

The Perceptions of Spanish Speaking
Heritage Students on Their Experiences
Studying the Language in a University on
the Central Coast of California

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Agenda

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Project Inspiration

- SPAN 301S Service Learning taught by Dr. Rafael Gómez
- Placement:
 - Monterey Peninsula College



Fuente: españolaldiasitegoogle.com

Who is a Heritage Spanish Speaker?

A language student 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).



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Research Question

What are the perceptions of 10 heritage students of Spanish at a university on the Central Coast of California about their experiences studying Spanish and developing their writing abilities?

Institutional Profile

- University on the Central Coast of California.
- More than 7,500 students enrolled.
- 63% are women and 37% are men.
- 28% of students reside in the county.
- 41% identify as Hispanics or Latinos.



Participants

- 10 Heritage students of Spanish from said institution:
 - 6 women
 - 4 men
- In their last semester of the Spanish major.



Instruments

- Survey
 - Questions:
 - 11 multiple choice
 - 4 ask for explanations
 - 6 open-ended questions
- Semi-structured interview for a case study with an individual that completed the survey.
 - Questions based on the following: identity, code switching, linguistic discrimination, linguistic insecurity and Stamp test.

Analysis

- Quantitative analysis
 - 6 multiple-choice questions
 - place of learning
 - with whom they spoke Spanish
 - frequency of Spanish use
 - purpose of speaking Spanish
 - self-reported writing abilities in Spanish
- Qualitative analysis
 - 5 open-ended questions
 - 3 multiple-choice questions that ask for an explanation
 - difficult aspects of writing
 - classroom activities that help with Spanish development
 - composition writing experiences
 - how instructors could support improvement of student writing

Analysis: Case Study - Ruti

- Deductive analysis
 - took notes during the interview
 - listened to the recording for instances related to topics from previous literature
 - transcription of direct relevant quotes from Ruti

Quantitative Results

Figure #1: Place of learning Spanish.

A. ¿Cómo aprendiste el español?

10 responses

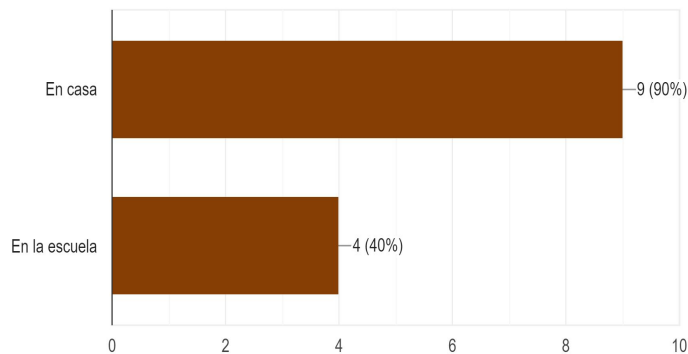
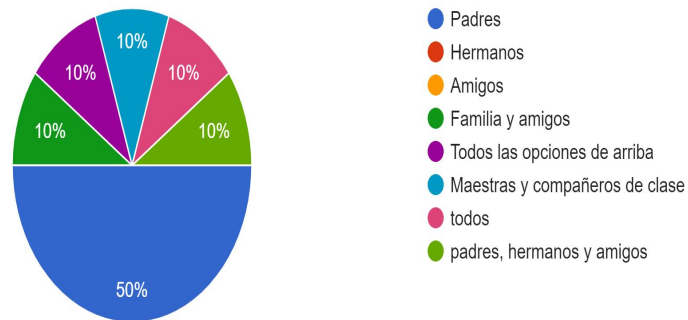


Figure #2: The people with whom they spoke Spanish.

C. ¿Con quién hablabas español?

10 responses



Quantitative Analysis (continued)

Figura 3. The learning of reading and writing in Spanish during childhood.

2. ¿Aprendiste a leer y a escribir el español en tu niñez?

10 responses

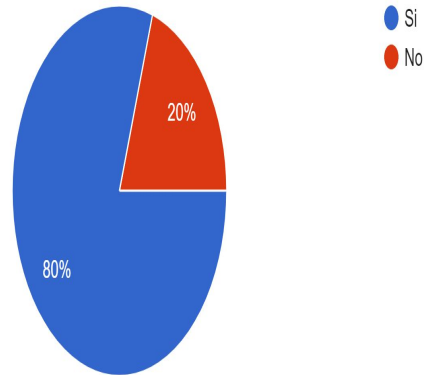
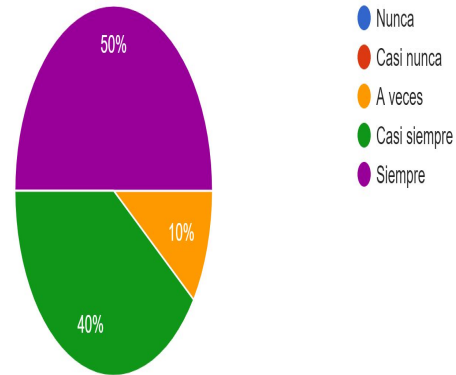


Figura 4. Frequency of current reported use of Spanish.

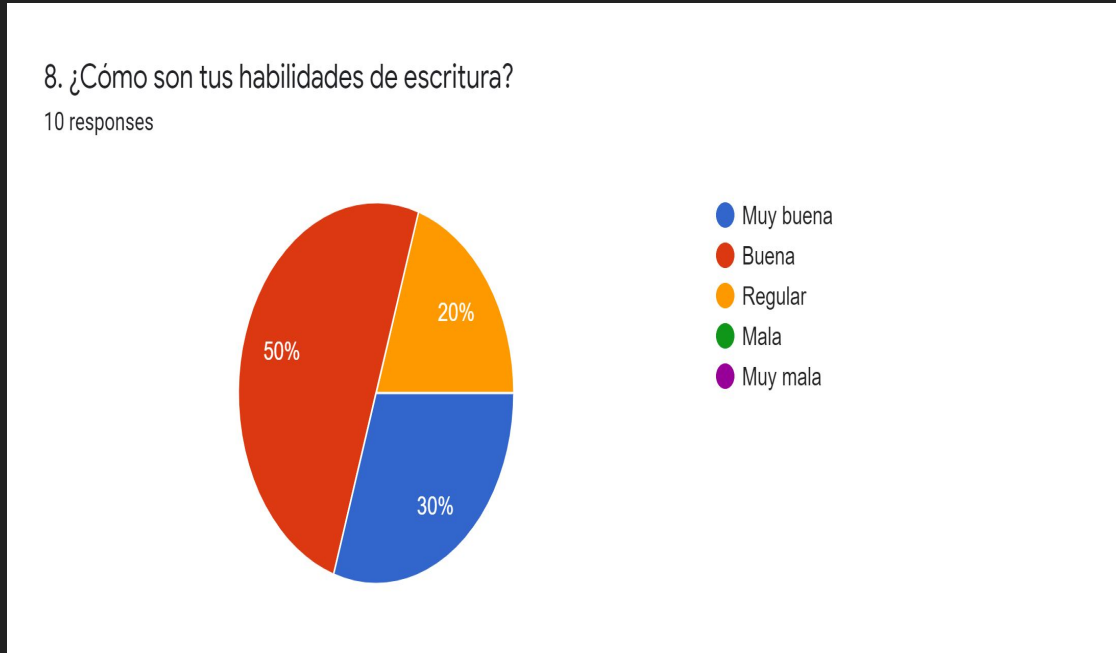
4. ¿Actualmente, sigues hablando el español?

10 responses



Quantitative Analysis (continued)

Figura 6. Self-reported writing abilities.



Qualitative Analysis



Did you learn to read and write in Spanish in your childhood?

- **Most participants grew up speaking Spanish since childhood.**

“My mom taught me to read...”

“I was taught Spanish since I was a child, but grammatical rules were not part of that instruction.”

Qualitative Analysis (continued)

Did you ever study Spanish in school?

- They took different levels of Spanish in different stages of schooling (primary, secondary, college, etc.)

“I studied Spanish in high school. I took two years of Spanish”



Qualitative Analysis (continued)

What are your writing abilities like?

- Not all have the same linguistic abilities, especially in writing.

“I lack practice to write better”

“I have improved my writing at the university”

What aspects of writing in Spanish seem difficult to you?

- Accent rules

“The most difficult thing is to indicate the types of accent that certain words contain. Sometimes I get confused when trying to identify if the words have a prosodic or written accent. ”

Qualitative Analysis (continued)

What aspects of writing in Spanish seem the easiest to you?

- It easy to recognize the tense in a sentence in the indicative mode

“Recognizing the tense of the sentence”

“The tenses (past, present, future)”

Qualitative Analysis (continued)

How are the essays written in class?

Do you complete several drafts?

- Students do not write many drafts after instructor corrections

“We usually deliver only the latest version”

“ I usually make a draft first and then complete a final version”

What could the instructor do to better help you with your Spanish, in particular with your writing?

- Students said that they would like more information about the following:

“How can they improve and learn the grammar rules”

“ and an explanation of why something is not correct”.

Case Study: Ruti



“I use [Spanglish] every day. Using Spanglish or code switching is part of my identity. I use them to be accepted and included in the group I speak with and I like them to accept me just the way I am”

Case Study: Ruti (Continued)

“For example, one day in class they asked me what jobs I had had and when I answered ‘I was a conductor [manejadora] of a store,’ the professor said, ‘oh, you conducted a store, did the store have wheels?’ And I explained that I was a conductor because I had employees, I paid them, ... and the professor replied, ‘Oh! You were a manager [gerente],’ In that moment, I heard a lot of laughter from my classmates, in a making-fun-of-me-kind-of-way and that was what motivated me to stop participating ... and keep quiet in class.”

Case Study: Ruti (Continued)

With respect to writing, Ruti explained that her professors have occasionally given her the option to do multiple versions of papers but a lot of times she has chosen not to complete them because she hasn't had time. She feels that her writing needs improvement.

Discussion

Participants indicated the following:

- They are aware that they have strong speaking abilities.
- They are aware that there are grammar errors in their writing.
- They want to develop their Spanish abilities, in writing in particular.
- They want their teachers to be aware of their linguistic needs.
- They want to obtain more feedback on their written work.

Discussion (continued)

- Materials development should take into consideration the needs and desires indicated by the students themselves.
- Limitation: Not able to go more in depth in examining the use of pedagogical materials such as a rubric and an error code developed specifically for this population.

Conclusions

- The results indicate that it is important to find out from heritage students what they want and need in order to improve their language and writing abilities in particular.
- In general, the participants in this study think that their writing abilities are not as strong as their oral, listening, and reading abilities, so writing would be a good area to focus on in terms of instruction.
- Instructors of heritage students might consider diverse ways to expand and/or improve on writing development and feedback in order to help students improve in this area.
- It is of the utmost importance that instructors respect the language these students bring to the classroom while encouraging them to expand their linguistic repertoires.

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Appreciations

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