University Level Spanish Heritage Language Students' Use of Metaphor in Writing: Exploring Auto-Biographical Linguistic Narratives

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Abstract : The question of heritage language learners in foreign language classrooms has been widely debated in second language education, especially with Spanish in a U.S. Instructors of Spanish as a foreign language have brought pedagogical focus to Spanish heritage language students in order to retain, develop and maintain their first language. This paper proposes a thorough examination of the use of conceptual metaphors within autobiographical linguistic narratives as a key indicator of the writing development of advanced Spanish-language students. By pairing genre theory from Systemic Functional Linguistics with metaphor theory, this paper will examine the metaphors used by 3rd and 4th year university Spanish students within the narrative genre from a corpus of 16, 091 words. The investigation has found that heritage language students use a variety of bicultural metaphors, transferred from both languages to conceptualize their linguistic development, in addition to using metaphor in specific narrative stages as a literary strategy. Since it has been found that the metaphors used were transcultural, the use of conceptual metaphors in heritage language learners can be further examined to help these students achieve their linguistic and academic goals in the Spanish by transferring from their knowledge in English. In conclusion, by closely examining the function of student discourse through their multicultural metaphoric competence, this study provides important insights on how to enable instructors to best further their students' writing development in the target language.
Keywords : academic writing development, heritage language learners, language attitudes and ideologies, metaphor
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