Classroom Based Dialect Awareness in Heritage Language Instruction: 
A Critical Applied Linguistic Approach

Glenn A. Martínez
The University of Arizona

ABSTRACT
The present paper argues that while the Spanish for Heritage Learners (SHL) profession has given ample attention to sociolinguistic issues such as linguistic standards and language variation in teacher training, it has not yet given sufficient attention to the promotion of dialect awareness among heritage learners themselves. After discussing the role of dialect in heritage language pedagogy, I review some of the ways in which dialect awareness has been fostered in existing SHL textbooks and ancillary materials. I argue that these approaches can be sharpened by attending to the social functions of language variation. I present a critical applied linguistic approach to dialect awareness that focuses on the indexical aspects of language variation in society. I discuss three strands of this approach to dialect awareness: functions of dialects, distributions of dialects, and evaluation of dialects. Finally, I suggest some activities to present these strands in a first year college level Spanish for heritage learners class.

Introduction
The teaching of Spanish to Spanish speakers in the United States Southwest is, I would argue, nearly as old the presence of English in the region. While it did not come of age until the movimiento chicano of the 1960’s and 1970’s that opened the doors of colleges and universities to large numbers of Mexican American students, its existence prior to that era can hardly be questioned (cf. Villa 2002; García 1993). What the Chicano movement did was not so much to bring to the surface a new teaching field but rather to expose large numbers of socially and politically sensitive students to the grossly insensitive and antagonistic pedagogical practices that had prevailed in the field of Spanish teaching. In 1981, Guadalupe Valdés redefine and reoriented the Spanish teaching profession. Her seminal article on the “Pedagogical implications of teaching Spanish to the Spanish-Speaking in the United States” vividly exposed the raging contradictions and insensitivities implicit in the teaching
methodologies of the time. She pointed out the logical and practical discrepancies that plagued both the view of Spanish teaching as a way to eradicate the local vernacular and the view of Spanish teaching as a way to promote biloquialism. Her conclusion in that article was that Spanish for Heritage Learners (SHL) should be viewed as a broad-based “language arts” curriculum that promotes “development and enrichment of language skills within existing dialects” and “wider communicative competence and enhancement of self-image” (1981: 19).

Valdés’ redefinition of the SHL curriculum underscored the central role of dialect awareness in the Spanish teaching profession. Since the publication of that seminal article, the SHL profession has tackled issues of dialect-based inequalities and language rights from diverse angles and with multifarious results. Some scholars have taken it upon themselves to prescribe the “best” Spanish dialect to be used in instruction (Torreblanca 1997) while others have argued that the local variety is just as good or bad as any other dialect when it comes to language education (Villa 1996). Some scholars have argued for a socio-culturally constructed dialect that transcends nation-state boundaries within the Spanish speaking world (Porras 1997) while others adopt a more formal approach defining “academic language” in terms of measurable features such as lexical density and syntactic complexity (Colombi 2000). Most recently, however, the issue of dialect awareness in SHL has exploded in an emotionally charged debate over the underlying social and political motivations of linguistic differentiation and subordination both in the classroom and in society at large (Villa 2002). While some may disagree, I personally believe that these discussions are healthy and invigorating for the field. Even so, I don’t think anyone would question the fact that dialect awareness has recently become an increasingly important issue in heritage language pedagogy.

In the present essay I will focus on the incorporation of dialect awareness into the beginning level SHL curriculum. First, I will discuss some of the ways in which SHL scholarship has framed the question of dialect awareness, and I will point out some reasons why it is central to the pedagogical goals of the profession. Then, I will identify and evaluate some examples of dialect awareness instruction in existing textbooks and ancillary materials. Finally, I will present a set of classroom activities designed to sharpen dialect awareness instruction in SHL.

DIALECT AWARENESS IN THE SHL PROFESSION

The questions that are increasingly being asked in relation to dialects and language variation in the context of SHL are: What dialect does the teacher use to impart instruction? What dialect does the teacher promote? What does the teacher think about the vernacular dialect of students? How does the teacher express these
prejudices in the classroom? Perhaps, lurking behind these questions, we can find more student-centered preoccupations. For instance, how are these attitudes and expressions damaging students’ self-confidence? How does the choice of dialect among teachers convey social asymmetries to students? Is the use and promotion of a standard dialect an instance of educational malpractice? (Baugh 1999) These underlying implications notwithstanding, the literature on dialect awareness in SHL has been limited to discussions relating to teacher training and upper division coursework. Gutiérrez (1997), for instance, argues that awareness of sociolinguistic issues is a critical component in the training of teachers who work with heritage language students. Potowski (2000), furthermore, discusses an exemplary approach for training graduate teaching assistants to work with heritage language students both in heritage language and second language classrooms, and Leeman (2002) proposes a model for critical language awareness through an upper division course on the social issues surrounding Spanish in the United States. Classroom based dialect awareness (CBDA) programs focused on teaching heritage language students themselves, at the most elementary levels of instruction, about the nature of language variation, however, have been far too uncommon in the literature.

Yet even though the profession has not set forth a specific methodology for implementing CBDA, dialect awareness does form a central part of the pedagogical core of SHL. Valdés’ most recent work identifies four central goals in SHL teaching: 1) Spanish language maintenance, 2) acquisition of a prestige dialect of Spanish, 3) expansion of bilingual range, and 4) transfer of literacy skills (1995, 2001). The second goal clearly suggests the need for a well-elaborated methodology of CBDA for a number of interrelated reasons. Valdés notes that one of the problems associated with learning a second dialect is the fact that learners are not always aware of the exact differences between the first and second dialects. She rightly points out: “learners have vocabularies that are essentially identical to vocabularies in the standard language” (1995: 312). How do learners know when they are using the standard and when they are using the vernacular? We might say that the difference lies in the fact that the vernacular dialect presents stigmatized features while the prestige variety does not, and thus our pedagogical task is to help the learner develop an “internal monitor” to assist in avoiding the stigmatized features under certain social conditions. So, one reason for developing a well-defined methodology of CBDA is to assist students in developing this monitor. A more pressing motivation, however, remains to be uncovered. My preoccupation at this point is that in teaching the standard dialect we tend to skew our explanations towards purely linguistic issues when, in fact, the entire notion of standard and vernacular dialects is really much more of a social issue. Samaniego and Pino, for instance, argue that “teachers should provide model registers using video, radio, movies, guest speakers, and the like
and then require students to model different registers, especially the formal
g registers, through role playing, debates, and speeches” (2000: 43). I worry that
when we ask students to “model” the speech of socially prestigious groups, we are
implicitly saying that their own language is somehow not good enough to get on
in society. How can we tell students that a linguistic form is stigmatized or
somehow not good enough or not appropriate without telling them why? We can
all agree that there is no intrinsic reason for the stigmatization of certain linguistic
features. But that does not mean that there is not an extrinsic social reason that
can be explicated in ways that students can understand and assimilate. I see no
particular reason why we should wait until a student has mastered the standard
variety before informing her/him of the reasons why the standard exists in the first
place. The absence of socially oriented CBDA methodologies in SHL, however, is
conducive to just this type of scenario. Heritage language students generally do
not come to realize the nature of language variation until they have taken upper
division classes in linguistics. I am constantly amazed by heritage learners who,
after taking six or seven SHL courses in the department, come up to me after a
lecture on language variation and say, “you know, I have never heard that before.”

In the present paper, I will argue for a robust model of CBDA that is
capable of transmitting a deep-seated understanding of language variation at the
elementary levels of heritage language instruction. I believe that heritage
language pedagogy can be considerably enriched if dialect awareness is the first
thing that students are taught instead of the last. Furthermore, I will argue that
students bring with them a profound experiential understanding of language
variation, subordination, and discrimination, and that CBDA can help them to
develop a complex theoretical understanding of this experience. This
understanding, I would argue, may result in a renewed pride and interest in the
heritage language and thus contribute, in one way or another, to each of the goals
of heritage language pedagogy noted by Valdés.

CBDA IN CURRENT PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

The fact that scholars are not writing about CBDA does not mean that it
isn’t taking place in the heritage language classroom. There is ample evidence to
suggest that textbook writers are particularly concerned with dialect awareness
and that they promote it even at the most elementary levels of instruction. Sarah
Marqués, for instance, prefaches her very traditional *se dice* ‘say’ and *no se dice*
‘don’t say’ lists of English loanwords and their equivalents, e.g., *manojo* instead
of *bonche* and *desperdicio* or *desecho* instead of *yonque*, saying: “En los países
donde dos lenguas se hablan … es muy común y casi inevitable que existan los
llamados ‘préstamos de la lengua’” “In countries where more than one language is
spoken … it’s common and practically inevitable that so-called ‘loanwords’ will
exist’ (2000: 52). Of course, we would hardly admit that this apologetic preface constitutes anything close to CBDA. Other textbook authors, however, do make more meaningful attempts to promote CBDA. On the same subject of English loanwords, Ana Roca in *Nuevos Mundos* eloquently stresses the arbitrary nature of official acceptance of loanwords by the Real Academia Española. Her discussion of loanwords includes the observation: “en España, por ejemplo, se anuncian con la palabra *parking* los sitios de estacionamiento y un bar muchas veces le llaman *pub*” ‘in Spain, for example, parking lots are advertised with the word *parking* and a bar is often referred to as a *pub*’ (1999: 34). She also elaborates her discussion with the use of *realia*. For example, she shows a picture of a sign that reads ‘*Beepería*’ and proceeds to ask students “¿Qué le parece el nombre de esta tienda? ¿Puede pensar en un nombre más apropiado?” ‘What do you think of the name of this store? Can you think of a more appropriate name?’ The purpose of the exercise, of course, is to demonstrate the inherent difficulties associated with finding native words for every new item encountered in reality. It also demonstrates that looking for native words can, in fact, interfere with communication, i.e., there is no “more appropriate” name for a store that sells beepers. Fabián Samaniego, et. al. in their *Cuaderno de actividades para hispanohablantes* that is ancillary to Mundo 21 dedicate an entire section of almost every chapter to some form of CBDA. For instance, one activity in the workbook focuses on colloquial Puerto Rican speech. Students are given a literary fragment from the work of Pedro Juan Soto and are then asked to give the formal equivalent of words such as *piensah, seguil, echao*, and *uhté*. This type of exercise allows for a straightforward presentation of phonetic variation in Puerto Rican Spanish. Notwithstanding the admirable attempts of Roca and Samaniego to incorporate CBDA in the SHL curriculum, George Blanco, Victoria Contreras, and Judith Marquez in *Ahora, sí* present the most ambitious treatment of linguistic variation to date in an elementary SHL textbook. They begin the discussion of language diversity by pointing out the language differences encountered in a series of previously studied literary excerpts by Mexican American authors. They expand on the notion of variation by taking age as a conditioning factor of linguistic variation and asking students to reflect on the differences between their own language and that of their parents. They go on to point out the arbitrary nature of linguistic variation. They suggest an activity in which students are asked to find the names of a set of items in three distinct geographical regions. They are also told to ask their informants which form they consider to be most “correct.” This activity highlights the fact that the most correct term is usually the term most closely associated with one’s own sociolinguistic experience and upbringing.

Each of these examples seems to fall in line with the pedagogy of dialect awareness developed by Wolfram and his associates (Wolfram 1999; Wolfram, Adger, and Christian 1999). In this methodology, dialect awareness is conceived
of in terms of a set of themes that should be elaborated and exemplified through hands-on practice with real dialect materials. The themes in Wolfram’s pedagogy include: 1) dialects are natural, 2) dialects are regular, and 3) variation occurs on different levels. So, the first theme, dialects are natural, might be elaborated by showing in some way the inherently variable nature of language itself. The second theme, dialects are regular, might be elaborated by working with speech samples from a specific dialect in order to determine the regular patterns of variation. The third theme, variation occurs on different levels, might focus on the differences between two dialects, for example, Southern American English and Bostonian English. Students would see that the dialects are different not only with respect to “accent” but also with respect to words and sentence structures.

While this model of CBDA goes a long way in contesting the age old practices of the traditional language arts teacher, I wonder if it is really capable of responding to the underlying sociolinguistic issues that face many heritage learners of Spanish. This model of CBDA basically gives students the tools to analyze language varieties from a scientific perspective. It allows them to detach emotion and prejudice from the perception of dialects and to look at them as self contained systems of human communication. I am not suggesting that this analytic framework does not contribute to enlightened modes of understanding ourselves and others. I am questioning whether it is, in and of itself, sufficient to reach this central goal of dialect awareness programs. I would argue that it is not. I would argue that if we really want to give students the ability to understand language variation, we need to go beyond the realm of linguistic description and tackle head on the indexical social values ascribed to different varieties of language. Following Urciuoli, I believe CBDA can and must “emphasize those aspects of language that structure relationships rather than code (English or Spanish): in other words, I fit the referential (word and grammar meaning independent of context) into the indexical (the social aspect of meaning) and not vice versa … Indexes (after Peirce) are signs that indicate connection, co-existence, or causality. For our purposes, indexes are words, sounds, or grammatical elements that carry information about the speaker’s identity or location” (1998: 7). My argument, then, is that a robust model of CBDA must engage not only questions of code but also questions of structure, and it must highlight the relationship between language, power, and social groups.

A CRITICAL APPLIED LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO CBDA

In the ensuing discussion, I will argue for a critical applied linguistic approach to CBDA in the SHL curriculum (Pennycook 2001; Fairclough 1995). By critical applied linguistics, I refer to that view of language teaching, which directly confronts and contests the power issues that abound in language
education. This approach to CBDA goes beyond the model developed by Wolfram and implemented in numerous SHL textbooks in that it focuses on both code and structure, on both reference and index in sociolinguistic variation. The critical approach to CBDA would certainly welcome any pedagogical practice that engenders more enlightened modes for understanding dialects. Therefore, this approach readily embraces the themes that are present in Wolfram’s model and in current SHL textbooks. We go beyond these themes, however, because we believe that a full understanding of language variation must include a full understanding of social power. I conceive of at least three additional themes that can be added to Wolfram’s list. These themes relate to 1) the functions of dialects, 2) the distribution of dialects, and 3) the evaluation of dialects. In other words, I am proposing that, building on the linguistic framework developed by Wolfram, we should add a social framework that doesn’t stop at answering the what of variation but that proceeds to answer the why of variation as well.

After learning that dialects are natural and regular, any curious student might wonder what dialects are for anyhow. Why not just speak the standard dialect and make things easier on yourself? This is an admittedly blunt rendition of what often goes on in the heritage language classroom. It also happens to be the naturalized or “common sense” reaction that I get from upper and upper middle class dominant culture students in my fourth year sociolinguistics classes. This reaction, of course, obviates the close link between language and identity. The reaction that surfaces among lower and lower middle class minority students, on the other hand, is normally something like: Why does the burden of changing dialects fall on me and not on someone else? Here, the issue begins to unravel into higher degrees of complexity, and what began as a “politically neutral debate about language” begins to converge on politically charged issues of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. These issues do not suddenly emerge in fourth year classes, however. In fact, I would argue that they are much more prevalent and more critically in need of being addressed in the first year of college. Heritage language students arrive at the university with deep-seated emotional issues about their heritage language. They have been taught, and in many cases have internalized, a feeling of inferiority about their heritage language. Throughout their schooling experience of some twelve or thirteen years, they have been programmed with what Haugen refers to as “linguistic self hate” (1956). This phenomenon translates into a heightened sense of linguistic insecurity and inhibition that directly interferes with the language development process. In light of these social facts, I see no cogent reason for postponing a discussion of the social functions of dialects until the fourth year of undergraduate education.

The question that looms over us, as SHL educators, however, is how to begin to address these issues in a curriculum that is focused on verb conjugations, the alphabet, and the proper placement of written accent marks. What pedagogical
methods and classroom activities can bring these issues to light in a way that will enrich students? I think that “language games” can reveal sharp insights into the nature and functions of sociolinguistic variation. In fact, I would argue that we can use language games in the classroom in order to allow students to reflect on sociolinguistic issues of language, power, and social inclusion. One language game that is common both in Latin America and in Chicano communities of the Southwest is the so-called *jerigonza*. I will argue that we can build activities with this language game that will allow students to better understand the social functions of linguistic difference. We might begin by asking if students know how to *hablar en la efe*. In most cases, one or two students will know how to do it and they will say their name or something else using *la efe*. Then, we might ask the student how the game is played, and s/he will explain that every syllable is broken up and followed by an extra filler syllable that begins with [f] and copies the vowel from the previous syllable. So, a name like *Angélica Celaya* will be realized as *[anfahefelifacacefelafayafa]*. Once this is done, then students can practice saying their name and the like. The activity would culminate in a series of critical questions about the game. Why play it? What is it used for? What effect does it have? Such questions will invariably call to mind some of the social functions of dialects. They include some people and exclude others. In other words, this language game offers a unique opportunity to talk about the socially unifying and the socially distancing effects of language variation.

A second issue that can profitably be explored in a critical applied linguistic model of CBDA relates to the distribution of dialects. How are dialects distributed across social groups and what does this distribution signify? The point that we would want to drive home here is that languages and speakers do not exist in a vacuum; instead, they exist in a well-defined and socially significant linguistic market structure. Some languages have higher market values than others within a given community and this is determined by traditional market forces such as supply and demand (cf. Bourdieu 1994). Heritage language learners are intuitively aware of these forces in spite of well-known and oft repeated sayings such as *ser bilingüe vale por dos* ‘a bilingual counts as two’. Oftentimes, as a motivating tool, we find ourselves, as SHL educators, repeating these *dichos* in order to garner student’s attention. What we should be doing, I think, is to bring students to the discovery of the arbitrary nature of the entire linguistic market and of how to make the market work to their advantage.

One way of achieving this might be to create an activity based on the concept of euphemisms. In the Southwest, a well-known euphemism is the use of the word *blanquillos* instead of *huevos*. This word is generally used by women to avoid the physiological connotation of the latter word. I would conceive of a mini-ethnography in which students would analyze this variation among their family members. For instance, we might ask them to record every instance of the
words blanquillo and huevo and to make a note of who is saying it and in what context (i.e., who are they talking to, what are they talking about, where are they, etc.). Surely, the results of the activity will vary, but the heart of the matter will invariably shine through in each student’s report. Through this activity, students will note that the decision to say huevo or blanquillo depends on a variety of factors and that the dependency is far from erratic. For instance, a student might note that her father says blanquillo when talking to her mother, but that he says huevo when talking to her brother. This activity will give the teacher a golden opportunity to explain the functional differentiation of languages in society and the results of violating those well-defined functional differences.

Samaniego and Pino report a similar instance where an SHL instructor was faced with a group of young students who insisted on using the colloquial expression simón when responding yes or sí. The authors go on to remark that she “used this as a perfect opportunity to teach students about register. She pointed out to the students that in certain social situations it may be completely appropriate to respond to a yes/no question with simón; however, the classroom necessitated another type of language in which case sí would be more appropriate than simón” (2000: 44). While this exercise addresses the CBDA theme of distribution of dialect, it is fundamentally different from the blanquillo ethnographic assignment because the functional distribution of dialect forms is dictated and imposed from a position of institutional authority, i.e., the teacher herself. In other words, when developing CBDA activities we must be careful not to conflate issues of language and power, for this is many times painfully evident in students’ everyday experiences. On the contrary, CBDA activities should draw on local knowledge and experience in order to attenuate as much as possible the inextricable bond between language and power. Only in this way will students ever be able to contest the rampant racist ideologies that use language as a pretext for social subordination. And this brings me to my final theme.

A third theme that contributes to the critical applied linguistic approach to CBDA is evaluation of dialects. Why do people value one dialect over another? Who decides that the Spanish of Mexico or Spain is better than the Spanish of Texas, New Mexico, or Arizona? The selection of a prestige variety is always an issue of power and control. As mentioned above, if we view the interrelationship between language and power as an equation where language = power, then the goal of CBDA must be to sufficiently diminish one or the other side of the equation in order to demonstrate that the connector (=) is nothing more than a social construction, a figment of our collective imagination. Students need to understand this. Students must have access to a sophisticated social lens that will allow them to rise above the essentialist ideologies that regard their language and, indeed, their own selves as inferior. It is precisely this consciousness that allowed Gloria Anzaldúa to make the now famous assertion: “I am my language”
(1987: 59). An understanding of the socially constructed hierarchies of language variation brought her to the bone-chilling conclusion that when one belittled her language, they also belittled her. And for Anzaldúa, this revelation was emancipatory. It allowed her to transcend the belittlement and to contest it, to resist it, and to reshape it. This is the kind of knowledge that we urgently need to give to our students. If our students walk into the class saying *haiga* and walk out saying *haya*, there has been, in my estimation, no value added. However, if they walk in saying *haiga* and walk out saying either *haya* or *haiga* and having the ability to defend their use of *haiga* if and when they see fit, then there has been value added. It is critical that we strive to allow students to develop this type of sociolinguistic sophistication in our endeavors as SHL educators.

Samaniego and Pino discuss an activity to develop respect for linguistic diversity. The activity consists of asking students to gather information pertaining to the different words used to designate certain objects such as “bus” and “bean”. Students soon discover the wide array of terms that are used for each: *autobús, camión, guagua, colectivo,* and *bus* for the former, and *frijol, fríjol, habichuela, poroto,* and *alubia* for the latter (2000: 53). While the activity works well in enlightening students about the reality of variation and about the fact that variation does not change the referential properties of the item in question, I am afraid that it conveys a subtle message that embraces power asymmetries ascribed to language variation. If we look at how the activity works out, we can see that each variant *autobús, camión, guagua,* etc. comes to be associated with a particular country, Spain, Mexico, and Cuba respectively. Linguistic variants can, thus, come to be thought of in terms of the flags that stand behind them. The inherent problem in this is that Chicano or Nuyorican Spanish has no flag to legitimize its existence. Therefore, even as we are trying to enhance an appreciation of language differentiation, we are at the same time conditioning the legitimacy of differentiation through politically defined sites of power.

An alternative activity could be conceived based on the pervasive tradition of the *apodo* or ‘nickname’ in Southwestern Mexican American culture. Friends and family members often engage in the jest of coming up with nicknames for each other and seeing if they stick. *Apodos* such as *el smiley, el panda* and *el picudo* are commonplace in the borderlands. A classroom-based activity on *apodos* might begin by introducing the concept as an alternative name that reflects a physical or personality trait. Then we can ask students to share some of the *apodos* they have been given. After introducing the concept and reinforcing it through practical experience, we can put students into groups and ask them to come up with an *apodo* for one another based on the models previously elucidated. Invariably, students will come up with all sorts of nicknames. Then we might ask these same groups to come up with an *apodo* for the instructor. This will most likely prove to be much more difficult although one or two groups may
turn up insightful nicknames. The difficulty in coming up with an *apodo* for the teacher can then be highlighted in order to elicit a reflection on how the apparatus of the jest really works. Through a series of leading questions, we can get students to understand that the jest only operates from positions of more power to positions lesser power. While most students will have had an *apodo* given to them by their father, their uncle, or their peers, it is quite unlikely that they would have given one to their father, uncle, or grandfather, for instance. This is a revealing and penetrating lesson about the relationship between language and power. People use language in order to exert power. When we engage in the jest of assigning *apodos*, we are implicitly expressing a greater degree of social power. When the *apodo* sticks, our power becomes legitimized and ratified by those who continue to use the *apodo*. Of course, we need to be careful to avoid conveying the notion that *apodos* themselves are somehow negative. We need to be careful to stress that power relations strike at the very heart of language differences. The *apodo* activity is useful inasmuch as it highlights the underlying motivations that sustain and reproduce the evaluative differentiation of linguistic forms.

**CONCLUSION**

In sum, I have argued that dialect awareness is a pressing issue in heritage language instruction and that the focus of dialect awareness can effectively be student-centered instead of teacher-centered. The notion of classroom based dialect awareness (CBDA) rests on the fundamental notion that knowledge and understanding of language variation are emancipating and enriching elements in the intellectual development of students. Previous treatments of CBDA, however, have limited the endeavor to a narrowly formal understanding and appreciation of dialects. I argued that CBDA can and should go beyond a formal understanding of dialects and foster a more profound social understanding of language variation. I argued that key themes in this endeavor include the functions of dialects, the distribution of dialects, and the evaluation of dialects. Furthermore, I suggested a series of activities that use everyday local knowledge and experience to foster an understanding of the themes in the SHL classroom.

**WORKS CITED**


Torreblanca, Máximo. “El español hablado en el Suroeste de los Estados Unidos y las normas lingüísticas españolas”. In C. Colombi and F. Alarcón, 1997, 133-139.


NOTES

1 The concept of the internal monitor was initially introduced in the field of second language acquisition (Krashen 1982). Valdés, however, has recently adopted it as central concept in second dialect acquisition.

2 The author gratefully acknowledges the buena voluntad of his former student, Angélica Celaya, for reminding him of the rules of the game.
Of course, the real danger here is that the silly *apodo* will stick and then the teacher will have to endure it for the rest of the semester.