needs of HL learners. Bustamante and Novella (2019) found in their study examining the educational experiences and challenges encountered by Latina pre-service teachers seeking initial Spanish teacher certification that there existed a discrepancy between the recommendations of teacher preparation programs and the actual practices observed in certain classrooms. For instance, participants noted instances where HL students were instructed as if they were L2 learners.

The teaching of HL students at the secondary level, as well as the AP Spanish exams represent another noteworthy aspect concerning language teachers and their

students that merits special attention from researchers. Presently, Spanish HL programs at the tertiary level are undergoing steady expansion primarily due to the growing enrollment of Latinx students in post-secondary education (Beaudrie & Marrero-Rivera, 2024). Conversely, at the secondary level, courses are limited despite a rising proportion of Latinxs in K-12 education, which increased from 23% in 2010 to 28% in 2021 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). This disparity underscores the need for a critical examination of how standardized assessments, such as the AP exams, influence Spanish education, particularly in accommodating bilingual practices. Various standardized assessments, including the AP exams, prioritize linguistic and cultural practices prevalent among educated monolingual Spanish speakers outside of the United States, thus construing many bilingual practices as inappropriate (Leeman, 2012). If standardized assessment exams are to persist, they must acknowledge, integrate, and embrace the linguistic practices inherent to local language communities (Ducar, 2024).

To date, research related to AP Spanish exams, Spanish high school teachers and their students is scant. With this study, I aim to contribute to the field of language education, and to SHL education in particular, by offering a deeper insight into the profiles and needs of AP Spanish teachers of HL students with the ultimate goal of effecting constructive social change. My ultimate objective is to improve teacher preparation in SHL pedagogy in order to alter the system that makes HL students' educational experiences so challenging. The inequities and injustices prevalent in the American school system, which stigmatizes HL students' Spanish varieties, are reflected in the AP Spanish Literature exam outcomes of these students. Adequate training of AP

Spanish teachers could provide HL students an equitable opportunity to obtain higher scores on the AP exams, thereby significantly impacting their educational journeys.

## **1.2 Theoretical framework of project**

To investigate how to better prepare AP Spanish teachers to provide Latinx students with adequate resources and an equitable opportunity to earn AP Spanish exam scores that will grant them college credit, this dissertation's methodological framework will be based on Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). This theoretical framework promotes analyzing and challenging Latinx subordination and fundamentalism, aiming to bridge practice with theory, scholarly research with teaching, and academia with the community (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Currently, there is a lack of scholarship on SHL educators in the United States, which makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the field has progressed in influencing language teacher preparation programs and fostering professionalization (Gironzetti & Belpoliti, 2021). Therefore, guided by LatCrit principles, this study investigates the needs and challenges of AP Spanish teachers of HL students, with the aim of informing and enhancing professional development offerings, thereby establishing a link between theory and practice.

It is important to note that LatCrit emerges from Critical Race Theory (CRT), a theoretical framework that examines the dynamics between race, racism, and other forms of oppression experienced by diverse marginalized groups. Solórzano (1998) emphasizes that “critical race theory in education challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (Solórzano, 1998, p. 122). Solórzano (1998) identifies five overarching themes that delineate the conceptual

frameworks, research methodologies, and instructional strategies of CRT in education.

These themes serve as a starting point for academic inquiry:

1. *The crucial role and intersectionality of race and racism in education*, which acknowledges that race and racism are fundamental in defining, as well as explaining individual experiences and intersecting with other forms of subordination.
2. *The resistance to the dominant ideology*. According to the latter, educational institutions claim to provide equal opportunities for all, and are colorblind, as well as race- and gender-neutral. These ideological beliefs promote a meritocratic culture that gives people the deceptive impression that the system is objective and only considers individual abilities and skills, rather than reinforcing the privilege of certain groups in society.
3. *The support for social justice*, which can be interpreted as the theory's commitment to social justice in education by eradicating racism and other forms of subordination, including class and gender.
4. *The significance of experiential knowledge*, which emphasizes the lived experiences of people of color and considers them essential and legitimate for analyzing and comprehending various forms of oppression in the field of education. CRT not only embraces experiential knowledge, but also regards it as a strength, which is why it often includes narratives, stories, and biographies as research methods.

5. *The interdisciplinary viewpoint*, which highlights interdisciplinary methods as a means of analyzing race and racism by emphasizing historical context and rejecting the practice of disregarding history.

These themes provide academics with a blueprint for challenging traditional methodologies, thereby facilitating the transition of educational research toward a more critical form of inquiry aimed at benefiting individuals in oppressive social circumstances.

LatCrit expands upon CRT by exploring how race intersects with immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture, particularly within the Latinx community. It is important to understand that LatCrit and CRT are complementary, both working towards the transformation necessary for minoritized communities of color in the United States to achieve social change based on inclusion and equity (Valdés, 1996). This dual framework is beneficial when examining educational research related to minoritized student populations, such as HL students, as it considers the various microaggressions they face throughout their education.

Historically marginalized student groups are often subjected to deficit-oriented paradigms, which attribute the obstacles and inequalities they face solely to personal factors. These paradigms align with neoliberal ideology, an economic philosophy that prioritizes free markets, individual autonomy, and minimal government intervention (Angus, 2015). In neoliberalism, the main goal of the educational system is to prepare students, seen as consumers, to compete in the global economy. This focus on individual autonomy sidelines or opposes broader aims such as developing empathetic individuals, critical thinkers, and responsible citizens. Consequently, individuals are solely

accountable for their failures and successes, with no acknowledgment of the state's or society's role. These paradigms, influenced by neoliberal ideology, transcend issues of race or ethnicity. However, they fail to recognize the systemic discriminatory structures, policies, and practices entrenched within educational institutions, which significantly impact the educational attainment of minoritized communities (Davis & Museus, 2019).

LatCrit, like CRT, aims to instigate social change by illuminating oppressive dynamics within society. However, LatCrit goes beyond CRT by addressing issues often ignored by critical race theorists, such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). If CRT overlooks language, it misses a crucial aspect concerning speakers who use minority varieties of English. LatCrit thus encompasses all aspects of CRT while recognizing the intersecting identities of Latinxs, which significantly influence their educational experiences. This framework values the experiential knowledge of Latinx students and rejects deficit-based educational models that perpetuate social inequities and disempower these students (Delgado Bernal, 2002). With a specific focus on Latinx students, LatCrit seeks to understand and enhance their educational experiences. Guided by this framework, I recognize that language is inextricably linked to the manifestations of race and racism experienced by Latinx students in U.S. schools. Accordingly, this study examines the professional development needs of AP Spanish teachers who primarily teach HL students, alongside their classroom experiences and challenges. My goal is to identify educational gaps and devise strategies to support the academic progress of HL learners.

### **1.3 Rationale for the study**

The field of SHL research and pedagogy became increasingly visible over the past two decades, leading to identification of core goals and teaching competencies (Valdés, 1995, 2000; Aparicio, 1997; Martínez, 2016; Lacorte, 2016; Beaudrie & Vergara Wilson 2022; among others). Nonetheless, educators and teacher preparation programs struggle to bridge the gap between these competences and the practical realities of the SHL classroom (Gironzetti & Belpoliti, 2021). Moreover, there remains a lack of studies centering the needs and experiences of educators of SHL students in secondary school classrooms. At the core of this research lies a dual-fold issue. First, HL speakers commonly grow up in environments characterized by subtractive bilingualism, leading to varying degrees of proficiency in their HL by adolescence (Montrul & Polinsky, 2021). Montrul and Polinsky (2021) explain how diverse upbringing scenarios (e.g., children of immigrants raised as simultaneous bilinguals, immigrant children with varied exposure to schooling in their native country based on their age upon immigration, etc.) lead to variation in the linguistic structure of this population, posing challenges for language teachers in the classroom. For a majority of Latinx students, formal instruction in their HL begins in secondary school, typically through conventional world language courses that overlook their specific linguistic characteristics (Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010).

Second, traditional teaching models rooted in dominant language ideologies and prescriptive pedagogy continue to influence the instructional approaches adopted by language teachers with regards to HL education (Parra, 2014). There is an urgent need in the teacher development field to design more effective teacher preparation models for those who instruct HL students. As a result of this need, many secondary school teachers find themselves compelled to adopt a "learning while teaching model" (Bateman &

Wilkinson, 2010; Valdés et al., 2008). Given the prevalence of mixed classes, Spanish teachers must be equipped with the resources necessary to accommodate a diverse range of student needs within a singular classroom (Brown and Thompson, 2018). Recent studies on the professional development of SHL teachers corroborate that teacher training programs do not adequately incorporate preparation on best practices for SHL students (Gironzetti & Belpoliti, 2021; Ducar, 2022). Ducar's (2022) qualitative study revealed that this deficiency in SHL-specific preparation led to feelings of inefficacy and uselessness among high school teacher participants. Consequently, it becomes necessary to recognize the heterogenous student populations that Spanish teachers serve, as well as the deficiencies in teacher preparation within the field, in order to better prepare both pre-service and in-service language educators for the actualities of today's classrooms.

#### **1.4 Background for the study**

##### **AP Spanish Exams**

The College Board's AP program was created with the intent to afford secondary school students the opportunity to earn college credit while fulfilling their high school graduation requirements. Originating in the 1950's, the program has expanded from its initial availability solely in a handful of elite high schools in the Northeast to its current widespread implementation across virtually all private and public high schools nationwide. The AP exam is now available in 38 different subjects, including World Languages and Cultures (e.g., Spanish, Latin, French, Italian, German, Chinese, and Japanese), History and Social Sciences (e.g., Comparative Government and Politics, European History, Human Geography, etc.), Sciences (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, etc.), Math and Computer Science (e.g., Calculus, Statistics,

etc.), and Arts (e.g., Music Theory, Art History, etc.) Consequently, the number of administered examinations has increased exponentially from 899,463 in 1997 to 5.19 million in 2023 (College Board).

The AP program has been offering a Spanish exam since May 1994 (Rothschild, 1999). Today, there are two AP Spanish exams available: the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam and the AP Spanish Literature and Culture exam. The curriculum for the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam revolves around six central themes: Families and Communities, Personal and Public Identities, Beauty and Aesthetics, Science and Technology, Contemporary Life, and Global Challenges. Mastery of these themes is assessed at the end of the school year through a series of tasks involving the three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. The exam is divided in two parts, comprising a multiple-choice section and a free response section. The multiple-choice component evaluates students' comprehension of written, audio, and visual text, as well as their ability to interpret the content of written or audio materials. The free response section entails tasks such as responding to an email, composing an argumentative essay, engaging in a simulated conversation, and making a cultural comparison between an aspect of a Spanish-speaking community familiar to the student and a corresponding facet in another community.

Similarly, the AP Spanish Literature and Culture curriculum delves into six themes: Las sociedades en contacto, La construcción del género, El tiempo y el espacio, La creación literaria, Las relaciones interpersonales, and La dualidad del ser. These themes are explored through the analysis of 38 literary works by diverse authors from Latin America, Spain, and the United States. Similar to the Language and Culture exam,

students are tasked with demonstrating mastery of these themes by performing a series of activities integrating the three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. This exam, too, is divided into two parts, including multiple-choice and free response sections. The multiple-choice section prompts students to analyze and interpret literary and audio sources, as well as to draw connections between literary texts and a non-literary aspect of culture. The free response section requires students to write two short-response answers and two essays. The short-response questions entail tasks such as comparing a literary text and an artistic representation, identifying themes within a text and explaining their development, while explaining the function of literary elements and stylistic features. The essays ask students to compare two different literary texts and to contextualize a text within its corresponding literary movement while explaining its relationship to its specific historical and social context.

In 2023, 163,107 students participated in the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam, while 22,847 undertook the AP Spanish Literature and Culture exam (College Board). Brown and Thompson (2020) conducted a study exploring the linguistic backgrounds of AP exam candidates and discovered that a majority of those who attempted both AP Spanish exams were HL students. Their analysis revealed that, on average, HL learners attained higher scores than their L2 peers in the AP Spanish Language and culture exam. On the contrary, HL learners achieved lower scores than L2 learners in the AP Spanish Literature and Culture exam. By examining test results spanning from 2004 to 2014, the authors noted that in 10 out of the 11 years analyzed, L2 students consistently outperformed HL students in the Literature exam.

The outcomes of the AP Spanish Language and Culture can be anticipated, given that a significant proportion of the exam grade is attributed to oral proficiency (25%), with one of the writing tasks involving responding to an email (12.5%). These tasks involve language functions that are commonplace for many HL students in their daily interactions with family and community members, experiences less common for L2 learners, whose exposure to Spanish typically occurs primarily within the classroom setting. The AP Spanish Literature and Culture examination presents a contrasting scenario. This exam primarily emphasizes writing tasks (50%) and reading analysis (40%), with a mere 10% allocated to interpretive listening. Consequently, HL examinees may encounter unfamiliar and challenging tasks, as these students typically develop literacy skills predominantly in English and may possess limited proficiency in their HL, particularly in reading and writing domains (Zyzik, 2016). Additionally, HL students often use Spanish in colloquial contexts, resulting in lexical gaps across various semantic domains (Parodi, 2008). Conversely, L2 students have primarily engaged with Spanish within a formal educational setting, potentially explaining their tendency to achieve higher scores in the AP Spanish Literature and Culture exam. Nik (2012) conducted a study involving Hindi HL and L2 learners, revealing that HL students exhibited greater familiarity with popular culture elements such as Bollywood cinema, music, and fashion, while L2 students demonstrated stronger proficiency in academic cultural domains such as politics, history, and geography. Hence, there is a clear need for modifications in the AP Spanish program. This includes revising the exam content itself and enhancing teacher preparation to ensure Latinx students have an equitable opportunity to achieve a score of 3 or higher on the end-of-year exam, thereby earning college credit. The

proposed modifications aim to address disparities in exam performance between HL and L2 learners. These may involve adjustments such as incorporating more culturally relevant content and assessment criteria that better reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of Latinx students. The goal is not necessarily for the HL group to outperform the L2 group on both exams, but rather to ensure that both groups have fair and equitable opportunities to demonstrate their proficiency. Ethically, modifying exams in this way necessitates careful consideration of fairness and inclusivity, ensuring that no group is disadvantaged or advantaged unfairly due to linguistic or cultural backgrounds.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The present dissertation study aims to shed light on the unexamined topic of AP Spanish by examining the preparation of AP Spanish teachers concerning HL pedagogy to assess their professional development needs. The study will address the following research questions:

1. What is the preparation or training of AP Spanish teachers in SHL pedagogy to support their students in successfully passing the AP exams?
2. What, if any, challenges do they face when teaching AP Spanish to this student population, and what do they attribute these challenges to?
3. What types of professional development do AP Spanish teachers of HL students need to better prepare HL students for these exams?

This study does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of all the professional development needs and challenges encountered by AP Spanish teachers of HL students, its findings represent a substantial contribution to the SHL field. This contribution holds particular significance due to the limited availability of research delving into secondary

school contexts and the lack of understanding regarding the characteristics and needs of Spanish teachers instructing HL students.

### **1.6 Organization of dissertation**

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The current chapter provides an introduction to the study, incorporating an overview of the AP Spanish exams and arguments regarding the rationale behind the need of such research. In addition, this chapter includes a statement of positionality that informs this work, alongside an introduction to the theoretical framework and research questions that guide this study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature, focusing on studies on SHL teacher development, as well as the knowledge base required for effectively meeting the needs of SHL students in both mixed and SHL classrooms. Additionally, an overview of available options for in-service teacher training is offered.

Chapter 3 describes the study's methodology, including the mixed methods used to frame and analyze the research, along with a description of the instruments employed. Additionally, the chapter details the selection criteria and backgrounds of the participants, alongside the data collection methods employed to address the research questions posed in this dissertation. Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the findings that were identified through data analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data obtained through the online survey and semi-structured interviews, as well as a discussion of the findings. Moreover, actionable steps are provided for teacher preparation programs, school districts, and educators to effectively meet the needs of HL students. The dissertation concludes with chapter 5, which provides a summary of the study's findings, accompanied by pedagogical implications extrapolated from the results.

Further, chapter 5 discusses the limitations of this study and potential directions for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The present chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the most pertinent literature on the topics that collectively inform the current study. The first section offers a review of HL teacher development, discussing how teacher training programs can be improved to better prepare language educators to work with HL students, drawing upon insights from several research studies. Next, the discussion delves into the foundational knowledge base required for effectively meeting the needs of SHL students across both mixed and SHL-specific classroom settings. This chapter concludes with an overview of available options for in-service teacher training.

#### **2.1 Heritage language teacher development**

Scholars have highlighted the insufficient preparation of both pre- and in-service language educators, identifying deficiencies in both linguistic expertise and pedagogical training (Ducar, 2024; Brown & Thompson, 2018). Historically, language teacher training has revolved around training world language teachers on L2 methodologies (Randolph, 2022; Pascual y Cabo & Parra, 2018). However, the current demographics in the United States starkly contrast with the prevailing practices of numerous language teacher preparation programs across the nation, as teachers often lack the skills necessary to effectively meet the needs of the growing Hispanic student population. Currently, Hispanic students account for 28.5% of enrollment from pre-K through grade 12 across the country (U.S. Department of Education, 2023), thereby exerting a significant impact on the education system across all levels of instruction. This demographic trend is evident in many Spanish language classrooms nationwide, where both L2 and SHL students are

increasingly mixed into the same learning environment (Carreira et al., 2019).

Consequently, this population increase highlights the need for prospective Spanish language teachers to receive training in more than just the principles of L2 acquisition.

In the United States, Spanish remains the most taught world language across both secondary and postsecondary levels (Lusin et al., 2023). Traditionally, Spanish language curricula were tailored for L2 learners; however, the current landscape calls for a paradigm shift, requiring that educators possess the competencies necessary to effectively meet the diverse needs of students in the same classroom (Brown & Thompson, 2018). Therefore, both pre-service and in-service Spanish teachers need training in SHL pedagogy, as there exists a high probability of encountering SHL students in their classes regardless of geographic location (Ducar, 2022). Despite these realities, Spanish teacher training programs persist in prioritizing the training of teachers in L2 methodologies, relegating HL-specific pedagogies to the margins (Pascual y Cabo & Prada, 2018). As a result, language teacher training programs inherently fall short in adequately equipping teachers for the practical realities they are likely to encounter in their teaching environments.

To enhance the educational experiences of HL students, it is necessary to address the aforementioned deficiencies in the language teacher education curricula. The shifting demographics of our student population call for modifications in language teacher preparation programs; nevertheless, it is essential that all programs prepare teachers to effectively meet the needs of this expanding population (Ducar, 2022). Historically, educational efforts in the United States have primarily centered on teaching Spanish as an L2, often overlooking the needs of Spanish-speaking communities (Pascual & Cabo &

Prada, 2018; Leeman & King, 2015; Alvarez, 2013). Although there is an increasing number of programs addressing the needs of HL learners in post-secondary institutions (Beaudrie & Marrero-Rivera, 2024; Carreira, 2017), teacher training for this demographic remains largely neglected. As a result, this deficiency in language teacher preparation programs is harmful to both educators and their students as academic training in HL pedagogy has been shown to benefit students when incorporated into teacher preparation (Novella & Bustamante, 2023).

Unfortunately, the urgency to integrate pedagogical approaches for HL learners into language teacher training programs is intensified by the additional challenge that several studies have underscored. These studies have shed light on the unpreparedness of teachers to effectively meet the needs of HL learners. A study conducted by Ducar (2022) presents insights from a study involving 17 high school Spanish teachers enrolled in an online graduate course on SHL pedagogy. Through a content analysis approach of teachers' discussion board posts throughout the semester, Ducar examined the evolution of teacher attitudes. Initially, many teachers demonstrated a lack of respect for student varieties and US varieties of Spanish, focusing instead on teaching what they perceived as "academic Spanish." This sentiment was often coupled with disillusionment towards their prior training, reflecting a desire to have engaged with topics of language variation and linguistic ideologies earlier in their careers. Ducar underscores the transformative potential of critical language awareness (CLA) in this context, highlighting how teachers became more cognizant of the social, political, and economic power structures embedded within language variation.

Moreover, Ducar emphasizes the importance of destabilizing teachers' ideologies and fostering a more equitable learning environment for language students. By delving into bilingual ideologies, linguistic characteristics of US Spanish varieties, and language variation, teachers experienced a profound transformation in their pedagogical approach. Ducar's study showcases the value of professional development in enhancing SHL teacher development, emphasizing the need for educators to critically engage with language ideologies and practices. Through concrete suggestions offered in the article, Ducar addresses Leeman's (2015) call for destabilizing teachers' ideologies, advocating for a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach to language education.

A similar pattern emerged in the research of Valdés et al. (2008), who investigated the pedagogical obstacles inherent in formal instructional settings aimed at preserving heritage languages, encompassing minority, immigrant, and indigenous languages. Using Spanish as a focal point, the authors illuminate the myriad tensions surrounding the incorporation of minoritized languages into established high school and university language programs originally tailored for traditional L2 learners. Through a comprehensive survey of instructional practices employed in teaching Spanish to HL students across secondary and postsecondary institutions in California, the study offers insights into the challenges and tensions surrounding HL education. Additionally, the authors outline a research agenda designed to deepen our understanding of the linguistic characteristics of HL learners and the instructional role in the development or re-acquisition of non-dominant first languages (L1s). High school teachers participating in the study acknowledged a lack of specialized pedagogical training for HL learners, resulting in their reliance on a "learning while teaching" approach. This approach poses

significant challenges as it limits teachers' ability to effectively address the unique linguistic and cultural needs of HL learners. Without adequate training, teachers may struggle to implement research-based instructional strategies that support language development and academic achievement in HL learners. This gap in specialized training not only affects the quality of education HL learners receive but also perpetuates inequities in educational outcomes between HL and non-HL students.

Furthermore, the authors delve into the implications of the survey findings, shedding light on the significant challenges encountered by educators teaching heritage languages within formal instructional settings. It underscores the pressing need for targeted professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills and strategies for effectively addressing the unique needs of HL learners. By highlighting the limitations of the current pedagogical landscape and proposing avenues for future research, the article advocates for a more comprehensive understanding of HL education. It emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and valuing heritage languages within educational frameworks, aiming to foster linguistic diversity and empower HL communities. Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing discussions surrounding HL maintenance and development, urging educators and policymakers to prioritize the preservation and revitalization of non-dominant languages in educational settings.

Similar tendencies were observed in the study by Bateman & Wilkinson (2010), which surveyed middle and high school teachers in Utah, where there has been a recent surge in the number of SHL students. Conducting a statewide survey of Spanish teachers in schools across Utah, the study examines various aspects related to SHL education. These include teachers' preparedness to work with SHL students, the prevalence and

nature of SHL classes, teaching approaches used in these courses, accommodations made for SHL students in traditional L2 classes, and teachers' perceptions of the success of both types of courses. Through the survey findings, the article sheds light on the current landscape of SHL education in Utah schools, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered by teachers in this context. It underscores the need for targeted professional development and support for teachers working with SHL students, as well as the importance of implementing effective teaching approaches and accommodations to meet the diverse needs of this student population.

Additionally, the authors emphasize the significance of continuously evaluating and improving SHL programs to ensure the academic success and linguistic development of SHL students. By offering recommendations for enhancing instructional opportunities, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on SHL education and aims to foster more inclusive and effective educational practices for HL learners in secondary schools. The authors conclude by offering recommendations aimed at improving academic outcomes for SHL students, thereby addressing existing gaps in SHL education. Although these findings pertain to educational settings in California and Utah, it is reasonable to assume that comparable difficulties are present in schools across various states nationwide. This reality underscores the urgent need to create stronger teacher training models for educators who provide language or content instruction to HL learners. Language teacher training and development programs should include modules on HL pedagogy to instill confidence in all educators when teaching this unique group of students, as they are likely to encounter them in their classrooms, given that Hispanics represent the largest and one of the fastest growing minoritized groups in the country.

## **2.2 Key differences between heritage language and second language learners**

As previously noted, language teacher preparation programs must develop training models specifically for educators who teach HL learners, rather than solely emphasizing L2 methodologies. This is because HL learners possess significant linguistic and cultural knowledge that L2 learners would require considerable time and effort to acquire (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Additionally, it is inappropriate to treat HL learners as first language speakers of their heritage language raised in their countries of origin, as HL learners exhibit diverse characteristics across several dimensions, including historical, linguistic, educational, affective, and cultural (Beaudrie & Fairclough, 2012). Thus, to identify the core competencies for HL teachers, it is critical to understand the differences between HL learners and other language learners. Beaudrie et al. (2014) argue that the primary distinction between HL and L2 learners lies in their exposure to the language. HL learners have typically been exposed to the language naturally within their home or community environments, whereas L2 learners generally encounter the language only within instructional settings such as classrooms. This fundamental difference results in several specific disparities, including age of acquisition, learning context, language variety acquired, connection to the language, cultural connection, quality of input received, and language proficiency. These distinctions are elaborated upon below.

Age of acquisition refers to the fact that HL learners typically begin learning the language from birth or early childhood. This early acquisition often results in advantages not typically seen in L2 learners, such as the mastery of certain syntactic structures, extensive colloquial vocabulary, and native-like pronunciation. In contrast, L2 learners in the United States generally begin studying their second language in high school,

representing a case of late second language acquisition, which occurs after the "critical period" (Ortega, 2009). A further distinction between HL and L2 learners relates to the context in which learning occurs and how this influences the type of linguistic input received and the competencies ultimately developed. As previously discussed, HL learners typically acquire their language in natural settings such as the home or community, exposing them to authentic, colloquial forms of the language and resulting in greater familiarity with oral communication over written forms. Conversely, L2 learners often encounter the language in classroom environments, where the focus is on academic language use for reading, writing, listening, and speaking, accompanied by L2 teaching methodologies that emphasize metalinguistic activities and explicit grammar instruction.

Another key difference concerns the language varieties to which these learners are exposed. Prestigious language varieties are often associated with speakers who are in power within society, leading to the marginalization of other varieties (Achugar, 2008). Milroy and Milroy (1999) note that classrooms typically promote the superiority of a single prestigious variety through explicit instruction. While some HL learners may have learned a prestigious variety, many have acquired less prestigious variants from their families and communities. In contrast, L2 instructional materials generally present a standard variety devoid of overtly stigmatized features, making it easier for L2 learners to comprehend and use the language taught as many of them have acquired the language in school, whereas HL learners may face challenges if the instructional language differs significantly from their own variety.

The connection to the language and culture also differentiates these groups. For HL learners, their heritage language is integral to their bilingual identity, fostering a deep

emotional attachment. Carreira and Kagan (2011) found that 85% of HL learners surveyed across various heritage languages and regions in the United States viewed their heritage language as a crucial aspect of their identity. In contrast, L2 learners typically approach language study as external observers, viewing the L2 as an academic subject similar to science or history. Finally, the last distinction between these two learner types discussed by Beaudrie et al. (2014) pertains to language proficiency. L2 learners generally follow a structured curriculum, making it easier to predict their knowledge and identify potential gaps at different proficiency levels, as described by Carreira (2000) as an implicational hierarchy. However, predicting language proficiency for HL learners is more complex due to the diverse linguistic backgrounds and knowledge they possess. Another distinction between HL and L2 learners pertains to the connection to the language and culture. For HL learners, their heritage language is often an essential part of their bilingual identity, creating a strong emotional attachment to it. Carreira and Kagan (2011) surveyed HL learners across different heritage languages and geographic regions in the United States and found that 85% of respondents said that their heritage language was an important part of who they are. In contrast, L2 learners generally approach L2 studies as outsiders and view the L2 as an object of study, much like science or history.

Lastly, HL and L2 learners exhibit differences in their proficiency across the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. HL speakers often develop strong oral skills, particularly in listening and speaking, due to early exposure and use in familial or community settings. However, they sometimes lack literacy skills, such as reading and writing, especially when the HL uses a different writing system from the majority language, leading to a disparity between their oral and written proficiencies. In

contrast, L2 learners typically receive more structured education that balances the development of all four skills, although their oral skills may lag behind their literacy skills initially. This divergence highlights the need for tailored educational approaches to address the specific needs of HL learners, particularly in enhancing their literacy abilities.

In summary, understanding the key differences and needs of HL learners compared to L2 learners is essential for developing effective language teacher preparation programs. HL learners' early exposure to the language, varied linguistic environments, and strong cultural connections differentiate them significantly from L2 learners, who primarily engage with the language in formal instructional settings. These differences need tailored teaching strategies that address HL learners' unique linguistic backgrounds and emotional ties to their heritage language. Therefore, language educators must be equipped with specialized knowledge and skills to meet the diverse needs of HL learners effectively. By recognizing and addressing these distinctions, teacher preparation programs can better support HL learners' linguistic and cultural development.

### **2.3 Heritage language teachers' core competencies**

In order to inform curriculum decisions aligning with the needs of HL learners, the field of HL education has established certain instructional goals. Valdés (1995, 2005) outlined six goals for HL instruction, complemented by Aparicio's (1997) addition of a seventh goal, and Beaudrie and Vergara Wilson (2022) incorporation of an eighth. These goals for HL instruction include:

1. HL maintenance
2. development of a prestigious variety
3. expansion of the bilingual range
4. transfer of literacy skills

5. development of academic skills
6. development of positive attitudes
7. development of cross-cultural awareness
8. development of Critical Language Awareness (CLA)

This final goal is crucial, given that certain pedagogical approaches in HL education perpetuate dominant language ideologies, such as the standard language ideology (Leeman, 2012), disregarding the varieties that HL students bring to the classroom, which diverge from those typically taught in language classrooms. The concept of standard language ideology posits the feasibility of eradicating linguistic variation, deeming specific speech patterns as "correct" and others as "incorrect," acknowledging linguistic authority in determining correctness, and attributing prestige to certain language forms or practices based on their inherent value rather than societal attitudes toward their users (Milroy, 2007). Consequently, critical language pedagogy seeks to integrate methodologies and approaches aimed at fostering critical reflection and empowering student agency in language learning (Leeman, 2005). CLA directs attention to the social and power dynamics impacting speakers of minoritized languages in the United States, mandating the examination of the sociopolitical implications of language within educational settings (Zentella, 2002; Leeman 2005). A substantial body of literature addressing HL speakers and CLA acknowledges the Eurocentric orientation prevalent in language teacher preparation programs across the United States, emphasizing the urgency for educators to deepen their understanding of the cultural and linguistic dynamics within local language communities (Holguín Mendoza, 2017). CLA advocates for both students and educators to explore the sociopolitical implications of language in shaping knowledge, culture, and identity (Leeman, 2005). Despite our well-intentioned motives,

societal norms socialize us to perceive certain language varieties as superior to others, calling for a critical self-reflection to recognize and address this inherent bias (Holguín Mendoza, 2017). Lacorte (2016) argues that reflective practices should address teachers' "own background as native or nonnative speakers of the languages they teach; personal experience as language learners; experience with different kinds of teaching; attitudes or preferences concerning pedagogical or curricular options; views about communities where the heritage language is used, and so on" (p.111). Thus, incorporating CLA principles into teacher training programs serves as an initial step toward reversing the language shift experienced by some HL speakers (Ducar, 2022). Therefore, it is imperative that language teacher education programs abandon eradication practices and adopt a critical perspective that questions the imposition of standard varieties.

Given that HL maintenance is one of the primary objectives of HL instruction, it is crucial for educators to foster positive attitudes towards student varieties of their HL. From a linguistic standpoint, all language varieties hold equal value; however, from a sociopolitical standpoint, certain varieties are deemed more prestigious than others (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Consequently, these prestigious varieties are designated as the standard, giving rise to the ideology of the standard language discussed previously. As outlined by Lippi-Green (2004), the notion of a standard language ideology is deeply ingrained within the United States education system, favoring an abstracted, idealized, and unchanging form of spoken language. Typically, the variety favored by the socioeconomic elite is chosen as the standard (Lippi-Green, 2012). Parodi's (2008) instructional framework offers a model enabling HL educators to address issues related to linguistic ideologies. This model involves teaching students the standard, providing them

with the option of employing it in academic settings if they so desire. By adopting this model, HL students can maintain their Spanish vernacular while simultaneously addressing linguistic, sociolinguistic issues, and affective needs, such as negative attitudes towards their own varieties (i.e., linguistic insecurity). Many HL speakers exhibit a lack of confidence in their linguistic abilities and may at times reject their HL due to internalized messages regarding the inferiority of languages other than English stemming from normative monolingualism-associated ideologies. Consequently, educators must address the affective needs of HL learners, as language attitudes frequently exert a significant influence on language development (Gardner, 1982).

In addition to the eight goals of HL pedagogy, the field of SHL has advocated for teacher preparation initiatives that integrate theoretical frameworks, resulting in a set core of teaching competencies deemed essential for achieving the aforementioned goals and successfully serve HL learners. These competencies for HL instruction underscore the valuable insights obtained over many years from diverse academic disciplines, including formal linguistics, sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, and classroom-based research within this domain. Beaudrie and Loza (2023) summarize these core competencies, comprising the following eight components:

1. Understanding the bilingual continuum and comprehending the definitions that encompass HL learners.
2. Distinguishing between HL and L2 learners, and recognizing how the cultural, academic, and sociolinguistic backgrounds of HL learners shape variations in learning styles, educational needs, and language proficiency.
3. Recognizing HL learners' implicit knowledge of their HL and its implications for instructional practices.

4. Acquiring knowledge about the educational challenges in teaching mixed HL/L2 classes.
5. Understanding the sociolinguistic dimensions of the HL variety and its connection to language education settings.
6. Engaging in introspection regarding teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward HL learners and the varieties they use.
7. Being aware of raciolinguistics and dominant ideologies within language teaching, as well as notions of standard language use, appropriateness, and monolingualism.
8. Acknowledging the historical and political factors influencing the maintenance of the HL within the United States and how these contribute to adverse experiences for HL learners during their educational journey.

These core competencies aim to systematize the education of HL teachers and are designed to form the groundwork for future teacher preparation programs. Therefore, language teacher education programs aspiring to better prepare their teachers must incorporate these competencies into their curricula.

As discussed in the preceding paragraph, several core competencies essential for educators pertain to Applied Linguistics and Sociolinguistics, calling for them to teach through a sociolinguistically-informed perspective. This lens incorporates an acknowledgement of diversity alongside a comprehensive understanding of language prestige and stigmatization. Among the most important responsibilities of a language teacher is helping students to understand the distinction between language registers and the ramifications of using certain registers (i.e., using a colloquial register in an academic context and vice versa) (Beaudrie et al., 2014). To adopt a sociolinguistically-informed approach, educators must recognize and appreciate the language varieties that their

students will bring to class. Given the diverse origins of Spanish speakers in the United States, their linguistic practices will reflect this diversity in the classroom.

Variation among different Spanish varieties includes lexical, phonetic, phonological, and morphosyntactic differences. In addition, given that the typical HL student is bilingual, their linguistic practices are likely to exhibit phenomena commonly associated with languages in contact. These phenomena include codeswitching, borrowing, extensions, and calques (Escobar & Potowski, 2015). Codeswitching involves the use of two or more languages within a single utterance or speech act (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Contrary to the belief that codeswitching occurs due to a speaker's inability to find appropriate words in their heritage language, research indicates that HL speakers with limited proficiency engage in simpler forms of code-switching compared to those with stronger proficiency (Zentella, 1997). Another phenomenon that results from language contact is lexical borrowing, which involves incorporating a word from one language into another and adapting it to fit the phonological and morphological patterns of the borrowing language (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Despite the comprehensibility of these borrowings, HL speakers often face criticism from monolinguals, including educators, for their use. Extensions, whether pertaining to semantic meaning or grammatical structure, entail the process of appropriating a word or structure from a source language and expanding its semantic scope or syntactic function, thereby imbuing it with novel meanings influenced by another language (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Within the context of L2 instruction, such phenomena are occasionally denoted as "false cognates." Lastly, calques represent direct, literal translations from a source language (Otheguy, 2013). Similar to codeswitching, individuals possessing higher proficiency in both languages are

inclined to incorporate a greater number of calques into their discourse (Silva-Corvalán, 1994). Therefore, the examination of Spanish language variation and the linguistic practices of bilingual HL students highlight the intricate dynamics of language contact, highlighting phenomena such as codeswitching, borrowing, extensions, and calques, which enrich our understanding of bilingual language acquisition and usage in educational contexts.

Building on the understanding of language contact phenomena and the complexity of bilingual language use, the crucial role of the HL teacher lies in informing their students about the usefulness of colloquial varieties beyond the confines of the classroom and home (Martínez, 2003). Achieving a comprehensive understanding of not only the linguistic aspects associated with HL learners but also issues concerning language prestige and stigmatization requires going beyond the study of Sociolinguistics and incorporating insights from other fields, such as Critical Race Theory, Anthropology, and Sociology, among others, to fully grasp the multifaceted aspects pertaining to the Spanish-speaking population in the United States. Researchers have long advocated for modifications to teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development in order to address the social and educational concerns regarding HL students (Schwartz, 2001). To better prepare pre-service teachers for working with the HL learner population, effective teacher education programs must provide a comprehensive education, exposing them to social issues extending beyond language study. This exposure should include topics such as bilingualism, language contact, and sociolinguistic variation, which are unlikely to be covered in undergraduate or graduate programs focused solely on L2 acquisition.

In addition to incorporating both HL goals and pedagogical approaches, teachers of HL speakers should be familiar with the principles underpinning Native Language Arts, given the considerable overlap between these educational domains. Webb and Miller (2000) advocate for teachers of HL students to examine the standards pertinent to language arts instruction and to delve into the instructional methodologies employed by language arts educators. The Standards for the English Language Arts, published in 1996 and reaffirmed in 2012 by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA), demonstrate strong alignment with the needs of HL students. Key NCTE standards relevant to HL teachers include the development of linguistic and academic skills essential for communication across diverse settings through expanding their command of various registers, awareness of complex sociolinguistic dynamics characterizing the use of a minoritized language in the United States, and recognition of the influences of socioeconomic disparities, ethnic and cultural biases, family illiteracy, and socioeconomic adversity on educational attainment (Potowski & Carreira, 2004). Furthermore, Potowski and Carreira (2004) present practical strategies for teachers to implement NCTE standards in HL education. These strategies focus on enhancing linguistic and academic skills necessary for effective communication across diverse professional and academic settings in the United States. They emphasize the importance of broadening HL students' mastery of various registers and genres, addressing the emotional needs arising from the complex sociolinguistic environment of Spanish use in the United States, and creating culturally responsive environments in their classrooms. This would allow exploration of social barriers faced by Latinx students, such as poverty, ethnic and cultural discrimination, family illiteracy, and sociopolitical

disenfranchisement, from a bicultural perspective, enabling the development of personal and group strategies to overcome these challenges. Additionally, they suggest the creation of student-friendly Spanish grammar lessons. Although the authors acknowledge that the NCTE standards align more closely with the needs of HL students than foreign language standards, they caution against uncritical application, as these standards are designed for native English speakers. Consequently, many HL students may not possess the necessary Spanish proficiency to engage with language arts as monolingual native speakers in Spanish-speaking countries would. Nonetheless, they assert that the NCTE standards offer significant value to HL education (Potowski & Carreira, 2004).

Building on these strategies, further insights into teacher development are provided by Lacorte (2016), who outlines essential components for effective teacher development programs applicable across various educational settings, including community-based schools, K-12 education, and higher education. These components encompass ideological, cultural, socioaffective, linguistic, curricular, pedagogical, and professional considerations relevant for educators working with HL learners in both HL and mixed courses. Lacorte (2016) conceptualizes these elements within an ecological framework, recognizing the impact of social, educational, cultural, economic, and political contexts on teaching and learning processes. The subsequent discussion elaborates on each of these seven components in detail, as outlined by Lacorte (2016).

1. Ideological considerations: These pertain to teachers' beliefs about the values, goals, and assumptions related to teaching content and pedagogy. These beliefs develop gradually and possess both subjective and objective aspects. They may stem from various sources, such as personality traits, personal experiences as

- language learners, experiences with different teaching methods, attitudes towards the language of instruction, and perspectives on the individuals or groups learning the target language.
2. Cultural considerations: These relate to the impact of cultural affinity on HL learners. Culture significantly influences HL learners' motivation to enroll in courses that allow them to explore their cultural and linguistic heritage and to strengthen their connections with their families and communities.
  3. Socioaffective considerations: These involve the recognition by teachers of the significant positive correlation identified by researchers between HL proficiency and various aspects of identity development, including higher self-esteem, confidence, self-determination, social interaction with peers, family relationships, L2 development, and academic achievement. Teachers should be mindful that affective practices, such as the expression of feelings, moods, dispositions, and emotions, may present more complex dimensions for HL learners.
  4. Linguistic considerations: These encompass the differences in HL proficiency distribution compared to L2 learners across language modalities, text genres, and language registers. A thorough understanding of HL linguistic systems requires knowledge of the contrasts between first, second, and HL acquisition, particularly in grammatical and social areas.
  5. Curricular considerations: These highlight the importance of teachers becoming well-versed in the administrative practices of their institutions. This knowledge includes a thorough review of pedagogical materials specifically designed for HL learners or mixed classes.

6. Pedagogical considerations: These emphasize that teacher preparation for those working with HL learners should cover contemporary approaches such as language arts, differentiated instruction, and critical language pedagogy. Additionally, teacher preparation programs should incorporate activities addressing identity and power dynamics in the classroom, the concept of translanguaging, and engagement with HL communities through various oral, written, and visual means.
7. Professional considerations: These involve the need for teachers working with HL learners to participate in diverse professional development opportunities to enhance their effectiveness. Furthermore, they should be trained in reflective practices to observe and assess student performance, pose pertinent questions regarding linguistic and social behaviors observed in the classroom, and design and evaluate activities that promote language and cultural development.

The components proposed by Lacorte (2016) are relevant not only to language teacher training programs but also to professional development courses, modules, and workshops for educators in various educational settings.

#### **2.4 Pedagogical context knowledge for mixed courses**

This discussion thus far has primarily addressed the improvement of teacher training programs to better prepare teachers to work with HL learners within the context of specialized instructional settings tailored to this student population. In most schools and universities in the United States financial limitations and other constraints prevent the establishment of a dual-track for HL and L2. This issue arises in part from neoliberal policies that have led to reduced funding for education programs. Ideally, students should

have access to education in their native or heritage language, regardless of the level of demand, particularly in a wealthy nation like the United States. However, due to the constrained budgets for education, decisions are made based on available resources. This brings up the dilemma of whether the focus should be on meeting the educational needs of students or on minimizing the cost of public education.

Additionally, there is a lack of awareness regarding the characteristics of HL speakers, few teachers trained in HL pedagogy, limited faculty resources, and a dearth of specialized initiatives targeting HL learners (Carreira & Kagan, 2018). Given these institutional dynamics, combining both HL and L2 learners in a single classroom is the norm in most educational settings. While there may be instances of overlapping needs between these two groups of language learners, most often the distinct academic and affective experiences of HL students delineate the main differences (Ducar, 2022). The inherent challenges posed by this combination become evident: instructional practices tend to align with L2 pedagogy rather than HL pedagogy or a pedagogical framework tailored to the dynamics of mixed-language classrooms (Carreira & Kagan, 2018).

The term *mixed class* refers to courses with both SHL and L2 learners (Carreira, 2012) and is subdivided into three distinct typologies (Carreira, 2014). *Type 1 mixed classrooms* consist predominantly of L2 students alongside a small number of HL learners (Potowski, 2002), representing the most common typology fraught with many challenges. This classification does not refer to classes employing methodologies for teaching both HL and L2 students effectively. While these courses meet the needs of L2 learners, they are not very helpful for HL learners. Research indicates that the instructional methodologies, topics, and instructional materials in such classes largely

mirror those of traditional L2 courses (Carreira, 2014). In *type 2 mixed classrooms*, the number of L2 and HL learners is similar (Dones-Herrera, 2015), while in *type 3 mixed classes*, HL learners outnumber L2 learners (Vana, 2020). Given the inherent complexities surrounding HL instruction, much of the literature on mixed classes has predominantly focused on type 1 classes, reflecting the common scenario of many HL learners studying their heritage language in such settings (Carreira, 2016). Despite the evident benefits of offering dedicated HL courses, a number of obstacles may hinder their implementation, including barriers related to departmental resources and the need for faculty training or recruitment of trained faculty (Beaudrie & Marrero-Rivera, 2024).

Undoubtedly, the integration of mixed HL/L2 classes presents a pedagogical challenge, given the multitude of differences among students in their abilities, goals, and attitudes. In mixed-language instructional contexts, the student cohort may include typical L2 students alongside HL students, including first-generation immigrants proficient in their heritage language, as well as third-generation immigrants who are English dominant, and have predominantly receptive abilities in their HL. As the Hispanic population in the United States continues to grow, mixed HL/L2 courses will become the standard in most schools across the country. Consequently, preparing teachers with the skills and strategies to navigate the challenges of mixed-language classrooms should be a top priority for the language teaching profession.

As previously discussed, a core competence required for educators in the subject area of Pedagogical approaches for teaching HL lies in their ability to implement differentiated instruction tailored to mixed classes and to employ strategies for HL/L2 collaboration (Gironzetti and Belpoliti, 2021). Differentiated instruction, as proposed by

Tomlinson (1999), constitutes a pedagogical approach that capitalizes on the unique learning profiles of students to tailor instruction accordingly, thereby fostering individual academic achievement. This approach holds particular promise for mixed HL/L2 classes, as it provides a variety of learning options that cater to diverse student needs. Key principles characterizing differentiated instruction include: (1) the curriculum is shaped by student differences; (2) integration of ongoing student assessment in the curriculum; (3) various instructional materials are available; (4) flexible pacing; (5) students are involved in setting expectations and objectives; (6) use of diverse grading criteria; and (7) students are assigned work based on their level of readiness (Potowski & Carreira, 2004).

Beaudrie et al. (2014) provide concrete examples of effective differentiation strategies in the HL/L2 classroom, emphasizing the importance of adopting a multifaceted approach not only to content delivery but also to the incorporation of such methodologies in the instructional process and student output. Teachers are tasked with the ongoing assessment of their students to gain insights into individual learning preferences in, thereby informing the selection of appropriate instructional strategies tailored to the diverse needs and developmental stages of learners. Additionally, establishing rapport with HL students at the beginning of the academic term to assess their language proficiency levels is important for devising instructional interventions that align with their specific needs. This initial assessment can be facilitated through methods such as student interviews or administering a survey. Carreira (2012) proposes differentiating instruction through the implementation of formative assessments and strategic grouping techniques.

Continuous formative assessments serve as invaluable tools for educators, offering insights into individual language proficiency levels without the imposition of grading pressures, thereby facilitating instructional adjustments as needed. Deliberate grouping strategies are employed to purposefully group students based on their language abilities, rather than relying on self-selection or random assignment. Teachers must ensure that the pairing of HL and L2 students is mutually beneficial, avoiding the practice of designating HL students as mere "language assistants" for the benefit of L2 learners, a dynamic that perpetuates social and structural inequities faced by many HL students and their families in daily life. Bowles (2011) suggests pedagogically beneficial approaches to pairing students in HL/L2 mixed classes, such as leveraging HL learners' expertise to enhance the lexical repertoire of L2 peers, while reciprocally, L2 learners may contribute to the metalinguistic grammatical knowledge of HL counterparts. By employing such strategies, teachers create a learner-centered classroom environment that empowers students as their language proficiency is viewed as a resource rather than a problem. While differentiated instruction represents an effective method for addressing the challenges in mixed-language classrooms, it is not without limitations, given the significant differences in the language development of these students.

In creating formative assessments tailored to the mixed HL/L2 classroom and executing student groupings effectively, language educators must grasp the differences between these two groups of students. According to Beaudrie et al. (2014), common differences between HL and L2 learners include: age of language acquisition (early childhood versus post-puberty), learning context (naturalistic versus formal schooling), language variety (occasionally nonprestigious versus prestigious), connection to the

language (familial versus academic), connection to the culture (insider versus outsider), and language proficiency levels (less predictable versus predictable). HL learners typically benefit from early and naturalistic language exposure, providing an advantage in oral proficiency, albeit often accompanied by deficiencies in writing and spelling skills (Carreira & Kagan, 2011). Conversely, L2 learners commonly exhibit stronger literacy skills compared to their oral skills. Nonetheless, both groups frequently encounter challenges with similar linguistic structures, such as gender agreement, indirect object marking, and aspect and mood distinctions (Montrul, 2016).

One of the primary distinctions between HL and L2 learners pertains to their respective explicit or metalinguistic knowledge, with HL learners typically possessing implicit knowledge of grammatical concepts while L2 learners exhibit explicit knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology. Moreover, the process of grammar learning follows a different trajectory for these students, as HL learners use language to access grammar while L2 learners use grammar as a means to access language (Parodi, 2008). Given that HL learners are accustomed to internalizing grammatical instruction without receiving explicit instruction, teachers are advised to differentiate instructional materials to accommodate this distinction when teaching grammar in mixed-language classes (Zyzik, 2016). Conversely, educational materials for teaching vocabulary can often be used with both groups, given their greater transferability to HL students. Similarly to L2 students, HL students frequently exhibit lexical gaps across various semantic fields and demonstrate English influence in their writing, primarily due to the prevalence of mainstreaming as the predominant educational model for English language learners (ELLs) in the majority of schools in the United States. This model prioritizes English

acquisition over the maintenance and development of minoritized languages (Fuller & Leeman, 2020). Additionally, they use Spanish in a limited range of contexts, which means they are familiar only with the vocabulary relevant to those specific areas.

Similar to HL educators, teachers of mixed HL/L2 classes must adopt a sociolinguistically-informed approach to language instruction. This is because mixed HL/L2 classes comprise students with diverse linguistic backgrounds and proficiencies, necessitating teaching methods that recognize and address these differences. A sociolinguistically-informed approach allows educators to tailor instruction to both HL learners, who may need support in literacy, and L2 learners, who may require more foundational oral language practice. Russell and Kuriscak (2015) identified challenges faced by both pre-service and in-service Spanish teachers in mixed language classes, highlighting difficulties in addressing the sociolinguistic needs of HL students despite their awareness of these needs. The authors also noted discrepancies between teachers' ideologies and instructional practices concerning language education. Furthermore, teachers themselves may inadvertently contribute to the failure of mixed HL/L2 classes, as many of them lack adequate knowledge of sociolinguistics and language politics, potentially resulting in biases against non-standard or non-prestigious varieties spoken by many HL learners and their families (Wilberschied & Dassier, 1995). Researchers have argued that equipping teachers with knowledge of the sociolinguistic connotations of language use is essential for fostering an additive bilingualism environment, where students continue to develop their native language alongside acquiring a second language. To cultivate such an environment in mixed classrooms, educators must discern and address sociolinguistic power dynamics, designing instruction that rejects the

reinforcement of hegemonic cultural norms (Randolph, 2017). Thus, language educators are called upon to engage in self-reflection to critically examine how their perspectives on linguistic agency and language acquisition may influence their instructional practices.

In addition to the aforementioned pedagogical and subject-matter knowledge, language educators must cultivate an awareness of societal perceptions regarding the bilingualism of their L2 students in contrast to that of their HL students. The unequal value assigned by monolingual English-speakers to the language skills of fellow native English-speakers compared to speakers of minoritized languages underscores the concept of “differential bilingualism”, where bilingualism among native English-speakers is often regarded as an asset, while bilingualism speakers of minoritized languages is frequently viewed as a problem or shortcoming (Aparicio, 1998). These perceptions are not inherently tied to the languages themselves, but rather to the social status attributed to their speakers, thereby influencing language maintenance (Fuller & Leeman, 2020). Unfortunately, many HL speakers internalize this hierarchical construct, leading them to undervalue their language skills, ultimately resulting in low ethnolinguistic vitality and potentially language shift. Differential bilingualism causes positive attitudes toward one’s own heritage language while fostering negative attitudes towards one’s own variety. Differential bilingualism often results in individuals valuing their heritage language as a whole but developing negative attitudes towards their specific variety, which may be seen as less prestigious. This dichotomy arises because the standard form of the heritage language is often idealized, while regional or non-standard varieties are stigmatized, leading to internalized negative attitudes toward one's own speech patterns. Consequently, it is essential for language teacher preparation programs to incorporate

sociolinguistic instruction to empower educators to navigate linguistic variation effectively and appreciate linguistic diversity, rejecting notions of certain varieties being superior to others (Burgo, 2017).

Lastly, numerous scholars have addressed the significance of incorporating principles of CLA in mixed HL/L2 classes (Randolph, 2022; Gasca Jiménez & Adrada-Rafael, 2021; Leeman & Serafini, 2021). The current training approach for language instructors, heavily grounded in the communicative method and often mandating exclusive use of the target language while correcting linguistic features prevalent in HL-speaking local communities, fosters an unfavorable learning environment for both HL and L2 students. This approach neglects the existence of multilingual communities and their language practices (Pascual y Cabo & Prada, 2018). Researchers advocate for educators to embrace the translanguaging practices inherent in their students' linguistic repertoires and surrounding communities in such mixed classes. They observe how traditional L2 classes tend to restrict multilingual practices such as code-switching, while emphasizing standard language forms (Gasca Jiménez & Adrada-Rafael, 2021). Meaningful transformation in language education cannot occur until community languages, sociolinguistic dynamics, minority language issues and language politics in the United States are brought to the forefront of world language teacher preparation (Ducar, forthcoming).

## **2.5 Teacher development for in-service teachers**

This discussion thus far has centered on the improvement of teacher preparation programs to better prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs of HL learners across various educational settings, explaining the content knowledge and pedagogical

competencies essential for these novice educators. However, many teachers with HL students in their classrooms have already completed teacher training in programs that predominantly emphasized L2 acquisition, consequently leaving them ill-prepared to address the challenges of a dual-track or mixed HL/L2 classroom. Other teachers responsible for HL student instruction lack formal training in language teaching and are assigned this responsibility solely by virtue of being native speakers. Nevertheless, language proficiency alone is insufficient for effective HL instruction, as some native speakers may hold HL speakers to unrealistic monolingual standards (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Moreover, being a native speaker, including being raised in a country where the native language holds dominant societal and educational authority, may prevent a comprehensive understanding of the sociolinguistic contexts in which HL speakers are raised in the United States.

Furthermore, the lack of training in sociolinguistics among native speaking teachers can be detrimental for HL students. Therefore, hiring a native speaker solely based on language proficiency does not guarantee successful educational interactions. Gironzetti and Belpoliti (2021) conducted surveys and interviews with SHL teachers, revealing their awareness of the deficiencies in their professional training and their reliance on self-initiated, albeit limited, professional development opportunities to improve classroom outcomes. Consequently, it appears that many teachers with HL students must independently seek solutions. This study's findings also indicate reluctance among SHL educators to engage in intensive professional development opportunities aimed at expanding SHL core competencies, primarily due to financial and time

constraints, as well as a lack of institutional support. Nonetheless, viable strategies exist to address this circumstance.

Other options for the professional development of in-service HL educators include weekend workshops, online self-paced models, webinars, and summer institutes. Literature suggests that cost-effective and time-commitment-appropriate workshops can help bridge the gap between research and practice (Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016). While these alternatives are preferable compared to receiving no education, they are not perfect solutions, as the process of preparing HL teachers entails a gradual process. Conceptual and critical understanding develops gradually and dynamically through sustained practice, rendering single conference sessions or brief webinars insufficient for comprehensive teacher development.

An essential facet of preparing in-service teachers to excel as HL educators involves engaging in long-term critical self-examination concerning personal experiences, attitudes, and linguistic ideologies, particularly regarding language identities, variation, and language contact dynamics. Gironzetti & Belpoliti (2021) advocate for introspection guided by principles of social dialogue, which include teachers participating in collaborative networks with peers at various stages of their careers to critically examine instructional practices, attitudes, and underlying assumptions. Reflective practice, a cornerstone of this introspective process, entails teachers evaluating classroom decisions, discerning how these preferences reflect their consciousness, and assessing their impact on student learning outcomes. Acknowledging the pervasive influence of the standard language ideology in educational settings, continuous self-awareness is imperative, prompting educators to engage in ongoing introspection.

Moreover, this social dialogue should extend beyond language educators to encompass colleagues from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Leeman (2018) highlights the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, encouraging language teachers to collaborate with peers in other fields to facilitate student discussion of language's political and social dimensions. Additionally, Holguín Mendoza (2018) argues that professional development opportunities for HL teachers should incorporate self-analysis components to deepen understanding the role of language in processes of marginalization and discrimination, among other societal dynamics.

Potowski (2003) describes a model of in-service SHL teacher training conducted in Chicago, Illinois, a city notable for its large Hispanic population. Known as the "Heritage Language Teacher Corps" (HLTC), this model emerged from a collaborative effort between the University of Illinois at Chicago and Chicago Public Schools. The program offered three graduate-level courses, covering SHL methods, Sociolinguistics, and Spanish Literature and Culture, free of charge to high school teachers. In these courses, teachers applied and expanded their newly acquired knowledge by creating instructional materials and exchanging successful pedagogical strategies. In addition to the coursework, teachers participated in workshops addressing diverse topics, including assisting HL students with the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam, leveraging online resources for SHL instruction, and integrating sociolinguistics into teaching practices. Additionally, the model incorporated classroom visits, a local HTLC conference, along with other activities. While this model appears ideal, it is important to recognize its limited feasibility for many high school teachers across the United States. The initiative was made possible through a three-year grant awarded to the participating

school district, highlighting the pivotal role of funding in facilitating HL teacher training initiatives and the establishment of HL programs in educational institutions, as emphasized throughout this discussion.

In instances where fully funded programs or semester-long courses are not feasible for in-service teachers, alternative options include organizing after-school weekend workshops held over a portion of the academic term. Moreover, educators may consider attending occasional conferences offering HL teacher training. While participation in such activities can be costly, teachers can advocate for school administrators to cover the costs of these professional development opportunities on behalf of their students. In cases where attending workshops and conferences in person proves challenging, educators can access digital resources. Such resources include podcasts, workshops, and HL research publications, as well as the National Heritage Language Resource Center at the University of California, Los Angeles, which focuses on teacher education, material development, and curriculum design. The center provides the StarTalk modules, interactive self-paced tutorials designed to enhance understanding of the needs of both HL and L2 students. These tutorials also include strategies tailored for use in mixed-language classrooms.

The Texas Coalition for Heritage Spanish (TeCHS) is another initiative that offers many free online resources to teachers. TeCHS provides modules for professional development, a repository of classroom materials, and a platform for educators to exchange instructional materials with fellow HL teachers. The readily accessible online series titled "Materials for Heritage Language Teaching" serves as an introduction to HL teaching methods, offering not only foundational theoretical information but also

practical suggestions for daily instruction. Furthermore, educators can participate in events organized by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the latter which has a special interest group focused on heritage language. In addition to in-person gatherings, both organizations offer an array of online events and resources tailored to HL education. Moreover, several books dedicated to HL pedagogy aimed at equipping language teachers with comprehensive knowledge in this domain are available. Among these books are *Innovative Strategies for Heritage Language Teaching: A Practical Guide for the Classroom* by Fairclough and Beaudrie (2016), *Advances in Spanish as a Heritage Language* by Pascual y Cabo (2016), *Heritage Language Teaching: Critical Language Awareness Perspectives for Research and Pedagogy* by Loza and Beaudrie (2022), *Culturally Sustaining Literacy Pedagogies: Honoring Students' Heritages, Literacies, and Languages* by Cantrell et al. (2022), *Aproximaciones al estudio del español como lengua de herencia* by Pascual y Cabo and Torres (2022), and *The Peer-Effect: Non-Traditional Models of Instruction in Spanish as a Heritage Language* by Reznicek-Parrado (2024), along with several others. All the aforementioned resources are either freely accessible or available at a modest cost, thereby enhancing their accessibility to educators across diverse settings.

Lastly, it is important to recognize that while these pedagogical resources are available, it is not solely the responsibility of the language teacher to procure them. The limited time teachers can devote to obtaining additional education outside of regular work hours cannot fully compensate for a lack of support from school administrators. Administrators are responsible for providing teachers with the resources necessary to

effectively educate students. Additionally, they should prioritize allocating more funds to language departments, which frequently are underfunded and consequently under-resourced. Another avenue through which schools can support their language teachers is by providing dedicated time for professional development. By affording educators scheduled time within their working hours for activities such as completing modules, reading relevant literature, and participating in webinars, schools can alleviate the burden on educators to engage in professional growth outside of their contractual obligations. Prioritizing support for students from linguistic minority backgrounds should be a top priority for all stakeholders in an educational institution.

## **2.6 Advanced Placement Exams**

An extensive body of research has been conducted regarding the benefits associated with AP participation among high school students. Previous research has established a positive correlation between AP exam participation and achieving subsequent college success (Smith et al., 2017; Chajewski et al., 2011; Speroni, 2011; among others). For example, Smith et al. (2017), analyzed data from over 4.5 million students to assess the impact of AP exam performance on college completion and subsequent exam-taking behavior using a regression discontinuity design with continuous raw AP exam scores. Their findings indicate that achieving higher integer scores on AP exams positively influences the likelihood of earning a bachelor's degree within four years, with credit-granting scores increasing this probability by 1-2 percentage points per exam. Additionally, students who receive a score of 3 rather than 2 on junior year AP exams tend to take between 0.06 and 0.14 more AP exams during their senior year. These

results underscore the significance of AP exam performance in shaping college outcomes and subsequent academic engagement.

Chajewski et al. (2011), examined the relationship between AP exam participation and enrollment in four-year postsecondary institutions and found a significant positive correlation. The authors analyzed data from over 1.5 million students nationwide and findings revealed that students who participated in AP exams were substantially more likely to enroll in a four-year college compared to those who did not take any AP exams. Specifically, the likelihood of attending a four-year institution increased by at least 171% for students who took one, two to three, or four or more AP exams. This relationship held true even after accounting for various demographic, ability, and high school-level factors. These findings suggest that AP participation plays a crucial role in college preparation and planning, highlighting the importance of AP courses in educational initiatives aimed at enhancing college readiness. Similarly, Speroni (2011) compared the efficacy of AP and Dual Enrollment (DE) programs in enhancing college access and success for high school students. Using comprehensive data encompassing two cohorts of all high school students in Florida and controlling for various school and student characteristics, including prior academic achievement, she examined the predictive power of AP and DE participation on students' college outcomes. Results indicate that both AP and DE programs exhibit strong associations with positive post-secondary outcomes, albeit with differences in enrollment patterns. Specifically, while DE students show a higher likelihood of attending college after high school compared to AP students, they are less inclined to initially enroll in four-year institutions. However, despite this discrepancy in

initial enrollment, the disparity between DE and AP in terms of bachelor's degree attainment is minimal and not statistically significant across various model specifications.

The benefits of earning high AP exam scores extend to marginalized student cohorts as well. Dougherty et al. (2006) demonstrated a significant positive correlation between successful completion of AP exams and higher college graduation rates among Hispanic students, along with those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Their study delves into the correlation between college graduation rates and the participation and success of students in AP courses and exams. It assesses this relationship through three distinct approaches: firstly, by comparing the college graduation rates of AP and non-AP students; secondly, by conducting a comparative analysis of college graduation rates after adjusting for students' demographics, prior achievement, and high school characteristics; and thirdly, by examining the correlation between a high school's AP participation rate and its percentage of students graduating from college. The findings suggest that the proportion of students from a school who take and pass AP exams serves as the most reliable indicator of the school's effectiveness in preparing students for college graduation. This underscores the significance of AP exam outcomes, highlighting the need for schools and districts to not only enhance the quality of AP course instruction but also to improve students' academic readiness before their enrollment in such courses. Consequently, it is advisable for schools to implement Pre-AP courses alongside every AP class they provide to guarantee the academic achievement of their students in both AP exams and subsequent college endeavors.

The advantages of participating in the AP program are evident. Nevertheless, marginalized students face disparities in accessing AP courses. Previous research has

extensively discussed the historical inequities in access to AP programs for minoritized student groups (Bittmann et al., 2017; Kerr, 2014; Handwerk et al., 2008; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). For instance, Bittman et al. (2017) examined AP enrollment and passage rates among marginalized student populations, including African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students, in public and charter high schools in Florida. Analyzing data from 355 schools, the researchers investigated the relationship between the proportions of enrolled students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses and their corresponding AP exam passage rates. The results revealed a weak yet positive correlation between the proportions of Hispanic, African American, and Caucasian students passing AP exams and the proportion of enrolled AP students. Conversely, a negative relationship was observed between the proportions of students enrolled in AP classes and those receiving free or reduced-price lunch, indicating lower enrollment rates in AP courses in schools with higher poverty levels. These findings underscore the importance of addressing disparities in AP enrollment rates, particularly in high-poverty schools, to ensure equitable access to advanced coursework and enhance opportunities for academic success among marginalized student populations.

Kerr (2014) conducted a case study in which she gathered data on minority student enrollment in honors and AP classes at a high school in Kansas with the goal to devise a strategy to address the achievement gap between white and non-white students. Prior to this investigation, there was a lack of precise data to transition the discourse from identification to resolution. Conducted over 1.5 years across 35 social studies classes spanning grades 9-11, the research collected enrollment figures, assessment results, class

grades, and teacher recommendations from various local, district, and state sources. This action research revealed tangible progress within a year as a consequence of the implementations put in place following data collection, demonstrating a notable increase in minority enrollment in International Baccalaureate (IB), honors, and AP classes at the high school. Similarly, Handwerk et al. (2008) investigated advanced coursework access to high school students. Combining data from the College Board's AP program with the U.S. Department of Education's records for all public high schools nationwide, the authors assessed AP program availability, participation patterns, and student performance across schools with varying socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and geographic characteristics. Key findings include school type variations in the degree to which they offer AP, with public high schools demonstrating similar AP exam participation and student performance levels after accounting for school differences. However, a minority of students achieve scores high enough on AP exams to potentially earn college credit or placement, with consistent disparities observed for low-income and underrepresented minoritized students. Despite some progress in introducing the AP program to diverse schools, minoritized students remain underrepresented among AP examinees. Additionally, gender differences are evident across various study measures. The study concludes that widening access to advanced coursework for underserved student populations is imperative for facilitating higher education opportunities and successful workforce participation.

Solorzano and Ornelas (2004) use CRT to investigate the access and availability of AP courses and their impact on educational outcomes for Latinx and African American students. In their study, they address questions regarding how school

structures, practices, and discourses contribute to racial and ethnic discrimination in AP course access, how students and parents respond to such discrimination, and how school reforms can mitigate these disparities. The research is conducted within a California school district serving a significant population of Latinx and African American students. Findings reveal three distinct patterns: Latinx students are disproportionately underrepresented in AP enrollment district-wide; schools in urban, low-income Latinx and African American communities exhibit low AP course enrollment rates; and even in high schools with substantial AP course enrollment, Latinx and African American students are not equally represented in AP enrollment. These disparities in access to advanced coursework not only deprive students of critical opportunities but also perpetuate the harmful notion that AP courses are not intended for them. This detrimental perception contributes to the ongoing academic achievement gap prevalent in public schools nationwide. Nevertheless, minority students possess the potential to excel when provided with equitable opportunities (The Education Trust, 2013). Therefore, it is essential to supply these students with appropriate resources and to ensure AP teachers receive adequate training to effectively support this demographic, as these measures are crucial for narrowing the achievement gap.

According to The New Teacher Project (2018), Black and Latinx students are being prevented from participating in advanced courses due to educational policies and practices rather than their academic abilities. These issues include racially diverse school districts receiving less funding compared to those serving predominantly white students, as well as educator and grading biases. Educator and grading biases involve the racial and cultural prejudices inherent in testing and grading practices, reflecting the biases of

teachers. Additionally, the lack of access to diverse educators poses a significant barrier for Black and Latinx students. Research indicates that having teachers of the same race or ethnicity positively influences the academic outcomes of students of color (Grissom & Redding, 2015). Consequently, school and district leaders should develop actionable solutions to address these issues and support these student populations. The Education Trust (2020) outlines several measures that educational leaders can implement to support students in enrolling in advanced courses. These steps include establishing clear, measurable goals for increasing access to advanced coursework and promoting student success, as well as committing to monitoring district progress towards these objectives. Additionally, it is crucial to provide adequate support to ensure that students not only enroll in AP courses but also successfully pass the end-of-year AP exams with a score of 3 or higher to earn college credit.

Lastly, while a substantial body of research underscores the benefits of AP exam participation and its positive impact on college success, significant disparities in access to these opportunities persist among marginalized student populations. Efforts to address these inequities must focus on providing equitable resources, improving the quality of AP course instruction, and ensuring diverse representation among educators. By setting clear goals and offering comprehensive support, educational leaders can enhance AP course enrollment and performance, particularly for underrepresented students, thereby narrowing the achievement gap and promoting greater educational equity.

## **2.7 Critical Race Theory and teacher development**

CRT provides educators with a valuable framework for understanding, identifying, and remedying the pervasive white supremacy entrenched within the United

States educational system, including teacher training (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Hambacher and Ginn (2020) argue that white supremacy in teacher education has been sustained by a broad emphasis on diversity, which has allowed educators to avoid discussions of race and racism. In response, scholars have advocated for a deliberate focus on race, proposing that antiracist principles should be integrated into multicultural education efforts (Lee, 2014). Vesely et al. (2023) suggest that as CRT challenges the prevailing narrative on race by analyzing how educational theories, policies, and practices marginalize particular racial and ethnic groups, it logically extends to serve as a framework for constructing antiracist teacher education initiatives. Consequently, the authors investigate the implementation of antiracist pedagogy in teacher education classrooms, driven by the imperative to challenge racism within educational settings. They aimed to assess their own university's teacher education classrooms using a CRT framework to discern how systemic racism is both perpetuated and disrupted, with the goal of fostering sustained antiracist pedagogy. To achieve this, they developed an Antiracist Pedagogy Course Audit, a tool designed to enhance teacher capacity for critically reflective practices across five key domains: Instructor Critical Consciousness, Understanding Students' Backgrounds and Experiences, Course Readings and Content, Classroom Learning Environment, and Assignments and Assessments. The authors outline the early stages of implementation, details the process-oriented mechanisms for adaptation, and discuss the practical applications of the tool within an early childhood education teacher education course.

Other studies regarding CRT and teacher development have focused on the experiences of pre-service teachers of color in teacher preparation programs with the goal

of improving their educational journeys. For example, Rodríguez et al. (2023) analyze the experiences of Latinx pre-service teachers enrolled in a teacher preparation program in the New Latinx South, a region marked by a substantial increase in the Latinx population in recent decades that encompasses the area from North Carolina to Alabama. Through the use of pláticas, informal conversations with a group of six female Latinx pre-service teachers, the authors uncover two central themes: encounters with racism and discrimination, and feelings of isolation. These findings, coupled with the participants' narratives, shed light on the obstacles faced by this demographic within the education sector and underscore the need for improvements in professional support to better assist Latinx teachers. The study aims not only to enhance the educational journey of Latinx pre-service teachers but also to address the growing demand for Latinx educators in schools in the United States. Additionally, the use of pláticas as a research method adds depth and authenticity to the study, aligning with the participants' cultural practices and community engagement. Similarly, Rogers-Ard et al. (2013) contend that economic marginalization, standardized testing, and racially skewed criteria for assessing teacher competence perpetuate the underrepresentation of teachers of color within urban teaching cohorts. To increase teacher diversity, the authors spotlight two urban initiatives aimed at mitigating these obstacles, contextualizing them within a CRT framework, which underscores strategies for empowering urban communities to exert greater influence over local teacher development processes. The authors propose a teacher evaluation framework that combines perspectives from schools, districts, universities, urban constituents, including students, families, and community organizations, as well as teachers themselves, to redefine the parameters of teacher efficacy.

Moreover, in line with efforts to enhance teacher diversity and address the challenges faced by pre-service teachers of color, Chu et al. (2023) examine a case that offers insights for institutional partnerships aiming to enhance diversity in the teaching profession by cultivating "homegrown" Latinx teachers. Through a qualitative case study approach focused on Latinx students in an early childhood education program at a regional public university, the authors investigate the experiences of students who participated in a Grow Your Own (GYO) program during their high school or community college education. The GYO initiative aims to recruit and support individuals dedicated to teaching within or in close proximity to their local communities, aiming to achieve a teaching workforce that mirrors the racial composition of the student body. The study by Chu et al. (2023) addresses the obstacles encountered by GYO Latinx teacher candidates upon transitioning to a 4-year university teacher education program and explores strategies to enhance the support and retention of Latinx teacher candidates. Findings reveal that GYO Latinx students face challenges related to increased financial burdens, admission requirements, and commuting upon entering the university. Additionally, the study highlights the significance of fostering a critical learning community that prioritizes culturally sustaining and place-based approaches to support Latinx students' success in teacher education programs.

Lastly, CRT serves as a strong framework for addressing systemic racism within teacher development, advocating for a deliberate focus on race to combat the perpetuation of white supremacy in educational settings. Through the implementation of antiracist pedagogy, programs can aim to disrupt entrenched biases and foster inclusive learning environments. Additionally, studies examining the experiences of pre-service

teachers of color underscore the importance of professional support and institutional initiatives to enhance teacher diversity and support the success of underrepresented educators. These efforts align with the broader goal of addressing the growing demand for diverse educators and promoting equitable educational outcomes for all students.

## **2.8 Chapter Summary**

The objective of this chapter was to provide context and identify pertinent studies focused on the professional development of teachers working with HL students. Several important insights can be drawn from this chapter, underscoring the significance of the research presented in this dissertation. Firstly, the analysis highlights a deficiency in the preparation of both prospective and practicing language teachers to effectively teach HL students. This inadequacy primarily stems from a training gap in language teacher preparation programs, which predominantly prioritize L2 approaches, thereby neglecting the unique needs of HL learners. Despite the existence of defined instructional goals and core competencies essential for HL teachers, this gap persists. Furthermore, this chapter reveals the adaptability of teaching methodologies to accommodate the diverse needs of both HL and L2 learners in a shared learning environment. promoting advantages for both student types, despite their differences. It underscores the potential benefits afforded to both student groups through flexible teaching approaches, notwithstanding their inherent differences. Additionally, the chapter discusses the common circumstance where many teachers working with HL students have completed training primarily focused on L2 acquisition. While this presents a challenge, the review proposes various strategies that can be implemented to mitigate this issue.

In conclusion, the studies discussed in this chapter emphasize the importance of examining the experiences of teachers working with HL students to identify their instructional needs. These studies highlight the necessity of analyzing teachers' needs to pinpoint and address gaps in HL teacher training, aiming to enhance learning outcomes. Particularly relevant to this dissertation is the need to support teachers preparing HL students for high-stakes assessments, such as the AP Spanish exams — an area that has been largely overlooked in the field of SHL. This research seeks to address this gap by exploring the specific needs of these teachers. As SHL researchers and educators, it is crucial to advocate for and contribute to the improvement of educational outcomes for all students, including those in secondary school contexts, to achieve true equity. These findings serve as the foundation for the present study and highlight the gap in the literature that this dissertation addresses.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This dissertation study aims to gain insights from the experiential knowledge of AP Spanish teachers of heritage language learners. The main objective is to draw implications for the preparation of students in Spanish pre-service teaching programs, as well as for the ongoing professional development of in-service educators. During the spring semester of 2023, 51 teachers volunteered to participate in this study, contributing their experiences and perspectives on teaching AP Spanish to HL students.

The current study adopts a mixed-methods approach that analyzes the needs of AP Spanish teachers who primarily teach HL students, as well as their professional and educational profiles. The data collection process involved an online survey distributed to AP Spanish teachers of HL students across the United States and follow-up interviews with a subset of these teachers. A needs analysis assessment was chosen due to its efficacy in identifying prevailing training needs for enhancing the professional development of AP Spanish teachers (Brown, 2002) and in tailoring curricula to best suit the needs of HL students, addressing the following research questions:

1. What is the preparation or training of AP Spanish teachers in SHL pedagogy to support their students in successfully passing the AP exams?
2. What, if any, challenges do they face when teaching AP Spanish to this student population, and what do they attribute these challenges to?
3. What types of professional development do AP Spanish teachers of HL students need to better prepare HL students for these exams?

To enhance clarity, Table 1 delineates the steps taken to execute this study. References to these steps will be made throughout the chapter using their respective numerical identifiers.

**Table 1. Stages of study with corresponding action steps**

Stage	Action
1	IRB approval
2	Recruitment of teacher participants through online social networks
3	Teachers who met selection criteria were contacted
4	Selection and recruitment of participants for interviews
5	Interviews were conducted
6	Data analysis of survey responses
7	Data analysis of interviews

The current chapter outlines the methodology used for the present study. This chapter is subdivided into the following segments: 1) selection of participants and their background, 2) research design and instruments, 3) procedures for data collection, and 4) methods for data analysis.

### **3.1 Selection of participants and their background**

For the purpose of recruiting participants for this study, online social networks designed specifically by AP Spanish teachers for fellow AP Spanish teachers to share resources and connect were used. Each participant was required to fulfill the criteria of being at least 18 years of age, engaged in teaching AP Spanish, and having HL speakers in their AP class. Participants consisted of self-identified in-service educators who have been teaching AP Spanish to HL in schools throughout the United States. A total of 51 participants who met the above criteria agreed to answer the online survey. The study

information and recruitment form approved by the IRB (# 00017194) was sent via email to these 51 teachers to make the study goals and participation process clear, along with a link to the survey. The subsequent section elaborates on the participants' age, gender, relationship with Spanish, current teaching location, school type they teach at, and other relevant information. Participant information of those who completed the survey is further outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2. Participants background information**

<i>(N = 51)</i>							
Age			Sex		Spanish		
18-30	31-45	45-60	Female	Male	L1	L2	L3
5	30	16	39	12	32	18	1

Over half of participants ( $n = 30$ , 59%) were between the ages of 31 and 45 years old; the vast majority were women ( $n = 39$ , 76%), and Spanish was either their L1 ( $n = 32$ , 63%), L2 ( $n = 18$ , 35%) or L3 ( $n = 1$ , 2%). Table 3 shows the geographic distribution of online survey participants divided by region. Note that the table does not include all regions and states, solely those represented by teachers who participated in the study.

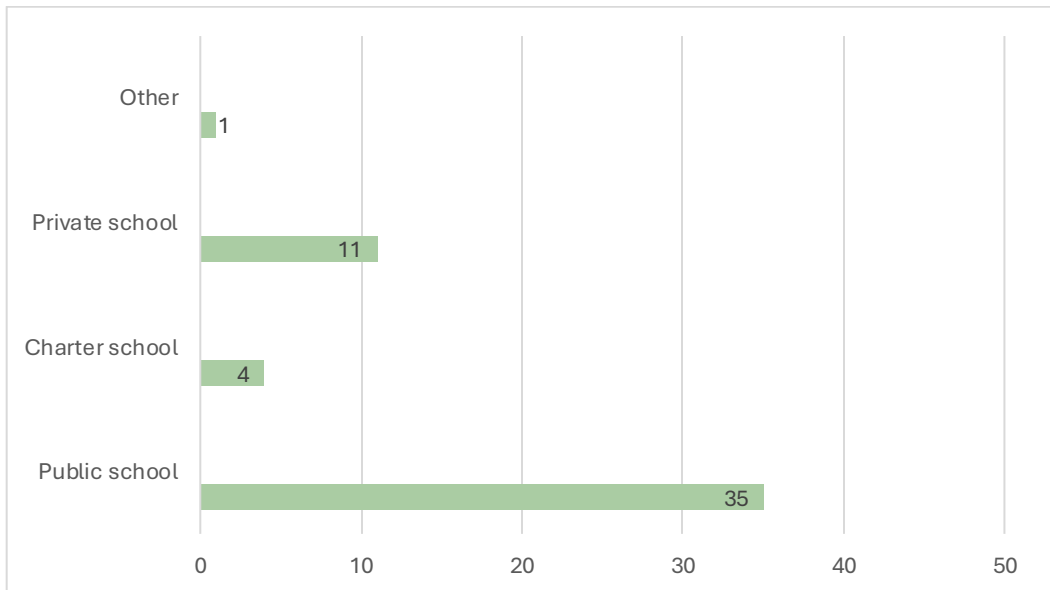
**Table 3. Distribution of online survey participants by U.S. region**

South	Southwest	Midwest	Northeast
Arkansas 1	Arizona 5	Illinois 7	Massachusetts 1
Florida 5	California 7	Indiana 1	New York 5
Maryland 3	Colorado 1	Iowa 2	Pennsylvania 2
Mississippi 1	Oklahoma 1	Ohio 2	Rhode Island 1
Tennessee 1	Texas 5	Wisconsin 1	
<b>Total: 11</b>	<b>Total: 19</b>	<b>Total: 13</b>	<b>Total: 8</b>

Although a substantial proportion of respondents who participated in the survey were based in regions such as the Southwest ( $n = 19, 37\%$ ), other geographical areas, such as the West, were not represented at all in the survey sample. This may be attributed to the prevalence of a substantial Spanish as an HL learner demographic within states encompassing the Southwest, consequently leading to a greater concentration of educators teaching this population.

As shown in Figure 1, the majority of survey respondents teach at public high schools across the country constituting a sizable proportion ( $n = 35, 69\%$ ). In contrast, a smaller group of educators are employed in private schools ( $n = 11, 22\%$ ), while a modest fraction is associated with charter schools ( $n = 4, 8\%$ ). Additionally, one respondent provided a response categorized as "Other."

**Figure 1. Participants' self-reported current teaching context.**



The third stage of this study entailed the recruitment and selection of participants for the interview component. The selection of interview participants was carried out through a purposeful sampling approach (Patton, 2002), which considered the following criteria: (1) current and past teaching contexts (public, charter, private school, etc.); (2) years of teaching experience; (3) degree of experience teaching Spanish to HL students (direct experience, indirect experience in mixed classes); and (4) regions within the United States where they teach AP Spanish. This criterion was considered to guarantee that interviewees encompassed a diverse range of profiles, thereby capturing a breadth of experiences and contexts. While the sample may not be regarded as representative of the entire population of AP Spanish educators in the United States, their participation in the interview phase of the project allowed me to give voice to teachers from diverse educational contexts and backgrounds with a variety of experiences, thereby enabling a comprehensive examination of their professional needs.

Eight participants were selected to participate in the follow-up interview with the goal of supplementing the data obtained from the survey responses. The interview sought to unpack and elucidate the survey responses, ensuring a thorough and comprehensive representation of the perspectives and voices of educators. In accordance with the data provided by the interviewees, the following presents pertinent information for each participant:

### **Interview Participants**

#### ***Lus (Interviewee 1)***

Lus was born in Spain and migrated to the United States at the age of 31. Their professional teaching career has been exclusively within the United States. They

currently live in Pennsylvania and teach at a public school. In addition to Spanish and English, they also speak French. They have an M.A. in Language Teaching, which they completed in the U.S. with the purpose of acquiring a teaching credential in the state where they currently reside. They report that, on average, they have about 20% HL speakers in their AP Spanish class and that they have received no specific preparation to teach Spanish as an HL. They have been teaching Spanish for over a decade and have been teaching AP Spanish courses for over 4 years.

***Samantha (Interviewee 2)***

Samantha is originally from Indiana, but currently resides in San José, California, where they teach at a private all-girls high school. Spanish is their L2, and they have some proficiency in Italian and Russian. They hold both B.A. and M.A. degrees, although neither of these qualifications pertains to the field of language education, rather they are degrees in other fields. Nevertheless, they have obtained a teaching license in the state of California. On average, they report having about 20% HL speakers in their AP class. They also report having acquired some degree of preparation to teach Spanish as an HL due to attending workshops and conference presentations. They have been teaching AP Spanish courses for over 20 years.

***Miriam (Interviewee 3)***

Miriam is originally from Puerto Rico with their parents having migrated from Cuba during the 1960s. Following their high school graduation, they relocated to the United States and have lived in the country ever since. In addition to Spanish, they have also taught French and currently teach at a public school in Maryland. Despite holding both a B.A. and an M.A. degree, neither of their academic credentials relates to language

education. However, they have a Maryland teaching license. They report that, on average, they have approximately 40% HL speakers in their AP Spanish class and that they have not undergone any specialized training to teach Spanish as an HL. They have been teaching Spanish for over 20 years and have been teaching AP Spanish courses for the past 5 years.

***Verónica (Interviewee 4)***

Verónica was born in Lima, Perú and migrated to the United States at the age of 14. Since then, they have been living in Chicago, Illinois, where they teach at a public school. They have earned an M.A. degree in language education and hold a teaching license in the state of Illinois. On average, they report that most of the students in their AP Spanish class (over 50%) are HL speakers. They also report that their preparation to teach Spanish as an HL includes a combination of undergraduate, as well as graduate level courses. They have been teaching AP Spanish for 11 years.

***Eva (Interviewee 5)***

Eva was born in Perú and migrated to the United States at the age of 22. They currently teach at a public school located in Providence, Rhode Island. In addition to Spanish, they have also taught French. They have an M.A. in language education, along with a teaching license originally obtained in their previous state of residence prior to relocating to Rhode Island. They report that most of the students in their AP Spanish class (over 50%) are HL speakers. They also report that their preparation to teach Spanish as an HL includes attending workshops and seminars. They have been teaching AP Spanish for the past 6 years.

***Camila (Interviewee 6)***

Camila is originally from Zacatecas, México and migrated to the United States in their infancy, alongside their family. They identify as a heritage speaker, having grown up speaking Spanish at home and acquiring English after starting kindergarten. They currently teach at a public school in Iowa. They hold a B.A. in language education and have a teaching license in the state of Iowa. On average, they report that most of the students in their AP Spanish class (over 50%) are HL speakers. Although they have a B.A. in language education, they report that they received no specific training to teach Spanish as an HL. They have been teaching Spanish for 4 years and was teaching AP Spanish for the first time at the time the interview took place.

***Wendy (Interviewee 7)***

Wendy is from Oklahoma and currently teaches there at a private school. Spanish is their second language, and they have a B.A. degree that is not related to language education. They have a teaching license issued by the state of Oklahoma and have also received National Board Certification for Teaching. They report that most of the students in their AP Spanish class (over 50%) are HL speakers. They also report that their preparation to teach Spanish as an HL includes attending workshops and webinars. They have been teaching Spanish for 15 years and have been teaching AP Spanish courses for 7 years.

***Henry (Interviewee 8)***

Henry is from Easton, Maryland and currently teaches there at a public school. Spanish is their second language, and they have a B.A. in language education, as well as a teaching license issued by the state of Maryland. On average, they report that most of the students in their AP Spanish class (over 50%) are HL speakers. Although they have a B.A. in language education, they report that they received no specific training to teach Spanish as

an HL through their teacher preparation program. Their preparation to teach Spanish as an HL includes attending workshops and seminars, which makes them feel like they are not adequately prepared to teach this population. They have been teaching Spanish for over a decade and have been teaching AP Spanish courses for 8 years.

### **3.2 Research design and instruments**

This dissertation study explores the challenges and needs of AP Spanish teachers who primarily teach HL students. The research employs an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Ivankova et al., 2006), combining qualitative and quantitative data. Data was gathered through an online survey distributed to AP Spanish teachers across the United States, followed by interviews with a subset of educators. A mixed-methods strategy was chosen to collect data more effectively from both a general and case-specific perspective. Moreover, this study triangulates quantitative and qualitative data (Long, 2005), enhancing the depth of understanding of research findings and increasing the trustworthiness of the gathered information. In addition, this mixed-methods design enabled me to go beyond aggregated survey data and give voice to AP Spanish educators' concerns and needs through semi-structured interviews. According to Brown (2002), conducting a needs analysis is crucial to ensuring the success of a training program. Without such analysis, we “run the risk of overdoing training, doing too little training, or missing the point completely”. (p. 569) As the overarching goal of this investigation is to improve the preparation of AP Spanish teachers in HL pedagogy, examining the existing gaps regarding how to serve this student population more effectively and identifying the forms of professional development that could address these gaps and ultimately enhance the situation is essential.

In the second stage of the study, participants filled out a survey using the Qualtrics XM platform (see Appendix B). The design of this instrument adhered to survey research principles (Neuman, 2011) to obtain an accurate professional profile of this sample of AP Spanish teachers of HL students in the United States in order to understand their professional development needs and interests. The goal of the survey is to offer a comprehensive overview of the perspectives and experiences of AP Spanish teachers in general. The survey included a consent form followed by a total of 33 items designed to collect information from AP Spanish teachers with varying levels of experience teaching HL students. The survey contained Likert-style rating items asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with written statements, closed-ended questions, and open-ended questions. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were prompted to enter additional comments into a text box. All survey items were based on an exhaustive literature review on the competences of Spanish as an HL teachers, as well as my own experiences as an AP Spanish teacher of HL students.

**Table 4. Survey components and design**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sample question</b>	<b>Data type</b>
1	Demographic background	Question #7: Select the state where you are currently teaching	Nominal scale
2	Educational background	Question #11: Have you completed a specific degree or program to teach Spanish or another language?	Nominal scale
3	Professional development	Question #19: Consider the following areas of professional development. Which topics help a teacher meet the needs of heritage learners of Spanish?	Likert (Ordinal scale)

4	Teaching experience	Question #23: How long have you been teaching Spanish (as a second, heritage, or first language)?	Ratio scale
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Section 1 of the survey is primarily comprised of close-ended questions. These questions covered teachers' self-reported demographic details, such as their native language, additional languages known or taught besides Spanish, the location of their current teaching position, and whether they teach at a public, private or charter school. Additionally, participants were asked about any experience teaching outside the United States. This section included a single open-ended question asking participants to share their place of origin.

Section 2 of the survey, which gathered participant responses related to their educational backgrounds, was divided into two parts. The first part inquired about teachers' general education degrees and whether these were related to language teaching. The second part focused on their knowledge about SHL learners. In the first part, questions revolved around the types of degrees held by teachers, their relevance to language teaching, and the completion of requirements for a Spanish teaching license. Subsequent questions inquired about their readiness to teach Spanish to HL learners, their confidence in teaching this student population, and the typical number of HL speakers present in their AP Spanish classes.

Section 3 of the survey, which focused on participants' professional development, prompted them to assess the significance of various areas and subjects to enhance their ability to address the needs of heritage learner students. Additionally, teachers were asked to evaluate different modalities of professional development they would consider for

ongoing education. Specifically, educators were requested to rate the importance of 15 distinct topics related to the core competences of SHL teachers. This evaluation was conducted using a binary choice with an option to explicitly abstain, with response options ranging from "Valuable" to "I don't know/I am not sure." An illustration of an item within this category was: *Translanguaging (the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features of different languages in order to maximize communicative potential)*. This part, which focused on professional development modalities, listed nine different approaches and asked teachers if they would participate in any for their continuing education. An example of an item from this category was: *Joining a virtual group or community focusing on Spanish as a heritage language*.

Finally, the last section of the survey, centered on the teaching experience of participants, prompted them to respond to questions about how long they had been teaching Spanish, the typical class size for their AP Spanish class, and the percentage of students typically achieving a score of 3 or higher on the exam. Additionally, within this section, there were open-ended questions seeking insights from teachers on the challenges encountered when teaching AP Spanish to HL learners. It also sought their opinions on the kinds of professional development they believe would help them prepare their HL students for success in the AP exam. Lastly, there was a space provided for teachers to include any additional comments.

Following the collection of data through the online survey, the fourth stage of the study entailed audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews with a subset of survey respondents, in accordance with current sociocultural proposals for teacher education that emphasize the role of dialogue and reflection as central components in teachers'

development (Johnson, 2009). The semi-structured interview protocol allowed for flexibility, ensuring that participants had the autonomy to share their teaching experiences without being confined to a rigid set of predetermined questions. The interviews were employed to acquire additional insights into their survey answers, address any inconsistencies in the responses, and delve more deeply into their experiences teaching HL speakers.

The interview participants had the option of conducting the interview in either Spanish, English, or a combination of the two, and the interview questions generally mirrored those of the survey but included some additional questions tailored to the survey responses of individual participants in order to better comprehend their individual comments and make potential connections. The purpose of this was to gain a deeper understanding of the self-perceived efficacy, beliefs about HL education, experience, and training in HL pedagogy. The interview elicited open-ended responses in three key areas covered in the survey: participants' experiences teaching AP Spanish, the instructional approaches, and techniques they use in their classes, and their plans for continuing professional development. The interview protocol consisted of 16 questions applicable to all participants with flexibility to include questions that emerged during the interview or arose from individual survey responses. The interview questions included questions such as: “Can you describe your experience learning Spanish?”, “How would you describe the students in your AP Spanish classes to someone who is about to visit your school for the first time?”, and “What are the greatest obstacles preventing you from continuing your education to meet the needs of your HL students in your AP classes?”. Appendix C contains the interview protocol.

### **3.3 Procedures for data collection**

Data collection occurred during the Spring 2023 semester. Initially, a pilot survey was conducted, and adjustments were implemented to rectify any confusion or ambiguity in the survey questions. Subsequently, participants were recruited online using social networks designed specifically for AP Spanish teachers to share sources and connect, and the revised survey was distributed to the teachers who expressed interest in participating in the study. These social networks have thousands of members and are moderated by AP Spanish teachers. The AP Spanish Literature group has more than 2,300 members, while the AP Spanish Language group has more than 5,200 members. The AP Literature group averages approximately seven postings per day, while the AP Language group averages approximately two posts per day. To start the recruitment for the present study, a message was posted in the aforementioned social networks with an invitation to participate and instructions on how to contact me if interested. Teachers who expressed interest in joining the study contacted me via email, and I provided them with a survey link. The survey required approximately 15-20 minutes for completion. Participants were given the option to select an anonymous identifier that would be used to refer to them throughout the study, ensuring their confidentiality. This approach was adopted to preserve participants' anonymity and honor their choices regarding the distribution of their information. The recruitment of participants for this study extended over approximately two months, during which several social network posts were necessary to attract additional participating teachers. Furthermore, I reached out via email to teachers who had initially expressed interest in the study but had not completed the survey. The purpose was to encourage their survey participation, as well as address any questions or

concerns they might have had regarding the study. In the last question of the survey, teachers were asked whether they would be open to participating in a follow-up interview. Those who expressed interest were later contacted through email to propose available meeting times for scheduling an interview virtually via Zoom, with a suggested duration of at least 30 minutes. However, participants were informed that the session could be as brief or as extended as they wished.

Before commencing the interview session and initiating the recording, the researcher reviewed the consent form once more with each participant, allowing time for any additional questions, and sought permission to begin the recording. Each individual interview spanned a minimum of 30 minutes, with roughly half extending to about an hour. Throughout these interviews, the researcher was in a quiet space alone, equipped with a notebook to take notes during the session. Every interview commenced with a casual discussion with the participant, and each individual was asked about their language preference for the interview, initially starting with English. Additional questions were incorporated to encourage participants to provide more details about particular topics they introduced and to seek clarification regarding comments made in the survey when necessary. Prompts like "could you explain...", "tell me more about...?" or "can you give me an example of...?" were employed to gather more information. The interviews were scheduled at times convenient for each participant, fitting into their individual schedules, and typically lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. To maintain the authenticity of participants' responses, each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### **3.4 Methods for data analysis**

Responses from both the survey and interviews were stored in a secure, password-protected online repository. To safeguard participant confidentiality throughout the investigation, their names were replaced with pseudonyms during analysis. The only identifiable details retained for each participant included their age, gender, native language, ethnicity, and the state in which they were teaching at the time of their participation in the study.

The analysis of the survey data utilized a mixed methods approach. Descriptive statistics were utilized for survey questions. For each survey item, mean values and standard deviations were computed, along with the percentage of agreement across all participants. To calculate the percentage of agreement for Likert-scale items, responses were numerically rated from 1 to 5. Responses with codes 3 or above ("Very valuable," "Valuable," and "A little valuable") were considered in agreement, indicating support for a specific area of professional development. On the other hand, responses with code 2 ("Not valuable" were regarded as not in favor of that particular aspect of professional development.

Interview transcriptions and notes from interviews were coded using MAXQDA, a computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data analysis software, was employed for data coding. All qualitative data sources were coded using a grounded theory approach. In grounded theory, coding generally consists of two phases, as outlined by Charmaz (2014): initial coding and focused coding. For the analysis of transcriptions, an initial coding process, employing inductive analysis as described by Charmaz (2014), was utilized. Inductive analysis, as defined by Thomas (2006), involves a method that relies on meticulous readings of raw data to extract concepts, themes, or a model through

interpretations made by an evaluator or researcher. Regarding initial coding, Charmaz (2014) emphasizes coding should "stick to the data" (p. 116). This involves utilizing action words (e.g., engaging, experiencing, showing) to articulate the actions present in the data. In the initial cycle, coding was conducted without predefined themes. The initial coding process is designed to encourage the discovery of themes inherent in the data itself. In contrast to earlier grounded theory approaches, as rejected by Charmaz (2014) and exemplified in Glaser (1992), who advocates for an initial coding approach devoid of preconceived notions about the data, Charmaz suggests that initial coding should be open-ended. However, she acknowledges that researchers inevitably bring a set of experiences, prior ideas, and skills to the data analysis process. Therefore, I did not approach the data with predetermined themes that I aimed to validate but, instead, let the data speak to me and used this as a guiding factor throughout the data analysis process. Text segments pertaining to teachers' experiences with HL students, along with their teaching methods and language beliefs, were emphasized, and codes were formulated verbatim.

Following the initial coding phase, I proceeded to the second round of coding, focused coding. As described by Charmaz (2014), this stage involves evaluating all initially identified codes, comparing them across the entire dataset, and pinpointing specific codes with heightened analytical significance. The initial codes were structured according to the following principal domains, aligning with the research questions: preparation in SHL pedagogy, challenges, and professional development needed. Once I identified all the focused codes (e.g., experiencing a lack of confidence in their preparedness to teach HL learners), I employed a LatCrit theoretical lens to identify

thematic categories that were prominent across each source of data. Thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), was utilized to summarize the most prevalent codes for subsequent analysis. The primary purpose of thematic analysis is to recognize, analyze, organize, describe, and report the themes present in a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2008). This method's adaptability is crucial for analyzing teachers' perceptions, practices, and experiences. The section that follows describes my positionality, as well as the influences and perspectives shaping this research.

### **3.5 Positionality**

To practice critical self-reflection and adhere to the principles outlined in this study, I will start this section by discussing my own positionality. I am a native Spanish speaker, born and raised in Puerto Rico, and I moved to the United States in 2014 to pursue my graduate studies. Growing up as the granddaughter of a teacher, witnessing my grandmother's altruistic dedication to teaching in our community instilled in me a profound appreciation for education, shaping my aspiration to become an educator myself from a young age. Upon embarking on my graduate studies in the United States, I began my career in education, working across various institutions in different states, including Illinois, Massachusetts, Texas, and Arizona. These experiences have afforded me the opportunity to engage with diverse student populations, spanning from secondary to post-secondary levels.

I began teaching Spanish for heritage learners at a Title I school in Massachusetts. After two years at this school, I relocated to Texas, where I continued my career as a high school teacher, also assuming the role of Spanish Teacher Leader. My time in Texas was,

perhaps, the highlight of my career as an educator. It was during this period that I began teaching AP Spanish to HL students. The majority of my students came from Mexican American backgrounds, often first-generation youth raised by monolingual working-class parents. It was during this time that I came to the realization that despite holding an M.A. in Language Education, my training had not adequately prepared me to effectively meet the needs of this student demographic, primarily due to the lack of SHL pedagogy coursework in my program.

Subsequently, I began searching for additional resources to address the needs of my students. This involved reading books, attending workshops and conferences, and joining social media groups with fellow teachers of SHL students, among other endeavors. It is widely acknowledged that schoolteachers in the United States face significant challenges, grappling with low compensation and heavy workloads, which add considerable difficulties. As part of this effort, I attended an AP Summer Institute, which, according to the College Board website, “offer[s] the most thorough professional learning available for AP educators. Attendees engage in 30 or more hours of content-rich training designed to strengthen how they teach their AP courses.” Despite this investment, I found that the content largely catered to meeting the needs of L2 students, leaving me with lingering questions: how can I best support my HL students in achieving high AP exam scores? How can I structure my curriculum to not only cover exam content but also facilitate HL skill development, while also empowering my students?

As a high school teacher, I witnessed firsthand the reality of language teachers lacking proper training, hindering their ability to effectively address the diverse needs of their students. The majority of universities prioritize the teaching of L2 methodologies,

largely neglecting comprehensive training in HL pedagogy. This deficiency highlights the critical importance of advocating for the representation and empowerment of language-minoritized individuals and communities. Central to my values is a commitment to purposeful contribution, driving my dedication to dispel misconceptions surrounding bilingualism, positioning it not as a detriment but as a valuable human ability both individually and societally. Accordingly, my research efforts center on advancing HL pedagogy and fostering teacher education, while recognizing the imperative to amplify the voices of HL speakers and their research.

### **3.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter discusses the methodology employed in investigating the challenges and needs of AP Spanish educators who teach HL students. It begins with an overview of participant selection, using targeted recruitment through online social networks dedicated to AP Spanish educators. 51 participants meeting specific criteria were recruited, reflecting a diverse range of backgrounds and teaching contexts across the United States. Details on participant demographics, including age, gender distribution, and teaching locations, highlight the study's scope and regional representation.

The research design is characterized by an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, integrating both quantitative data obtained from an online survey and qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews. This methodological choice aimed to gather a holistic understanding of AP Spanish teachers' experiences and perspectives. The survey, conducted via Qualtrics XM platform, encompassed 33 items exploring demographic information, educational backgrounds, professional development needs, and teaching experiences related to HL learners. Following the survey, interviews with eight

selected participants provided deeper insights, enhancing the richness and interpretive depth of the study's findings. Data collection procedures involved iterative adjustments to ensure clarity and participant engagement. Initial pilot testing of the survey facilitated refinement before wider distribution among interested educators. Recruitment efforts leveraged active engagement within online communities, emphasizing confidentiality and voluntary participation. Subsequent interviews, conducted via Zoom, adhered to a flexible protocol to capture nuanced responses and contextual variations in teaching practices and professional challenges.

Lastly, quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics, revealing patterns in educators' perceptions and needs. Qualitative data, derived from interview transcripts, underwent rigorous coding and thematic analysis using MAXQDA software. This methodological rigor ensured the identification of key themes such as pedagogical preparation, instructional challenges, and desired professional development strategies among AP Spanish teachers. Overall, this chapter sets the stage for the subsequent presentation and discussion of findings, illuminating critical insights into enhancing HL education within the AP Spanish curriculum.

## CHAPTER 4

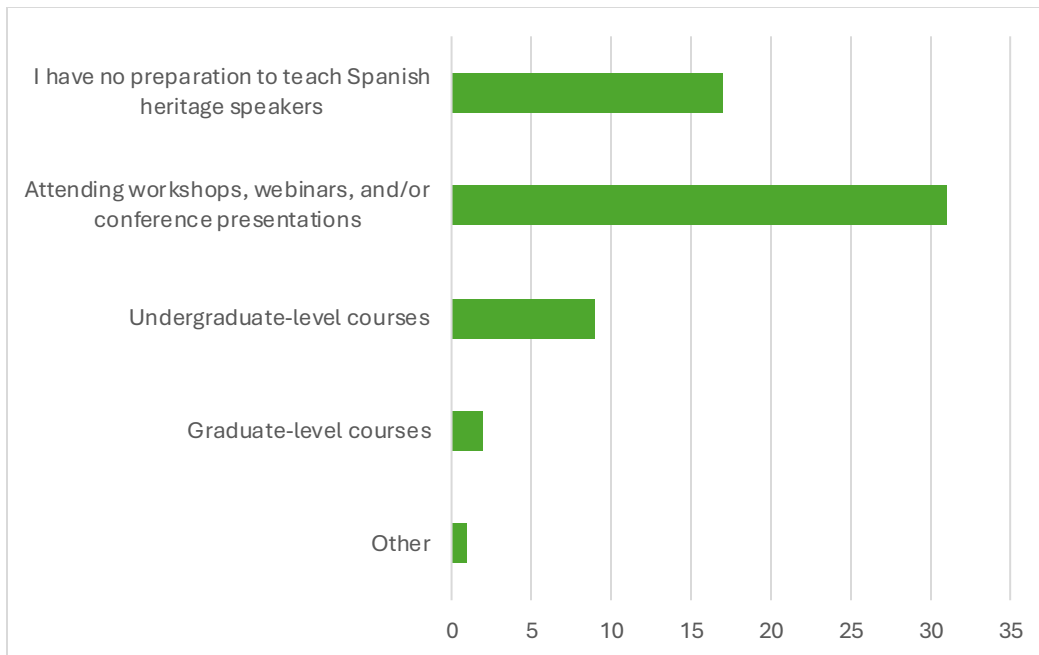
### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and the discussion of the dissertation study. The primary aim of the study is to document the current deficiencies in the language teacher curriculum, with particular attention to how these gaps affect AP Spanish teachers and their HL students. Each section of this chapter answers one of the research questions, and each section is then further divided into relevant themes, which are explored in detail. After examining the needs presented by teacher participants in both survey and interview data, I provide recommendations for language teacher training programs, secondary school districts, and educators based on the needs identified.

#### **4.1 Spanish heritage language teaching preparation**

The first research question was: “What is the preparation or training of AP Spanish teachers in SHL pedagogy to support their students in successfully passing the AP exams?” On average, most teachers who participated in this dissertation study reported receiving minimal training in SHL pedagogy to support their HL students in achieving a successful score in the AP exams. To address the first research question, the online survey asked teachers “Which of the following options best describes your preparation for teaching Spanish to heritage speakers?” To respond to this question, teacher participants were permitted to select multiple options, indicating that certain teachers received training across various modalities (e.g., workshops and university courses). Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of teachers' responses.

#### **Figure 1. Teachers’ preparation to teach Spanish heritage speakers (N=51)**



Results indicate that teachers, collectively, have a wide range of training to teach Spanish heritage speakers. Seventeen teachers (33%) lacked any formal preparation in this regard, while 34 (67%) reported having had some formal training. Within the latter group, 31 (60%) participated in less intensive forms of training through workshops, webinars, or conferences. Additionally, only 9 (17%) teachers have completed undergraduate-level courses in this field, 2 pursued graduate-level courses, and one teacher indicated alternative preparation methods. The descriptive results presented here are consistent with those found in the studies conducted by Gironzetti and Belpoliti (2021) as well as Carreira (2022). In both, at least half of the participants indicated that they had undergone some form of specialized training in SHL. However, in general, the training received by teachers is minimal and inadequate to effectively address the needs of SHL students.

To address the first research question and gauge each teacher's perception regarding their preparation to meet the needs of their HL students in their AP Spanish course, the

semi-structured interviews incorporated specific questions. These included questions such as “Based on your teacher training, do you feel adequately equipped to teach AP Spanish to HL students?” and “Has your school or district provided you with professional development opportunities regarding SHL pedagogy?” These questions served as guidelines for the discussions. However, the interview format allowed for flexibility to pose additional questions based on participants’ responses. The teacher training needs that I identified through the analysis of interview data are categorized into themes and elaborated upon in subsequent sections.

### **Lack of confidence in addressing the needs of SHL students as a result of minimal training**

The predominant theme in the semi-structured interview data addressing the first research question is teachers’ notable lack of confidence in preparedness to address the needs of SHL students as a result of minimal or no training in SHL pedagogy. In alignment with survey results, interviewees were split; four reported no formal training to teach SHL students, while the remaining indicated they received minimal training, typically through professional development workshops, webinars, or conferences. As a result, teachers described how they lack confidence in their abilities to adequately prepare their SHL students for the AP exams, which is aligned with the findings from previous studies (Ducar, 2022; Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010 & Valdés, 2008; among others). For example, in excerpt 1, Samantha elaborates that despite their school offering them the option to participate in professional development activities, including seminars on HL pedagogy which they have chosen to attend, they still feel inadequately equipped to address their students’ needs. Additionally, they express a desire for more resources on

HL pedagogy and highlight that the seminars they have attended did not effectively assist them in teaching their mixed classes.

1. I am given professional development opportunities that I get to determine. So I just went to ACTFL. For example, uh- in Boston and I- and I choose to go to the seminars that are about heritage language learning. Yeah. So, but there isn't a lot there. And I have to say- yeah, I still- I still feel very much sort of at sea. Um, you know- I wish- I wish there were more resources. I mean, I think particularly for my situation where I've got a class where I've got to deal with these two groups. Yeah. And, you know, and don't have time to teach two different classes. I mean, at some level, they've got to do somewhat the same thing. I do try to- you know um take- you know alternate. – Samantha

This sentiment of feeling at sea, was consistently expressed by the interviewees, particularly when inquiring about the instructional approaches employed by teachers with their SHL students. While attending professional development opportunities is beneficial, they are insufficient for achieving complete competence in teaching this student demographic.

Similar to Samantha's experience, other teachers shared feeling a lack of confidence in teaching this student population, despite participating in professional development opportunities. Some of the teacher interviewees did not participate in trainings specifically regarding HL pedagogy, rather they received trainings designed specifically for AP Spanish teachers which they reported did not meet their HL students' needs.

2. Y francamente, yo me fui muy como decepcionada de esa clase. Entonces a mí me la directora me dio esa clase y yo todavía sentía que me faltaba. Dije yo no sé cómo enseñar comprensión de lectura a estos estudiantes. [And frankly, I left that class feeling quite disappointed. So, the principal assigned me that class, and I still felt like I was lacking. I said to myself, I don't know how to teach reading comprehension to these students.] – Eva
3. I think we need a separate training for people who teach heritage kids, because the trainings that I got is all for the white kids. And you know, that's great that it's for the language- the L2 kids. Pero [But] that- that training did not relate to my

experience. I wanted training on how to work with kids who maybe um AP Spanish like- you know they don't- they're here because they have to take it, but they're not motivated or they- they think they don't have to try because they're native speakers. How do you address that? I wanted a workshop on that. – Camila

Despite participating in professional development sessions tailored for AP Spanish teachers, Eva and Camila express dissatisfaction with these workshops. They expressed a desire for training to include guidance on how to motivate students whose first language in Spanish.

As conversations progressed regarding the teachers' preparation to address the needs of their HL students in their AP Spanish course, some participants mentioned feeling unsure and expressed that they would like some guidance in specific aspects related to their HL students. Camila highlights this point by stating,

4. I would really like a workshop where they tell us what is appropriate and what is not, because who am I to tell my Puerto Rican students not to write their ensayo [essay] a certain way? Not to- not to uh do their despedida [closing] a certain way, right? Because we have students that come from other countries, Latin American countries that say words que a lo mejor no dicen: "Si no es tan- tanta molestia, me gustaría preguntarle esto". [and maybe they won't say: "If it's not too much trouble, I would like to ask you something"] But they say other- like they say that, but in different way. Is that appropriate? Are you going to judge it because you're not used to hearing those words? And because I really want to know the positionality of some of these scorers, like- like, you know, if they've never heard Puerto Rican or Dominican Spanish and when they're doing the informal conversation, are they going to get points docked off for saying vaina? Or pana? And I would like to- I would like to have a workshop on that, on colloquialisms that uh, students use for the simulated conversation and asking like okay- is pana okay? Can they say that? Because that's how their informal conversations are in the hallways. – Camila

Here Camila communicates a need for professional development in the area of sociolinguistics, particularly emphasizing the interpersonal speaking section of the AP

Spanish Language and Culture exam. They also highlight the sociolinguistic concern that the scorers likely lack the necessary sociolinguistic training to accurately assess pluricentric languages. Meanwhile, Henry shares a desire to assist HL students to embrace the language skills that they bring into the classroom, while also helping them develop those skills.

5. I really would like a way that a heritage learner could celebrate what they know and what they can bring, the perspective that they can bring, while also working on, um, Spanish. I feel like as their teacher I don't know how to help them navigate those two. – Henry

Samantha shares similar sentiments but problematizes this further by introducing the topic of linguistic accuracy into the conversation. Unlike Henry, Samantha has undergone some professional development aimed at encouraging HL students to foster positive attitudes towards their language varieties. Nevertheless, they raise the question of the relevance of accuracy if our goal is to encourage students to continue their language studies beyond secondary school and leverage their language proficiency in their professional careers.

6. I feel like the training that I've had, like the social-emotional piece of making sure that they feel that they belong, I feel that- that is there, that- that training is out there. Um, and it shouldn't go away. It should still be part of it. But I would love to have it- if we want as an educational community for them to be able to continue, be able to and want to continue to study in college at a- at a university level and- and so that they can then- certainly for personal enjoyment and pride, but also make money when they go out and they can use their language professionally. Um, you know, so how much accuracy do we want? Linguistic accuracy. How much does it matter? Um, and maybe it matters a lot. Or maybe it doesn't really matter that much. And I'm okay either way. – Samantha

Participants also express how their sense of being unprepared to teach their SHL students has prompted them to rely on mutual assistance. Among them, Lus, who teaches

at a Pennsylvania public school serving a small Hispanic demographic, shares the following:

7. Bueno, la suerte entre comillas que tenemos es que las maestras que estudiamos- que enseñamos honores, todas somos nativas. Tenemos una de Puerto Rico, una de Colombia y yo de España. Entonces entre nosotras nos vamos como buscando un poco la vida por ahí y- o sea, como dándonos consejos y entonces- es que tenemos una población muy, muy pequeña de- de hispanos, la verdad. Entonces yo creo que ni se les habría ocurrido en el en el distrito darnos ningún tipo de apoyo. [Well, the 'luck,' in quotes, that we have is that the teachers who teach honors, we are all native speakers. We have one from Puerto Rico, one from Colombia, and I am from Spain. So, among us, we kind of help each other out, I mean, giving each other advice, and then... it's just that we have a very, very small population of Hispanics, really. So, I don't think it would have even occurred to the district to give us any kind of support.] – Lus

The lack of HL-focused preparation in their teacher training program, coupled with insufficient support from their administration, has forced Lus to seek assistance and guidance from their colleagues to help meet the needs of their students. Moreover, they mention how “lucky” they are in having all Spanish Honors teachers at their school being native speakers. This statement underscores a common misconception among educators and administrators that language proficiency alone qualifies one to be an effective language teacher. This misconception poses a risk, as some native speakers may impose unrealistic monolingual standards on HL speakers (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Furthermore, the status of being a native speaker, many of whom were born, raised, and educated in a country where the native language holds dominance and power can hinder a full understanding of the context in which HL speakers are brought up in the United States.

Other teachers also shared that engaging with fellow teachers at their schools and participating in online teacher communities is beneficial for addressing questions concerning their HL students. Besides relying on each other for support, teachers also

highlight that their own experience and learning through trial and error have contributed significantly to their growth as effective instructors. One teacher noted "15 years of in-class learning" in their survey response regarding their preparation to teach SHL students, alongside their participation in workshops.

8. Lo que me sirvió un poco fue que eh había un jefe de departamento del- de foreign language que nos juntaba a los profesores porque son diez escuelas de high school y nos juntábamos todos los profesores de AP. Entonces ahí es cuando, eh, como digo, las dudas que teníamos por fin las resolvía. Yo le pregunté al profesor que tenía experiencia- le dije mira cómo haces, ¿cómo le haces con la lectura, con los alumnos heritage para que entiendan cómo haces esto? Ah, y él me dio tips y eso me sirvió. Y ya después yo ya con la experiencia ya uno va agarrando ciertas cosas que- que puedes hacerles y ahora yo ya lo hago diferente. [What helped me a bit was that there was a department head for foreign language who brought us teachers together because there are ten high schools, and all the AP teachers would gather. So that's when, as I say, the doubts we had would finally be resolved. I asked the experienced teacher — I said, look, how do you do it, how do you deal with reading, with heritage students so they understand, how do you do this? Oh, and he gave me tips, and that helped me. And now with experience, you start picking up certain things that you can do with them, and now I do it differently.] – Eva
9. I've joined a few groups online for- for AP teachers, heritage teachers. Y entonces yo veo allí que ponen comentarios [And I see that they post comments] and I've even asked some questions myself sometimes and that has been helpful. – Miriam
10. Espero que este entrenamiento que tengo, que ya viene en agosto, sea mejor que el que tuve, porque el que tuve yo- yo le digo una cosa, yo aprendí por colegas más que por el profesor que nos dieron y por el- la misma... ¿Cómo se dice? Necesidad del alumno- ya cuando uno ve y dice- ah, no, esto no, esto no funciona, no lo descarto, hay que hacer esto- esto. Creo que la experiencia es mucho. [I hope that the training I have coming up in August is better than the one I had, because the one I had... let me tell you, I learned more from colleagues than from the teacher and from... how do you say it? The students' needs... when you see and realize, ah, no, this doesn't work, then I discard it, we have to do this... this. I believe experience is key.] – Eva

These excerpts demonstrate that the existing deficiencies in language teacher preparation programs have forced teachers to adopt a "learning while teaching" approach, a

phenomenon also emphasized by Valdés et al. (2008). Teachers also experience a lack of efficacy in their teaching efforts concerning SHL students, a trend consistent with Ducar's (2022) research. All in all, these educators are directly urging institutions of higher education to incorporate specific training for HL pedagogy within teacher training programs.

Lastly, interpreting the findings for this first research question within a LatCrit framework, we can see how the excerpts from teacher participants highlight how educational institutions continue to marginalize minoritized student populations, particularly SHL students. The fact that most language teacher preparation programs fail to provide training in SHL pedagogy, despite the notable increase in Hispanic students enrolled in public preK-12 schools underscores the ongoing devaluation and exclusion of students of color and their experiences within formal educational contexts. Part of this issue stems from institutional inertia. Many older teachers received their initial training years ago, which is now outdated. Universities, which are chiefly responsible for teacher education, tend to be slow to implement changes. By neglecting to effectively prepare educators to work with this student population, the education system further disempowers these students by depriving them of the essential tools for success in their academic pursuits, such as a properly trained teacher. The majority of teacher participants in this study lacked formal training or received only minimal education in SHL pedagogy through workshops, webinar, or conferences. Only three teachers in the survey sample completed undergraduate or graduate courses in this area. In conclusion, the inadequacies in language teacher preparation programs significantly hinder the educational experiences and outcomes for SHL students. Addressing this gap by integrating comprehensive SHL

pedagogy training into teacher education programs is imperative for fostering an inclusive and equitable educational environment. Without such reforms, the marginalization of minoritized student populations will persist, undermining their academic potential and perpetuating systemic inequities.

#### **4.2 Challenges of teaching AP Spanish to heritage speakers**

My second research question was: “What, if any, challenges do AP Spanish teachers face when teaching AP Spanish to this student population, and what do they attribute these challenges to?” All teachers who participated in this study reported encountering challenges at their high schools when teaching AP Spanish to SHL students. Teacher participants attributed these challenges either to their own insufficient preparation in SHL pedagogy or to systemic issues within the educational system, which frequently neglects Latinx students. To explore the second research question, I used an open-ended question to afford teachers the opportunity to share as much or as little information as they wished: “What do you believe are the main challenges you face when teaching your AP Spanish class to heritage language students?” Teachers had the option to cite multiple challenges. In total, the 51 participants who completed the survey cited 63 challenges, with the most frequent challenge cited being developing literacy skills ( $n = 18$  teachers, 35%). Other frequently reported challenges were addressing varying levels of proficiency and inadequate placement. Comments representative of each of these challenges are presented in Table 1. As the sample comments clearly show, these challenges have an impact on teachers’ ability to assist their SHL students in achieving success on AP exams. The remainder of the responses (15) were nearly equally divided among other challenges such

as lack of motivation/apathy from students, dealing with language variation, and lack of support from parents/staff.

**Table 1. Challenges of teaching SHL students reported by AP Spanish teachers**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Sample teacher comments</b>
Developing literacy skills	18 (35%)	<p>“Formal register and language conventions will always be the challenging areas for heritage students.”</p> <p>“Teaching students not to use English in their writing and teaching the structure of an essay.”</p> <p>“Writing a 3-5 paragraph essay with transitional words and phrases.”</p>
Addressing varying levels of proficiency	17 (33%)	<p>“I feel that the heritage speakers are overlooked, even though that is not my intention. Additionally, there is a wide range of proficiencies within the heritage speaking group of students. I need help creating learning activities where all groups feel they are moving forward.”</p> <p>“I still cannot get that class together because I have different types of students. I have the kids that don't speak full Spanish, but they understand it. But if they were to be placed in Spanish with non-native speakers, they would be bored out of their mind and they would be causing a disruption. Then there's the second group, which is the newcomers. Some of them can write very well because they were in school before they got here.”</p>
Inadequate placement	13 (25%)	<p>“I think the students are placed in AP classes only because they speak the language, but they do not have the foundation to be in an AP course.”</p>

	<p>“They're in AP Spanish because they're in the dual language program or because someone said, oh, you speak Spanish, you're going to pass the AP test, but they don't want to do the work.”</p>
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To elicit teachers’ perspectives on the challenges encountered when teaching AP Spanish to HL learners, the semi-structured interviews employed targeted questions to facilitate conversation. Interview participants were not prompted with specific questions concerning the challenges they encounter. Therefore, themes within the interview data arose spontaneously, as was the case for the other two research questions. Consistent with the survey findings, interviewees also cited grappling with challenges associated with developing literacy skills among SHL students, addressing varying proficiency levels within their classes, and inadequate student placement in Spanish courses. Sample questions prompting educators to articulate the challenges they confront included: “Which parts of the AP Spanish exam do you believe are the most challenging for your HL students and why do you think they are so challenging for them?”, “Do you believe that the Spanish courses at your school adequately prepare HL students for your AP Spanish class?”, and “How would you describe the students in your AP Spanish classes to someone who is about to visit your school for the first time?”. Similar to the approach adopted for the first research question, these functioned solely as guidelines, affording teacher participants the liberty to share their thoughts freely. The analysis of interview data pertaining to the second research question suggests four main challenges: 1) Insufficient administrative support, 2) Addressing student overconfidence in test

performance, 3) Supporting students with insufficient AP-level preparation, and 4) Navigating the needs of both L2 and SHL students.

### **Insufficient administrative support**

During discussions on professional development as part of the interviews, teachers highlighted the lack of support from their school districts in facilitating the funding of their ongoing education, particularly to address the needs of the SHL student population at their schools. In general, participants conveyed the necessity to independently seek resources, finance their training, and allocate personal time outside of work hours to pursue professional development in this area. Imposing such formidable responsibilities on language teachers is unjust, particularly within the context of widespread perceptions of overwork and underpayment among schoolteachers in the United States and may contribute to diminished well-being and push some to leave the profession (Steiner, Woo & Doan, 2023). Several educators also noted disparities at their institutions, observing that colleagues teaching other subjects receive financial assistance for professional development, whereas they do not which suggests language courses have less legitimacy compared to other core subjects. Without adequate resources and support, coupled with inadequacies in language teacher training programs, AP Spanish teachers have limited ability to effectively prepare their SHL students for AP exams. For example, Henry explains the challenges he encounters due to insufficient support from the administration at his school.

- 11.** In our district, like whenever we propose something like we have a very- we have a very, like, um, supportive supervisor, but she's often- she'll say, you know, it's always money and staffing that are the problems. Like, um, you know, I've said like, oh, I would love to go to, you know, this training or this conference and kind of the answer is like, oh, there's no money to do it. You can go, but you're going

to have to pay for it yourself. So sometimes that, um, is- is an obstacle for sure. Um, but I do know that in our district that, you know, the numbers are already- they're just going to keep getting larger, because I know that as of now, like in our high school, it's about 1200 students. And it, um, I think it's- it's approaching like 40 to 50% Hispanic. Even though it's a rural area, like, it's kind of crazy. And I know that our elementary school is over 50%. So, it's only getting larger. Yeah, I don't know. I just think, honestly, we need a few more teachers. We only have three Spanish teachers at our school. And I think that... Um, you know, if we had a few more teachers, I think we could more easily have a heritage program because we would have more teachers that could do it. But with three, it's really hard if you're going to take one of us away to teach, um, heritage learners all day. That only leaves two of us to do- to teach the other half of the students. And so, our classes are really large. I mean, 30, 32, I mean, they're large classes. So, I would say staffing is an obstacle, money, and time. – Henry

This participant notes the increasing Hispanic population at their high school, particularly given the larger cohort of Hispanic students at their nearby elementary school.

Consequently, Henry emphasizes the need for more Spanish teachers, positing that hiring more teachers could facilitate the introduction of a heritage language track. Henry's comment echoes findings from prior research indicating that a separate track for heritage speakers is uncommon within the majority of language programs (Beaudrie & Marrero-Rivera, 2024; Goulette, 2020). Such courses are not consistently available at both secondary and postsecondary levels due to a multitude of factors, including allocation of resources, lack of investments in training current faculty or hiring trained faculty, low enrollment, and a general lack of advocacy (Beaudrie & Marrero-Rivera, 2024; Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010; Ingold et al., 2002). Other teacher interviewees echoed the challenges articulated by Henry, stating:

**12.** I felt that when we separated them out that there was potential there.

Unfortunately, the school decided not to support it [the heritage language track] anymore and it's something that I disagree with the school on. Um, but it was a financial decision at a certain level. – Samantha

13. I haven't gone to a conference or anything, you know, for- for being a dual language school, we just do our own thing. And I don't think that's good. I do think we need training. I- I want training on how to work with heritage speakers specifically, but because they don't give us any funding at all, I've had to look for it on my own. – Camila
14. They have a bank, or they have access to funds where I can request to go to something. And I've been teaching a long time, and I know that sometimes those wells of money dry up and you don't have the opportunity to do anything. This year they had kind of a mix up with the funding, and the person that was supposed to approve them said that she never got the emails, which I could easily prove wrong, but after a while it- you know, it isn't worth fighting. So, I didn't get to go to one this year. But it's all like self-initiated. Like my school is not going to make me go to something. Opposite I go to them and say I want this. – Wendy

While providing SHL courses remains the most favorable options for students, barriers such as financial constraints may prevent this from occurring. Samantha's school previously provided a track for SHL learners; however, the program was discontinued. In situations where resources are insufficient, SHL programs often bear the brunt of such funding cuts. This phenomenon is due to the institutionalization of L2 programs, contrasting with the less stable integration of SHL programs within the organizational structure of language departments (Carreira, 2017).

Similarly, Camila and Wendy share the diverse challenges stemming from insufficient administrative support within their respective institutions. Camila, who teaches at a dual language school, advocates for training aimed at teaching SHL learners, noting the absence of institutional funding for professional development endeavors. Wendy shares that, at their school, they must advocate for themselves and ask to attend professional development opportunities as the school will not encourage it or look for options for teachers. Consequently, Camila and their colleagues find themselves independently seeking and funding such training, thereby imposing a substantial burden

on their already demanding teaching responsibilities. In contrast to Camila's experience, Wendy's school allocates certain funds for teachers' continuing education endeavors. Nevertheless, Wendy explains that these resources are not consistently accessible or easily obtainable, resulting in occasions where attendance at professional development activities is precluded due to factors beyond their control. These teachers' statements underscore the challenges and bureaucratic hurdles educators must navigate within their respective schools, indicative of insufficient administrative support hindering their potential to achieve optimal effectiveness as language teachers.

Miriam similarly emphasizes the lack of resources at her school, particularly concerning support for Spanish language teachers. In addition, she explains the reluctance of school administration to allocate funds towards initiatives intended to enhance the educational experience of SHL learners, reflecting pervasive negative assumptions about this student population.

**15.** I think the number one obstacle is probably um- the lack of resources, lack of funds. That's always an issue. And the fact that they see heritage speakers as kids who are just going to go into um- some sort of a career path. They don't see them as uh- as college bound students and I feel like they're like a forgotten population. We have about 200 Hispanics in our school it's uh- so a lot of migrant workers who come and go. So um- so I think those things. I am an AP Advocate so I want to see Black and Brown students in our um- AP classes. Y también que ven el español, ven a los lenguajes y las artes como si fueran un subgroup, you know? [And also that they think of Spanish, they think of languages and arts as a subgroup, you know?] There's money for English, there's money for math and there's money for science, but never for Spanish. – Miriam

In addition to highlighting the lack of funds at their institution, Miriam comments on a perceived bias in administrative resource allocation, whereby subjects such as English, math, and science receive preferential treatment over Spanish. Miriam further notes a

systemic disregard for Hispanic students' academic potential and consequent underinvestment in their success, exemplified by the administration's reluctance to prioritize initiatives such as pedagogical training tailored for SHL instruction. Miriam underscores the significance of fostering diversity in AP courses, particularly emphasizing the inclusion of students from marginalized racial backgrounds. This is an important point, corroborated by research indicating a positive correlation between students' access to advanced curricular opportunities and their academic attainment (Leung et al., 2020; Warne, 2017; Speroni, 2011; among others). Students who attain AP Spanish credit exhibit higher rates of university graduation in comparison to their counterparts who do not achieve such credit (Reeder, 2020). However, equitable access to advanced coursework remains elusive for many students, notably those from minoritized backgrounds. State-level data highlight substantial disparities in access to advanced courses, thereby exacerbating existing achievement gaps (Leung et al., 2020). An effective strategy to mitigate these disparities involves establishing consistent and sufficient funding mechanisms to facilitate continuous professional development for teachers, which would enhance their capacity to address the needs of marginalized student populations, including SHL learners.

### **Addressing student overconfidence in test performance**

Another recurrent theme among teachers when discussing the challenges they encounter while teaching AP Spanish to HL learners during the interviews is effectively addressing student overconfidence in test performance. Previous scholarship on linguistic confidence posits that individuals who experience linguistic confidence regarding their self-perceived command of the HL are more inclined to maintain the language (Abtahian

& Quinn, 2017), positioning HL speakers as exemplars of linguistic resistance. Yet within the context of high-stakes assessments, such as AP Spanish exams, excessive confidence can present challenges. Students demonstrating overconfidence may resist their teachers' guidance and feedback, thereby hindering their performance. Eva elaborates on observing this phenomenon in both their classroom and as an AP Reader, as delineated in excerpts 16 and 17.

- 16.** Mis- mis alumnos casi todos son nativohablantes, pero ¿qué pasa con ellos? Que ellos cuando van a la clase van con esta mentalidad de que ya la tengo, ya no tengo que esforzarme, ya la pasé y no es así. He tenido alumnos que- que más hablaban inglés que español y les fue bien, sacaban un 4 ó un 5, en cambio los- los y luego un nativohablante, ¿por qué no va a sacar un 5? Y eso es lo que me ha estado pasando. [My students are mostly native speakers, but what goes on with them? When they go to class, they have this mentality that they already know it, that they don't have to make an effort anymore, that they've already passed, but that's not the case. I've had students who spoke more English than Spanish and did well, they got a 4 or a 5, whereas the native speakers, why wouldn't they get a 5? And that's what has been happening to me.] – Eva
- 17.** Yo les digo a ellos siempre que de todos los exámenes que corregí una vez me dio una pena, me dio una gran pena tener que ponerle un 0 a una chica nativohablante porque ella dijo 'Oh, hoy día van a escuchar la mejor presentación, bla bla bla' y decía yo, ¿y cuándo va a empezar? Y se le pasaron los dos minutos y no dijo nada. Como yo tenía tantas dudas y mira, era una- una chica que hablaba así como yo, sin acento, sin nada, el español. Entonces yo me comuniqué con la que era mi table leader y ella me dijo 'ese es el problema con los native speakers. Ellos creen que porque hablan ya uno tiene que darles un 5. Póngale 0', me dijo. 'Qué pena, off topic lo siento, no es así y ya' y no, no pude- no pude ayudarla. Me hubiera gustado ayudarla, pero qué pena, no se puede. Y no, eso va en contra de los guidelines. [I always tell them that out of all the exams I have graded, once I felt really sorry, I felt really sorry for having to give a native-speaking girl a 0 because she said, 'Oh, today you're going to hear the best presentation, blah blah blah,' and I thought, when is it going to start? And two minutes passed, and she didn't say anything. Since I had so many doubts- and look, she was a girl who spoke just like me, without an accent, nothing, perfect Spanish. So, I contacted my table leader and she told me, 'that's the problem with native speakers. They think that just because they speak, you have to give them a 5. Give her a 0,' she said. 'What

a pity, off-topic, I'm sorry, it's not like that, and that's it,' and no, I couldn't help her. I would have liked to help her, but what a pity, you can't because no, that goes against the guidelines.] – Eva

In excerpt 16, Eva explains what they perceive as a challenge with HL learners in their AP Spanish class, noting a tendency among them to exert minimal effort due to an underlying assumption that they will pass the exam based on language familiarity alone. This is juxtaposed with Eva's observation of their L2 students, who have achieved scores of 4 or 5 on the exam, leading them to assert that HL learners, by extension, should attain a similar level of achievement. Their statement regarding the expectations placed on HL learners highlights the dangers that can result from external factors, such as societal perceptions or expectations, which may trigger linguistic insecurity among speakers of minoritized languages (Tseng, 2021). In excerpt 17, Eva recounts an anecdote frequently shared with their students, detailing an instance when as an AP Reader they gave an SHL speaker a score of 0 in the presentational speaking section. Despite the student's apparent proficiency in Spanish, they failed to adhere to the prompt's requirements, illustrating the importance of task fulfillment. In excerpts 18, 19, and 20, other teachers recount similar experiences in their respective AP courses.

**18.** A part of the issue is- because they're heritage speakers and está este orgullo de [they have this pride of] 'I don't have to try, yo ya sé español. [I already know Spanish] I know more Spanish than this white kid, so I don't have to try. I'm going to pass the test.' Maybe you'll pass it, but you won't get a 5, right? Or, um, you might not pass it because you never compare two cultures, right? So that's- that's the struggle that I have. – Camila

**19.** My kids struggle with the outlining phase. That's honestly, to me, the big weakness because they often- sometimes they have this- I said they, I don't want to stereotype or anything, but um, often they say, 'oh, you know, I speak Spanish. I'll be fine', you know? And then they'll go right into the essay without any planning. – Henry

**20.** Last year I had a mixed class and I think- I believe that actually some of my- two of my Anglos scored 5s versus my heritage speakers who scored more of a 3. I think they go in thinking- they're very confident. And they don't look at the strategies that they need in order to complete the task. Casi todos mis estudiantes de heritage me sacaron 3 y niñas que eran brillantes y los anglos me sacaron 4 y 5 e incluso una heritage me sacó un 2. [Almost all of my heritage speakers scored a 3, even girls that were brilliant. And the Anglos scored 4 and 5, while one heritage student even scored a 2.] They read too fast. Otra cosa, no leen fuera del salón de clase, no importa que yo le diga que por favor leen, que miren, que hagan esto. [Something else is that they don't read outside of the classroom. It doesn't matter how much I tell them to please read this, to look at that, to do this.] They don't read at home. Ellos tienen muchas responsabilidades. [They have a lot of responsibilities.] – Miriam

Much like Eva, Camila observes a comparable trend among their SHL students, who harbor the belief that their superior Spanish proficiency exempts them from exerting effort and assuming automatic success. Moreover, Camila underscores the challenge of SHL students failing to fulfill prescribed tasks, such as comparing two cultures in a free-response speaking section. Similarly, Henry elucidates a parallel phenomenon among their students, noting instances where they do not prepare an outline before writing their essays, a practice Henry deems a weakness stemming from an overconfidence in their Spanish-speaking abilities. It appears that students might be conflating language proficiency with testing techniques. As a result, students who may have lower proficiency but are acquainted with the structure of the test can perform better on it. Lastly, Miriam describes a similar situation to Eva, wherein their L2 students achieved higher scores than their SHL counterparts, with some L2 students attaining scores of 5 while almost all SHL students received scores of 3. Miriam attributes this discrepancy to SHL students' tendency to read instructions hastily, thereby neglecting some of the requirements needed to successfully complete the task.

Another aspect Miriam raises concerns about is SHL students' lack of commitment to reading outside of class, a practice they typically encourage their AP students to engage in. They attribute this tendency to the multitude of responsibilities SHL students typically shoulder beyond the classroom. There may also be other factors related to social class. For instance, people with higher levels of education are generally much more likely to own and read books. Hence, it is important for educators who work with minoritized student populations to implement culturally responsive teaching approaches, which not only foster academic achievement but also cultivate students' cultural competence and critical consciousness (Ladsen-Billings, 1995). Adhering to this pedagogical approach entails empowering students to maintain their cultural integrity while excelling academically. The documented positive impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching on academic outcomes (Thomas, 2019; Hanley & Noblit, 2011; Au & Mason, 1981, among others) underscores the necessity for teachers, particularly those teaching SHL students, to bridge academic content with students' home and cultural experiences. This teaching practice is especially crucial in preparing students for high-stakes assessments, such as the AP exams.

Similarly, in line with the overconfidence exhibited by some SHL students due to their proficiency in their HL, the following excerpt by Henry elucidates how this phenomenon extends not only to students but also to their parents. Henry describes how parents often presume that their child's proficiency in Spanish should automatically translate into high grades in Spanish courses.

- 21.** I had an interesting conversation with a parent the other day because he said 'I know there are some other students in your class that- like, are taking your class that speak Spanish at home, but they have like D's and C's in the class.' He's like,

‘but I know that they speak Spanish.’ And I was like, ‘they do.’ And I said, ‘it also involves writing in Spanish, reading in Spanish. It also involves actually doing the work and not just saying, oh, I’m good, I speak Spanish, I’ll pass- like, you know, when we have an essay and you don’t do it- like you know’, so I said, ‘it’s way more than speaking and it also involves like, you know, it’s supposed to be a college level course. So, it might not be a ton of work necessarily- like a lot of assignments, but the assignments they have to do are probably challenging for them.’ And he said, ‘you know, Spanish, I’ve spoken it all my life. So, you know, with all due respect- it’s, you know, I know more Spanish than you.’ And I was like, ‘fair, absolutely.’ But I was like, you know, along the same line, you know, when students are in school, they have to do the work. And even when sometimes- when some of the students do the work like they- you can tell they didn’t really put a lot of effort into it, and then they end up getting not the highest grade. And then, you know, they have a D in a Spanish class. And then it looks like- then it kind of it’s weird being like a non-Hispanic white teacher because then they’re like, ‘oh, you know, I think they’re...’ That what the- the dad brought up, you know like ‘are you favoring the non-native speakers?’ – Henry

This description of Henry’s conversation with a student’s father exemplifies the prevalent expectations and family criticism experienced by speakers of minoritized languages in the United States, potentially undermining their motivation to use and maintain their HL (Tseng, 2021). Such expectations reflect a common misconception regarding bilingualism (Grosjean, 2010) and persistently affect HL speakers within educational institutions, communities, and broader societal contexts. Here, the father of the student assumes that speaking Spanish at home should guarantee academic excellence, as evidenced by the expectation of an "A" in Spanish class. This belief overlooks the multifaceted nature of literacy, assuming erroneously that proficiency in the HL equates to biliteracy. Extensive research indicates that HL students’ literacy skills often lag behind oral proficiency (Carreira & Kagan, 2011; García & Díaz, 1992). Many HL learners have their initial exposure to literacy in their HL during high school or college-level courses. Unfortunately, these societal expectations imposed on students by family

members have repercussions not only for the students themselves but also for their teachers. Teachers may face accusations of favoritism towards other students when HL students fail to attain the expected grades. Furthermore, the students' father reinforces their assertion by claiming authority based on their greater proficiency in Spanish compared to Henry, who is an L2 speaker. Non-native Spanish teachers are often perceived as Spanish language learners, thereby undermining their legitimacy to teach an HL, despite their demonstrated proficiency (Helmer, 2013).

Meanwhile, Lus shares their own experience regarding the phenomenon of overconfidence among SHL students at their school. They specifically address the reluctance of SHL students to enroll in Spanish courses prior to undertaking AP Spanish, citing reasons such as experiencing boredom in the classes and their belief they possess pre-existing knowledge of the course material. Lus elaborates on the collective efforts of the Spanish teachers at their school to encourage SHL students to enroll in courses like Spanish 3 Honors or Spanish 4 Honors by emphasizing the comprehensive coverage of grammar topics in these courses as beneficial for enhancing writing skills.

**22.** El problema es que nosotros si cuando tenemos estudiantes de herencia siempre queremos que empiecen a tomar pues 3 honores o 4 honores, porque ahí es donde damos mucha gramática y para que ellos empiecen a escribir bien y vayan aprendiendo. El problema es que no quieren porque dicen que eso es aburrido para ellos, que ya lo saben. [The problem is that when we have heritage students, we always want them to start taking 3 or 4 honors classes, because that's where we focus a lot on grammar and so they can start writing well and learning. The problem is that they don't want to because they say it's boring for them, that they already know it.] – Lus

The boredom described by Lus among their SHL students in mixed classes is unsurprising, given that SHL learners often possess a diverse array of skills and

sociolinguistic competencies surpassing those of typical L2 learners (Randolph, 2022). This, coupled with the historical absence of considerations for SHL learners in discussions pertaining to Spanish as a 'foreign' language (Valdés, 2006), and the infrequency of instructional adjustments tailored specifically for SHL learners by teachers (Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010), may elucidate the challenges faced by both teachers and SHL learners. Such factors contribute to research findings focusing on students' perceptions, which often indicate that SHL learners in mixed classes do not consistently harbor positive attitudes towards the class itself or their teachers (Burgo, 2016; Dones-Herrera, 2015). For instance, Harklau's (2009) study following SHL learners in a high school setting revealed students' initial optimism regarding studying Spanish in a mixed course, which eventually gave way to disenchantment with the learning experience, with students deeming the class boring. Compounding the issue, language teachers tend to prioritize addressing the affective and instructional needs of L2 learners over those of SHL learners when addressing affective and instructional needs for both cohorts (Randolph, 2017; Russell & Kuriscak, 2015). In essence, it should not be unexpected that SHL students exhibit hesitancy towards enrolling in mixed classes, as these classes typically overlook their skills and fail to implement differentiated approaches to address the range of student needs.

### **Supporting students with insufficient AP-level preparation**

The next theme derived from the interviews pertaining to the challenges encountered by educators teaching AP Spanish to HL learners is effectively supporting students with insufficient AP-level preparation. To date, there has been little research concerning AP Spanish exams and HL learners. Scholarship examining SHL has disproportionately

concentrated on the linguistic and sociocultural development of SHL students in conventional four-year university institutions (Marijuan, 2022). Thus, our understanding of the Spanish courses HL students take before enrolling in an AP Spanish course remains limited. Nonetheless, it is well-documented that a majority of U.S. school districts do not offer world language courses during the K-8 years, making it necessary for students to wait until high school to begin developing oral and literacy skills in languages other than English (Escobar & Potowski, 2015). Consequently, unless an SHL student has attended a dual language school, their formal academic study of their HL will not commence until adolescence, placing them at a disadvantage.

A qualitative study conducted by Marrero-Rivera (2021) examining the perspectives of AP Spanish Literature and Culture teachers regarding the needs of HL students and how these needs are met in the classroom, documented instances where HL students were enrolled in AP Spanish courses without having previously completed a Spanish course. Some educators reported situations where students with no proficiency in Spanish were placed in advanced Spanish courses based on their Hispanic surnames, as administrators presumed bilingual proficiency. This arbitrary placement of SHL students places them at a disadvantage, as they have not had the opportunity to develop their language skills adequately prior to enrolling in college-level AP courses. Consequently, this phenomenon elucidates why teachers in this study struggle to support students who lack adequate preparation for AP Spanish courses.

It is crucial to emphasize that the issue of supporting HL students with insufficient preparation for AP coursework encompasses both exposure to academic Spanish and the development of test preparation and other academic strategies not directly related to

language skills. Unfortunately, HL students often lack both areas of preparation. As previously noted, they typically do not begin formal study of their heritage language until high school. Additionally, they tend to take fewer AP exams compared to their peers, a disparity largely attributed to unequal access to advanced coursework, which disproportionately affects minoritized students, such as Latinx and African American students, who are underrepresented in AP enrollment (The Education Trust, 2020; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Bittmann et al., 2017). Educators can mitigate these challenges by providing targeted support that includes rigorous academic Spanish instruction paired with HL pedagogy-informed teaching practices, as well as comprehensive test preparation strategies, thereby promoting equitable access to AP coursework and exams for HL students.

Excerpts 23, 24, and 25 illustrate a common struggle among AP Spanish teachers regarding their HL students:

- 23.** También los ensayos porque nunca antes habían escrito en español todo un ensayo. O sea, uno dice ‘Oh, pero es que hablas español, tienes que saber hacerlo’, pero la estructura, lo académico, la sintaxis y todo para ellos es como ‘¡Wow! Pasé de un solo año donde aprendí cosas básicas y me estás haciendo saltar a escribir ensayos’. O a los chicos que nunca tomaron clase de español antes es como ‘sé que hablo español, pero ahora tengo que escribir un ensayo completo’. [Also, the essays, because they had never written a whole essay in Spanish before. I mean, one might say, 'Oh, but you speak Spanish, you should know how to do it,' but the structure, the academic aspect, the syntax, and everything is like, 'Wow! I went from just one year where I learned basic things and now you're making me jump to writing essays.' Or for the kids who have never taken Spanish class before, it's like, 'I know I speak Spanish, but now I have to write a complete essay.'] – Verónica
- 24.** They're ELL students and they've never had to write like a 2- or 3-page essay. Never, never because se lo hacen tan fácil. [they make it so easy for them] Very, very easy. And it's -it makes it hard for me because I'm like, ‘dude, I feel like you should already know how to write an essay or an email’. Aunque sea el email,

¿no? Yo no sé qué enseñan en las otras clases, [At least the email, right? I don't know what they teach in the other classes] but it's not... And they can't even do it in English or Spanish. – Camila

- 25.** When I score their essays- it's not so much the grammar and the vocabulary where they struggle. It's the organization piece mostly, and the analysis and the- and the, you know, using the sources to support their argument. I often find that, um- that especially the heritage learners, um, just summarize the sources, the fuentes, [sources] instead of like having a point of view and then integrating them like they're much just like fuente uno, fuente dos. [source one, source two] And I'm like, 'well, you showed me you understood what they said, but you didn't actually argue anything'. Um, and it's interesting to me because a lot of the heritage speakers in the class like- it's their only- it's the only Spanish class that they've ever taken, ever in high school. Um, for a lot of them. So, you know, sometimes I almost feel like an English teacher because I'm teaching them like- this is what an essay is like, and this is what a conclusion is and an argument and a thesis and supporting detail. So, we do a lot of like graphic organizers and stuff like that. – Henry

The excerpts provided above illustrate a common struggle among AP Spanish teachers regarding their HL students, students who lack familiarity with using their HL in academic contexts, particularly in writing. Verónica, as indicated in excerpt 25, notes that their students enter the class without prior experience in Spanish essay writing. This lack of familiarity in writing in their HL stems from either limited exposure to Spanish coursework, typically at lower levels, or a complete absence of Spanish instruction before enrolling in AP classes. Chevalier (2004) posits that functional biliteracy cannot be attained within the confines of a single or even two-semester course. Therefore, enrolling in a course with the primary objective of preparing for a high-stakes assessment, which necessitates formal writing skills, poses a significant challenge for HL students and their teachers alike. Furthermore, HL learners typically find presentational language aspects more demanding than interpersonal ones (Beaudrie et al., 2014). In language learning, the presentational mode refers to the act of conveying information, concepts, or ideas to a

target audience. Essentially, it constitutes a form of one-way communication where interaction for negotiating meaning between speakers and listeners is absent. This mode encompasses both oral and written communication skills.

In excerpt 24, Camila underscores a significant point: many HL students are also English Language Learners (ELLs). Unfortunately, numerous schools nationwide allocate a significant portion of ELL students' academic paths to remedial English classes, hindering their development of advanced literacy skills as they focus on basic language acquisition. This arises primarily due to the prevalent adoption of a sheltered English immersion (SEI) program model in the educational landscape of the United States, where the sole components is ESL classes. These classes entail the withdrawal of students from regular classroom settings to partake in specialized English language instruction. The aim of such programs is to expedite students' linguistic assimilation process in English and facilitate their integration into mainstream classrooms. Unfortunately, the academic rigor of these SEI programs is often not equal to that of mainstream classrooms (Escobar & Potowski, 2015). This is supported in the testimony of Camila, who attests that students enrolled in such programs are seldom tasked with essay writing, leading to a deficiency in essay-writing skills in both English and Spanish among the students. The goal of these programs is to emphasize English acquisition at the expense of nurturing students' literacy skills in their first language. This is problematic, given that if we truly want students to learn English, they must first study in their native language (Escobar & Potowski, 2015). Research (Thomas & Collier, 2002; Hakuta, 1986) shows that children who receive instruction in their native language benefit from sustained cognitive and academic development. This also facilitates the acquisition of a second language while

enabling the transfer of literacy skills from the native language to the second language. Consequently, HL learners find themselves in a disadvantaged position relative to their Anglophone counterparts, as they are forced to acquire English without adequate opportunities to develop skills in their native language and they often lack cognitive readiness for such linguistic transitions. The emphasis on English acquisition arises from the prevalent perspective among those in power in the United States that view language diversity primarily as an issue to be solved, rather than acknowledging it as a fundamental right that warrants protection or as a valuable asset that must be preserved (Cashman, 2006). As a result, with each passing academic year, Anglophone students make greater strides in literacy while the gap between them and ELL students continues to widen (Escobar & Potowski, 2015).

Similarly, Henry (Excerpt 25), highlights the challenges encountered by their HL students in tackling more complex writing tasks, such as articulating opinions and persuading readers to accept a point of view. Chevalier (2004) advocates for a stratified approach to writing instruction for HL learners that emphasizes the segmentation of instruction based on proficiency levels and recognizes the impracticality of covering all developmental stages within a single course. These developmental stages encompass the progression from writing conversational exchanges to constructing persuasive arguments. The teacher interviewees reported frequently confronting the challenge of guiding their HL students through multiple developmental stages within a single AP Spanish course given that for many students, the course is their initial exposure to formal Spanish instruction. Therefore, both HL learners and their teachers are predisposed to potential setbacks. Excerpts 26 and 27 echo the sentiments expressed by these educators.

- 26.** Bueno, obviamente la escritura es lo peor que llevan porque muchos lo han- obviamente lo han aprendido en casa, pero hay muchos que nunca han leído un libro, ni siquiera un cuento en español. Entonces les cuesta mucho, ¿no? Las partes más difíciles para estos estudiantes son el ensayo y el correo electrónico, las partes escritas. Sí... Ellos, por ejemplo, a lo mejor no saben una expresión formal o escriben a veces como hablan. Entonces, sobre todo los ensayos, hay algunos que son un desastre porque escriben como hablan, no saben que tienen que organizar sus ideas. En realidad, ellos no saben ni qué es un ensayo persuasivo porque estos estudiantes han llegado al país a lo mejor hace pues tres, cuatro años y ellos están estudiando inglés, ¿no? Entonces es- es difícil. Es difícil, sí. [Well, obviously writing is the hardest part for them because many have obviously learned [oral language?] at home, but there are many who have never read a book, not even a short story in Spanish. So, it's very difficult for them, right? The most challenging parts for these students are the essay and the email, the written parts. Yes... They, for example, may not know a formal expression or sometimes write as they speak. So, especially the essays, some are a disaster because they write as they speak, they don't know they have to organize their ideas. Actually, they don't even know what a persuasive essay is because these students may have arrived in the country maybe three, four years ago, and they are studying English, right? So, it's difficult. It's difficult, yes.] – Lus
- 27.** They do struggle with like creating a composition that- that, you know- just being able to justify their ideas with evidence from a text. And so, we do a lot of work on- on, um, you know, creating topic sentences or thesis statements and then identifying what's the evidence and explaining how that connects back. And there is um- I don't know how... They do an English class, but it seems to me that this is a skill where English would support Spanish. So, the question is, do they also struggle in English? Or maybe they're doing it in English, and they're just not transferring those skills into Spanish, and I don't know the answer to that. And I have wanted many times to talk to the English department to see where are these students- like how are they doing to be able to answer that question of can they do this fine in English and it's just not transferring into Spanish? Or is it a skill that they need developing in both classes? – Samantha

In excerpt 26, Lus articulates the challenges their HL students encounter with writing.

However, this teacher also uses negative language to describe their students' language skills. For example, they express that essays are a “disaster because they write like they speak.” Educators with good intentions may unwittingly perpetuate oppressive language

ideologies through their lack of sociopolitical awareness as it relates to the nature of language, as well as a hierarchical categorization of SHL learners based on perceived linguistic proficiency (Goulette, 2020; Randolph, 2017; Potowski, 2002). Lus (Excerpt 26) underscores the struggles faced by some students, who have resided in the country for only a brief period and are ELLs.

Samantha also addresses the challenges their students encounter in grappling with more complex writing tasks, such as substantiating their arguments with textual evidence. Furthermore, they reflect on the interplay between students' literacy skills in English and Spanish, and contemplate whether similar difficulties persist in students' English literacy skills. As previously discussed, the proficiency level in students' HL significantly impacts their academic achievement holistically. Furthermore, Jang and Brutt-Griffler (2019) demonstrated that proficiency in the HL, particularly in literacy, is associated with higher rates of high school completion and enhances access to post-secondary education among Latinx and Asian HL learners.

In line with these observations regarding HL students not being adequately prepared for AP-level courses, several teachers drew comparisons between their L2 and SHL students, revealing a disparity stemming from the educational system in the United States, which neglects students' HLs and prioritizes rapid English acquisition. Excerpts 28, 29 and 30 illustrate this point.

**28.** It's often- um their first and sometimes only class that they even do in high school. And the second language learners that are in Spanish, it's often their second or third course and they often have already taken or are currently taking, you know, AP Government, AP English language. So, their- their academic writing skills are stronger. And it's kind of like the strong area for the second language learners are the weak area- weaker area for the heritage language learners. – Henry

- 29.** I think what is- what's happening is the L2 learners that take that test also take AP English Lit. Like they like to read, they like to discuss literature. And so, they can- they transfer those- those skills really easily. Whereas the heritage learners may not be may not be in- may not be in the English Lit AP class. Um and- and so they don't get like- that like extra reinforcement that the L2 learners get. – Samantha
- 30.** Los estudiantes estadounidenses se saben la gramática de pe a pa, sus acentos, su- todos se lo saben perfecto, pero les cuesta mucho hablar. Saben escribir muy bien, la verdad, pero les cuesta mucho. O sea, les cuesta hablar, ¿no? Entonces, por ejemplo, si tenemos un examen que estamos repasando algún concepto de gramática, pues los estudiantes de herencia hispana, si tú les nombras un pretérito o un subjuntivo imperfecto no saben lo que estás diciendo, a no ser que vean un ejemplo o una frase escrita, aún no saben. Para ellos eso es muy difícil porque es como aprender al revés. [The American students know the grammar inside out, their accents, everything, they know it all perfectly, but they struggle a lot with speaking. They can write very well, honestly, but speaking is difficult for them, right? So, for example, if we have an exam where we're reviewing some grammar concept, Hispanic heritage students, if you mention a preterite or an imperfect subjunctive, they don't know what you're talking about unless they see an example or a written sentence, they still don't know. For them, that's very difficult because it's like learning backwards.] – Lus

Henry and Samantha raise the issue that many of their L2 students are enrolled in multiple AP courses and exhibit stronger academic writing skills compared to the SHL students, who typically do not enroll in other AP courses. These teachers' statements are consistent with research findings that indicate that students' ability to excel and their academic accomplishments are enhanced when they have ample access to advanced curricular offerings, such as AP courses (Leung et al., 2020).

In excerpt 30, Lus further contrasts the skills of their L2 students with those of their SHL students, highlighting the former's grasp of grammar and orthographic conventions although they often experience difficulties in speaking, in contrast to the latter's lack of metalinguistic awareness. They describe this lack of metalinguistic

knowledge as a form of “learning backwards.” This statement underscores the result of lacking training in SHL pedagogy, as these students’ language learning environments influence the nature of linguistic input they receive and subsequently shape the language competencies they acquire (Beaudrie et al., 2014). L2 learners are familiar with L2 teaching methodologies, which often incorporate extensive metalinguistic activities such as explicit grammar instruction, while SHL learners acquire language skills in natural settings such as the home or community. This teacher’s statement invokes deficit assumptions, and overlooks the considerable linguistic and cultural proficiency possessed by SHL learners, which would demand significant time and effort for L2 learners to attain (Beaudrie et al., 2014).

This deficit-based perspective regarding SHL students is likely a result of teachers being trained solely in L2 methodologies and lacking experience in developing SHL-oriented curricula. As L2 courses are not suited for meeting the needs of SHL learners, they often reflect hegemonic and deficit perspectives of SHL learners, notwithstanding the fact that such learners often possess a wide array of skills and sociolinguistic competencies that surpass those of L2 learners (Randolph, 2022). Additionally, problematic ideologies also perpetuate the notion of valuing Spanish/English bilingualism among L2 learners while concurrently undervaluing it for SHL learners, a phenomenon called "differential bilingualism" by Aparicio (1998). This concept refers to the unequal societal value given to bilingual proficiencies, where bilingual skills among Anglo members of the language majority are often perceived as an asset and an accomplishment, contrasting with those of Latinxs and other language minority or immigrant groups, which are frequently perceived as an issue and a deficiency (Cashman,

2006). This perception is reflected in Lus's remark regarding the struggles her L2 students face in speaking, a fundamental language skill in which many HL learners demonstrate advanced proficiency. Cashman (2006) describes this disparity by noting that "the bilingualism of members of language minority groups tends to be underappreciated or disparaged outright while the (sometimes quite limited) bilingual skills of Anglo language majorities are generally held in high esteem" (p. 42). To address this issue, a reimagining of language education and the incorporation of training in SHL and critical pedagogies are imperative. Such approaches would effectively meet the immediate academic and affective needs of students enrolled in language courses nationwide.

### **Navigating the needs of both L2 and SHL students**

The last theme derived from the interviews pertaining to the challenges encountered by educators teaching AP Spanish to HL learners is navigating the needs of both L2 and SHL students in mixed classes. In congruence with prior research findings (Randolph, 2017; Russell & Kuriscak, 2015), teachers also voiced frustration in attempting to effectively navigate the needs of both L2 students and SHL students in their mixed AP Spanish courses. One participant, Wendy, associates the different needs between L2 and SHL learners with the diverse needs observed among her SHL students as a whole.

- 31.** I'm having to balance two different populations that have different needs and then would say even within the heritage speakers- I mean, I've got some students that- that in terms of writing, they're illiterate. Like they can speak the language, but when they read, they read in English. They read the Spanish but pronounce in English. And- and then they certainly don't know how to spell anything. And then I have students that have been reading because their family, you know- because they were in a dual language immersion program, or their family is very big book

readers. And so, they've been reading their whole lives. And even like those two groups within a class would be hard to like- how do we get them all to be successful? And how do we get them all to feel empowered, so we don't have- you know, these feelings of like- because sometimes there's these feelings of inadequacy. I mean- I've got a class that's mixed. My second language learners feel inadequate next to the heritage speakers because they don't have the recall of vocabulary or the quickness of speaking or understanding what they hear. But my heritage speakers, you know what? You know, they're trying. They're getting a B, you know- like, wait a second, but I speak this and- and they look at their next-door neighbor who's got an A and she doesn't speak it, you know. And so, there's a feeling of inadequacy there. So, something's not working. And then within the heritage speakers, you could even have, you know, the same thing. – Wendy

In this excerpt, Wendy's frustration, and her lack of training in HL pedagogies are apparent when she labels her HL students as "illiterate". As evidenced here and in previous excerpts, participants who lack formal training in HL teaching methods, feel daunted by the task of tailoring instruction for numerous students and their various needs, and struggle to understand their students' needs for effective support. Miriam and Verónica echo Wendy's feelings stating:

- 32.** I strongly believe that they have a different set of needs that need to be addressed. And because they are in the minority of my class, they don't get addressed. So when they're put together with second language learners, I don't get to spend time with them the way I want to and don't feel that they're well served in my- and I want it to be better, but I don't- I don't know how to be able to deal with both- both populations in a way that is effective to my satisfaction. – Miriam
- 33.** I really struggle with curriculum and lessons to meet everyone's needs in a class that combines fluent Spanish speakers- like the heritage speakers, students who are second language learners, but are fairly proficient and desire explicit grammar lessons in order to learn the language, and students who are simply not performing at the AP level but are in the class anyway because College Board and our school system encourages everyone to take AP classes regardless of if it is truly an appropriate choice for the student. Y entonces por necesidad para- para hacer la clase más accesible, especialmente para este último grupo que le digo, tengo que enseñar explícitamente gramática y vocabulario y muchos heritage speakers no ven la importancia de aprender esto porque es contenido que ellos ya

saben. [Out of necessity to make the class accessible, especially for that latter group, direct instruction of grammar/vocab is often necessary, and many heritage speakers do not always see the importance of learning this because it is content they already know.] I would love to be able to do 100% cultural discussions/lessons related to the AP themes y cosas así más interesantes [and more interesting stuff] but that would not be accessible to the majority of my students. – Verónica

Overall, these teachers are implicitly highlighting a need for HL-focused training within teacher preparation programs to address these challenges.

Lastly, an analysis of the findings pertaining to this second research question through a LatCrit framework shows how educational institutions oppress language minoritized student populations across multiple dimensions. The institutional ideology prevalent in United States educational systems, which perceives Latinx students as inferior, manifests in overcrowded and underfunded schools (The Education Trust, 2022; Kozol, 1991). According to data from The Education Trust (2022), school districts with the highest populations of Black, Latinx, and Native students receive significantly less state and local funding compared to other districts. The data further highlights the states' deficiencies in equitably funding districts that serve the largest numbers of students of color, low-income students, and English learners. The report identifies the critical need for equitable distribution of educational resources. This is also evident in the current study, as teachers report a lack of financial support from their schools to address the gaps in their education, which include minimal to no preparation in SHL pedagogy. Even in schools with a large Latinx population, there is a lack of allocation of resources to assist teachers in effectively supporting the unique language development of these students. Several teacher testimonies reveal instances where school administrators are unwilling to

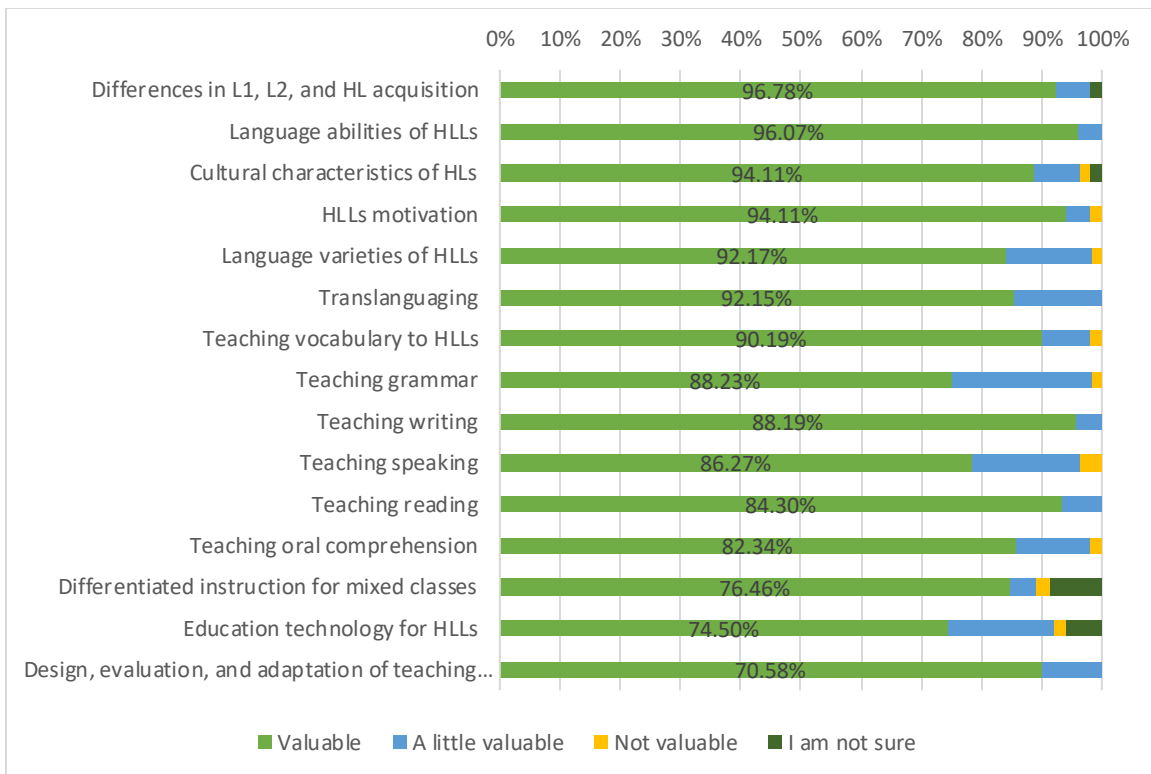
establish a specialized track for these students. In one notable case, a school discontinued its SHL track citing financial constraints. The failure to allocate resources for SHL students and their instructors represents a form of discrimination and oppression, disregarding the teachers' professional development needs and the students' academic potential.

Additionally, several educators raised concerns about their struggles in addressing the needs of these students due to the education system's focus on English language acquisition rather than the development of advanced literacy skills in students' HL. This focus often results in Latinx students being segregated from mainstream classrooms and placed in remedial English classes, where teachers may not hold them to the same academic standards as their peers in other classes. Students of color frequently encounter low teacher expectations, leading to their placement in lower-level classes and perpetuating academic achievement gaps (van den Bergh et al., 2010; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Consequently, this places students at a disadvantage in succeeding in advanced courses, as their educational experiences fail to equip them with the necessary skills to do so. This is further evidenced by the arbitrary placement of SHL students into AP Spanish courses without adequate preparation. Given that literacy in the HL is associated with higher high school graduation rates and greater access to higher education among Latinx students (Jang & Brutt-Griffler, 2019), failing to provide SHL students and their teachers with essential resources puts these students at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers who receive adequate support.

#### **4.3 Professional development areas needed to improve SHL teacher preparation**

My last research question is, “What types of professional development do AP Spanish teachers of HL students need to better prepare HL students for these exams?”. The majority of teachers who participated in this study reported a need for additional training in HL pedagogy, encompassing both general best practices, as well as specialized training in various topics related to HL pedagogy. To explore the third question, the online survey asked teachers to assess the value of various areas and topics for professional development on a 3-point scale ranging from 0 (not valuable) to 2 (valuable), with an opt-out option (I don’t know/I am not sure). The results are summarized in Figure 2, with topics arranged in descending order based on teachers' evaluations.

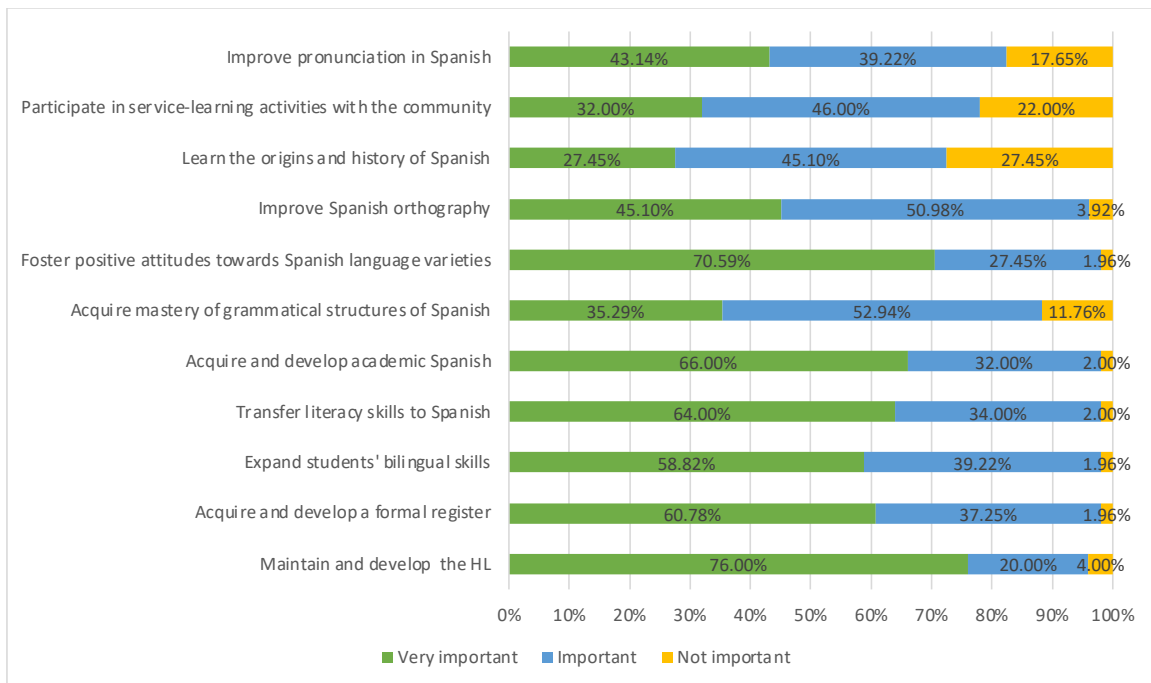
**Figure 2. AP Spanish teachers’ evaluation of professional development topics**



We can observe that overall participants find all topics to be valuable for their growth as teachers of SHL learners. As observed in the figure, the main takeaway is that the teacher participants rated all topics highly. Even the lowest rated item, design, evaluation, and adaption of teaching was rated as valuable by 71% of the survey participants. Of particular interest, educators primarily prioritize topics that correlate with content areas pertinent to the AP Spanish exams, notably emphasizing writing and reading skills.

Next, participants were asked to evaluate the significance of HL instructional goals within the AP Spanish class that they teach on a 3-point scale ranging from 0 (not important) to 2 (very important). The results are summarized in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. AP Spanish teachers' assessment of HL education goals**



Overall, we can observe that participants consider all HL instructional goals to be either very important or important within the AP class that they teach.

Lastly, the online survey included a question that prompted teachers to share what types of professional development they believe would more effectively equip them to prepare their HL students for success in the AP Spanish exams. This question was open-ended, allowing teachers the flexibility to provide as comprehensive or concise a response as they desired. Every participant answered this question, and some identified multiple areas of professional development in their answers. Among the 58 areas of professional development identified by participants as beneficial for improving their abilities to teach SHL students, the most frequent type cited was general training in SHL pedagogy (23 teachers). Other frequently reported areas included developing SHL learners’ literacy skills and implementing differentiation strategies for mixed classes (23 responses). Table 2 presents comments exemplifying each of these categories of professional development. The remaining responses (12) were distributed fairly evenly among various other types of professional development, such as selecting or creating instructional materials for SHL learners, improving students’ orthography, and specific AP exam preparation tailored to the needs of SHL learners.

**Table 2. Areas of professional development reported by AP Spanish teachers as necessary for improving their abilities to meet the needs of their SHL students**

Areas of professional development	Frequency	Sample teacher comments
General training in SHL pedagogy	23 (45%)	<p>“I need a training on how to teach heritage speakers as I didn’t learn much in teacher prep to help.”</p> <p>“Tailoring instruction for heritage students. Their needs and interests are far too different compared to the non-heritage group.”</p>

Developing SHL learners' literacy skills	13 (25%)	<p>“Specific instruction around improving literacy and improving the aspects of reading detailed in the AP Spanish description.”</p> <p>“How to improve writing skills for heritage speakers with little writing experience who are strong speakers/listeners.”</p>
Implementing differentiation strategies for mixed classes	10 (19%)	<p>“Differentiating curriculum between second language learners and heritage speakers and perhaps even within the heritage speaker group, in a way that doesn't mean creating separate curriculum for each group. Maybe identifying skill development that would serve all groups. Fair and equitable assessment creation for all groups in a mixed classroom.”</p> <p>“How to differentiate (in ways that will not require time-consuming teacher preparation) for the vast differences between heritage learners and non-heritage learners.”</p> <p>“I know from the PD I have taken in the past for heritage learners in the general Spanish classroom, it's not proper practice to have SLL and HL together, but in many schools around me including my own can't afford to separate.”</p>

To answer the final research question concerning the types of professional development AP Spanish teachers of HL learners need to better prepare these students for the AP exam, the semi-structured interviews employed targeted questions to facilitate the conversation. I also analyzed and took into consideration teachers' responses to all interview questions, as insights gathered from questions unrelated to professional

development also contributed to informing this question. In line with survey findings, interviewees similarly expressed the need for comprehensive training in SHL pedagogy. The interviews allowed me to identify particular training gaps, particularly training gaps concerning teachers' linguistic attitudes. Sample questions prompting educators to articulate the professional development they needed included: "What types of training would help you better meet the needs of your HL students in your AP Spanish classes? What do you believe would be beneficial?" Additional questions aimed at elucidating this point included: "How do you differentiate your AP classes based on the varying language abilities of your HL students?" and "What teaching methods do you use to develop your students' writing?" among others. These questions served as guidelines, allowing teacher participants the liberty to express their perspectives openly. The predominant theme I identified from the interview data centers on the detrimental effect of teachers' negative attitudes towards SHL learners' varieties.

### **Detrimental effects of negative attitudes towards SHL learners' varieties**

The conceptions individuals hold regarding languages in general influence their attitudes, as well as their practices (Achugar, 2008). Previous studies have overwhelmingly shown that attitudes can lead to linguistic biases and societal discrimination (Ducar, 2008; Bills, 2005; Lippi-Green, 2004; among others). Valdés et al. (2003) conducted investigations into language attitudes and ideologies among university faculty members, both revealing a devaluation of colloquial or community Spanish. In interviews conducted with teachers for the present study, the educators' comments shed light on their own language attitudes or those prevailing among their colleagues and underscored a need for teachers to undergo training in applied linguistics and

sociolinguistics focused on knowledge of SHL varieties and attitudes and ideologies concerning language variation and change. The subsequent excerpts illustrate this need.

**34.** The heritage speakers that I have that grew up here in the US, um, their- their spoken language is very informal. Uh, I wouldn't... It depends on who you talk to. Some people would say it's español mocho. Mhm. Uh but I don't consider that. I think, you know what? They're bilingual. They can communicate. Um they can code switch and I celebrate that. So, I don't really correct their grammar. I, you know if they say maestra instead of maestra [teacher] or uh, yo no sabo, I know what they're saying. So, I'm not going to correct them because, um, historically, especially in the district that I work in, because obviously it's harder to find Latinx teachers in Iowa. They do bring teachers from Spain. Uh, they have like this, I don't know, agreement with the Spanish government and the teachers from Spain obviously- they have their own, uh, ideas about the Spanish language, right? And oftentimes it becomes colonial and oppressive. So even the kids who took dual language since kindergarten, they still make those code-switching mistakes. And in the past, um, their grammar or their spoken or formal language in Spanish hasn't improved because they shut down because their teachers from Spain said their Spanish was horrible, que hablaban el español bastardizado [that they spoke bastardized Spanish] and like just horrific things that they tell these kids, telling them that their Spanish sucks. So, they- when they come to me in AP Spanish or whatever, they're already like, a lot of them don't feel empowered to use the language. So, I have noticed a trend where the, for example, the English speakers, the non-native speakers that took dual language desde chiquillos, [since they were little] uh, their Spanish is better than even the kids that took the Spanish with them as- as children. I don't know if that makes sense, and I think a part of it is because of the way some teachers, um, made the kids feel instead of empowering them to speak their language and, um, honor their culture. A lot of times they- they felt like they sucked. – Camila

In excerpt 34, Camila describes the language attitudes prevalent among certain teachers at their school, specifically those from Spain, toward the language varieties of their students. that some teachers at their school, teachers from Spain, have towards the language varieties of their students. They describe these attitudes as “colonial and oppressive”, as these teachers describe the code-switching utilized by their students as “horrible” and “bastardized”. Camila’s statement highlights the risks that can result from

the lack of training related to local varieties of Spanish in the United States, emphasizing the need to integrate local linguistic variation as a fundamental element of teacher preparation programs. Consequently, it becomes crucial for educators to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying bilingualism and language contact, sociolinguistic phenomena, the variation in Spanish the United States, as well as insights into their students' cultural heritage (Holguín Mendoza, 2017). Verónica echoes Camila's sentiment in the subsequent excerpt.

- 35.** They're self-conscious about the way they talk because they've been told that they're yo no sabo kids, right? And now they're getting assessed on it? And they're- they think that they're going to get like a bad grade or something. – Verónica

Teachers reported that these negative language attitudes directed towards SHL students have yielded detrimental effects, instilling self-consciousness regarding their language varieties and instigating fear of receiving poor grades in their Spanish class. Verónica highlights instances where students have been labeled as "yo no sabo kids," a derogatory term originating from social media platforms, which serves as a manifestation of linguistic discrimination against U.S. Latinx youth. Stransky et al. (2023) provide the following definition for this phenomenon:

This internet phenomenon consists of the use of the term no sabo [kids] in videos, images, memes, tweets, and GIFs to refer to a subset of US Latinx youth, particularly those who do not engage in traditional Hispanic- Latinx culture or do not speak Spanish. This label is also used to refer to Latinx youth whose Spanish communicative skills are significantly influenced by English, their dominant language. These language practices may include, but are not limited to, highly

stereotyped language contact phenomena such as language mixing, calques, or borrowings. (p.38)

The use of this term can exacerbate the precarious position of Spanish and its speakers in the United States. This is evident in the previous excerpts where teachers report that students' linguistic self-confidence has been negatively affected by external perceptions of their language variety. As a result, the already challenging task of preparing HL students for the AP exams becomes significantly more difficult for teachers. They must navigate not only the task of imparting exam content but also increasing their students' confidence in their Spanish-speaking abilities, thereby enabling them to effectively engage with the course material.

While Camila and Verónica described the negative language attitudes exhibited by fellow teachers within their respective schools, the following excerpts show the negative attitudes of teachers themselves when discussing the varieties of their HL students.

**36.** Para la clase de AP yo creo que se necesita un poco más también de eh- ¿cómo se le dice? Que los alumnos se vean más eh- expuestos al buen español, ¿no? Porque a veces ellos son un poquito- así como terquitos me dicen '¿pa' qué?' No, no 'pa' qué' no, 'pa'" no, 'para, para'. Tú no hablas así. No porque está mal o 'haiga'. ¡Ay, Dios mío! Cuando me escriben 'haiga' a mí me da, me da no sé qué. Y les digo 'no, esto tampoco existe, eso se llama un barbarismo. Tú tienes que poner 'haya'. 'Espero que haya tiempo para terminar la tarea'. Y aún así siguen. [For the AP class, I believe it also requires a bit more, how can I say it? That students are more exposed to good Spanish, right? Because sometimes they are a bit, like stubborn, they say '?' '¿pa' qué?' No, no 'pa' qué' no, 'pa'" no, 'para, para'. You don't speak like that. Not because it's wrong or 'haiga.' Oh, my God! When they write 'haiga', it makes me, I don't know what. And I tell them 'no, this doesn't exist either, that's called a barbarism. You have to put 'haya.' 'Espero que haya tiempo para terminar la tarea' (I hope there is time to finish the homework). And even then, they continue.] – Eva

This statement reflects Eva's negative attitudes toward the language varieties of their SHL students, rooted in the "standard language" ideology. Lippi-Green (1997) describes this ideology as "a bias toward an abstract, idealized homogenous language, which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and which has as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class" (p. 64). Expressions such as "el buen español" suggest that Eva perceives the language varieties of their SHL students as inferior or "bad" Spanish. Consequently, this ideology fosters outdated curricular and instructional practices based on an eradication approach, aimed at eliminating all non-standard variants from students' linguistic repertoire (Valdés, 1978). This is evident in Eva's description of their approach upon encountering expressions such as "pa' qué" or "haiga", which are common not only among SHL speakers in the United States but also in many monolingual varieties. Their approach involves instructing students not to use such expressions, labeling them as incorrect and nonexistent, deeming them as "barbarisms." The potential detrimental effect of such attitudes on SHL students, many of whom are often entering a Spanish class for the first time, cannot be overstated. Moreover, these attitudes not only affect individual students but also contribute to the socio-economic and political marginalization of minoritized language speakers (Fuller & Leeman, 2020).

Like Eva, Lus also exhibited negative attitudes toward the language varieties of their SHL students in their statements. The following excerpts exemplify this.

- 37.** Este año lo que hice con una chica- esta chica de Guatemala, que ella sí que se esfuerza mucho, es ponerla con una chica española y enseñarle. 'Bueno, esto es lo que ha hecho esta chica. Mira su tesis. Mira cómo la- la ha formado. Mira el vocabulario que ella está usando. ¿Ves cómo aquí hay palabras más sofisticadas?

No puedes escribir cosas como 'nomás' ni 'ahorita'. Entonces poco a poco se está dando cuenta, pero como digo, es constante- constante pelea. [This year, what I did with a girl —this girl from Guatemala, who really puts in a lot of effort —is to pair her with a girl from Spain and teach her. 'Well, this is what this girl has done. Look at her thesis. Look at how she has structured it. Look at the vocabulary she is using. Do you see how here there are more sophisticated words? You can't write things like 'nomás' or 'ahorita'. So little by little, she's realizing, but like I say, it's a constant, constant struggle.] – Lus

In this excerpt, Lus elaborates on their instructional approach with an SHL student from Guatemala. They describe a strategy where they pair this student with another from Spain, intending to demonstrate the latter's essay development process. Similar to Eva's approach, Lus also adopts practices aligned with an eradication approach, instructing the student to refrain from using specific expressions. Some of the goals of this approach are “to make learners conscious of the differences between their variety and a privileged variety of Spanish and to provide *se dice/no se dice* lists for (mostly lexical) comparisons between nonprivileged and privileged varieties” (Loza & Beaudrie, 2022, p.4). By having their SHL student from Guatemala use the work of their classmate from Spain as a model to follow, this teacher is evidently making their student aware of the differences between their language variety and the prestige variant from Spain. When students are encouraged to emulate the language of socially prestigious groups, it implicitly suggests that their own variety is inadequate (Martínez, 2003). Thus, by instructing their student from Guatemala to use their classmate's writing style, Lus is implicitly sending a message to the former that their language variety is inferior to that of their classmate. In a follow-up to the previous excerpt, Lus also says

**38.** Los que no están al mismo nivel son los estudiantes de herencia hispana y con ellos son los que tengo que trabajar más en el sentido de- de eso, de la escritura. A veces también un poquito de comprensión porque, por ejemplo, los estudiantes

que son de Centroamérica a lo mejor no saben una expresión o un dicho de España. Entonces, normalmente yo hago como unas pequeñas reuniones con ellos individualmente. [The students who are not at the same level are the Hispanic heritage students, and with them, I have to work more on that- on writing. Sometimes also a little bit on comprehension because, for example, students who are from Central America might not know an expression or a saying from Spain. So, typically, I hold small individual meetings with them.] – Lus

Lus's preference for a prestige variety leads them to perceive the lack of familiarity among their students from Central America with expressions used in Spain as a problem that must be addressed. Randolph (2022) argues that “we must reject the foreignness of Spanish and instead situate the language within local contexts that are more immediate to the students' communities and lived experiences” (p. 182). To counteract this notion of language foreignness, educators must familiarize themselves with the Spanish spoken in the United States, which constitutes the most common variety among their students (Ducar, 2022). Therefore, academic preparation on SHL pedagogy and sociolinguistics should be integrated into teachers' pedagogical training, extending beyond pre-service language education to encompass ongoing professional development for all faculty members within world language departments across K-12 and post-secondary contexts (Novella & Bustamante, 2023).

Interpreting the results of the final research question through the lens of a LatCrit framework suggests that language teacher training programs contribute to the ongoing marginalization of minoritized students and their needs. The gaps in language teacher education concerning SHL pedagogy, ranging from general familiarity with effective methodologies for students to specific areas like applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, as well as differentiation strategies for mixed classes, among others, poses significant

challenges for HL learners. The negative language attitudes held by some educators often result in SHL students experiencing a lack of motivation, diminished self-confidence in their language skills, and frustration due to the perceived difficulty in “repairing” their Spanish (Valdés et al., 2003). This highlights the ongoing subordination of students of color within the education system, particularly regarding the historical devaluation, misrepresentation, and exclusion of their languages within formal educational institutions (Delgado Bernal, 2002). The insufficient preparation of language teachers perpetuates purist linguistic ideologies, leading to negative perceptions not only of nonstandard varieties but also of their speakers.

#### **4.4 Recommendations for language teacher training programs**

The results of this dissertation study point to a noticeable lack of well-defined curriculum centered on SHL pedagogy in AP Spanish courses with SHL students, a gap that could be remedied through formal instruction in SHL teaching methodologies. If this sample reflects the background of AP Spanish teachers more generally, they are typically female, aged between 31 and 45, native speakers of Spanish, and may have undergone minimal training in SHL pedagogy. However, this training is insufficient in adequately preparing them to effectively guide SHL students through the rigors of AP Spanish exams within a mixed classroom setting, which is the context for most participants in this study. Yet the survey responses indicate that up to 33% of teachers have not received any form of training in SHL pedagogy. Findings from both the survey and interview data reveal that teacher participants acknowledge the limitations in their teacher training and often seek assistance from colleagues and pursue self-initiated professional development endeavors to enhance outcomes for SHL students in their AP Spanish classes. This

section will center on listing the training needs and respective action steps that should be taken by stakeholders identified through survey and interview data. These are categorized into three distinct yet overlapping categories: gaps in language teacher training that should be addressed by teacher preparation programs (see Table 3), those that should be addressed by school districts (see Table 4), and the specific areas that teachers need further development in (see Table 5).

**Table 3. Gaps in teacher training that language teacher education programs should address**

Gaps	Action steps
General HL competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include HL pedagogy course as a core requirement of program</li> <li>• Develop specialized workshops or seminars focusing on different HL competencies</li> <li>• Offer opportunities for preservice teachers to observe and participate in real classroom settings with HL learners through supervised practicum experiences</li> <li>• Integrate coursework, workshops, and seminars that emphasize the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy in language education</li> <li>• Design and implement an HL certification within the teacher training program</li> </ul>

<p>Differentiated instruction for mixed-language classes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a specialized module within the language teacher training program that specifically addresses differentiated instruction for mixed-language classes</li> <li>• Provide ongoing professional development and support for in-service language teachers to enhance their knowledge and implementation of differentiated instruction for mixed-language classes</li> </ul>
<p>Language varieties of HL speakers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on local translingual practices by examining the linguistic landscape and diverse language varieties within the local community</li> <li>• Introduce CLA principles and practices to encourage critical reflection on language attitudes, power dynamics, and social justice issues related to HL varieties</li> <li>• Implement fieldwork experiences or community-based projects that allow pre-service teachers to engage directly with HL speakers and their communities</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Needs that school districts should address**

Needs	Action steps
Assess local Hispanic population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a comprehensive demographic analysis of the local Hispanic population to gather detailed information about their linguistic backgrounds, cultural identities, socioeconomic status, and educational needs</li> <li>• Establish partnerships with local Hispanic community organizations, cultural centers, and advocacy groups to facilitate ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and engagement</li> <li>• Implement culturally responsive assessment practices that recognize and value the linguistic and cultural assets of Hispanic students</li> </ul>
Invest in training current language teachers in HL pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer professional development workshop opportunities focused on HL pedagogy for current teachers within the school district</li> <li>• Implement a mentorship or program where experienced HL educators serve as mentors or instructional coaches for their peers</li> <li>• Create a resource bank or repository of instructional materials, lesson plans, and</li> </ul>

	<p>assessment tools specifically designed for HL instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish partnerships with universities that offer specialized training or certification programs in HL pedagogy</li> </ul>
<p>Placement tool for Spanish courses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a placement exam specifically designed to assess students' proficiency in Spanish language skills and cultural knowledge</li> <li>• Institute criteria and guidelines for interpreting placement exam results and making placement decisions for AP Spanish courses</li> </ul>
<p>Modify academic curriculum to include SHL track</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with language experts, educators, and community stakeholders to develop an SHL track within the academic curriculum</li> <li>• Recruit and train teachers with expertise in HL pedagogy to teach courses within the SHL track</li> <li>• Establish partnerships with local Hispanic organizations, cultural institutions, and community groups to enrich the SHL track with authentic learning experiences and resources</li> </ul>

**Table 5. Training areas and needs of AP Spanish teachers of HL students**

Training area	Specific training needs
Methodologies for teaching SHL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing teachers' understanding of the unique needs and challenges faced by HL learners in preparing for the AP Spanish exams, while also ensuring alignment with the exam's objectives and requirements</li> <li>• Providing differentiation techniques for SHL instruction to meet the varied learning needs of learners, including adapting materials, activities, and assessments to accommodate different proficiency levels, learning styles, and language backgrounds</li> <li>• Creating materials that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for SHL learners and evaluating existing materials for their effectiveness in meeting SHL students' needs</li> <li>• Acquiring specialized knowledge and strategies for effectively teaching the various language skills required for SHL proficiency development</li> </ul>
Applied linguistics and sociolinguistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of the linguistic variation present in diverse</li> </ul>

	<p>language communities, including variations in dialects and registers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing translanguaging as a natural language practice among multilingual learners and learning strategies for creating inclusive and supportive learning environments where students feel empowered to draw on their full linguistic repertoires to express themselves</li> <li>• Developing sociolinguistic awareness to understand how language practices are shaped by social factors such as identity and power and integrating language samples from diverse sociocultural contexts into instructional materials</li> <li>• Developing an understanding of the political dimensions of language education, including the historical and contemporary contexts of language policies, language rights, and language ideologies that impact HL communities</li> </ul>
Speakers of SHL and their communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and developing awareness of the diverse linguistic backgrounds, cultural identities,</li> </ul>

	<p>and experiences of SHL speakers and their communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing the factors that influence HL learners' motivation to learn and maintain their heritage language and fostering a positive learning environment that promotes learners' motivation</li> <li>• Using strategies for effectively supporting SHL learners in the classroom and addressing the specific linguistic, academic, and socioemotional needs they may have</li> </ul>
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Based on survey and interview data, several key training needs have been identified across language teacher education programs, school districts, and AP Spanish teachers. Teacher training programs should address gaps in general education related to HL pedagogy, differentiated instruction for mixed-language classes, and language varieties of SHL speakers. School district administrators should team up with content-matter experts to focus on needs such as assessing the local Hispanic population, providing training in HL pedagogy to their teachers, implementing a placement tool for AP Spanish courses, and modifying the language curriculum to include an SHL track that meets the needs of the growing Latinx student population. Additionally, AP Spanish teachers of HL students require training in HL core competences, specifically in pedagogical approaches for teaching SHL, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, and

SHL speakers and their communities (Gironzetti & Belpoliti, 2021). By addressing these gaps in language teacher education through targeted action steps, stakeholders can better support both pre-service and in-service educators in meeting the diverse needs of HL learners and promoting their academic success.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

The results and discussion in this chapter revealed that there exists a significant gap in the preparation and training of AP Spanish teachers in SHL pedagogy to adequately support their HL students in achieving success on the AP exams. The majority of teachers participating in this study have received minimal to no formal training in SHL pedagogy, highlighting an urgent need for teacher preparation programs to incorporate comprehensive training in this area. Furthermore, the challenges encountered by AP Spanish teachers when teaching HL students are multifaceted, ranging from lack of preparation in SHL pedagogy and best practices to meet the needs of these students to systemic issues within educational institutions that often neglect minoritized student populations. These challenges highlight the need for and importance of professional development initiatives at the institutional and systemic levels to effectively address the unique needs of HL students effectively.

Moreover, the professional development needs of AP Spanish teachers for better preparing HL students for AP exams I identified in my analysis emphasize the necessity of ongoing training and support in HL pedagogy. The desire for additional education in SHL methodologies, encompassing both general best practices and specialized topics related to HL pedagogy, indicates the interest of teachers to enhance their instructional practices and support the academic success of their students.

In conclusion, the results of this dissertation study underscore the critical importance of addressing the deficiencies in language teacher training, particularly in the context of supporting HL students in AP Spanish courses. Recommendations derived from this study provide actionable steps for teacher preparation programs, school districts, and educators to bridge the gap in SHL pedagogy knowledge and effectively meet the needs of HL students. By prioritizing targeted professional development initiatives and advocating for social justice by meeting needs of HL students, stakeholders can work collaboratively to enhance outcomes for HL students in AP Spanish exams, providing minoritized students and their teachers with better resources and promoting equitable access to quality education for all learners. This would help meet the goals of the LatCrit framework, which emphasizes CRT and addresses issues of racial justice and equity in education.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Researchers have pointed out the inadequate training provided to both pre- and in-service language teachers, citing gaps in their linguistic expertise and pedagogical training (Ducar, 2024; Brown & Thompson, 2018). Traditionally, the focus of language teacher education has been on instructing world language teachers in L2 methodologies (Randolph, 2022; Pascual y Cabo & Parra, 2018). Nonetheless, the changing demographics in the United States reveal a significant mismatch with the practices employed by many language teacher preparation programs, as educators frequently lack the necessary skills to address the needs of the increasing Hispanic student population. The present dissertation used survey and interview data to conduct a needs analysis of AP Spanish teachers who primarily teach HL students across various regions of the United States. Given the limited existing research on AP Spanish exams, secondary school language teachers, and their students, this study represents the first effort to examine the profiles and needs of AP Spanish teachers in relation to SHL pedagogy, aiming to improve teacher preparation and ensure HL students have an equitable opportunity to achieve AP exam scores that will grant them college credit. This dissertation first provided an overview of existing knowledge concerning AP Spanish exams. Subsequently, the rationale and motivation for the study were discussed through a review of previous literature, highlighting gaps in language teacher development, and examining studies pertaining to teacher development for in-service teachers. Furthermore, recommendations were proposed for teacher preparation programs, school districts, and

educators based on the needs identified from the research findings, with the goal of enhancing outcomes for HL students in AP Spanish exams.

This final chapter begins by providing a summary of the dissertation along with the main findings. Second, the chapter highlights the pedagogical implications pertinent to language teacher education, as well as the SHL classroom. Finally, limitations of the present study are described, alongside suggestions for future directions for research concerning AP Spanish exams and SHL teacher development.

### **5.1 Summary of findings**

This dissertation aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the preparation or training of AP Spanish teachers in SHL pedagogy to support their students in successfully passing the AP exams?
2. What, if any, challenges do they face when teaching AP Spanish to this student population, and what do they attribute these challenges to?
3. What types of professional development do AP Spanish teachers of HL students need to better prepare HL students for these exams?

To address these questions a needs analysis study was conducted, incorporating survey data obtained from 51 educators teaching AP Spanish, alongside interviews conducted with a subset of 8 teachers who had completed the aforementioned survey. These mixed methods data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014), while using a LatCrit framework (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

The results of the quantitative analysis regarding the first research question revealed that teacher participants had received minimal training in SHL pedagogy to support their HL students in achieving a successful score in the AP Spanish exams.

Although a majority of surveyed teachers ( $n = 34$ , 67%) reported having received some form of training in SHL pedagogy, such training primarily consisted of participation in workshops, webinars and/or conference presentations. Specifically, 31 teachers (60%) received limited training through these professional development opportunities. Furthermore, only 9 teachers (17%) had taken undergraduate courses in the subject, 2 (3%) had engaged in graduate-level coursework, and one teacher (1%) mentioned alternative preparation methods. While avenues in professional development such as participation in workshops, webinars, and/or conferences are valuable, they fall short in providing comprehensive training for effectively meeting the needs of SHL students. In tandem with these quantitative findings, the qualitative analysis of interview data revealed a prevailing theme: teachers expressed a notable lack of confidence in addressing the needs of SHL students stemming from minimal training. This lack of confidence in teaching SHL students is indicative of gaps in language teacher training programs, as previous scholarship has demonstrated (Ducar, 2022; Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010 & Valdés, 2008; among others).

As evidenced in the excerpts obtained from the interviews, the predominant lack of confidence among teachers in adequately catering to the needs of their students, compounded by the existing deficiencies in language teacher preparation programs, has led teachers to adopt a "learning while teaching" methodology, a phenomenon also emphasized by Valdés et al. (2008). Confronted with the need to learn from experience and reliance on peer support networks, teachers find themselves compelled to adopt such an approach, albeit to the detriment of their SHL students. The fact that teachers of SHL students perceive themselves ill-equipped to meet the needs of this student population

owing to the failure of language teacher preparation programs to provide training in HL pedagogy is particularly noteworthy against the fact that Hispanics constitute the largest increase in population growth in the United States, surpassing other racial or ethnic groups (Pew Research Center, 2023). This underscores the persisting devaluation and marginalization of students of color and their educational experiences within formal learning environments. Even among teachers who reported having undergone some type of training in SHL pedagogy, the sentiment persists that such training remains insufficient, thereby accentuating a demand for more resources and support in this area of professional development.

In terms of the second research question, every teacher participant reported encountering a myriad of challenges in their respective high schools while teaching AP Spanish to SHL students. These challenges were attributed by educators to their own insufficient training in SHL pedagogy or to systemic issues within the educational system, which frequently neglects the needs of Latinx students. The most cited challenges by teachers in the survey included developing SHL students' literacy skills ( $n = 18$ , 29%), addressing varying levels of proficiency ( $n = 17$ , 27%), and dealing with the inadequate placement of SHL students in their AP Spanish classes ( $n = 13$ , 21%). Survey respondents expressed that these challenges have a detrimental impact on their capacity to effectively support their SHL students in achieving success on the AP exams.

Interview participants also reported facing numerous challenges when teaching SHL students in their AP Spanish classes. Analysis of interview data revealed four main challenges: insufficient administrative support, addressing student overconfidence in test performance, supporting students with insufficient AP-level preparation, and navigating

the needs of both L2 and SHL students. Regarding insufficient administrative support, conversations revolved around schools failing to facilitate funding for teachers' ongoing education. For example, teachers expressed that if they wished to pursue professional development in SHL pedagogy, they had to independently seek the resources, finance their training, and allocate personal time outside of work hours to pursue such education. Additionally, several educators observed disparities in the importance attributed to language courses compared to other subjects at their respective institutions, noting that colleagues teaching different subjects receive financial support for professional development, while they do not.

Concerning the theme of addressing student overconfidence in test performance, discussions centered on teachers' observations regarding the tendency of SHL students to exert minimal effort in preparation for the AP exams. This phenomenon stems from an underlying assumption among these students of possessing inherent proficiency in their heritage language, leading them to expect high scores solely based on their familiarity with the language. While it is important to recognize and address this perceived overconfidence among students, it is also crucial to acknowledge the positive aspect of this situation. Previous research on linguistic confidence suggests that individuals who exhibit confidence in their perceived command of their HL are more inclined to maintain the language (Abtahian & Quinn, 2017), positioning HL speakers as exemplars of linguistic resistance. In addition, several teachers also noted a lack of dedication from SHL students towards extracurricular reading, a practice they commonly encourage their AP students to engage in to enhance exam readiness. Teachers attributed this tendency to

the array of responsibilities SHL students typically shoulder beyond the classroom, a phenomenon supported by prior research (Sy & Romero, 2008; Ginorio et al., 1995).

In relation to the theme of supporting students with insufficient AP-level preparation, conversations revolved around the common struggle faced by teachers when encountering students in AP classes who lack familiarity with using their HL in academic contexts, especially in writing. For instance, teachers noted that many SHL students in their classes had limited exposure to Spanish coursework or had no prior experience with Spanish instruction before enrolling in AP courses. This presents a considerable challenge for both teachers and SHL students who are enrolled in a course primarily aimed at preparing for a high-stakes assessment that requires formal writing skills.

Within this theme, discussions also focused on comparing the skills of L2 students with those of SHL students, with teachers raising the issue that many of their L2 students enroll in multiple AP courses and demonstrate stronger academic writing skills compared to the SHL students, who generally do not enroll in other AP courses. Moreover, L2 students take multiple Spanish courses prior to enrolling in AP Spanish, while HL students are not given this opportunity. Consequently, SHL students are disadvantaged as they have fewer opportunities to develop their literacy skills before taking AP Spanish exams.

Concerning the final theme related to the second research question, which involves navigating the needs of both L2 and SHL students, discussions centered on teachers expressing their frustration when attempting to effectively address the needs of students in mixed AP Spanish courses, a sentiment echoed in previous research findings (Randolph, 2017; Russell & Kuriscak, 2015). As indicated in the excerpts, participants

lack formal training in HL teaching methods, leading them to feel overwhelmed by the task of tailoring instruction for a diverse array of students and their respective needs, and grappling with understanding their students' differing language development for effective support. This illustrates how teacher preparation perpetuates systemic racism by overlooking the needs of minoritized students and failing to provide essential training for their teachers, despite the fact that these students constitute the majority, as is the case for HL students taking AP Spanish exams. This is why CRT is crucial; it offers educators a vital framework for recognizing, understanding, and addressing the deep-rooted white supremacy within the educational system in the United States, including in teacher training (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). As a result, teacher participants in this study explicitly advocate for the integration of HL-focused training in teacher preparation programs to address these challenges.

Regarding the third research question, the majority of teachers reported a need for additional training in HL pedagogy to adequately prepare their students for the AP Spanish exams. Teacher participants expressed a need for further education in SHL training, encompassing both general best practices and specialized training on various aspects of HL pedagogy. Teachers were asked in the online survey to evaluate the importance of different areas and topics for professional development, with findings indicating that participants perceived all topics as valuable for their growth as teachers of SHL learners, although they predominantly prioritized topics aligned with content areas relevant to the AP Spanish exams. The topics that teachers evaluated were the following:

1. Design, evaluation, and adaptation of teaching materials
2. Education technology for HL learners

3. Differentiated instruction for mixed classes
4. Teaching oral comprehension
5. Teaching reading
6. Teaching speaking
7. Teaching writing
8. Teaching grammar
9. Teaching vocabulary for HL learners
10. Translanguaging
11. Language varieties of HL learners
12. HL learners' motivation
13. Cultural characteristics of HL learners
14. Language abilities of HL learners
15. Differences in L1, L2, and HL acquisition

Additionally, teachers were prompted to assess the significance of HL instructional goals within their AP Spanish classes. Results indicated that they regarded all HL instructional goals as either very important or important. In terms of the types of professional development deemed most effective in preparing HL students for success in the AP Spanish exams, the most frequently options included general training in SHL pedagogy ( $n = 23, 40\%$ ), developing SHL learners' literacy skills ( $n = 13, 22\%$ ), and implementing differentiation strategies for mixed classes ( $n = 10, 17\%$ ).

Conversations with interview participants revealed a prevailing theme centered on the detrimental effect of teachers' negative attitudes towards SHL learners' varieties. As exemplified in the excerpts, certain statements made by teachers shed light on their own language attitudes or those prevalent among their colleagues, highlighting a need for teachers to receive training in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, particularly concerning knowledge of SHL varieties, as well as attitudes and ideologies regarding

language variation and change. Additionally, these statements emphasize the necessity for teachers to be trained in CLA due to its transformative potential in this area. Ducar (2022) highlights that incorporating CLA into teacher education can enhance teachers' awareness of the social, political, and economic power dynamics inherent in language variation. Some teachers also expressed that these negative language attitudes directed towards SHL students have led to detrimental consequences, such as instilling self-consciousness regarding their language varieties and instigating fear of receiving low grades in their Spanish class. In addition, some teachers shared witnessing instances where SHL students have been labeled as "yo no sabo kids," a pejorative term originating from social media platforms, which serves as a manifestation of linguistic discrimination against U.S. Latinx youth (Stransky et al., 2023). Furthermore, other teachers demonstrated their own negative language attitudes towards their students' varieties by displaying a preference for a prestigious variety and perceiving their students' varieties as a problem that must be addressed.

## **5.2 Pedagogical implications**

Apart from addressing the research questions, the results of this dissertation study yield significant implications for the fields of language teacher development and SHL education. First and foremost is the apparent lack of well-defined curriculum centered on HL pedagogy in AP Spanish courses with HL students, a gap that could be remedied through formal instruction in HL teaching methodologies. As evidenced in the experiences and needs of teacher participants and corroborated by previous scholarship (Carreira, 2022; Ducar, 2022; Gironzetti and Belpoliti, 2021; among others) the training received by educators is minimal and insufficient to effectively address the needs of SHL

students. As such, the first step for language teacher preparation programs should involve the integration of HL methodologies into their curriculum. This can be accomplished by including an HL pedagogy course as a core requirement of the teacher training program, by designing and implementing an HL teacher certification, and by developing specialized workshops or seminars focusing on different HL competences, among others.

Based on the dissertation findings, we can further refine and adapt our pedagogies to better meet the needs of SHL students in our language classrooms. The results cover a range of crucial considerations that directly influence classroom practices and student outcomes. First, it is crucial to deepen our understanding of the unique needs and challenges encountered by HL learners in preparing for the AP Spanish exams. Such understanding not only facilitates tailored instruction but also ensures alignment with the exams' objectives and tasks, thereby enhancing students' readiness for the assessments. By honing in on the linguistic and affective dimensions of SHL learners, teachers can devise instructional strategies that cater to their specific needs, fostering a supportive learning environment (Beaudrie et al., 2014). Additionally, acquiring specialized knowledge and strategies for SHL proficiency development enables educators to scaffold learning effectively, guiding students towards academic success.

Second, the incorporation of differentiation techniques is crucial for accommodating the diverse learning needs of students in mixed classes. Adaptation of materials, activities, and assessments to accommodate varying proficiency levels, learning styles, and linguistic backgrounds is essential for promoting inclusivity and maximizing student engagement and achievement. Through the implementation of differentiated instruction, teachers can effectively address the unique needs of SHL

learners, facilitating their linguistic and academic development (Carreira, 2017). Moreover, the creation and evaluation of linguistically and culturally appropriate materials are imperative for optimizing instructional effectiveness in the SHL classroom. Tailoring materials to resonate with SHL learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds not only enhances engagement but also promotes a sense of belonging and identity affirmation (Carreira & Chik, 2018). However, it is important to note that differentiation is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and adopting a CLA approach is necessary, which entails moving beyond surface-level instructional modifications. In order to implement truly inclusive approaches in the mixed classroom, educators must be able to identify the sociolinguistic power struggles at play and develop teaching methods that reject reinforcing the dominance of the majority culture (Randolph, 2017). Thus, merely implementing differentiation is not enough and teachers must engage in critical self-reflection to examine how their perspectives may influence their instructional practices. Randolph (2022) also argues that students in mixed classrooms would benefit from focusing on the intersections of the language learning experiences of all learners. In other words, completely segregating experiences for HL and L2 learners through differentiation is not advantageous. Using collaborative, justice-oriented, community-based projects across the curriculum is one method to address this need (Randolph, 2022).

As evidenced in this dissertation, an understanding of linguistic variation within diverse language communities is crucial for teachers working with SHL learners. In view of the fact that SHL speakers are a minoritized community, it is essential for educators to incorporate an awareness of the sociopolitical context surrounding their language

varieties within the classroom setting (Loza & Beaudrie, 2022). Teachers can create a classroom environment that validates students' linguistic backgrounds and encourages the use of their full linguistic repertoires by recognizing and embracing linguistic diversity (Novella & Bustamante, 2023; Ducar, 2022). Furthermore, recognizing translanguaging as a natural language practice among multilingual learners is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment. Teachers should develop strategies for cultivating translanguaging practices in the classroom, encouraging students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires to communicate and learn. By embracing translanguaging, teachers can leverage students' multilingualism to develop their skills in their HL, while also promoting a positive language-learning environment where linguistic diversity is celebrated. Additionally, developing sociolinguistic awareness among teachers is critical for understanding how language practices are influenced by social factors such as identity and power (Holguín Mendoza, 2017). Teachers can foster linguistic self-confidence in their students by incorporating local translingual practices from their communities into instructional materials. Moreover, teachers can adopt pedagogical approaches that encourage student engagement in multimodal, translingual, and hybrid literacies to broaden their linguistic skills, such as multiliteracies pedagogy. Zapata and Lacorte (2018) argue that the objectives of a multiliteracies pedagogy align closely with current trends in the field of SHL. This approach deliberately combines academic language learning with personal experiences to reflect the realities of students' everyday lives. It also guides the creation of curricular materials that are more relevant to learners' personal, social, and cultural contexts, and provides opportunities for students to interpret and produce meaning using various forms, including oral, visual, written, audiovisual,

and digital texts (Zapata & Lacorte, 2018). In addition, an understanding of the political dimensions of language education, including language policies, rights, and ideologies, is essential for advocating for the linguistic needs of HL communities (Fuller & Leeman, 2020).

Another crucial pedagogical implication that arose in this dissertation was to develop a comprehensive understanding and awareness of the diverse cultural identities and experiences of SHL speakers and their communities. This understanding enables teachers to create a culturally responsive and inclusive learning environment that validates students' linguistic and cultural identities. The benefits of Culturally Responsive Teaching on academic performance (Thomas, 2019; Hanley & Noblit, 2011; Au & Mason, 1981, among others) emphasize the importance for teachers, especially those teaching SHL students, to connect academic content with students' home and cultural backgrounds. This pedagogical approach is particularly important in preparing students for high-stakes assessments, such as the AP exams. Additionally, recognizing the factors that influence HL learners' motivation to study and maintain their heritage language is crucial. Educators should strive to create a supportive and encouraging atmosphere that promotes learners' motivation by acknowledging and leveraging their instrumental and integrative motivations for studying their heritage language. This can be achieved by integrating culturally relevant and meaningful learning experiences into the curriculum (Ducar, 2012). Ultimately, by addressing these pedagogical implications, teachers can facilitate the linguistic, academic and socioemotional growth and development of SHL students.

### **5.3 Study limitations and future directions**

While the present dissertation study was able to address the proposed research questions and shed light on additional pertinent aspects concerning AP Spanish teachers and their students, it nonetheless encountered certain limitations. The primary drawback pertains to the sample size, specifically the inability to recruit participants from all 50 states of the United States. As a result, the findings may not offer a comprehensive representation of all AP Spanish teachers of HL students nationwide. The inclusion of educators from all states could have potentially yielded more generalizable results. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that despite the limited sample size, the distribution of participants is somewhat reflective of the population of the United States, with populous states such as California, Texas, and Florida (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023) being adequately represented, whereas smaller states are less so.

In addition to the small sample size is the fact that this study's scope is limited to AP Spanish teachers in the United States, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to educational contexts beyond the country. Given that many secondary schools outside the United States offer authorized AP courses and qualifying AP exam scores are recognized in over 100 other countries worldwide (College Board), the applicability of this study is notably restricted to the United States' educational landscape. While there may be some parallels with SHL speakers in other countries, it is important to acknowledge the distinctive lived experiences of Spanish speakers in the United States. These individuals have encountered linguistic oppression and Hispanophobia for decades and continue to confront such challenges (Zentella, 1997), which likely shape their participation in standardized courses and exams, as well as the experiences of their educators, in ways distinct from those of students and teachers in other countries. Thus,

future research endeavors should explore HL teacher development within diverse international contexts, thus fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of HL education beyond national borders.

Another limitation to this dissertation study pertains to the recruitment process, specifically the reliance on self-selected social networks to identify participants. This recruitment strategy inherently introduces a bias, as teachers who opt to engage in such social networks may possess unique characteristics or perspectives that differ from the broader population of AP Spanish teachers. As a result, the sample obtained through this method may not be fully representative of the entire population of AP Spanish teachers. Furthermore, the self-selection aspect of these social networks may attract teacher participants who are particularly enthusiastic or invested in certain aspects of language teaching, potentially skewing the perspectives and experiences reflected in the study. Thus, while the insights obtained from this sample are valuable within the context of the study, they should be interpreted with caution in terms of their generalizability to the broader population of AP Spanish teachers. Future research could explore alternative recruitment strategies to mitigate this limitation and enhance the study's external validity.

Moving forward, one avenue for future research lies in exploring the effectiveness of targeted professional development programs in HL pedagogy tailored to the specific needs of AP Spanish teachers. Given the widespread acknowledgment of insufficient training in SHL pedagogy among educators (Carreira, 2022; Ducar, 2022, Gironzetti and Belpoliti, 2021, Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010 & Valdés, 2008; among others), investigating the impact of structured professional development initiatives could offer valuable insights into enhancing teacher preparation and support. Such research could

involve longitudinal studies assessing the implementation and outcomes of comprehensive training programs, examining their influence on teacher confidence, instructional practices, and ultimately student outcomes. Additionally, comparative studies could explore variations in the effectiveness of different professional development approaches, ranging from workshops and seminars to mentorship programs and online courses, thereby informing the design of evidence-based interventions to address the identified gaps in teacher training.

Another promising direction for future studies entails examining the intersectionality of language teacher development with broader educational policies and practices, particularly those affecting marginalized student populations. Considering the documented challenges faced by AP Spanish teachers in addressing the needs of SHL students, future research could explore the impact of systemic factors, such as curriculum design, assessment policies, and resource allocation, on language teaching and learning outcomes. By adopting a critical perspective informed by frameworks such as LatCrit and CLA, researchers can uncover the structural inequities embedded within educational systems and advocate for transformative interventions to promote linguistic and educational justice. Such research endeavors hold the potential to not only inform policy reform but also empower educators to enact meaningful change within their classrooms and communities.

An additional promising avenue for future research in the area of teacher development is to explore the educational and professional profiles and contexts of HL teachers in the United States. Teachers working with HL students encompass a diverse spectrum of individuals, including native speakers, L2 speakers, as well as HL speakers.

There are disparities in the extent of specialized language teaching instruction received by these teachers. Consequently, to understand how to better prepare them to work with HL learners, research endeavors must delve into their needs, instructional practices, and beliefs.

While scholars have developed a set of core goals and teaching competencies in recent years, HL educators and teacher preparation programs encounter challenges in translating these competencies into instructional practices in HL classrooms. Bridging this gap is one of the most significant challenges in the field of HL pedagogy, which can potentially lead to frustration in teachers who may find these goals idealistic and detached from the complexities of the classroom. In order to begin a systematic and realistic approach toward addressing the needs of HL teachers, Gironzetti and Belpoliti (2021) advocate for collaborative engagement with teachers in creating a flexible instructional design plan. This plan aims to facilitate the translation of curricular objectives into real-world teaching contexts. Especially, the perspectives of educators across diverse institutional settings should be incorporated, transcending the confines of traditional four-year universities. Such inclusive engagement ensures that the resulting design plan resonates with the diverse instructional landscapes encountered by HL educators across various educational institutions.

An area of future research that merits special attention is the inclusion of teachers from independent HL education programs. These programs, which are community-organized entities operating outside the formal education system, represent an integral component of HL education (Valdés, 2017). They have emerged as a response to the perception that institutional settings alone are responsible for preserving minoritized

languages (Valdés, 2017; Mufwene, 2002). However, research suggests that HL programs have limited effectiveness in ensuring long-term language maintenance (Valdés, 2017; Fishman, 1991). Fishman (1991) stated that while schools can serve as initiators or contributors, formal education alone cannot accomplish all objectives. Therefore, it is important for the field of HL to give community-based schools a voice and include them in important debates and decision-making processes regarding the curricularization of heritage languages. These programs have significant influence and play a constructive role in HL education, underlining the need for their inclusion in broader debates and initiatives within the field.

Lastly, future research should prioritize adopting an intersectional lens to examine the complex interplay between language teacher development, cultural competence, and social justice in AP Spanish education. By centering the voices and experiences of diverse stakeholders, including students, families, and community members, researchers can shed light on the multifaceted dynamics shaping language teaching and learning within diverse sociocultural contexts. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methodologies such as participatory action research and community-based approaches can facilitate collaborative knowledge production and foster reciprocal relationships between researchers and practitioners. Ultimately, by embracing an intersectional and community-engaged approach, future research can contribute to the co-creation of more equitable and inclusive educational spaces for SHL students and their teachers.

Given the evident lack of progress in HL teacher development as a scholarly field, the preceding discussion provided a future research agenda outlining key issues needing attention. This agenda aims to guide future investigations towards addressing key issues

essential for the professional growth of HL educators, thereby facilitating the development and maintenance of heritage languages. Despite the limitations in the present dissertation study, the presence of Latinx students in United States' classrooms is expected to increase, leading to a growing enrollment of SHL students in AP Spanish courses initially tailored for L2 learners. Consequently, I trust that my work can inspire further research endeavors aimed at comprehensively gaining an understanding of AP Spanish teachers of HL students.

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APPENDIX A  
DEFINITION OF TERMS

This section provides the reader with definitions of terms used throughout the dissertation.

Additive bilingualism: an approach to second language teaching in which the second language is seen as an addition to the learner's first language rather than as a replacement for it (Herrera-Rocha, 2017).

Advanced Placement (AP) program: “gives students the chance to tackle college-level work while they're still in high school—whether they're learning online or in the classroom. And through taking AP Exams, students can earn college credit and placement.” (College Board)

Critical Language Awareness (CLA): “theoretical and pedagogical framework with the potential to correct the social injustices that SHL scholars have long observed at the macro-, meso-, and micro- levels of US society.” (Beaudrie & Loza, 2021)

Critical Race Theory (CRT): “the work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination.” (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1331)

Culturally Responsive Teaching: using students’ customs, characteristics, experience, and perspectives as tools for better classroom instruction.

Differential bilingualism: views the bilingualism of English-speakers as a resource and that of others as a problem or shortcoming. (Aparicio, 1998)

Differentiated instruction: teaching method that capitalizes on children's differences in order to address them and, as a result, lead each child to academic success. (Tomlinson, 1999)

Formative assessment: refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course.

Heritage languages: “all non-English languages including those spoken by native American peoples” (Valdés. 2001, p. 39)

“minority languages learned in a bilingual or multilingual environment. They include languages in diaspora spoken by immigrants and their children, aboriginal or indigenous languages whose role has been diminished by colonizing languages, and historical minority languages that coexist with other standard languages in diverse territories.” (Montrul & Polinsky, 2021, p. 1)

“A language qualifies as a heritage language if it is a language spoken at home or otherwise readily available to young children, and crucially this language is not a dominant language of the larger (national) society.” (Rothman, 2009, p. 159)

Heritage language learner: “a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language.” (Valdés, 2000)

“heritage speakers who wish to regain, maintain or improve their home language through classroom instruction.” (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, p. 384)

“those who are trying to regain what they feel they have lost if they did not acquire it in a formal classroom environment.” (Montrul & Polinsky, 2021, p. 3)

Heritage language speaker: “are people raised in a home where one language is spoken who subsequently switch to another dominant language.” (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, p. 368)

“those in the wild, naturalistic learners and users who are not seeking to learn their heritage language in the classroom.” (Montrul & Polinsky, 2021, p. 3)

Latino Critical Race Theory: “theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression.” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 108)

Standard language ideology: “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class.” (Lippi-Green, 2004)

Strategic grouping techniques: a systematic approach for grouping students based on formative assessment data.

APPENDIX B  
ONLINE SURVEY

## Demographic Information

1. Where are you from?
2. Gender
  - Woman
  - Man
  - I'd rather not say
  - Other:
3. Age
  - 18-30
  - 31-45
  - 46-60
  - 61+
  - I'd rather not say
4. Spanish is my
  - L1
  - L2
  - L3
  - Other:
5. Do you know any other language? If yes, which one?
  - Yes:
  - No
6. Have you ever taught another language? If yes, which one(s)?
  - Yes:
  - No
7. Select the state where you are currently teaching
  - List of US states and territories.
8. In which type of school or district do you teach at?
  - Public school
  - Charter school
  - Private school
  - Other:
9. Have you taught outside of the U.S.? If yes, where?
  - Yes:

No

Education

10. Select all the degrees that you have completed (from which you have already graduated)

BA or BS

MA or MS

PhD or EdD

Other:

11. Have you completed a specific degree or program to teach Spanish or another language?

Yes

No

12. Did your program include a course that discussed language teaching methodology or language acquisition in depth?

Yes

No

13. Have you completed the requirements for a Spanish teaching license?

Yes, I have completed the requirements for a Spanish teaching license in the state where I am currently teaching AP Spanish

Yes, I have completed the requirements for a Spanish teaching license in a different state

No, I do not have a teaching license

*The following questions focus on your previous knowledge about heritage learners of Spanish. Consider the following definition when answering: “A heritage learner is a person who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English.” (Valdés, 2001):*

14. On average, how many heritage language students do you typically have in your AP Spanish class?

0%

20%

40%

Most of my students are heritage language learners (over 50%)

15. Select all the degrees that you have completed that are related to language teaching (select all that apply)
- BA or BS
  - MA or MS
  - PhD or EdD
  - None of these
  - Other:
16. Your preparation to teach Advanced Placement Spanish courses includes (select all that apply)
- I have no specific preparation to teach AP Spanish
  - Attending the College Board's workshops and/or summer institutes
  - Attending workshops, seminars, and/or webinars hosted by other agencies
  - Other:
17. Your preparation to teach Spanish as a heritage language includes (select all that apply)
- I have no specific preparation to teach Spanish as a heritage language
  - Attending workshops, seminars, and/or webinars
  - Attending conference presentations
  - Undergraduate-level (BA or BS) college courses
  - Graduate-level (MA-MS or PHD-EDD) college courses
  - A specific BA/BS degree
  - A specific MA/MS degree
  - A specific PhD/EdD degree
  - Other:
18. Do you feel prepared to teach AP Spanish to heritage language speakers?
- Yes
  - No
  - Maybe

Professional Development

19. Consider the following areas of professional development. Which topics help a teacher meet the needs of heritage learners of Spanish?
- Valuable - A little valuable - Not valuable - I don't know/I am not sure*
- Differences in first language, second language, and heritage language acquisition

- Language abilities of heritage language learners
  - Cultural characteristics of heritage language learners
  - Heritage language learners' motivation
  - Language varieties of heritage language learners
  - Translanguaging (the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features of different languages in order to maximize communicative potential)
  - Teaching vocabulary to heritage language learners
  - Teaching grammar to heritage language learners
  - Teaching writing
  - Teaching speaking
  
  - Teaching reading
  
  - Teaching oral comprehension
  
  - Differentiated instruction for mixed classes (second language-heritage language)
  
  - Education technology for heritage language learners
  
  - Design, evaluation, and adaptation of teaching materials for heritage language learners
20. What kind of professional development modalities are you considering to continue your education?
- I am considering this option – I am not considering this option*
  - Seminar / workshop at a conference on language teaching
  - Independent seminar / workshop
  - Webinar
  - Joining an association devoted to teaching Spanish as a heritage language
  - Joining a virtual group or community focusing on Spanish as a heritage language
  - Intensive summer courses or summer institute
  - Undergraduate classes
  - Graduate classes (MA/MS or PhD/EdD)
  - Graduate certificate in Spanish as a heritage language
21. Do you believe that professional development materials for AP Spanish teachers of heritage language students should be different than those of AP Spanish teachers of second language learners?
- Yes
  - No

22. Does your employer provide funding for subject-specific professional development?  
Yes  
No

Teaching Experience

23. How long have you been teaching Spanish (as a second, heritage, or first language)?  
1-3 years  
4-10 years  
11-20 years  
20+ years
24. How long have you been teaching AP Spanish?  
1-3 years  
4-10 years  
11-20 years  
20+ years
25. Normally, your AP Spanish class size is  
Less than 12 students  
12-20 students  
21-25 students  
26-30 students  
More than 30 students
26. In general, would you say that the AP Spanish class that you teach follows a curriculum based on the College Board's guidelines and descriptors?  
Yes  
No  
I don't know/I am not sure
27. In general, would you say that you practice differentiation in your AP Spanish classroom for your heritage language students? (differentiation = tailoring instruction to meet individual needs)  
Yes  
No  
I don't know/I am not sure

28. In the AP Spanish class that you teach, what level of importance do the following goals have for heritage language students?

*Very important – Important – Not really important*

Learn to express themselves correctly in writing and orally maintain and develop the heritage language

Acquire and develop a formal register of expression in Spanish

Expand students' bilingual skills

Transfer literacy skills to Spanish

Acquire and develop academic Spanish

Acquire a correct mastery of grammatical structures of Spanish

Foster positive attitudes towards Spanish language varieties

Improve Spanish orthography

Learn the origins and history of Spanish

Participate in service-learning activities with the community

Improve pronunciation in Spanish

29. Approximately, what percentage of your heritage language students score a 3 or higher on the AP Spanish exam?

0-20%

21-40%

41-60%

61-80%

81-100%

30. What do you believe are the main challenges you face when teaching your AP Spanish class to heritage language students?

*(This is an open-ended question)*

31. What types of professional development do you believe would help you better prepare your heritage language students be successful in the AP Spanish exam?

*(This is an open-ended question)*

32. Use this space to add any comments that you would like to share.

Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview? If so, please provide your contact information.

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### Background

1. Where are you from?
2. Can you describe your experience learning Spanish?

### Experiences teaching AP Spanish

1. How would you describe the students in your AP Spanish classes to someone who is about to visit your school for the first time?
2. Can you talk about your students' abilities speaking Spanish vs. writing in Spanish?
3. Can you describe your experience teaching AP Spanish to heritage language learners of Spanish? Would you say it has been different than teaching AP Spanish to second language learners? Why?
4. Do you believe that the Spanish courses at your school adequately prepare HL students for your AP Spanish class? Explain.
5. Which parts of the AP Spanish exam do you believe are the most challenging for your HL students and why do you think they are so challenging for them?

### Instructional approaches used

6. Do your heritage language students use non-standard forms of Spanish (e.g., *dijistes* instead of *dijiste*)?
7. How do you differentiate your AP classes based on the varying language abilities of your HL students?
8. What teaching methods do you use to develop your students' vocabulary?
9. What teaching methods do you use to develop your students' reading?
10. What teaching methods do you use to develop your students' writing?

Professional development

11. Based on your teacher training and professional development, do you feel adequately equipped to teach AP Spanish to HL students?
12. Has your school or district provided you with professional development opportunities regarding HL pedagogy?
13. What types of training would help you in order to better meet the needs of your HL students in your AP Spanish classes? What do you believe would be beneficial?
14. What are the greatest obstacles preventing you from continuing your education to meet the needs of your HL students in your AP classes?

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Sara Beaudrie  
 CLAS-H: International Letters and Cultures, School of (SILC)  
 480/965-1110  
 Sara.Beaudrie@asu.edu

Dear [Sara Beaudrie](#):

On 12/30/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Preparing the Heritage Language Educator: A Needs Analysis of Advanced Placement Spanish Teachers of Heritage Speakers
Investigator:	<a href="#">Sara Beaudrie</a>
IRB ID:	STUDY00017194
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent for interview, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Consent for observations, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Consent for online survey, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Interview questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• irb protocol, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> <li>• Permission to observe, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc);</li> <li>• Recruitment for interview, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• Recruitment for survey, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• Recruitment post, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• Survey questions, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> </ul>

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The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (1) Educational settings, (2)(i) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (non-identifiable), (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 12/30/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at [research.integrity@asu.edu](mailto:research.integrity@asu.edu) to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Anna Marrero-Rivera  
Anna Marrero-Rivera