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Academic peer tutors and academic biliteracy development in students of Spanish as a heritage language

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the literacy development of students who speak Spanish as a heritage language and who participate in mandatory, peer-to-peer tutoring sessions outside of the classroom. We explore students' academic development as well as their self-positioning as heritage speakers in a bilingual academic setting. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), we analyze the written production of seven bilingual students enrolled in a Native Speaker Program at a large, public university. We focus on the development of their academic language through the support of a heritage language tutor and explore the role of the peer tutor as a facilitator in this process. Additionally, we employ Appraisal Theory to analyze interviews in which the same participants explore their bilingual identities and how they position themselves interpersonally as a result of conversations held with a peer mentor, thus demonstrating the benefits of learning Spanish as a heritage language through peer-led learning in academic contexts.

RESUMEN

Este estudio explora el desarrollo de la lectoescritura de estudiantes de español como lengua heredada que participan en sesiones de tutorías individuales y obligatorias fuera de la clase. Su objeto consiste en analizar no solamente el desarrollo académico de estos estudiantes, sino también su posicionamiento como hablantes de lengua heredada en contextos profesionales bilingües. La Lingüística Sistémico-Funcional ha sido aplicada para analizar las producciones escritas de siete estudiantes inscritos en un programa de español para hablantes de herencia en una universidad pública. El análisis se centra en el desarrollo del lenguaje académico con el apoyo de los tutores y explora su rol como facilitadores a medida que los estudiantes adoptan características del lenguaje académico. Además, se utiliza la Teoría de la Valoración para analizar las entrevistas en las que los propios participantes exploran sus identidades bilingües y cómo se posicionan en el plano interpersonal a través de su colaboración con el tutor. El estudio demuestra las ventajas de las tutorías en el aprendizaje del español como lengua heredada en el ámbito académico.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Español como lengua heredada; lectoescritura; tutorías; identidades bilingües; lingüística sistémica funcional; teoría de la valoración

1. Introduction

1.1. Spanish in California: sociodemographic and educational relevance

Today, demographic trends continue to reveal the importance of the Spanish-speaking, Latinx¹ population in California. According to census data from 2016, 38.9% of California's population is Latinx, the

largest ethnocultural group in the state, surpassing white people of non-Latinx descent. Data collected by the Pew Hispanic Center shows that despite other states such as Texas and Georgia saw the greatest growth in Latinx populations during the last decade, California continues to have the largest population of people who identify as Latinx. In 2015, for example, 15.2 million Latinxs lived in California, a 39% increase from 10.9 million in 2000.

While Spanish continues to become more visible across the state, its integration into the education system in California has been contested, scrutinized and viewed by many as a threat to the state's—and the country's—national identity. In particular, this is illustrated by the approval of Proposition 227 in 1998, which was designed to prohibit the implementation of bilingual programs across the state. While this legislative effort was repealed 20 years later by the approval of Proposition 58 in 2016, many Spanish-speaking Latinxs who are now entering higher education and enrolling in Spanish courses have not previously received any formal education in the language of their heritage.

As more Spanish-speaking Latinx students enter higher education, enrollments in courses that offer Spanish as a core subject are not only becoming more numerous but also superseding courses that offer other languages (Silva-Corvalán 2000). Linguists, educators and academics in the United States have continued to demonstrate the importance of such bilingualism through their collective support for the field of Spanish as a heritage language.

1.2. Defining who speakers of Spanish as a heritage language are

A heritage language speaker is an individual “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” (Valdés 2000, 1). This definition proves useful because it not only refers to the potential variability of speaker competency in the heritage language (HL) but also to wider aspects of the speakers' linguistic background and experiences.

However, according to Beaudrie and Fairclough (2012), defining this community is challenging given the different types of heritage speakers who share unique language experiences. As Potowski (2005) illustrates, the backgrounds of heritage speakers are diverse and categorizing them under one label proves problematic. For instance, heritage speakers can range from newly arrived immigrants who are mostly Spanish monolingual speakers to fluent bilinguals of Spanish and English, and others who possess limited educational skills in their native tongue. Other more inclusive definitions consider wider contextual factors such as identity, family, and cultural connections and are not solely limited to language competency (Polinsky and Kagan 2007). For the purpose of this project, we will be denoting this community as *Spanish heritage learners* to describe a person who has proficiency in and a cultural connection to that language and is studying their heritage language in a classroom context.

1.3. Seeking language maintenance: developing academic biliteracy in Spanish

Most literature on Spanish language maintenance illustrates patterns of language loss among second and third generation Latinx immigrants. In light of this, scholars advocate for the development of academic registers and biliteracy skills that enable students to achieve successful levels of language maintenance. However, these goals are compounded by the fact that few heritage language learners have received explicit Spanish instruction in a formal academic setting (Colombi and Magaña 2013). Thus, heritage learners are often characterized as “having functional proficiency in interpersonal and colloquial registers” (Colombi 2015, 6). Moreover, Achugar and Colombi (2008) believe that becoming active participants and learning to *negotiate, construct, and index new identities as members of the academic community* (our emphasis) are imperative for heritage language learners of Spanish. As such, providing heritage learners with resources to understand language in an academic setting gives them the power to use language for their own purposes (Achugar 2003).

From the point of view of educational linguistics, many scholars have proposed the use of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Schleppegrell and Colombi 2002; Unsworth 2000) to further analyze the development of academic language and advanced literacy. Halliday's SFL is a functional theory of language that sees an intimate relationship between language structure and language function. Thus, the acquisition, development and use of a first or second/heritage language is part of acquiring a culture and is therefore a sociocultural practice (Halliday 1993).

Moreover, SFL views language as a continuous process where advanced language abilities are developed over long periods of time and are always immersed in a social context. Although this theory has been extensively applied to English L2 development, there are some studies that use this framework to analyze academic language development in L2 (Byrnes 2006; Byrnes and Maxim 2004; Ortega and Byrnes 2008) and among Spanish heritage language learners (Colombi 2002, 2006; Ignatieva and Colombi 2014). For example, Colombi's longitudinal studies (2002, 2006) look at the language development of Spanish heritage students by comparing grammatical intricacy and lexical density as measurements of how students move in the language continuum from the colloquial/oral registers to the more formal written ones they are studying in school. She analyzes clause combining strategies to show the ways in which students advance in their use of academic registers and structure their discourse by using fewer paratactic (or coordinated) clauses and hypotactic (or subordinate) combinations, which are commonly found in oral language.

1.4. Community impact in Spanish as a heritage language: an urgent issue

While learners of Spanish as a heritage language have had little opportunity to develop academic biliteracy, there is danger in restricting instruction to de-contextualized performance standards. Indeed, the connection between language and culture must be made explicit in Spanish heritage language pedagogy, given that the relationship between language and power as a way of constructing discourse is nowhere more evident than in the instruction of heritage languages (Colombi 2015). As posited by Martínez (2016), it is imperative that those that teach Spanish as a heritage language develop standards that reflect the cultural and political struggles of such learners and their communities. Simultaneously, educators must also acknowledge that academic contexts of instruction afford heritage speaker communities considerable influence. We thus subscribe to pedagogical models that provide speakers with the opportunity to mobilize expert identities, whereby not only what students can do (i.e., their proficiency), but also their role (i.e., language speaker, community member, language partner, tutor, mentor, etc.) and their impact in the community is assessed (see Martínez 2016). We conceptualize the acquisition of a prestige language variety and of academic skills in the heritage language as a process that is localized beyond the individual learner and instead mobilized across communities. With this community-based framework for Spanish heritage language teaching and learning in mind, we present the context of the present study. Here, speakers are provided with ongoing opportunities to deploy expert identities, to engage with and to have an impact within their own community of practice, acting as a methodology which recognizes and values the literacy practices of student learners from bilingual heritage communities while developing heritage language advanced literacy skills.

2. Context of study: peer-to-peer tutors in a program for speakers of Spanish as heritage language

Currently, more Latinxs Spanish-speaking students are joining higher education institutions in California than ever before, making up the state's largest group of young adults.² The present study took place in a language program designed for Spanish HL speakers at the University of California, Davis. The Spanish for Native Speakers Program (*Programa de español para hispanohablantes*) began in September 1992, under the supervision of the late Francisco X. Alarcón, a Lecturer in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and a Chicano Activist Poet. The program is divided into

three consecutive courses which are offered every academic quarter, and enrolled more than 100 undergraduate students in 2017.

In terms of demographics, the majority of students enrolled in this program are Mexican, closely mirroring the makeup of the Latinx population in California. Additionally, the program description specifies the sociolinguistic and educational profile of students for which that the program is designed. As such, the program's objectives center around language maintenance for both personal and professional goals. Therefore, the program's description highlights the importance of learners' previous linguistic experiences, and outlines, at its core, the importance of linguistic enrichment. Linguistic development is achieved through exposure to different language varieties and registers, from colloquial to academic ones. Simultaneously, such exposure also aims to enhance students' confidence with regards to the use of the language in these contexts and to build stronger bilingual identities.

2.1. Peer-to-peer tutoring: program core component

One of the most unique characteristics of this program is the adoption of a *peer tutoring curriculum* (Ugarte 1997) in which advanced students are hired to become tutors by the Department and to meet weekly with a currently enrolled student. Furthermore, tutors are students that have recently completed the program, serving as peer mentors who offer encouragement as well as academic support during weekly one-on-one meetings.

From its conception, the tutoring model within this particular program was conceived as a way to not only provide personalized academic support, but also social support. The original model described the tutoring hour as beginning with five to 10 minutes of "casual conversation" where tutors establish a personal relationship with the student: "in order to achieve this, tutors could ask the following questions: What do you like to do? What plans do you have for the future? Why are you interested in Spanish?" (Ugarte 1997, 85, our translation). Peer-to-peer tutoring as a pedagogical tool is contextualized in this particular setting as a way to further non-hierarchical dialogue amongst equals. Here, tutors may provide a bridge between the topics covered in class and their personal experiences as underrepresented, and, in most cases, first-generation students. In Ugarte's own words: "tutoring sessions provide students with an opportunity to use Spanish in a real-life communicative context. They go beyond academics; they are key in helping students develop their personal identities and facilitate Spanish teaching for native speakers" (Ugarte 1997, 89, our translation).

This study focuses on the relationship of the peer tutor and the enrolled students' overall academic written production in connection with issues surrounding students' bilingual identity. First, we will explore tutor impact on the development of their students' Spanish academic literacy. Secondly, we explore tutor impact on the development and deployment of students' bilingual identity. Thus, our research questions are as follows:

- What features of academic language (such as lexical density and grammatical complexity) appear in students' final drafts of an academic essay after the tutoring session?
- How does the tutoring relationship impact students' positionings as bilingual speakers of Spanish? That is, how do tutors impact students' bilingual identities?

3. Data collection and participants

The present study represents a snapshot of a larger longitudinal effort to study the impact of a peer tutoring program on HL learners' Spanish academic literacy development. In the Fall of 2017, the second author, Patiño-Vega³ collected data from three different sections of 25 students in the first (of three) courses in the Program for Native Speakers. From these students, seven consented to form part of this preliminary study. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 21 and all identified as Mexican. Furthermore, two of the seven students identified as first-generation immigrants.

Table 1. Participant's demographic and educational profiles.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
Age	21	19	18	19	18	20	21
Ethnicity	Mexican	Mexican	Mexican	Mexican	Mexican	Mexican	Mexican
Major	Psychology	Psychology & Spanish	Spanish	Political Science & French	Civil Engineering	International Relations	Political Science & French
Immigrant Generation	Second Generation	Second Generation	Second Generation	Second Generation	First Generation	First Generation	Second Generation
First language spoken at home	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish

All seven subjects were assigned to individual peer tutors and were required to attend a weekly 50-minute tutoring session for 10 weeks (or one academic quarter). The first essay analyzed was assigned during the fourth week of instruction. This persuasive essay asked students to address whether English should be the official language of the United States. The second essay was also persuasive in nature and was assigned during the seventh week of instruction, requiring students to explain the implications of an elimination of the Program for Spanish for Native Speakers at their institution. For the second essay, students were also asked to argue and present the benefits and consequences of eliminating the program. Although the course curriculum included other writing genres such as the autobiography, the two essays selected for the present analysis were the only two persuasive essays assigned throughout the course. This made the comparison between the two essays possible given that they share specific writing guidelines.

This study focused on students' first and final drafts of each essay (a total of four essays per student) which were submitted and collected through the university's online learning management system. The first version of each essay was submitted before the tutoring session in which student and tutor were expected to develop the original draft (Weeks 5 and 8). Thus, changes made by the student to the essay as a result of the feedback from the tutoring session had been incorporated. From the seven students who participated in our study, we selected the three participants (Students #1, #2, and #5) with the highest final grade in the course.

For the analysis of the written texts, we consider grammatical complexity and lexical density as markers of literacy development in the students' essays. Previous SFL analyses (Colombi 2002, 2006) have used the rate between lexical density and grammatical complexity to measure academic

Table 2. Data collected per participant.

PARTICIPANT	DATA COLLECTED
<i>Student 1</i>	Essay 1, Version 1 (no tutoring) Essay 1, Final Version (after tutoring) Essay 2, Version 1 (no tutoring) Essay 2, Final Version (after tutoring) Interview
<i>Student 2</i>	Essay 1, Version 1 (no tutoring) Essay 1, Final Version (after tutoring) Essay 2, Version 1 (no tutoring) Essay 2, Final Version (after tutoring) Interview
<i>Student 3</i>	Interview
<i>Student 4</i>	Interview
<i>Student 5</i>	Essay 1, Final Version (after tutoring) Essay 2, Version 1 (no tutoring) Essay 2, Final Version (after tutoring) Interview
<i>Student 6</i>	Interview
<i>Student 7</i>	Interview

literacy development, showing that students' academic literacy development increases as students move from using longer and more oral-like texts (such as using coordination, e.g. "and", "but", etc. and subordination, e.g., "because", "for", etc.) to texts with fewer yet more condensed clauses. This is illustrated by an increase in the number of words in nominal groups as well as the use of nominalizations that are more typical of written language with a higher lexical density.

In addition to the text analysis, all seven participants were briefly interviewed by the authors during the second-to-last tutoring session (at 10 weeks of instruction). These semi-directed interviews included questions regarding students' perceptions, opinions and experiences collaborating with a peer tutor, both in terms of academic usefulness and personal impact. Participants were asked to explicitly evaluate their collaborative experience as well as to describe how working with a peer "had affected their personal relationship with Spanish as bilingual individuals." (For a complete list of interview questions, see [Appendix](#)).

In order to explore, within participant interviews, students' interpersonal positionings vis-à-vis their knowledge of Spanish and the impact of their collaborative work with the tutor, the second section of this study employs Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005). Interpersonal positionings give us clues regarding power and subordination, equality versus difference and indications of alignment, solidarity and affective involvement constructed by the speaker, or writer, within the text (Eggins and Slade 1997). The Appraisal System conceives meaning-making as mobilized through three types of meaning: *ideational*, or meanings about the world or representations about reality; *interpersonal*, or meanings about roles and relationships; and *textual*, or meanings about the structure of the message, or the text (Eggins and Slade 1997). However, this study focuses on the interpersonal meanings inscribed in the student experience as a result of the tutor collaboration. Through the analysis of participant interviews, we attempt to highlight the negotiation of social identity, social meanings and social relationships inscribed in conversations concerning the role of the tutor and the role of Spanish. These are interpersonally framed by the student participant through particular feelings and opinions of greater or lesser intensity and directness (White 2015). Furthermore, this system has been used previously to look at issues of language attitudes and language power (Achugar and Pessoa 2009; Achugar and Oteiza 2009) as well as the construction of language identity (Achugar 2009). All interviews were transcribed and coded using Appraisal Theory.

It is important to note that while analyses of focal participants are not quantitatively generalizable to other contexts of study, their rich descriptive nature at a particular place in time contributes to what Stake (1995) refers to as "naturalistic generalization", that is, our ability as researchers to make inferences about the future based on an orderly account of the past. On this note, Dyson and Genishi (2005) extend Stake's argument by stating that "if a study gives readers a sense of 'being there', of having a vicarious experience in the studied site, then readers may generalize from that experience in private, personal ways, modifying, extending, or adding to their generalized understandings of how the world works" (115). Thus, the present analysis of heritage language learners as focal participants serves as a localized effort to generate emic understandings about this group of speakers in order to contribute to other etic systems of knowledge within the field of Spanish as a heritage language.

The following section presents the collected data and analysis of students' essays before and after tutor intervention as well as the analysis of student interviews.

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1. Language development in heritage language learners

SFL, as a functional theory of language, helps us understand how students' literacy develops along a continuum of language competence. A functional approach goes beyond the analysis of student errors and looks at the lexico-grammatical choices that students make and how they change over time, moving or not moving in the direction of academic language (Colombi 2002). For this study,

we look at how students move through the continuum of language development with reference to their lexical density and their grammatical complexity (Halliday 1996).

Lexical density refers to the proportion of lexical items to the total number of words in the text. Lexical items can be defined as content words such as nouns, adjectives, verbs and some adverbs; while function items are parts of speech that form a closed class (e.g. articles, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, etc.), which create the grammatical or structural relationships into which content words may fit. As Halliday and Hasan (1985) explains, the vocabulary of every language includes several high frequency words—these terms are often general items and are not specific. In Spanish, lexical words such as “*cosa*”, “*gente*”, “*ser*”, “*estar*”, “*haber*”, and “*poder*” have a high frequency of use (CREA Corpus 2018), representing functional items as they contribute minimally to the overall lexical density of the text. To illustrate, the following sentence taken from the first draft of a participants’ essay demonstrates the difference between lexical and function words (Note: **bolded words** illustrate lexical words and *italicized words* represent all function words):

El concepto de “English Only” va a traer más discriminación entre la gente de Estados Unidos. (5 Content words / 14 total words = lexical density of 36%)

Counting *English Only* and *Estados Unidos* as one word independently of one another, this sentence has a total of 14 words. Of these, *el*, *de*, *va*, *a*, *más*, *entre*, *la*, *gente*, and *de*, are considered functional items (a total of nine). The lexical items are *concepto*, *English Only*, *discriminación*, *traer*, and *Estados Unidos* (total of five). Importantly, Halliday and Hasan (1985) emphasize the differences between written and spoken language in that “written language is dense, spoken language is sparse” (62). Here, the proportions of function words compared to content words is almost doubled, a difference which is found when comparing spoken and written language. In general, written language consists of a higher ratio of lexical items to total running words (Halliday and Hasan 1985).

For this study, we focused on students’ written text analysis before and after seeking tutoring assistance. We documented how their writing gradually progressed towards being more lexically dense over the course of 10 weeks. It is important to highlight that improvements in participants’ writing ability are constantly being developed and will continue to do so beyond the end of the study.

As noted, Version 1 reflects the students’ lexical density before seeking tutoring assistance while Version 2 reflects the students’ lexical density after obtaining tutoring support. All students were enrolled in the same theme-based curriculum where Essay 1 was assigned during the fourth week of instruction and Essay 2 on the seventh week, with one-week in between each essay before submitting the final version, as illustrated in Table 3.

The percentage of the lexical density of the texts was calculated by dividing the number of lexical items by the total number of running words in the texts, as shown in Table 4.

As summarized in Table 4, there was no significant increase in the lexical density between Version 1 and 2 of Essay 1. Students 1 and 5 slightly decreased by 1%; however, Student 2 shows a significant increase of 13% after seeking tutoring assistance. These differences could be attributed to the inter-learner variability of each student and the experience they have with the language. For example, students who have taken prior Spanish classes during secondary education such as Advance Placement Spanish Language courses would have more familiarity with academic texts compared to bilinguals who have used Spanish in private familiar settings exclusively. Between Version 1 and 2 of Essay 2, we see a minor increase of lexical density for Student 1 and 2 (Student 5 did not submit their Version 1 of Essay 2). At first glance, it is difficult to see the lexical progress made by the students. However, when we consider the time span in which Essay 1 (fourth week) and Essay 2 (seventh week) were assigned, a relative increase in all students’ lexical density is observable. When comparing the Version 1 of Essay 1 to the Version 2 of Essay 2, we see a substantial lexical density increase for Student 1 (8%) and for Student 2 (13%). While Student 5 did not increase significantly, their lexical density did increase positively. Although there is much inter-learner variability among the participants, the results of the text

Table 3. Course essay and tutoring session outline.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
In class	Instruction	Instruction and introduction to tutoring	Instruction	Essay 1 assigned, draft 1 submitted	Tutor intervention	Essay 1 completed, final version submitted	Essay 2 assigned, Draft 1 submitted	Tutor intervention	Essay 2 completed, Final version submitted
Outside of class	No tutoring	Tutoring session	Tutoring session	Tutoring session	Tutoring session (exclusively for draft revision)	Tutoring session	Tutoring session	Tutoring session (exclusively for draft revision)	Tutoring session

Table 4. Lexical density of students' essays.

	Lexical Density			
	Essay 1 Version 1	Essay 1 Version 2	Essay 2 Version 1	Essay 2 Version 2
Student 1	185/475 39%	211/554 38%	145/320 45%	169/362 47%
Student 2	196/587 33%	276/594 46%	122/270 45%	152/328 46%
Student 5	172/379 45%	168/379 44%	—	165/347 48%

Table 5. Grammatical intricacy analysis.

Clause	Type
En 1919, el presidente de EE.UU. Theodore Roosevelt aseguró	Main
que en el país "sólo había espacio para una lengua."	Hypotactic
Después de tantos años, esta idea ...	
[de que el inglés sea el idioma oficial]	Embedded
sigue siendo una opción para los Estados Unidos.	Main
" <i>English Only</i> " es un movimiento	Main
[que esta a favor [[que el inglés sea el único lenguaje[[[que se use en los Estados Unido.]]]]	Embedded
Lexical Density: 24/53 = 45%	
Grammatical Intricacy: 4/3 = 1.3	

analysis show a common trajectory towards higher lexical density, demonstrating that tutoring assistance can clearly play a role in its development.

Additionally, we analyzed students' written development from oral to a more formal register through their grammatical complexity in their clause linking strategies. According to Schleppegrell and Colombi (1997), clause linking strategies are critical components of register differences. The type of clauses structured along with the lexical items selected can reflect either oral-like or written-like forms. Halliday (1994) describes written language as lexically dense, which "packs a large number of lexical items into each clause" (352), and consequently reducing the number of clauses being used. In contrast, spoken language becomes complex by being grammatically intricate and by building elaborate, interlinking complex clauses.

For this study, we defined the clause as the unit of analysis. Furthermore, we considered only finite clauses, i.e., a clause consisting of a finite verb structure. Every sentence in the students' essays that consisted of (a subject and) a finite verb was classified as a simple sentence and a combination of more than one hypotactic (not constituent of another clause) or paratactic (linked to main clause) clause as a complex sentence. Each clause was then coded as main (sole clause in a simple sentence), hypotactic, paratactic or embedded (part of clause in which it is embedded). The following sentences from the data (Essay 1, Student 1) illustrate a detailed clause analysis where lexical density was once again calculated and grammatical complexity was calculated by counting the number clauses (main, hypotactic, and coordinated) as a proportion of complex clauses.

Table 6 below summarizes the development of students' grammatical complexity in detail in an academic context. As shown, these results again demonstrate a positive impact that tutors have on students' writing as they move through the continuum.

Firstly, we see the reduction or maintaining of simple sentences within all students; in the example of Student 1 (Essay 1, Versions 1 and 2) we see a reduction of three simple sentences while the rest maintained or did not increase the use of these structures. All students demonstrated a preference for complex clauses, indicators of more embedding, which is also a characteristic of academic writing. Across the four essays, we also observed an increase in the use of embedded clauses; this is another feature found in academic writing, compared to the use of hypotactic and coordinate clauses that are attributed to oral-like language. For example, Student 1 decreases the use of hypotactic clauses minimally between Essay 1 and Essay 2 (by 1). However, we see an increase of embedded clauses by six between each version of Essay 1. Student 1's use of embedded clauses also reflects the use of simple and complex sentences. In the case of Student 2, each version of

Table 6. Grammatical complexity and lexical analysis of student essays.

	Student 1				Student 2				Student 3			
	Essay 1		Essay 2		Essay 1		Essay 2		Essay 1		Essay 2	
	V1	V2	V1	V2	V1	V2	V1	V2	V1	V2	V1	V2
Clause Type												
Main Clause												
Simple	8	5	3	3	2	2	1	1	3	2	0	3
Complex	19	25	16	18	21	23	12	15	19	20	0	14
Total Main	27	30	19	21	23	25	13	16	22	22	0	17
Main Clause Complexity Ratio	70%	83%	84%	86%	91%	92%	92%	94%	86%	91%	0	82%
Hypotactic	7	8	6	12	20	21	8	9	13	16	0	7
Coordinate	5	9	4	4	8	5	5	5	6	6	0	4
Embedded	11	17	13	11	7	9	6	9	11	11	0	9
Total Clauses	50	64	42	48	58	60	32	39	52	55	0	37
Total Clause Count / Word Count	11%	12%	13%	13%	10%	10%	12%	12%	14%	15%	0	11%
Clause Type Percentage Analysis												
Main Clause	54%	47%	45%	44%	40%	42%	41%	41%	42%	40%	0	46%
Hypotactic & Coordinate Clause	24%	27%	24%	33%	48%	43%	41%	36%	37%	40%	0	30%
Embedded Clause	22%	27%	31%	23%	12%	15%	19%	23%	21%	20%	0	24%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0	100%
Grammatical Intricacy	1.44	1.57	1.53	1.76	2.22	2.04	2.00	1.88	1.86	2.00	0	1.65
Lexical Density Analysis												
Lexical Word Count	185	211	145	169	196	276	122	152	172	168	0	165
Total Word Count	475	554	320	362	587	594	270	328	379	379	0	347
Lexical Density	39%	38%	45%	47%	33%	46%	45%	46%	45%	44%	0	48%

both essays attests a steady increase in the use of embedded clauses and a reduction of coordinate clauses, reflecting an increase in complex clauses in both final essays.

Although grammatical complexity fluctuated across participants, we can infer that it will decrease as students continue to further develop their Spanish. When we consider the time span of when Essay 1 (fourth week) and Essay 2 (seventh week) were assigned, we see a decrease in grammatical complexity for Students 2 and 5. Student 2 was charted at 2.22 at the beginning of their writing development; however, three weeks later, their levels had dropped to 1.88. Similarly, the grammatical intricacy for Student 5 was first plotted at 1.86 and within the same period of time, their levels dropped to 1.65. Even though these differences seem minimal, they indicate academic growth and development. However, we should also consider the omission of a control group as a limitation to this analysis. Other contributing factors such as time, should be accounted for their writing progress. Over the span of an academic year, in conjunction with tutor intervention, we can posit that students will attest greater complexity and lexical density at the lexical and clause level in their writing.

4.2. Bilingual identity and positioning: the appraisal system

In order to understand the evaluative positioning of students who have collaborated with peer tutors during the 10-week period, we identified the discursive resources that signaled, inscribed or evoked particular evaluative stances through attitudinal positionings⁴: that is, meanings by which tutees indicated positive or negative evaluation of people, places, things and/or events (White 2015). To develop an analysis of evaluative language, the appraisal system involves 3 main semantic domains: emotions (*affect*), ethics (*judgement*) and aesthetics (*appreciation*).

Affect expresses positive or negative feelings, or personally emotional reactions to a text or a process. It is expressed through the emotional dyads of happiness and/or unhappiness, satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction, and security and/or insecurity, as illustrated by the following examples from the data (note that the highlighted items are provided to illustrate the particular instance in the discourse):

- **Student #4:** "... at times it can be a little intimidating going to a TA or a professor and sometimes having someone who's closer to your age, more on your level can—you feel a sort of rapport with them." (Insecurity; satisfaction)

Instances of *judgement* express evaluations about the ethics, morality, or social values of people's behaviors, and are subdivided into social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) and social sanction (veracity, propriety). The following example illustrates this type of positioning:

- **Student #1:** "... hearing her [the tutor], the way she speaks like more professionally like makes me- motivates me to like actually learn the language." (Social esteem; capacity)

Appreciation refers to how speakers evaluate a text (or a semiotic entity such as an object, a person, a situation, etc.) in terms of its composition, as well as a speakers' reaction to it, or its value:

- **Student #4:** "Spanish is very important obviously because it's what I speak to- with most of my family ... " (Valuation)
- **Student #6:** "To me it was like, ok no, definitely not, I need my Spanish. And so I mean it's a really big part of who I am." (Composition)
- **Student #7:** "I've learned a lot of things from her [the tutor]." (Reaction)

Furthermore, attitudes can be raised or lowered through the system of graduation. A speaker can raise, or intensify a particular evaluation through force, or, they can soften, or mitigate, such an evaluation through focus:

- **Student #7:** “I definitely feel more comfortable speaking Spanish outside of like just the Spanish class.” (Force)
- **Student #1:** “Yeah, because there are some words in English that I just don’t know how to translate.” (Focus)

4.2.1. “I want to keep Spanish in my life”: Tutors as mediators of confidence

Student’s responses to the question, “Do you feel any different about your Spanish after collaborating with a tutor than before?” show a clear temporal distinction. Analysis of *affect* shows that instances of insecurity are prevalent when students describe their skills with the language before their collaborative relationship with the peer-tutor, whereas instances of security are coupled with descriptions of participants’ emotional responses after their collaboration with the peer-tutor.

Research focusing on linguistic insecurity in learners of Spanish as a heritage language exists within the field (Potowski 2002; Carreira and Bemman 2014). The sample presented here echoes the generalized deficit notion emanating from speakers themselves vis-à-vis their proficiency levels in the heritage language especially during their initial classroom experiences. In this case, participants express an internalized lack of confidence regarding their linguistic skills through powerful emotions of insecurity when describing their feelings concerning their linguistic skills before joining the peer tutoring program.

Notably, speakers used Graduation resources of force almost exclusively when describing earlier feelings concerning their perceived academic level in Spanish:

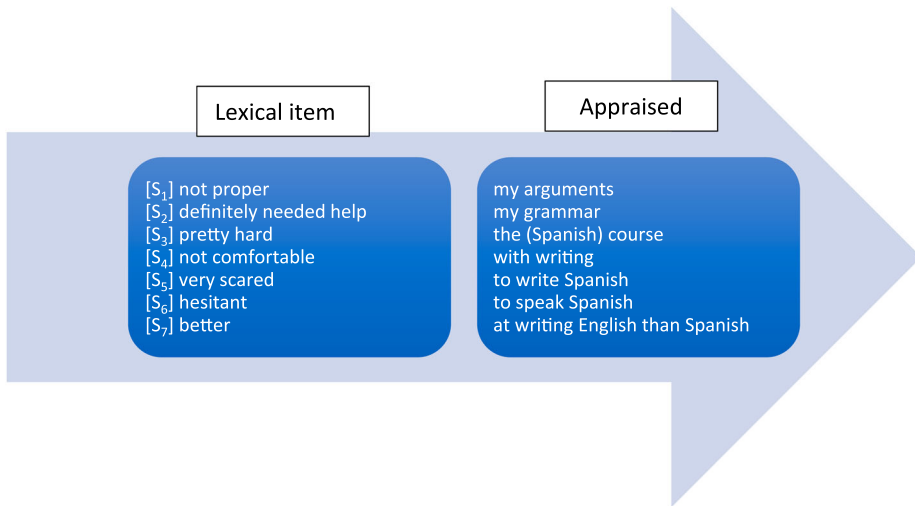


Figure 1. Before collaborating with tutor [Coding → *Affect*; insecurity].

Student #2: “I definitely knew ahead of time I needed help with my grammar” (Graduation; Force)

Student #5: “I feel like I would struggle a lot more and my work wouldn’t be at as good a level” (Graduation; Force)

Conversely, students’ emotional responses of insecurity regarding their own abilities in Spanish literacy, contrast strikingly with feelings of security and satisfaction, which they express when describing subsequent emotions after just 11 weeks working with a peer-tutor. The following sample includes participants’ indexes of their Spanish literacy skills after collaborating with the tutor:

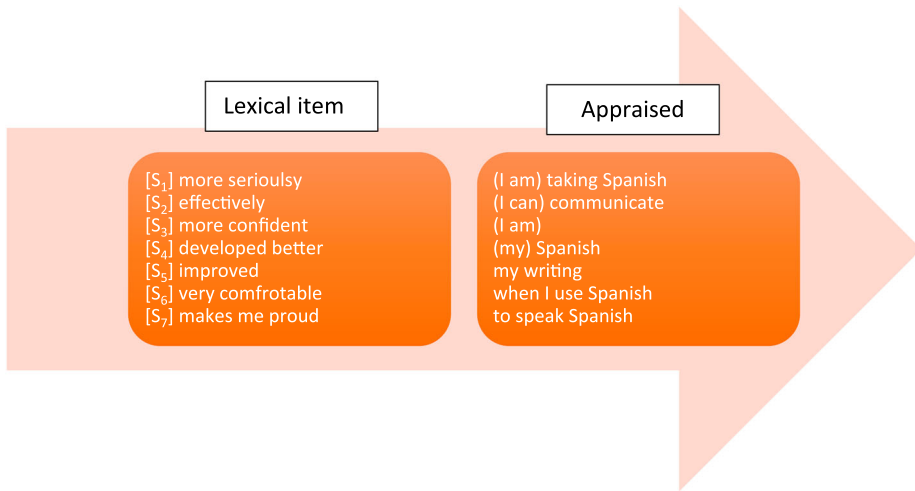


Figure 2. After tutor collaboration (end of quarter) [Coding → Affect; security].

Additionally, instances of Appreciation, both in the subcategories of valuation (how innovative, authentic), reaction (positive or negative), and composition (how balanced or complex) index students’ positive evaluations of the course and the peer-to-peer program, which ultimately echoes a renewed interest, motivation and value of their Spanish-related repertoires. The following is a sample of coded answers to the questions “What has been your experience in the Spanish Heritage Language Program?” and “What has been your overall experience with your tutor in relation to your performance in the course?”:

Table 7. Coding sheet for [Appreciation].

Speaker	Lexical Item	Appraised	Appreciation Subcategory
Student 1	helped me	tutor	Valuation
Student 2	beneficial	(peer tutor program)	Valuation
Student 3	helped me (so much)	(tutor)	Valuation
Student 4	great way	to improve my Spanish	Valuation
Student 5	Really like	The program	Reaction
Student 6	should be required	(tutoring)	Composition
Student 7	learned a lot	(from) tutor	Valuation

Overall, the data attests that participants index a marked positive evaluative experience of the peer-to-peer interaction and the program. This is evidenced through their perceived emotional experience of their bilingual identity through lexico-discursive iterations around “helpfulness” and “usefulness” in regard to this instance of peer collaboration. At the end of just 11 weeks of peer-to-peer collaboration, this means of curricular support demonstrated that participants’ affective involvement is widely engaged, or aligned, to positive evaluative meanings of their bilingual identity, combating previous negative evaluations of students’ Spanish academic repertoires.

5. Conclusion

This project’s main objective was to contextualize academic contexts outside of the classroom such as peer-to-peer tutoring as a space for literacy development in the context of a Spanish heritage learner student community. Furthermore, we sought to bring to light the potential for peer-to-

peer tutors of the same community of practice to enhance students' academic language development, both in terms of their written development as well as the development of bilingual identities as part of the academic experience. We show, through analysis of emergent literacies and bilingual positionings of students' collaborative relationship with peers of similar linguistic, educational and demographic profiles, that academic biliteracy development in the heritage language can also happen as enacted *across* communities. In this way, we invite the academic community to value and appreciate the role of the student as expert in developing specific heritage language pedagogies.

Additionally, as posited by the authors, it is clear that students view the peer-to-peer component of the heritage language learning program as an effective way of making language learning a "meaningful sociocultural practice" (Halliday 1993). Additionally, it provides a suitable pedagogical model for which we advocate. Importantly, it is crucial that academic biliteracy learning is mediated across communities of speakers, as working with peers allows learners to take more risks, ask more questions, and open up about their learning trajectories, thus representing a replicable programming model for heritage speaker communities across the board. It is also important to acknowledge that the success of this particular program is, to some degree, due to the accountability and prestige that the peer role entails, as tutors are well-compensated and have to compete to become tutors through an arduous application process that includes an interview in front of a hiring committee (including the program director, instructors, former tutors and at times, the department chair). Additionally, since the attendance grades that students achieve depend partially on their participation in the tutoring sessions, students subsequently attribute more value to these peer-to-peer contact opportunities. It is clear that the development of the peer-to-peer component is crucial to the success of the program as evidenced by the different types of impact outlined in this study.

Developing language and literacy means developing into a member of a cultural group (Painter 1991, 44). As such, given that academic literacy development and positive alignments to bilingual identities in the context of heritage learners is a longitudinal process, it requires multiple kinds of input across contexts. Not only do students need to be exposed to formal instruction in the classroom, but they must engage with literacy in other academic spaces. Furthermore, peer-to-peer tutoring, as a particular type of stimulus, provides opportunities for peers to collaboratively negotiate their own personal educational trajectories based on their common membership to a student group with unique academic and sociocultural challenges. Further textual analysis of emergent biliteracies and bilingual identity positionings of peer-to-peer tutor interactions will undoubtedly continue to reveal the role that they play in what Martínez (2016) calls "the embeddedness of the community" in academic literacy development for heritage speakers of Spanish.

Notes

1. Latinx" is the term used by the authors in an effort to adhere to terminology that is inclusive of all gender representations as related to the United States' populations with cultural and linguistic ties to Latin American and Spain.
2. At the University of California Davis, for example, and according to Spring '18 enrollment numbers, UC Davis has met the eligibility requirements to be designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) by enrolling at least 25 percent of its domestic undergraduate students from economically disadvantaged populations. HSI designation is given by the US Department of Education to educational institutions where Hispanic/Latinx/Chicanx students make up at least 25% of those enrolled and provides opportunities for federal funding to support student success and retention initiatives.
3. While the second author collected student's essays and undertook the analysis, the first author worked with the same students in the collection of interviews and transcription analysis.
4. Martin and White (2005) construct three main types of possible positionings: attitudinal, dialogic and intertextual. For the purposes of this project, we limit our analysis to that of attitudinal positionings given its potential for interpersonal meaning ascribed beyond the written text.

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Appendix

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

To be asked to the participant at the beginning of the tutoring session during the last three weeks of the Fall Quarter, 2017 (NB: participants must have completed at least 5 sessions with the peer tutor)

- Did you use any outside support (beyond the tutoring session) such as instructor help, tutoring outside of the Spanish Department, Google Translate, etc., to develop your final version of Escrito 2 from the first draft you submitted? If so, please explain.
- What has been your experience in the Spanish for Native Speakers program? Do you feel any different about your Spanish than before?
- What has been your overall experience with your tutor in relation to your performance in SPA 31?
- If given the choice, would you have wanted the course to have the tutoring requirement, or not? Why or why not?
- Tell me a little bit about the role Spanish has in your role as a student, and as an individual in general.
- Has your professional relationship with the tutor in any way affected the way you feel about Spanish, the way you speak/use Spanish, both inside of the university and beyond?