

Heritage Language Learners of Spanish: What Role Does Metalinguistic Knowledge Play in Their Acquisition of the Subjunctive?

Maite Correa
Colorado State University

1. Introduction

Over the past 40 years there has been a considerable amount of research on the effects that teaching focus has on second language (L2) learner accuracy. Those instructors who prefer teaching with a focus on meaning are often accused of not emphasizing grammatical accuracy and those who choose to focus on accuracy may be accused of not emphasizing fluency of communication. The main motivation to support one or the other point of view is closely related to the role that metalinguistic knowledge (MK, defined as “that part of explicit knowledge that is potentially verbalizable” (Isemonger, 2007, p. 113)) is believed to play in language acquisition: those who believe that explicit instruction poses no substantial benefits for L2 acquisition (Felix, 1981; Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Terrell, 1983) support a teaching approach based on fluency and communication, and those that believe that L2 acquisition benefits from some form of explicit instruction (Ellis & Laporte, 1997; Lightbown, 1998; Herdina & Jessner, 2000) support teaching approaches focused on form.

Heritage Language (HL) learners have been defined as students of language who are “raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speak or merely understand the heritage language, and who are to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (Valdés, 2000, p. 1). HL learners of Spanish exhibit some characteristics in common with their Foreign Language (FL) counterparts (Montrul, 2005; Montrul & Bowles, 2008; Lynch, 2008): First of all, as neither of them are monolinguals of Spanish, both groups usually fail to develop full linguistic ability in the target language and end up with similar grammars. Additionally, they make the same type of transfer errors from English and display some of the same morphosyntactical problems. However, manner and context of acquisition also set these two groups apart: First, HL learners may require substantially less instructional time than FL learners to develop the same skills, especially pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency (Brecht & Ingold, 2002). Second, while Spanish FL learners’ experiences with Spanish are homogeneously delineated within a specific progression of courses that begins at zero and goes through a well-defined academic experience (Carreira, 2007b), HL learners’ first academic experience with Spanish ranges within different levels depending on the language proficiency they exhibit when they decide to start studying the language, which many times prevents those who place into “intermediate” and “advanced” classes from reviewing important concepts that are typically taught in beginning courses (Carreira, 2007a). Third, and as a consequence of having learned the language in naturalistic settings, HL learners usually have less experience with Spanish literacy skills (reading, writing, and metalinguistic knowledge) than FL learners even though they are usually more fluid in conversational settings (Montrul et al., 2008).

For the past decades, research on language teaching has focused almost exclusively on pedagogies only appropriate to FL learning. Consequently, applied linguists and language instructors concerned with the teaching of Spanish for HL learners lack the opportunities to practice “theories that can directly support their teaching” (Valdés, 1995, p. 308). In fact, although the role that MK plays in FL acquisition has been long discussed in the field of applied linguistics, it remains unclear what role, if any, it plays in HL learners’ acquisition. This paper contributes to HL teaching pedagogies by

investigating and comparing the degree of the impact that MK has on the learning of a challenging structure such as the subjunctive by FL and HL learners of Spanish.

This study 1) looks at the different development that FL and HL learners at three levels of instruction show with respect to English/Spanish MK and accuracy in the use of a challenging, problematic structure, such as the subjunctive; 2) examines the relationship between MK in English and Spanish; and 3) compares the role that English/Spanish MK plays in the acquisition of the subjunctive by both groups.

In the following section I review some of the most relevant studies that look at the relationship between metalinguistic knowledge (or metalanguage) and language proficiency (or acquisition) in both FL and HL settings.

2. Previous Research

2.1. *The Role of Metalinguistic Knowledge in Foreign Language Acquisition*

In an attempt to determine whether students are disadvantaged when they are assumed to possess a working knowledge of terminology before entering the classroom, Jeffries (1985) documented the extent of students' knowledge of traditional English grammar terminology and correlated it with the grade at the end of one term of study of elementary French, German and Spanish at the university level. She found that the correlations between English grammar terminology knowledge and end of the semester grades were significantly strong in French and German (0.55 and .63 respectively) and significantly moderate in Spanish (.36). She also found positive correlations between the test of English grammar terminology and other variables considered, such as total scores in the MLAT or ACT composite scores (between .39 and .60). These results lead her to propose that "those students who begin instruction with some knowledge of formal grammar terms are most likely to perform according to the teacher's expectations" (p. 389) and that students' metalinguistic knowledge should be taken into consideration when deciding a teaching approach or choosing a specific textbook.

Alderson, Clapham & Steel's (1997) correlated linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge with proficiency level in French by first-year undergraduate learners of French. They found that the relationship between MK and general French language proficiency is weak. As a consequence, they conclude that MK and language proficiency appear to constitute two separate factors of linguistic ability and that there is no evidence to support the belief that students with higher levels of MK perform better at French, nor that they improve their French proficiency at higher rates than other students. According to them, there is no evidence from this study to justify the teaching of MK as a means of improving students' linguistic proficiency. However, as they acknowledge, acquisition of some linguistic items is more amenable to explicit instruction while others are best acquired through naturalistic exposure with no focus on form. This study tests French proficiency in general and the low correlations might be due to the possibility that some non-complex structures can be, in fact, acquired without any MK.

Elder, Davies, Hajek, Manwaring & Warren (1997) replicated Alderson et al.'s (1997) study with three groups of beginning language students (Chinese, Italian and French) with similar results. Participants took four tests of MK. The results of this battery of tests was correlated with the class achievement tests and exams administered to students during the first semester of language study. They found a weak relationship between English grammatical knowledge and foreign language performance at the early stages of learning (between .21 and .56). Nevertheless, the authors acknowledge that the relationship between English MK and success in acquiring a foreign language might become stronger as language study progresses, since it might be that at this early stage of learning the features of language being measured are quite trivial.

Han & Ellis (1998) examined the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge and general language proficiency by advanced adult learners of English in the United States (from different backgrounds). They found that metalanguage (terminology) plays only an "insignificant role" in general language proficiency (with correlations between metalinguistic tests scores and TOEFL/SLEP scores being close to zero). However, they also found that analyzed explicit knowledge (as measured by a delayed grammaticality judgment task) might play a significant role (with correlations above .43). As a consequence, they conclude that "teaching explicit knowledge might more profitably emphasize the development of analyzed knowledge than metalanguage" (p. 19).

From the studies reviewed here, it can be inferred that participants' level of proficiency is a decisive factor in order to determine the (dis)advantages of FonF and metalinguistic knowledge: beginner level students seem to benefit as much from explicit as from implicit knowledge, but intermediate and advanced L2 learners benefit more from explicit knowledge. In addition, knowledge of terminology seems to play only a modest role for beginner students (Alderson et al., 1997; Elder et al., 1997; Jeffries, 1985), but explicit knowledge has a moderate correlation with language proficiency for advanced L2 learners (Han & Ellis, 1998). Additionally, explicit knowledge might have a different effect on simple than in complex structures (Alderson et al., 1997), such as the one discussed here (subjunctive in Spanish)

2.2. The Role of Metalinguistic Knowledge in Heritage Language Acquisition

Previous research agrees that many HL learners of Spanish cannot produce grammatical terminology, simple grammatical analysis, and/or simple grammatical items on demand (Samaniego & Pino, 2000) and that explicit grammar explanations (mostly geared towards L2 learners) are often confusing to them (Beaudrie, 2009). Contact with the language for most of these learners takes place in natural settings where only authentic, highly contextual interactions occur. As a consequence, it has been suggested that teaching methodologies that require MK or over-emphasize the mastering of grammatical rules may be negative both in terms of performance and of self-confidence for this population (Beaudrie, 2009; Anderson, 2008).

However, the fact that HL students are confused with grammatical terminology and rules does not mean that some focus on form is not necessary and beneficial for this population (Anderson, 2008). Instead, the purpose of grammar instruction should not longer be learning a foreign language:

[R]ules of grammar could be seen as tools rather than as a belittling of their speech. Once the students learned these rules – many of which were applicable to their own varieties of Spanish as well – they could speak and write with greater confidence, which in turn allowed them to use Spanish more and in different ways and to reflect on their relationship with the language more freely. Learning about the way any language works can also raise awareness of language in general. While grammar lessons are not the only or even the principal ingredient needed to cause a positive change in a student's relationship with language, their use in this study seemed to empower the participants to think beyond grammar and reconsider their feelings toward the language (Mikulski, 2006, pp. 670-1).

Aligned with this idea of grammar rules as tools for reflection, awareness and empowerment, Potowski (2005) proposes that HL courses be designed not as Foreign Language courses, but as Language Arts courses, which are centered on literacy development and grammatical knowledge of the language that the students already speak.

To sum up, recent research on the differences between HL and FL teaching/learning has concluded the following:

- a) Because of previous, naturalistic experiences with the language, HL and FL learners have a different point of departure when they sign up for Spanish classes (Carreira, 2007b, Montrul & Bowles, 2008; Potowski, 2009)
- b) HL learners are not and should not be identified as advanced FL learners (Carreira, 2007a) or native speakers (Montrul & Bowles, 2008)
- c) HL learners report to be confused with grammatical terminology (Beaudrie, 2009)
- d) Some focus on form (including negative evidence) should be beneficial for HL learners, as it is for English native speakers enrolled in English or Language Arts classes (Potowski, 2005; Anderson, 2008; Montrul & Bowles, 2008)

3. This study

In this study there is no experimental treatment and, as a consequence, teaching methodology is not a variable. Instead of focusing on the learning process and how it can be altered, this study is based specifically on verbalizable MK (understood as the ability demonstrated by participants to identify grammar terminology and ungrammatical sentences, as well as to provide grammar rules regardless of their exposure to explicit/implicit teaching) and its relationship to subjunctive accuracy. The research questions are the following:

- 1) Is there any correlation between English and Spanish metalinguistic knowledge by HL and FL learners?
- 2) What is the relationship between FL/HL students' metalinguistic knowledge (in Spanish and English) and their accuracy in mood selection at the three levels of instruction?
- 3) Are the predictor variables for subjunctive accuracy different for FL and HL learners?

3.1. Participants

The participants for this study (Table 1) were 378 students recruited on a volunteer basis from nineteen 2nd (beginner), 3rd (intermediate), and 4th (advanced) year FL and HL Spanish classes at a large South Western university. After discarding tests that were incomplete (more than 30% blank), and with the help of a background questionnaire, a total number of 196 students were classified as HL speakers (54 beginner, 98 intermediate and 44 advanced) and a total of 178 students were classified as FL students (73 beginner, 56 intermediate and 49 advanced).

Table 1
Student participants

	FL learners	HL learners in HL classes	HL learners in FL classes	HL learners in content courses (FL and HL mixed)	Total
Level 1	73	53	1		127
Level 2	56	92	6		154
Level 3	49			44	93
Total	178	145	7	44	374

3.2. Materials

The materials for this study are divided in three parts: 1) A test of general metalinguistic knowledge in English and Spanish; 2) A test of grammatical competence in the subjunctive; and 3) a background questionnaire. The individual tasks are described in detail below.

3.2.1. Test of General Metalinguistic Knowledge in English and Spanish

a. Terminology test (TT). In order to measure the learners' knowledge of grammar terminology in both English and Spanish, they were presented with ten sentences in English and ten sentences in Spanish and asked to identify and underline a specific grammatical constituent for each sentence that might consist of one or more words (subject, preposition, main verb, etc.). One point was given if all the required words were underlined; 0.5 points were awarded if only part of the required words were underlined; and zero points were given if no words or *any* incorrect word(s) were underlined. The maximum points for each section is ten.

b. Grammaticality judgment task (GJT). This task consists of five sentences in English and five sentences in Spanish and it is broken down in three sections: 1) identification of ungrammatical sentences, and, in the case that the sentence is categorized as “ungrammatical”: 2) correction of errors; and 3) provision of rules. In order to evaluate the provision of rules for ungrammatical sentences, an adaptation of Han & Ellis’ (1998) rubric was used in which the maximum points for each item was 3. To determine the reliability of the use of this scale, a second rater was used. The Pearson Product Moment coefficient of reliability for the two raters was .83 for the GJT in English and .92 for the GJT in Spanish.

3.2.2. Test of Grammatical Competence in the Subjunctive.

a. Forced choice 1 (FC1). In this task there are ten sentences in which the participants were asked to circle one out of two options provided. One point was given for each correct answer. If seven or more responses were blank, the task was considered incomplete and it was not included in the analysis. The maximum score was ten points.

(1) Tus padres te sugieren que *comes/comas* más tomates

b. Fill in the blank (FB). This task consisted of five situations involving a dialogue. The participants were asked to fill in the blanks (a total of ten) with the correct form of the verbs in parenthesis. One point was given for each correct form of the verb. If the participant used the correct mood but the verb did not agree in person or number and/or was misspelled (“trabejen” instead of “trabaje”, for example), the item was given a score of half a point. Each incorrect (choosing the wrong mood) or blank response received a score of zero. If seven or more responses were blank, the task was considered incomplete and it was not computed. The maximum score for this task was ten points.

(2) En la parada de autobús:

Jaime: ¿Qué hace esa señora corriendo?

María: Ella le _____ (gritar) al conductor del autobús para que no se _____ (ir) sin ella.

c. Forced choice 2 (FC2). This task consisted of five situations, such as the one exemplified in (3) below. The participant is asked to choose the option that best describes the situation (one in the indicative and another in the subjunctive). The situation in (3) describes a mother looking for her son in the mall. The option in the indicative (a) depicts that same situation, whereas the answer in the subjunctive (b) describes a situation in which the mom looks for any child who is that age. One point was given for each correct answer. If four or five responses were blank, the task was considered incomplete and was not computed. The maximum score for this task was five points.

(3) María estaba en el centro comercial con su hijo Juan, pero Juan ha desaparecido y María lo está buscando:

a. María busca un niño que tiene 12 años

b. María busca un niño que tenga 12 años

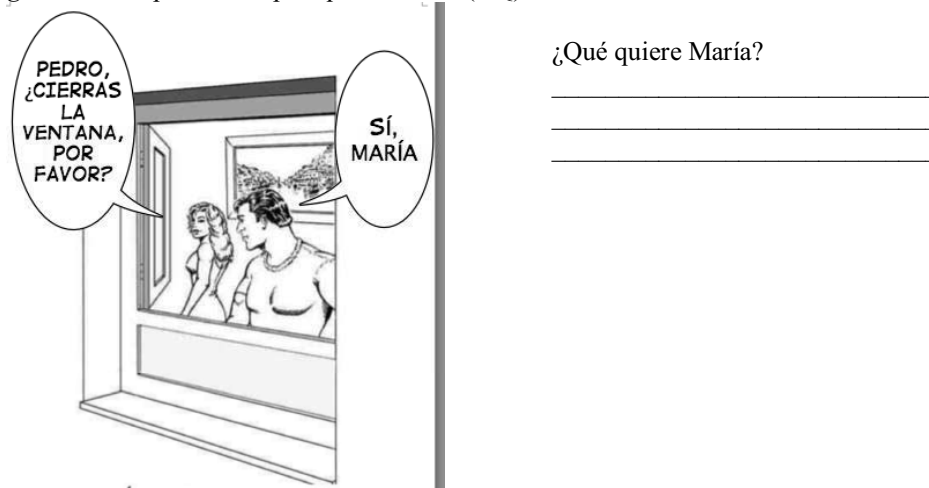
d. Sentence completion (SC). This task included ten sentences to be completed. One point was awarded if the verb’s mood was correctly chosen and it was correctly conjugated; half a point was given if the choice indicative/subjunctive was clear, but the form was still incorrect; and no points were given if the wrong mood was chosen. If seven or more responses were blank, the task was considered incomplete and it was not computed. The maximum score for this task was ten points.

(4) Cuando hace calor, mis amigos y yo...

e. Open questions (OQ). This task consisted of five drawings/explanations presenting five different situations (such as the one depicted in Figure 1). The participants were asked to answer a question

related to the drawing with a complete sentence. Two points were given for each correct answer and one point was awarded for a clear attempt to use the correct mood. If three or more responses were blank, the task was considered incomplete and it was not included in the analysis. The maximum score was ten points.

Figure 1. Example of the open question task (OQ)



3.2.3. Background Questionnaire

The background questionnaire was designed in order to obtain information on the personal, educational and linguistic background of the participants. This questionnaire served also to identify native/heritage speakers, participants who spent a considerable time in a Spanish speaking country, or participants who also spoke other languages.

3.3. Data Analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical data reduction procedure used to explain variability among variables in terms of fewer unobserved variables called factors. The advantage of using this methodology is that it allows a reduction in the number of variables by combining two or more variables into a single factor. A Principal Component Factor Analysis was performed using all the measures of metalinguistic knowledge (TT in Spanish, TT in English, GJT in Spanish, and GJT in English). To compensate for cases with missing values, a pair-wise deletion of cases with missing values was employed. The factor analysis produced a four-factor solution, but only one factor had an eigenvalue greater than one (2.469), which accounted for a remarkable 61.72% of the variance. This factor had strong loadings for both terminology tests (.818 for English and .819 for Spanish) and sizeable loadings for both provision of rules tests (.774 for English and .728 for Spanish), which means that all tests contributed more or less homogeneously to this factor score. The overall reliability of the MK component is a considerable .812.

Four more factor analyses were carried out in order to group data that might share commonalities: 1) Metalinguistic knowledge in English (TTE and GJTE); 2) Metalinguistic knowledge in Spanish (TTS and GJTS); 3) Terminology (TTS and TTE); and 4) Provision of Rules (GJTE and GJTS), all of which were also recorded as new variables.

Additionally, in order to determine an overall score of accuracy in the use of the subjunctive, a Principal Component Factor Analysis was performed using all the measures of accuracy in the use of the subjunctive (forced choice 1 (FC1), fill in the blank (FB), forced choice 2 (FC2), sentence completion (SC), and open questions (OQ)). To compensate for cases with missing values, a pair-wise deletion of cases with missing values was employed. The factor analysis produced a four-factor solution, but only one factor had an eigenvalue greater than one (3.378), which accounted for a notable

67.56% of the variance. This factor had strong loadings for all tests (.846 for FC, .855 for FB, .861 for SC, and .890 for OQ) except for the FC2 test, which was sizeable (.630). This means that all tests contributed more or less homogeneously to this factor score. This factor score was recorded as a new variable (called from now on ‘Subjunctive Accuracy’ or ‘S’). The overall reliability of the subjunctive accuracy component is a remarkable .906.

4. Results

The results were submitted to a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with group (FL vs. HL) and level (1, 2, 3) as between-subject factors. The dependent variables measured were subjunctive (S) and metalinguistic knowledge (MK). The results appear below in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2
Analysis of Variance for Subjunctive scores

	df	MS	F	Sig.
Level	2	18.962	38.398	.000
Group (HL or FL)	1	100.994	204.511	.000
Level * Group	2	6.721	13.609	.000

Adjusted R Squared = .474

Table 3
Analysis of Variance for Metalinguistic Knowledge scores

	df	MS	F	Sig.
Level	2	15.161	25.079	.000
Group (HL or FL)	1	101.793	168.386	.000
Level * Group	2	2.273	3.759	.024

Adjusted R Squared=.396

The interaction between level and group was significant for both subjunctive ($F_{2, 335}=13.609$, $p=.000$) and metalinguistic knowledge ($F_{2, 346}= 3.759$, $p=.024$) scores. Figures 2 and 3 below show how FL learners outperform HL learners across all levels in subjunctive accuracy, while the opposite happens with metalinguistic knowledge.

Figure 2. Means for subjunctive accuracy across levels.

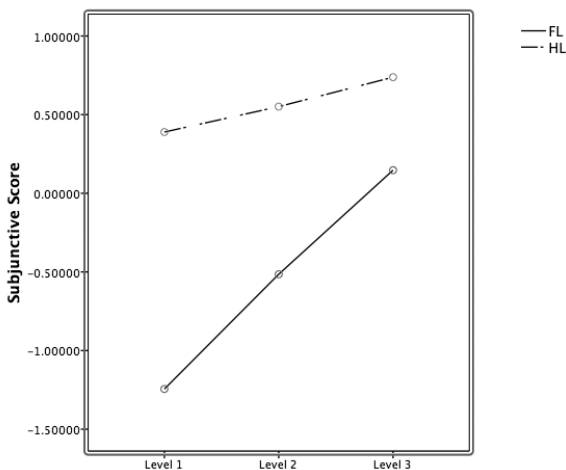
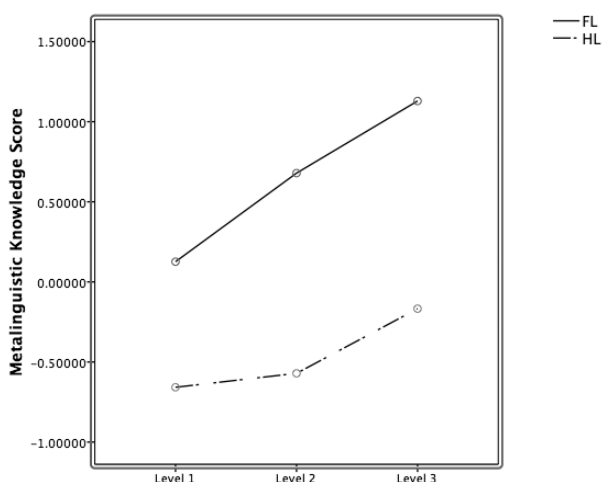


Figure 3. Means for metalinguistic knowledge across levels



In order to investigate the relationship between MK in English and MK in Spanish by FL and HL learners, correlation analyses were carried out with the following results (Table 4):

Table 4
Correlation between English and Spanish MK Scores by HL and FL Learners

	FL	HL
All levels	.712**	.759**
Level 1	.631**	.681**
Level 2	.643**	.711**
Level 3	.691**	.877**

** $p < .01$

As shown above, correlations between general MK in both languages are largely correlated (between .631 and .877), which indicates that the two measures are related at the three levels of instruction: participants who show MK in Spanish also show MK in English (or vice-versa) regardless of level of instruction.

In order to investigate the relation between MK and subjunctive accuracy, the subjunctive accuracy factor score (S) was interrelated to variables regarding MK using Pearson Product Moment correlations. The results are shown below in Table 5 and Table 6:

Table 5
FL Correlation Scores with FS Subjunctive

	FS MK	FS Term	FS GJT	FS MKE	FS MKS
All levels	.619**	.566**	.534**	.509**	.629**
Level 1	.323*	.297*	.287*	.239	.366**
Level 2	.666**	.675**	.428**	.498**	.616**
Level 3	.513**	.532**	.382**	.401**	.534**

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 6
HL Correlation Scores with FS Subjunctive

	FS MK	FS Term	FS GJT	FS MKE	FS MKS
All levels	.032	-.010	.061	.033	.025
Level 1	.097	.127	.022	.080	.095
Level 2	.024	-.055	.109	.042	.012
Level 3	-.246	-.304	-.164	-.207	-.273

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Correlations do not imply causation; however, they show relationships between variables. The Pearson Correlations for all levels presented in Tables 5 and 6 indicate a large and significant relationship ($p < .01$) between most measures of MK and the general subjunctive accuracy score (S) for FL learners. On the other hand, the correlations between MK and S are non significant and close to zero (or even negative) for HL learners, which implies that these MK variables are not related with subjunctive accuracy.

In order to find a predictor variable for subjunctive accuracy, Regression Analyses were carried out for both groups. A significant model emerged for FL learners ($F_{4, 140} = 23.143$, $p < 0.001$; $R \text{ Square} = .398$) illustrated in Table 7. This model explains 39% of the variance, with the predictor variable of GJT in Spanish accounting for the highest prediction ($\beta = .332$, $p < .01$) followed by TT in Spanish ($\beta = .260$, $p < .01$). Interestingly, GJT in English and TT in English showed correlations with overall subjunctive accuracy, but neither emerged as significant predictors in a regression model.

Table 7
Multiple Regression Analysis for Subjunctive Accuracy (FL)

Predictor Variable	Beta	<i>t-value</i>
GJT English	.016	190
GJT Spanish	.332	4.124**
TT English	.160	1.691
TT Spanish	.260	2.810**

** $p < .01$

A non-significant model emerged for HL learners ($F_{4, 177} = .299$, $p = .878$, $R \text{ Square} = .007$), which implies that none of these MK variables predict overall subjunctive accuracy for this group of learners.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results presented in this study support the idea that HL and FL learners of Spanish perform quite differently: FL learners outperform HL learners in MK across all levels, while HL learners outperform FL learners in all tasks related to subjunctive accuracy. This means that, even when HL learners are able to use subjunctive more accurately than FL learners, their knowledge of terminology and rules is well below the one their FL counterparts exhibit at the same levels.

RQ1: Is there any correlation between English and Spanish metalinguistic knowledge? Although FL learners' MK is significantly higher than that of HL learners' at all levels, English explicit knowledge of terminology and rules is highly correlated with the same type of knowledge in Spanish for both groups (FL learners: $r = .712^{**}$; HL learners: $r = .759^{**}$). Correlations become stronger as level progresses for both groups, which suggests that, as students learn more MK in Spanish, there might be transfer of this knowledge into English.

RQ2: What is the relationship between Spanish students' MK and their accuracy in mood selection at the three levels of instruction? In the case of FL learners, MK and Subjunctive accuracy are related at all levels (specially 2nd and 3rd). However, in the case of HL learners, MK and Subjunctive accuracy

are not related at any level (some correlations, even though non-significant, are *negative*). This implies that FL learners who are metalinguistically aware are more accurate in their production of subjunctive (or vice-versa). On the contrary, in the case of HL learners there is no relation between MK and subjunctive accuracy.

RQ3: Are the predictor variables for subjunctive accuracy different for FL and HL learners? The 4 measures of MK account for 38% of the variance in Subjunctive accuracy for FL learners, with Provision of rules in Spanish being the best predictor followed by Terminology in Spanish. However, none of the MK measures can explain the variance in Subjunctive accuracy for HL learners.

We can see from the results that FL students who are more aware of general grammar tend to use subjunctive more accurately than those that are not metalinguistically aware while, on the contrary, HL learners' knowledge of grammar is unrelated to their accuracy in the use of subjunctive, which is consistent with the idea that 1) manner of acquisition (naturalistic vs. classroom) affects the relationship between MK and subjunctive accuracy and that 2) knowledge of terminology and grammar rules is unrelated to accuracy in the use of subjunctive for HL learners. As a consequence, it is not striking to find that HL outperform FL learners in subjunctive accuracy at all levels but that FL learners outperform HL learners in all measures of MK at all levels. However, both groups of students *do* show improvement in their Spanish and English MK, although this improvement is much slower for HL than for FL learners. This suggests that HL learners acquire subjunctive implicitly rather than explicitly and do not need to "learn rules" in order to use the language successfully. Still, the fact that their MK knowledge improves means that they do learn some rules and terminology, although maybe not enough to play a role in their language acquisition, since the results seem to suggest that the more MK knowledge they possess, the worse they perform with subjunctive. Transfer from Spanish into English MK (and not vice-versa) could also explain why HL learners exhibit much lower MK scores in English than FL learners across all levels.

The claim that HL speakers are "in a no-win situation in foreign language classes" (Krashen, 2000, p. 441) is reinforced by the results of this study, which suggest that what works for FL learners might not work for HL learners and that Spanish programs should offer two separate (FL and HL) tracks where the focus on grammar needs to be addressed by differing approaches or with different objectives. In fact, and following Potowski (2005) and Samaniego & Pino (2000), it looks more reasonable to propose Spanish for HLLs courses that resemble language arts courses with an emphasis on the development of literacy and grammatical knowledge in the same manner that English language arts courses emphasize English learning.

As a consequence, we need to go back and revisit the objectives for language instruction in HL classes. There is nothing inherently wrong in teaching students to reflect on how their language works, and HL learners are not an exception. However, the purpose of grammar teaching should not be learning the language as much as reflecting on how it works from a descriptive perspective (versus the prescriptive approach mostly used in the FL classroom).

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Selected Proceedings of the 13th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium

edited by Luis A. Ortiz-López

Cascadilla Proceedings Project Somerville, MA 2011

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Correa, Maite. 2011. Heritage Language Learners of Spanish: What Role Does Metalinguistic Knowledge Play in Their Acquisition of the Subjunctive? In *Selected Proceedings of the 13th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium*, ed. Luis A. Ortiz-López, 128-138. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project. www.lingref.com, document #2481.