The Materials Development Project
Introduction: Lesson Plans for Teaching Spanish as a Heritage Language
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Project overview:

This five-unit series of lesson plans is designed to teach Spanish to heritage language learners. Building on the findings of the National Heritage Language Center Survey (see below), the lesson plans focus on developing literacy skills and expanding students’ bilingual range, tapping into community resources, and giving students the tools and strategies to become independent learners. Given the wide range of linguistic backgrounds represented in heritage language classrooms, the activities make it possible to differentiate instruction by learner needs and goals.

The National Heritage Language Survey:

The National Heritage Language Survey is a project of the National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) (www.nhlrc.ucla.edu), a Title-VI funded National Language Resource Center. The survey was designed to inform the development of curricula, materials, and professional development projects in heritage languages. Drawing on the research literature, the survey seeks information on critical issues in HL development, including learners’ home background and linguistic habits, attitudes, and experiences. Approximately 1,800 post-secondary heritage language learners (HLLs) representing 22 languages have responded to the survey.

Three types of findings from the survey inform the design of these lesson plans: 1) findings about HLLs as a group (i.e., findings across all languages), 2) findings specific to Spanish-speaking HLLs, and 3) findings about the context of teaching.

1) General findings about HLLs: The majority of HLLs surveyed are U.S.-born and were raised in HL-speaking homes. They have little to no schooling in the HL and use their HL mostly in the home context. Accordingly, they have relatively strong aural skills (particularly in the area of listening) and weak literacy skills in their HL (particularly in writing). Their main reasons for studying this language are, in order of importance: a) to learn about their roots, b) to communicate better with family and friends in the U.S., to fulfill a language requirement, d) to meet career goals, and e) to communicate better with family and friends abroad. HLLs have largely positive experiences with their HL and enjoy using the HL to help others and connect with members of the HL community.
2) **Findings about Spanish-speaking HLLs:** Relative to other HLLs surveyed, Spanish speakers have more developed literacy skills, make more use of their HL in their daily lives, and have extensively more experience traveling to their country of origin. In addition, their primary motivation in studying their HL is to further career goals, followed by the other motivations mentioned in 1).

3) **Findings about the context of teaching:** Most Spanish speakers surveyed study their language in separate classes for HLLs. The students in these classes run the gamut of proficiency levels and have widely different levels of exposure to Spanish.

**Language, content, and strategic objectives of the lesson plans:**

This curriculum teaches language, content, and literacy in an integrated manner. The lessons build on each other, such that the skills introduced in one unit are practiced and put to use in subsequent units.

**Developing literacy skills and expanding the bilingual range:**

The curriculum taps into HLLs’ fairly strong aural skills to develop their command of the written registers. The lesson plans expose students to a variety of written genres, starting with those closest to the spoken registers and progressing to those that deviate more from these registers and require more academic training. The genres are: the interview (Units I and II), the oral history (Units II and III), the short story (Units III, IV, and V), poetry (Unit VI), and the academic essay (Unit VII). Students compare and contrast these genres with regard to organizational structure, the type of vocabulary and syntactic structures employed, communicative purpose, tone, and audience.

As they work with the reading selections in each unit, students practice using pre- and post-reading strategies, including guessing the meaning of words in context, tapping into background knowledge, making inferences, and using framework cues. Then, using process-writing techniques, they produce samples of each genre.

**Reinforcing vocabulary and grammar:**

Vocabulary and grammar are taught in context. For example, students review the preterit and the imperfect in the context of studying oral narratives and short stories. To facilitate learning, the readings in a given unit are all thematically related. In this way, students encounter the same material multiple times.
Tapping into community resources and making connections with U.S. Latinos:

The readings focus on issues pertaining to U.S. Latinos and the follow-up activities engage students in further exploration of these issues. For example, students learn about the experiences of earlier generations of Latino immigrants by interviewing an elderly Spanish speaker. They also explore their own identity as they read and discuss the writings of U.S. Latinos on this topic. In addition, they conduct research on U.S. Spanish and Latinos for their academic paper in Unit VII.

Pedagogical tools:

Differentiated Instruction:

To accommodate students at different levels of readiness and with different learning goals, the lesson plans employ a variety of tools and activities from Differentiated Instruction (DT). This is an approach to teaching and learning that makes available to students multiple pathways for learning material. As an example, some activities in the lesson plans give students a choice about the work they will turn in, thereby differentiating instruction by learner interest. Other activities engage students in assessing their own needs and wants vis-à-vis the material, thereby helping them become independent learners.

Sheltered Instruction:

Another pedagogical approach that informs these lesson plans is sheltered instruction, or SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English). Designed to help English learners gain mastery of grade-appropriate content knowledge, the tools and principles of SDAIE can also enhance HL teaching and learning.

Following the principles of SDAIE, these lesson plans:

a) give clearly defined content and language objectives;
b) make explicit links to students’ background;
c) emphasize the learning of key vocabulary;
d) use a variety of activities to teach and reinforce concepts;
e) teach strategies that promote higher-order thinking skills;
f) engage students in a variety of in-class interactions, including one-to-one pairings, group work, and whole class interactions;
g) use activities that integrate all language skills;
h) provide on-going assessment.
(Echevarría, Vogt, and Short 2004)
The following section describes a number of activities from DT and SDAIE that are particularly useful in the HL classroom. These can be adapted to teach a wide range of materials.

**Pre-reading and writing activities:**

1. The **KWL chart** (What We Know/What We Want to Learn/What We have Learned) constitutes a valuable pre-reading and pre-writing activity. It helps students activate prior knowledge and identify areas for further exploration (Echevarría, Vogt, and Short 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit or Lesson Topic:</th>
<th>What we know</th>
<th>What we want to learn</th>
<th>What we have learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I know</td>
<td>What I want to learn</td>
<td>What I have learned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What __________ knows:</td>
<td>What ______ wants to learn:</td>
<td>What ______ has learned:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What __________ knows:</td>
<td>What ______ wants to learn:</td>
<td>What ______ has learned:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A variant of the KWL chart involves having each student fill out the first row of the chart and then having them interview two classmates to complete the other rows. This version of the activity allows students to learn from other students.
2. WH scan

As a pre-reading activity, students briefly scan a reading and fill out the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who (jot down any names of individuals, groups, or characters mentioned in connection with the reading):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When (jot down any reference to time):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where (jot down any place names):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What (jot down the themes of the reading – what is the reading about?):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After doing the above, they complete the following sentence:

This reading is about (i.e. what is the main wh-issue in the reading?)

_______________________________________________________________________________________________.

3. Multiple-entry journals/reading logs

This activity asks students to focus on various aspects of a passage as they are reading it. For example, beginning students may write down or highlight key phrases at the beginning, middle and end; important words; and main ideas in each paragraph. Later, they use this information to produce a written summary. More advanced learners may jot down the aspects of the passage that reveal the author’s assumptions and his intended audience. Subsequently, they use this information to re-write a paragraph from the reading for a different audience, adjusting the language and content as needed.

Post-reading activities

4. Text-to-text connections: This activity engages students in comparing two texts that they have studied. Comparisons can involve passages, characters, or themes from two or more class readings, as illustrated below. They can also involve comparing linguistic and stylistic features (adapted from Harvey and Goudvis, 2000).
With the text-to-world rubric, students can explore connections between a class reading and a historical or current event.

5. **Question-Answer Relations** (QAR): Through this post-reading activity, students practice recognizing and answering different types of questions. In the left column, the instructor writes questions about a reading. Students jot down their answers under the column that describes the students' answer. A variation of this activity
involves having students provide the questions (adapted from Echevarría, Vogt, and Short, 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Right there (the answer is explicitly stated in the text)</th>
<th>Think and search (the answer is implicit in the text and/or requires making connections between the information given)</th>
<th>On my own (the answer calls for a personal opinion or experience)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Writing and editing activities**

**6. Hands on the text**

The following can be used with a class reading either as post-reading activities or as writing options for less proficient students.

Working with a reading from the text, students can:

1) cut and paste sentences from the reading to produce abstracts of various lengths, e.g. 25 words, 75 words, and 250 words;
2) provide illustrations for the reading and modify sentences in the reading to produce captions.
3) for factual readings, prepare charts and tables with information from the web to supplement the reading. Each chart should be accompanied by a caption.
4) also for factual readings, add a sentence to each paragraph of the reading. Information can be obtained from the web or other resources.
5) prepare a visual organizer of the reading, selecting from different types of visual organizers the one that is most appropriate. Visual organizers can include: a Venn diagram, a time line, a tree diagram, a chart, a table, a flow chart, and a sketch.
7. Ojo! Post-its

This differentiated activity involves students in setting their own writing priorities. Students draw an eye (Spanish symbol for “note!”) at the top of four post-it notes and they write four different concepts, rules, etc. (do’s and don’t’s) to keep in mind while they are working on their compositions. They paste these notes at the top of their draft. Peer editors then focus on these notes as they edit the drafts, drawing an eye on the margins next to where a violation has been found.

For beginning writers, the post-its can focus on basic rules of orthography or grammar. For more advanced learners, they can focus on organizational and stylistic issues. As an alternative, students can select from a list of teacher supplied post-it notes that draw on the material reviewed in class.

Activities to review the material

8. The Exit Card

This activity helps students take stock of what they have done in class. During the last ten minutes of class, students reflect on the topics covered that day and summarize the two or three points that were most valuable to them. Students turn in their Exit Card, thereby giving the teacher feedback about the needs of each learner.

9. The “aha!” moment

At the end of the week or unit, students describe an “aha!” moment (i.e., an important realization) they had in class or while doing the homework.

10. Simultaneous roundtable

This group activity serves to review before a test. The teacher writes on the board four or five general questions about the material, for example:

1. To review a short story: Who are the characters in the story and what are they like?
2. To review information about a country: What can you tell me about the history of Nicaragua?
3. To review grammar: What expressions trigger the use of the subjunctive in noun clauses?
4. To review vocabulary: What vocabulary did we learn in connection with technology?

Working in groups of four, each student in the group copies one of the questions on separate pieces of paper (each question should be assigned a number: e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4). Each student writes something on his/her paper that is responsive to the question and then passes the sheet of paper to the person next to him. Once all students have
contributed answers to all questions, the group discusses their answers.

11. **The Jigsaw activity**

After completing the above activity (the simultaneous roundtable), each member of the group retrieves the piece of paper that has the question that he/she copied from the board. He/she then gets together with students from other groups who have the same question. This group of experts reviews the information they have and compiles the best possible answer to their question. Students then get back to their original groups and report on their work in expert groups. A visual representation of the flow of the activity is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1: Students work on the simultaneous roundtable. Each student answers all questions.</th>
<th>Step 2: Each student in the simultaneous roundtable is assigned a different question. Students with the same questions in the class work together on the best possible answer.</th>
<th>Step 3: Students go back to their original groups and report on their work in step 2.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>1, 1, 1</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>2, 2, 2</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>3, 3, 3</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>4, 4, 4</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. **The Interactive Journal** (adapted from Thomlinson, 1999): Through this activity students make connections between the material they are learning and their personal lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In this column, students jot down a phrase, an idea, a vocabulary item, expression, etc from a reading, activity, or class discussion that is meaningful to them.</th>
<th>In this column they explain the significance of each item (see examples below).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A phrase from a reading:</strong> e.g. <em>Papá se pasaba preocupado todo el tiempo y fumaba cigarrillo tras cigarrillo, quejándose de la lluvia porque no podíamos pizar algodón cuando estaba mojado</em> (from Cajas de Cartón, Unit IV).</td>
<td>Me acuerdo que mi papa también se preocupaba mucho cuando pasaba temporadas sin encontrar trabajo. El no fuma pero demostraba su ansiedad caminando de un lado de la casa a otro sin parar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Dad was worried all the time and smoked one cigar after another, complaining about the rain because we couldn’t pick the cotton when it was wet.]</td>
<td>[I remember that my dad also worried a lot when he couldn’t find work. He doesn’t smoke but he showed his anxiety by pacing constantly from one side of the house to the other.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **A fact from a reading:**  
e.g. En los EE.UU. los latinos conforman el 15% de la población. | En Los Angeles, donde yo vivo, los latinos conforman el 46% de la población y en California son un 35%.  
[In the United States Latinos make up 15% of the population.]  
[In Los Angeles, where I live, Latinos make up 46% of the population and 35% of California's population]. |
| --- | --- |
| **An idiomatic expression from the reading:**  
“Brincó como un saltamontes”  
[jumped around like a grasshopper] | No conocía esa expression, pero tiene mucho sentido. La voy a usar con mi hermano pequeño.  
[I didn’t know this expression but it makes a lot of sense. I’m going to use it with my little brother.] |

**Self-assessment activities**

**13. Review of objectives**

At the end of each unit students review the learning objectives given earlier and answer the following questions for each objective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of difficulty of the objective</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have made progress toward meeting this objective:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most challenging aspect of this objective is:

__________________________________________________________________________

What I can do to continue to work on this objective:

__________________________________________________________________________

**14. Class contributions**

This activity asks students to reflect on how they and other classmates contribute to the class (for example, through questions they asked, answers they gave, comments, etc.).
In this column identify three contributions that you made to the class. Be as specific about the nature of your contribution. Consider your work in small groups, paired activities, and the entire class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary word:</th>
<th>Two words that use this word (students can copy them from the readings, compose the sentence themselves, take them from the internet, etc.):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. house</td>
<td>morphologically and semantically related words:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g., morphologically related words: household, to house, housing.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g., thematically related words: home, family, kitchen, mortgage, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To teach vocabulary:

15. The four-corner worksheet:

Working in groups of four or five, each student selects a word from a vocabulary list or from an assigned reading and completes the worksheet as shown below. After completing the worksheet, he/she shares the worksheet with the group. The groups can also report to the class. The worksheets can form the basis of a class dictionary (adapted from Echevarría, Vogt, and Short, 2004).
16. What kind of word is it?

This activity serves to teach students how to deal with unfamiliar words in a reading. The instructor writes down five to ten words from a reading on the board. Students chose from the following statements to describe each word and they explain their answer. A variant of this activity involves asking students to provide an example of each type of word in the reading.

1. I need to understand this word in order to understand the passage that I’m reading or to complete a post-reading activity.
   a. I know the meaning of the word already.
   b. I can use word-guessing strategies to understand this word.
      - I can figure out its meaning from context.
      - I can use my knowledge of English to figure out its meaning.
      - I can break up the word into parts to understand some or all of its meaning (i.e. apply know of prefixes, roots, and suffixes).
   c. I need help to understand this word.
      - I can ask a student to help me with the meaning of this word.
      - I need a dictionary to understand this word.

2. I can ignore this word because it isn’t essential to understanding the passage or to completing post-reading activities.

Other

17. To allow for flexible pacing: Agendas

Agendas are lists of exercises and activities that students must complete in a given amount of time. Instructors may create agendas by picking and choosing from textbook activities or by designing their own. Students can engage in agenda work during a designated class time as, for example, during the last fifteen minutes of class, or when they have finished other work. Having a designated agenda time for the class has the advantage that it gives instructors the opportunity to meet with students who are in need of extra help. Agendas are particularly useful in classes where all students need a basic overview of the same material, but some students require substantially more practice than others.

18. To encourage students to pose and answer questions: the question parking lot

Sometimes students have questions that they don’t feel comfortable asking in front
of the class or that they feel are best addressed at a different time. They can write these questions on a post-it note and paste them in a designated part of the room. The questions can be addressed in groups, by the instructor, or by individual students. A variation of the activity involves having different designated posting areas for different types of questions (e.g., language questions, from questions about the readings, procedural questions). Questions can also be posted on a webpage. Students can receive credit for posting and/or answering a certain number of questions per semester.

**Resources on DT and SDAIE:**


