

EDITORIAL LETTER

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The body of scholarship exploring what is today known as *Spanish as a heritage language* began to take shape in the 1960s and 1970s, and over the last few decades has established itself as an exciting field of work committed to advancing our understanding and representation of US Spanish speakers in different positionalities. SHL, as those invested in this area often refer to it, has captured the attention of researchers and practitioners whose perspectives, traditions and approaches vary greatly; expanding the field over the gamut of formal and theoretical linguistics to applied work in a variety of areas and contexts. Recognizing the vitality of SHL, and reflecting the investment of a growing number of scholars, we are proud to announce the publication of the first issue of the *Spanish as a Heritage Language*. As its name indicates, this is a new journal dedicated to highlighting the emerging body of scholarship addressing questions within and around Spanish heritage speaker bilingualism. We take this notion in the broadest sense to refer to efforts directed to the development of theory and praxis.

But, to be sure, this is not the only project supporting the establishment of the field. The last decade has seen a number of inspiring edited volumes, special issues, and journal articles appear in relation to SHL; some of which are squarely focused thematic collections, and others, as part of regular issues in broader venues. Starting in Spring 2014, and joining an array of annual meetings connected to Spanish and its speakers, we saw the emergence of the Symposium on Spanish as a Heritage Language. First hosted for two consecutive years at Texas Tech University, the symposium is now on its way to hit its

eighth uninterrupted edition, having been subsequently hosted by colleagues at the University of Oregon, the University of California, Irvine, the University of Iowa, the University of Texas—Río Grande Valley, and the University of New Mexico. It is hosted virtually this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, by the City University of New York. We take these as examples of actions that illustrate the vigor of SHL as a field whose autonomy relies on the continuous commitment of researchers around the US and beyond.

While a lot has been done, much more lays ahead. And it is our hope that this journal will serve as a forum for sharing innovative ideas, to showcase the best research and to provide a vantage point to guide researchers and practitioners in the mission of promoting SHL, and more critically, advocating for its speakers and learners.

As our readers will soon realize, given the complex nature of the task at hand, the scope of the journal is necessarily wide and inclusive. As such, we do not restrict our publications to a certain theoretical framework or set of topics and commit to publishing scholarly work from all perspectives. We will consider a variety of themes including, but not limited to formal, theoretical and experimental work, pedagogical interventions and learner outcomes, assessment, sociolinguistics, sociology of language, language policy, linguistic landscape, critical pedagogy, language attitudes, and identity studies. As we see it, the field must be defined by the boundaries drawn by solidly designed research, strong theoretical proposals, and lines of work that can help us get a more nuanced understanding of SHL.

To meet the demands of our growing field, we strive to provide high quality publications in a number of formats. In addition to traditional original research articles, and book reviews, we publish *Thinking Allowed* pieces and *En Acción* reports. *Thinking Allowed* is a space for contributors to provide thoughtful commentaries, critiques, or overviews of a significant topic in the field of SHL studies. We envision *En Acción* reports to describe a particular pedagogical tool or practice, such as methods of assessment, experiential learning plans, creative expression, and the treatment of specific topics in the classroom. Moreover, our conceptualization of this journal was developed to engage scholars at all stages of their careers. Through our dissertation summaries section, we seek to provide a space for recent PhD graduates and junior scholars to tell the field about their contribution to the field.

Importantly, in these times of social unrest, we strive to create an academic platform founded on just, equitable, and responsive principles. As we see it, a commitment to social justice is (and will continue to be) critically important for the growth, health and productivity of the field in the years to come.

With the above in mind, let us now briefly shift the focus to our inaugural issue; which includes three original research articles, two book reviews, and one dissertation summary. In the first of the research articles, Oihane Muxika-Loitzate explores whether heritage speakers' degree of language dominance has an effect on their production of cognates and non-cognates with word initial /p, t, k/ in Spanish and English. In the second article, Eve Zyzik examines heritage speakers' lexical knowledge by focusing on verbal collocations. In the third article, Elena Foulis and Stacey Alex analyze the creation of a performance piece with undergraduate students to creatively combine Latina/o/x oral histories and performance artists' personal experiences as Spanish speakers. Brechje van Osch highlights her graduate work in a dissertation summary entitled *Vulnerability in Heritage Speakers of Spanish in the Netherlands: An Interplay between Language-internal and Language-external Factors*. Finally, as mentioned earlier, this first issue also includes two interesting book reviews: Janet M. Fuller and Jennifer Leeman's second edition of *Speaking Spanish in the US: The Sociopolitics of Language* by Mary Hudgens Henderson; and Mary Coady's *The Coral Way Bilingual Program* by Jessica Mitchell-McCollough. It is our hope that the content of the first issue will serve to stimulate further interdisciplinary dialogues and to inspire new research initiatives and educational approaches.

Before concluding, a most sincere word of appreciation is in order. While we are the face of this journal and we are ultimately responsible for it, it has taken a village to get to this point. We therefore have so many individuals to thank for their contributions to this inaugural issue. It is thanks to them that we have been able to take this project to fruition. First of all, we very much appreciate the guidance of Lauren Phillips (University of Florida Press) and the support of Gillian Lord and everyone in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese Studies at the University of Florida, for their support from the very beginning, in 2018, when this journal was at its seedling stage. We have come a long way since then: lots of hours of work behind the scenes have been invested so we can offer our very best today and moving forward. During this

process, we also feel privileged to work with and learn from an outstanding editorial board. Thank you all for trusting us, and for accepting such an important role. By now, many generous reviewers have already provided comments and suggestions that continually improve our efforts as well as those of the authors. Without excellent external reviewers who accept to give us their time and experience for the purpose of supporting the field, our journal would simply be not possible. They deserve our gratitude and much more. We plan to include a list of external reviewers every four issues, as a public acknowledgement of their valuable work.

Finally, we are proud to follow those who come before us. We stand firmly on the shoulders of bold scholars and activists, educators and researchers, thinkers and doers, who have been working on these important issues much longer than we have, undoing roadblocks and paving the road for what we can do today and in the future. We sincerely thank you for your effort, your work, and your contributions to the field.