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# Intercultural communicative competence and Spanish heritage language speakers: an overview from the U.S., Australia and Europe

## ABSTRACT

Research on 'heritage/community language education' (HCLE) has a relatively recent trajectory, but it has generated a large number of scholarly publications, particularly in relation to Spanish in the United States (U.S.) where the growth of Spanish heritage language learners (HLL) has been exponential. However, to date, limited research attention has been given to the intersection between heritage language learning and the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). This may be attributed to the assumption that, on a daily basis, such learners are required to move and effectively operate between languages and cultures and, therefore, already possess adequate levels of ICC. With the development of ICC now considered an integral component in language education, the time appears ripe to examine its implications within HCLE. This paper articulates the key similarities and differences in the trajectories of ICC research in relation to university level heritage learners of Spanish in three distinct geographical contexts: Australia, Europe, and the United States.

## KEYWORDS

intercultural communicative competence, Spanish as a heritage language in the United States, Australia and Europe, higher education sector, heritage language speakers, community language learners

## RESUMEN

La investigación sobre el "español como lengua de herencia o lengua comunitaria" (ELHC) tiene una trayectoria relativamente reciente, pero ha generado ya múltiples publicaciones, particularmente en el contexto estadounidense, donde el número de estudiantes de español como lengua de herencia (ELH) ha crecido exponencialmente. Sin embargo, hasta la fecha, la investigación centrada en la intersección entre el aprendizaje del ELH y el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa intercultural (CCI) es limitada. Esto puede atribuirse a la convicción de que estos estudiantes deben atravesar diariamente el umbral entre idiomas y culturas y que, por lo tanto, ya poseen niveles adecuados de CCI. Con el desarrollo de la CCI, considerada actualmente un componente integral en la instrucción de idiomas, es oportuno examinar sus implicaciones dentro del ELHC. En este artículo se desarrollan las diferencias y similitudes clave en las trayectorias de investigación de la CCI en relación con los estudiantes de ELH de nivel universitario en tres contextos geográficos bien distintos: Australia, Europa y los Estados Unidos.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

competencia comunicativa intercultural, español como lengua de herencia en los Estados Unidos, Australia y Europa, sector universitario, hablantes de lengua de herencia, hablantes de lenguas comunitarias

# Intercultural communicative competence and Spanish heritage language speakers: an overview from the U.S., Australia and Europe

## 1. Introduction

A rise in global mobility has become the norm in the 21st century. Albeit stalled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this dramatic rise has been further exacerbated by increasing waves of traumatic, forced displacement around the globe. Against this backdrop of increased diversity, we are witnessing an equally unprecedented rise in overt displays of xenophobic, dehumanizing, rampant discrimination of the Other. These issues appear to be a common feature of inequitable multilingualism (Ortega 2019) and pervasive monocultural, monolingual ethos, practices and ideologies (Macedo 2019).

In the field of languages education, given its emerging translingual and transcultural ethos, these parallel realities have called for renewed understanding of its goals and vision around who the 21st century language learner is and how to meet their needs in an ever-evolving educational landscape. Emerging features of this new learner profile include not only a rise in and increased recognition of existing heritage language speakers with wide-ranging proficiency levels in their home language but also learners with multiple types of literacies across linguistic repertoires. For these speakers there is an imperative to 'shuttle' (Canagarajah and Silberstein 2012) between linguistically and culturally diverse communities of practice. Therefore, for many of these learners, developing their multilingual and multicultural selves necessitates explicit engagement with and development of intercultural competence.

The impact of these emerging learner profiles is reflected in both compulsory and post-compulsory levels of education. In the highly internationalized university context, this is reflected in mission statements of higher education institutions around the world, through reference to the development of intercultural competences as explicit attributes of the global citizen/graduate (Dippold 2015). In order to understand this evolving language learning landscape, specific variables need to be taken into account. Firstly, the variable of geography is important to address because different national and regional circumstances entail different situations that learners must navigate. Secondly, further attention needs to be paid to the specificities of the language of study, its linguistic distance from the host language, but most importantly, its overall standing within the given learning community. Thirdly, the evolving development of culturally responsive pedagogies must also be taken into account to address the often traumatic linguistic, cultural and physical displacement in many of these learners' diasporic contexts and experiences.

Against this backdrop, we turn to the field of Heritage/Community Language Education (HCLE), which, despite its relatively recent trajectory as a field of studies, is emerging as a key area of research interest, particularly in the case of Spanish as a heritage language in the United States (US) where the number of Spanish heritage language (HL) learners has grown exponentially (Fairclough 2015; Kagan and Dillon 2018; Gironzetti and Belpoliti 2018, Alvord and Thompsom 2020).This growing body of research has shed light on various aspects of the HCL learning experience, from the diversity of HL learner groups and learner's motivation to attitudes towards the HCL to the prevalent linguistic features of HCL classroom interaction. However, as Xu and Moloney (2017) highlight in the context of Chinese as a HCL in Australia—a comparable case to the Spanish language one in the U.S.—limited research attention has been afforded to the intersection between language learning and the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) for HCL learners. This may be attributed to the assumption that, on a daily basis, these learners are required to move and

effectively operate between languages and cultures "at the threshold of their homes [rather than] at the border between two countries" (Kagan 2012, 72). Indeed, as Scarino points out, a distinctive characteristic of HCL learners is that they do not experience "intercultural processes of exchange solely as an abstract, intellectual exercise, but rather as a *lived experience*" (Scarino 2018, 472, emphasis added). With the development of ICC now considered an integral component in languages education, the time appears ripe to consider its implications within HCLE.

The first comparisons between HCLE in the U.S. and Australia can be traced back to the 2005 Special Issue of the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* aptly titled "Heritage/Community Language Education: U.S. and Australian Perspectives" (Hornberger 2005). However, contributions to this special issue did not focus on Spanish. The most recent publication, which includes a transnational perspective on Spanish as HCL, is Kim Potowski's *Handbook of Spanish as a Heritage Language* (2018). This edited volume provides comprehensive profiles of Spanish as a Community/Heritage Language (SCHL) from nine countries around the globe. However, these profiles do not address the development of ICC or the challenges associated with it in each of the given contexts. This paper aims to contribute to filling this gap by articulating the key differences and similarities in the trajectories of ICC research at the intersect of SCHL in three distinct geographical contexts: U.S., Europe and Australia. It is hoped that this preliminary overview across continents will serve as a springboard for deeper explorations in future research. Throughout this paper, we use the composite term 'heritage/community language' (HCL) to acknowledge the terminology employed by policy makers, scholars and educators in the U.S., that is, heritage language (HL), and community language (CL), which is the alternative term most widely used in Australian policy, research and education (Liddicoat 2017). However, we also acknowledge that these terms are not ideologically neutral nor unproblematic and that their use is not without shortcomings and ambiguities; however, their (re)definition falls outside the scope of this paper (see Ortega 2019).

The remainder of this paper is divided into two main sections. The first section is devoted to the analysis of definitions of ICC in its many guises as articulated in the language education benchmarking policies and guidelines relevant to each of the selected contexts. Here, it is important to note that while these policies and guidelines have been mainly developed within/for the compulsory education sector, the focus of our paper is on HCL in higher education. The second section aims to articulate the intersection between intercultural language learning and HCLE in each of the geographical contexts with specific reference to pedagogical challenges and opportunities. We conclude the paper by identifying avenues for future research in this area.

## 2. Intercultural communicative competence and heritage language learners in HE

### 2.1. Intercultural communicative competence in languages education
The notion of ICC, which emerged in the late 1990s in the work of Byram (1997) in the UK, truly signaled "a landmark shift in the way language education approached the integration of an intercultural dimension" (Díaz and Dasli 2017, 6). While various definitions of ICC have emerged since (c.f., Fantini 2020, and also Peng, Zhu, and Wu 2020), the importance afforded to ICC in (languages) education is evidenced by the publication of statements and policy documents by national and supranational organizations in each of the contexts under examination.

At the turn of the new century in Europe, the Council of Europe (CoE)'s *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (2001) aimed to provide transparency and coherence in curriculum development "through a shared metalanguage of

common reference points (…) and a descriptive scheme that outlines the communicative language activities, linguistic and general competences, and communicative strategies involved in different tasks that language users accomplish" (Piccardo and North 2020, 282). A significant contribution made by the CEFR was the promotion of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, which does not consist of the simple addition of monolingual competences in distinct languages, but rather the composite combination and development of dynamic repertoires in which all (partial) linguistic and cultural abilities and experiences play a key role in helping negotiate meaning in interaction.

Almost two decades later, new descriptors articulated in the *CEFR's Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2018a) aim to facilitate implementation of plurilingual and pluricultural competence as well as to expand the concept of *mediation*, originally introduced in 2001. In so doing, the volume provides a richer, developmental notion of mediation (linguistic, cultural, social and pedagogic), which emphasizes the co-construction of meaning in interaction and constant movement between the individual and social level in language learning (North and Piccardo 2017).

Simultaneously, the CoE also published the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC) (Council of Europe 2018b) in three complementary volumes. The RFCDC presented "a response to the urgent need to integrate democratic values and intercultural dialogue into curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment" (Yulita 2018, 500; see Simpson and Dervin 2019 for critical perspectives on the RFCDC). The volumes include scaled descriptors including a few examples from the L2 classroom (Byram and Wagner 2018). All these reference documents are applied across countries and education sectors. While European countries have national-level requirements regarding the formal study of languages in compulsory education, no such national standards exist in the U.S., where these requirements are mostly set at the school district or state level.

However, in the higher education context there are specific degree requirements which have generated increased engagement with the field of languages education. Significantly, the 2007 MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages set a clear shift in the development of language programs stating that "the language major should be structured to produce a specific outcome: educated speakers who have deep translingual and transcultural competence" (MLA 2007, 3). Here, the concept of translingual and transcultural competence "places value on the ability to operate between languages" (3–4). The report further articulates the need for language learners "to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture" (4) and, in so doing, shifted the focus "from mastery of the foreign language towards developing the ability to critically reflect on the world and themselves and recognize the multiple ways of viewing the world" (Parks 2020, 32).

Since then, several publications have highlighted the critical need to "prepare graduates for the cognitive and intercultural complexity of the twenty-first century" (Lee et al. 2012, 1; see also Chun and Evans 2016). With respect to languages education, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is the entity to which many language educators turn for benchmarks. In conjunction with the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL), ACTFL issued a document with detailed descriptions of what language learners can do at various levels. This document specifically lists proficiency benchmarks and performance indicators for products, practices, language, and behavior, which include *Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication* (Van Houten and Shelton 2018). The main aim of these statements is to facilitate the monitoring of intercultural learning across levels of language proficiency.

In the Australian education context, explicit acknowledgment and articulation of the importance of an intercultural dimension in language learning can be found in the recently developed Australian curriculum for languages (Australian Curriculum Assessment and

Reporting Authority, ACARA). In this context, 'intercultural understanding' (IU)—rather than ICC—has been included among the key capabilities to be developed by learners across all areas of the curriculum, which include languages. IU involves "students in learning to value and view *critically* their own cultural perspectives and practices and those of others through their interactions with people, texts and contexts across the curriculum" (ACARA 2014, emphasis added). Explicit acknowledgment and articulation of the importance of an intercultural dimension in language learning is thus foregrounded and utilized as a conducting thread throughout the new curriculum.

IU aims to cultivate values and dispositions such as curiosity, care, empathy, reciprocity, respect and responsibility, open-mindedness and critical awareness, which guide learners to "realize that successful intercultural communication is not only determined by what they do or say, but also by what members of the other language and culture understand from what they say or do" (ACARA 2014). Despite these significant advancements in the conceptualization of IU, due to the historical disconnect between the two sectors and the absence of an overseeing, regulatory body, language education programs in Australian universities remain largely unaware of the implementation of the curriculum changes currently underway in the compulsory education sector.

What emerges clearly from these three contexts is that regardless of the terminology used (e.g., ICC, plurilingual/pluricultural, democratic competence, translingual and transcultural competence, IU), preparing language learners for the intercultural complexities of the twenty-first century is imperative. Furthermore, at their core, a key feature of these constructs is the mediating role played by one's own linguistic repertoires in the process of meaning-making in intercultural encounters. Across these geographical contexts, language learning aims to foster critical engagement with one's own (pluri)linguistic and (pluri)cultural perspectives and practices as well that of prospective interlocutors from various backgrounds. While policy documents and supranational frameworks discussed here were largely developed with L2 learners in mind, these core aspects of intercultural learning appear to be particularly relevant to HL learners.

### 2.2. ICC in relation to L2 and HL learners

For HL learners, the ability to speak Spanish well may come to define or to be seen as indistinguishable from their cultural competence (e.g., Coryell and Clark 2009; Callahan 2010a, 2010b). Therefore, engaging critically with issues of linguistic legitimacy and multilingual/multicultural identity formation and negotiation through the development of ICC is crucial for these learners. Against this backdrop, language learners' motivation also appears to play an important role. In the U.S., L2 learners appear to be motivated by the need to fulfill university language requirements. They choose Spanish as opposed to French or Italian, for example, because they have already studied Spanish in high school, because it is perceived to be easier to learn than other languages, or because they believe it will be useful in future employment (Schroth and Smith 2018). SCHL learners, on the other hand, often mention a desire to communicate better with grandparents and other family members (Brown and Thompson 2018).

There are higher stakes for HLs when it comes to all forms of competence in the heritage language, since native speakers—influenced by long-standing raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores and Rosa 2015)—judge HL learners' errors more harshly in comparison to what they tolerate without criticism—or even praise—on the part of L2 learners (Krashen 2000; Callahan 2005; Petrucci 2007). Therefore, the stakes for HL are higher to achieve or approach high levels of linguistic proficiency as well as intercultural competence appear to be higher, because the acceptance of their own self-identity is  contingent on whether other native speakers also accept it (Leeman 2015).

While participation in community-based learning and study-abroad supports the engagement of heritage learners and provides opportunities for them to connect with their pan-Latino/x culture, it may also aggravate feelings of not being Latino enough, especially in the case of study abroad. In the U.S., the efforts and achievements of L2 learners are typically acknowledged and even celebrated in ways that the HL learners from racialized backgrounds are not (SCU OML 2019). Often, the HL is highly self-critical of their own progress. Any aspect in which the HL does not quite measure up is doubly discouraging because, as one older Latino student claimed anecdotally when reflecting on his poor performance in an exam at the beginning of a Spanish course, "I have Spanish in my blood".

## 3. Developing ICC in Spanish as HCL contexts

The following section is divided into each of the three SCHL contexts identified in the introduction. The genealogy of the varied terminology used in these different geographical contexts to refer to Spanish (i.e., *heritage language*; *community language* and *immigrant minority language*, respectively) is only part of the complex interplay between language, culture and identity. Furthermore, this terminology is also indicative of salient ideologies impacting on the status of Spanish in each of these contexts. Finally, throughout this paper, and the following sub-sections in particular, we use the collective term 'Spanish-speaking community'. It should be recognized that a key characteristic of this community is its heterogeneity including its cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, also influenced by situated, historical tensions in its varied approaches to language maintenance (López 2005). Each of the following sub-sections highlights the importance of situatedness, salient features of each context, the foci of extant research in ICC and SCHL and emerging trends in pedagogy.

### 3.1. The United States context

According to census data, Spanish is second only to English among languages spoken in the U.S. (Jenkins 2018). And although the number of students studying languages other than English in U.S. secondary and tertiary institutions is in decline, Spanish continues to have the highest enrollments (Instituto Cervantes 2019; Alvord and Thompson 2020). Courses designed for HL of Spanish have existed for several decades, beginning with courses offered as part of incipient Chicano Studies programs (Leeman and Martínez 2007). There is a large body of literature on the evolution of Spanish for Heritage Learners (SHL) programs (for overviews from various time periods, see Valdés, Lozano, and García-Moya 1981; Colombi and Alarcón 1997; Colombi and Roca 2003; Beaudrie and Fairclough 2012, Beaudrie, Ducar, and Potowski 2014; Fishman 2014).

The SCHL language classroom has long been a site of interest for languages educators (Gironzetti and Belpoliti 2018; Belpoliti and Bermejo 2019). HL Courses typically seek to capitalize on the oral and aural skills that HL bring to the classroom, and to develop other areas of proficiency/competency, especially written registers of the prestige variety of Spanish. As Villa (2018) notes—echoing the voices of several scholars such as Leeman (2005) and Flores and Rosa (2015)—this can be deeply problematic from a social justice perspective. Indeed, employing monoglossic views of language as the benchmark against which to compare L2 learners' performance is inherently flawed (Byram 1997; Davies 2003). In the case of HLs, this model is even less sustainable. Speakers of SCHL in the U.S.—and by definition, heritage speakers of any language anywhere—are living and interacting between two cultures. In the words of Showstack (2016, 145):

> (M)uchos HH de español en los EE. UU. aprenden el español de sus padres o abuelos, quienes han vivido algún tiempo en los EE. UU., e interactúan diariamente con personas con una gran variedad de trasfondos lingüísticos. El español que escuchan no es igual al español que escucharían si estuvieran viviendo en una región donde el español es la lengua hegemónica, y es posible que las similitudes con el inglés en su

habla sean un reflejo de las prácticas multilingües de sus interlocutores (véase Escobar and Potowski 2015).

Recent approaches to SCHL in the U.S. seek to address these monoglossic, (racio)linguistic ideologies deeply intertwined with learners' cultural identity by drawing on critical pedagogies (see Leeman 2018; Correa 2018; García 2019). In addition to the classroom itself as a research site, research centered on developing SCHLs' intercultural competence has largely focused on two specific contexts: firstly, on community-based learning and, secondly, but to a lesser yet rapidly growing extent, on study abroad (Burgo 2017; Quan et al. 2018). In community-based learning (also known as 'service learning'; see Hellebrandt and Varona 1999), students interact with local community members, some of whom are often first generation immigrant native speakers of Spanish. Beaudrie, Ducar, and Potowski (2014) recommend that HL act as ethnographers within their own families and communities. More recently, Thompson and Brown (2019, 924) have highlighted that the combination of Spanish for specific purposes and community/service learning "can have an empowering influence" on HL learners.

In study abroad, students interact with locals in another country, which may or may not be the same heritage context as that of the HL learners. The growing number of studies in this area suggests that, beyond the struggle with the traditionally monoglossic system and their (own) expectations of linguistic proficiency, HL learners are faced with specific challenges as they navigate intercultural adjustment in the host country as they confront "their own cultural and/or racial identity" (Comstock and Kagan 2020, 2). While Comstock and Kagan's recent study does not focus on SCHL study abroad programs, it highlights that the kind of intercultural transitions or negotiations that HL learners are used to experiencing in their home countries may shift dramatically during study abroad. Furthermore, they argue that better preparing HL learners for these challenges requires "a specialized approach (…) with attention to cultural differentiation, development of an intercultural identity, and appreciation of the culturally-specific nature of language use" (2020, 2).

While study abroad research may continue to prosper—albeit in potentially different formats given the educational challenges brought about by the current global pandemic—only around 10% of Hispanic and Latinx students from the U.S. currently study abroad (IIE 2019). Figures across all student groups indicate that –_in terms of the choice of Spanish-speaking countries – Spain is the most popular destination, with Costa Rica, Argentina and Mexico among the most popular destinations in Latin American. However, very little is known about how many HL learners choose to study in ancestral countries (see Shively 2016 and Burgos 2018). By contrast, given the particularities of SCHL in the U.S. context, given the ever-evolving landscape of displaced migrant Latinx communities, it appears that a stronger focus on community-based learning imbued with a critical, raciolinguistic perspective would be more conducive to the much-needed development of a differentiated pedagogy for SCHL. Such a focus is not without its challenges. SCHL program directors and instructors are tasked with the ongoing development of differentiated pedagogies for learners that have been (and will continue to be) deeply affected by the trauma of displacement. The development of such pedagogies will, in turn, require consideration of deeply entrenched raciolinguistic ideologies in the field of languages education.

### 3.2. The Australian context

While at first sight the Australian context may appear comparable to the predominantly Anglophone context in the U.S., the SCHL educational landscape could not be more different. This is reflected in both the socioeconomic and political status of Spanish as well as the composition of the SCHL population. Globally, Spanish has been ranked as the second most commonly spoken language as a mother tongue after Chinese and third in terms of the sheer

number of speakers (which includes learners as well as speakers of various levels of language proficiency) after Chinese and English (Instituto Cervantes, 2019). Yet, as highlighted by Jones Díaz and Walker (2018, 465), "this global status holds limited currency" in Australia, where according to the latest census data, Spanish ranks 9th among the top ten non-English languages spoken at home (ABS 2016). Indeed, apart from Italian and Greek, Spanish is the only other 'European' language that has retained its place in this list and it is considered one of the few European languages to have been consistently growing since the early 1990s (Travis 2013).

The Spanish-speaking community in Australia is indeed large and ever-expanding. Currently, the Spanish-speaking diaspora, a mixture of permanent settlers and transient migrants, represents an important presence in Australia. Yet, research on their migration history and societal impact remains limited (Urribarri et al. 2016). Available studies reflect a strong focus on the idea of belonging, intergenerational language maintenance and identity construction. The focus of the latter research centers particularly on women, children and the youth, with some studies focusing on the experiences of specific national groups (e.g., the El Salvadorian migrants, Chilean migrants, Mexican migrants, etc.), and, more recently, on digital and transnational citizenship (Martín 1996, 2011; Jones Díaz 2003; Zevallos, 2005a, 2005b, 2008; Mejía 2007, 2016; Sanchez-Castro and Gil 2008; Clyne and Kipp 2011; Rocha and Coronado 2014; Maggio 2017; Jones Díaz and Walker 2018; Mejía, Abascal, and Colic-Peisker 2018). Overall, in terms of language maintenance, Jones Díaz and Walker succinctly observe that "while Australia's language policy has effectively promoted the use of minority languages in the private domain, it has not extended the use of these languages to the public domain" (2018, 466), which includes the education system.

One of the few studies specifically concerned with areas relevant to IU and SCHL in Australia centers on early years education (Jones Díaz 2014). In this study, data derived from questionnaires and interviews with practitioners working in early childhood, primary, community language programs and one community language school revealed the impact of competing and contested institutional, material, discursive and economic conditions on these programs' capacity to deliver quality home and community languages programs. Key findings also highlighted the prevalence of an English-only habitus which impacts negatively on the nurturing and maintenance of social and cultural capital derived from the home language.

This is symptomatic of the seemingly perennial crisis in Australia's engagement with languages education, particularly in higher education. Overall, research in the area of SHCL in Australia remains quite limited, particularly in post-compulsory education and in relation to the development of ICC. Furthermore, while the study of Spanish as L2 is popular among undergraduate students, there currently is an absence of SCHL courses on offer at university level (Martínez-Expósito 2014). Indeed, according to the yearly report prepared by the Spanish Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional entitled *El Mundo Estudia Español* (2018), Spanish is taught in 21 out of 43 Australian universities. Spanish L2 courses are offered as part of *Hispanic Studies*, *Latin-American Studies* and *European Studies* as "minors" (over 2 years) or as "majors" (over 3 years) in the *Bachelor of Arts* degree or the *Bachelor of International Studies* degree. Nevertheless, it is expected that ACARA's recognition of diverse learning pathways in the new national curriculum will engage university languages educators with the needs of diverse learner groups in years to come. Language learners have been grouped as a) those who are continuing to develop the language being learnt as their first language; b) those who are home users of the language to some extent, referred to as 'background learners'; and c) second language learners.

### 3.3. The European context

In contrast with the Australian and U.S. context and despite the European Union's long-standing engagement with the study of languages, there has been relatively little work published on Spanish as a HL in the European context, let alone research on the development of ICC in heritage speakers of Spanish in European higher educational settings. This lack of literature may be symptomatic of a general lack of resistance to the promotion of distinct pathways for HL instruction on the part of European educational authorities, notwithstanding some attempts to the contrary (e.g., Christensen and Stanat 2007). In addition, and in contrast to the two contexts explored thus far, this may also be symptomatic of unresolved tensions regarding Spanish as an official European language (based on Spain's status within the European Union) and Spanish as a *migrant* language (featuring mostly Latin American varieties, which, given the colonial and hegemonic history of the language, continue to be subordinate to the more prestigiously-perceived Peninsular variety).

In this context, Extra and Gorter (2001) and Extra (2011) provide useful overviews of what are known as *immigrant minority languages* in Europe, but mention Spanish only in passing. As foreshadowed in earlier sections, studies emerging from the European context are largely concerned with L2 teaching environments rather than those of HL learners. Investigations specifically concerned with SCHL in the European context include, for Italy, Chini (2004), Calvi (2011), and more recently, in Kim Potowski's *Handbook of Spanish as a Heritage Language* (2018), Bonomi and Sanfelici (2018). Potowski's edited volume also includes comprehensive profiles of SCHL in the German (Ramos Méndez-Sahlender 2018), the Swiss (Abchi 2018) and the Swedish (Parada 2018) contexts. These studies, however, do not address the development of ICC or the pedagogical challenges associated with it in each of the given nation states. Furthermore, the specificities of each of these national contexts as recipient countries of diverse migrant groups make it difficult to establish comparisons between them, particularly in post-compulsory levels of education. The latter is highlighted in a study by Álvarez Romano (2017), which focuses on SCHL university students in Germany. The study reveals the scarcity of available university programs and research focusing on the specific curricular and pedagogical needs of these learners.

## 4. Concluding remarks

Two key aspects that emerged clearly from the preliminary overview presented in this paper are that while the conceptualizations of ICC in languages education continue to evolve in increasingly situated ways in each of the geographical contexts explored, the need for research at the intersection of SCHL and ICC remains largely unaddressed. Given the relentless rise in population mobility and the emerging yet increasingly varied profiles of HL outlined in the introduction to this paper, future theoretical and empirical studies addressing this gap can provide support for these learners—and their communities—to engage more fully and productively with their increasingly diverse nature. Furthermore, given the internationalized higher education sector's commitment to the development of globally minded, interculturally-competent graduates (Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith 2017), specific attention to the pedagogic needs of these learners will be needed more than ever.

In the U.S., studies have shown that experiential learning programs help SHLs gain confidence in their linguistic abilities by virtue of using their Spanish in contexts outside the home and classroom (Pascual y Cabo, Prada, and Lowther Pereira 2017). Future research in this area requires attention to learners' voices (Wilson and Pascual y Cabo 2019) and the development of awareness and appreciation of pan-Latinx cultures through strengthening connections to the HL's own home or community culture. This may be achieved through critical pedagogies that counter the prevailing rhetoric and raciolinguistic ideologies that marginalize Spanish as a HL and Spanish language varieties (García 2019). This increased

awareness will afford students a stronger connection to their heritage culture and identity, and a more positive attitude towards their own and other varieties of Spanish.

While the Australian and European contexts feature significant references to the development of ICC in compulsory levels of education, they also reveal a stark absence of research around the development of ICC within SCHL at university level. Future research across these geographical contexts (as well as others) requires deeper engagement with the specific, situated features of SCHL learner profiles as well as critical consideration of the ideological underpinnings, socio-economic and political standing of Spanish and its speakers in the given context. It is hoped that this paper goes some way in fostering new conversations which may serve as a springboard for such research.

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