

*De bueno a muy bueno:*  
**How Pedagogical Intervention Boosts Language Proficiency in  
Advanced Heritage Learners**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper presents and analyzes quantitative and qualitative changes in the performance of seven advanced-proficiency heritage speakers of Spanish over the course of one semester of instruction, during which these speakers were part of a college-level macro-based heritage Spanish class. Using oral narratives recorded in the first and last weeks of class, we analyzed changes in key categories such as overall narrative organization, use of discourse connectors, tenses, complex structures (subordination), and lexical proficiency. The post-intervention results showed positive improvements in students' linguistic ability to narrate in more sophisticated and complex ways as the proportion of subordinate clauses, variety of tenses, and diversification of discourse connectors increased, as well as the use of stylistic phrases and formulas characteristic of the narrative genre. The results provide concrete examples of the positive impact that a pedagogical macro-approach can have on advanced heritage learners' language development, use, and motivation. We propose a combination of pedagogical practices that include a rich language environment, meaningful interactions, continuous scaffolding, and explicit instruction about discourse elements, complex structures, and genre characteristics to continue fostering advanced language learning. Other factors we analyze as part of the dynamics of change in students' narrative skills include the interaction between oral and written modalities of the language and individual differences.

**KEYWORDS:** *heritage speakers, Spanish, college, pedagogical intervention, heritage language pedagogy, advanced, narrative skills, macro-based approach, pre-post study, complexity*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Heritage speakers (HSs)—bilinguals who were exposed to a minority language from birth but whose stronger language is the dominant language of society—face the common challenge of not having enough input and formal educational opportunities in their heritage language. These opportunities may be missing both during childhood, when HSs must negotiate both languages (He, 2014, 2016), and in adulthood, when HSs' reduced exposure to and use of the home language hinders its maintenance. However, a growing number of adult HSs representing different languages and proficiency levels choose to take classes in order to reconnect with their language

and culture (Colombi, 2015; Hornberger & Wang, 2008; Valdés & Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998; among others).

Such is the case of the Latino heritage population, which is entering higher education in larger numbers and deciding to enroll in Spanish language classes (Beaudrie, 2011; KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provanski, 2007). The interest in understanding and strengthening HSs' linguistic and cultural profiles has resulted in significant growth of linguistic and pedagogical research that seeks to identify their linguistic characteristics and design the best pedagogical practices to support oral and literacy development (some of the recent volumes in this area include Beaudrie, Ducar, & Potowski, 2014; Fairclough & Beaudrie, 2016; Zapata & Lacorte, 2018).

Much of this research concerns lower proficiency Spanish HSs (Montrul, 2016; Montrul & Bowles, 2009; Beaudrie, 2009; Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Lynch 2008), leaving information gaps regarding best practices for HSs with advanced proficiency (Alarcón, 2010; Carreira, 2013). Meanwhile, advanced HSs still need to develop and acquire the discursive abilities and formal registers of the language, including sophisticated lexicon and complex language structures needed for extended discourse exchanges and communication in professional and academic settings (Valdés & Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998; Swender, Martin, Rivera-Martínez, & Kagan (2014)).

In bringing already-proficient Latino HSs to an even higher level, macro-based (or top-down) approaches to teaching language are particularly effective (Kagan & Dillon, 2001/2003; Martínez, 2003; Wu & Chang, 2010, 2012; Parra, 2013; Parra, Otero, Flores, & Lavellé 2017; Carreira, 2016); this approach is designed to foster discursive abilities. This article expands our understanding of the role played by macro-based classroom interventions in language development among heritage language learners (HLLs).

## **2. APPROACHES TO HLL INSTRUCTION**

### **2.1 Explicit Instruction**

To explore possibilities for facilitating the (re-)learning of Spanish, some researchers have examined the effects of explicit grammar instruction in the (re)learning process. For instance, in their pioneering study, Montrul and Bowles (2009) demonstrated that explicit grammar instruction can have a significantly positive impact on the production of specific grammatical structures such as the indirect object marker *a* with *gustar*-type verbs. Similarly, Beaudrie (2009) found that HLLs with receptive abilities or with low Spanish proficiency who were placed in SLA classrooms benefited from some of the SLA methodology, e.g., grammar explanations, particularly those regarding accuracy in noun-gender agreement and verbal morphology.

However, other studies have shown mixed results about the benefits of explicit instruction for HLLs. For example, Potowski and Jegerski's (2007) study on production tasks, cited in Lynch (2008), compared traditional instruction with processing instruction (based on VanPatten and Oikennon's 1996 model of input processing) related to subjunctive/indicative mood distinction in heritage and L2 classrooms. The authors found no significant differences in the effects of the instruction type. Potowski, Jegerski, and Morgan-Short (2009) extended this work to explore the effects of focused grammar instruction based on an input processing model (VanPatten & Wong, 2004) to teach the past subjunctive—also a vulnerable structure in the Spanish of HSs—and found

that explicit instruction benefited FLLs more than HLLs. The authors assumed that the difference was due to the familiarity and broader knowledge of grammatical terminology acquired through several years of explicit instruction in the SLA classroom. In this regard, Torres (2013) found significant differences between HLLs and FLLs in the way they interpreted and responded to a task-based intervention using the subjunctive: given their familiarity with grammatical terminology and tasks structured around it in the SLA, FLLs identified the study tasks as choosing between subjunctive and indicative forms, while HLLs interpreted the task as interpreting the meaning of the prompts. Because of the lack of opportunities to formally learn the language, HLLs tend to get confused by technical terminology and grammatical explanations (Beaudrie, 2009; Torres, 2013). On the other hand, Torres's (2018) research on the teaching of the Spanish subjunctive in adjectival clauses shows that learning and using a specific structure is related not only to the type of instruction, but also to the complexity of the task and individual differences in prior language experience. These factors can lead to variation in task outcomes for both HLLs and FLLs.

Lately, researchers and practitioners have explored and adopted broader pedagogical frameworks that embrace a socially and interdisciplinary-oriented position toward language teaching. This pedagogical shift aims to address students' affective needs and interests while understanding how speakers of one language become users (i.e., speakers, writers, readers) of a language (Valdés, 2016, p. 260). Such an understanding would facilitate the development of meaningful pedagogical practices for HLLs, giving them the necessary tools to develop more sophisticated levels of language proficiency, along with a sense of motivation, pride, and agency within their communities.

## **2.2 Macro-Based Approaches to HLL Teaching**

Recent proposals for teaching HLs have embraced so-called "macro-approaches," an umbrella term for pedagogical approaches that prioritize meaning-making at the discourse level over linguistic forms at the sentence level. Macro-based approaches are associated with "whole-language" or "top-down" theories of information processing, which suggests that perception and information are organized and shaped by context, expectations, and meaningful experiences (Carreira, 2016, p. 126). In the field of HL teaching, such approaches address the development of language abilities through several principles (Kagan & Dillon, 2001/2003; Martínez, 2003; Wu & Chang, 2010, 2012; Parra, 2013; Parra et al., 2017; Carreira, 2016). The materials used with HLLs must be age-appropriate and representative of a broad range of meaningful input, including a variety of authentic written texts and other genres such as films, videos, music, and visual arts (Parra & Di Fabio, 2013; Parra, 2013; Parra et al., 2017; Samaniego & Warner, 2016). The following recommendations apply to the work with such materials in class: a) emphasis should be placed on the comprehension and analysis of content; b) the teaching of vocabulary and grammar should be integrated in the context of the relevant texts; c) attention should be given to stylistics; and d) a broad range of opportunities should be provided for students to express their views in class discussions, peer conversations, and essays.

The principle of language as a meaning-making tool (Halliday, 2007), which underlies macro-based frameworks, provides opportunities for students to use the language in a variety of contexts for a range of purposes, giving them "a sense of personal relevance, immediacy, and authenticity

to language learning that is difficult to achieve with micro-based approaches” (Carreira, 2016, p. 124). The macro-based framework is compatible with and serves as the basis for several teaching approaches already known in HL pedagogy, including approaches based on discourse, content, task, genre, and experience.

Furthermore, a macro-based framework allows for the inclusion of HLLs’ socio-affective needs, the development of positive attitudes toward the HL, stronger connection with students’ ethnolinguistic identity, the development of critical language and cultural awareness, and a sense of social agency. This framework has been proposed as the most relevant for fostering HLLs’ functional abilities (Kagan & Dillon, 2001/2003; Carreira, 2016), in particular at the intermediate and advanced levels.

Meanwhile, research in both HLA and SLA has shown that intermediate and even advanced HL (and FL) learners often stop short of reaching higher levels of proficiency, even within communicative or macro-based approaches (Byrnes, 2011; Crane, Liamkina, & Ryshina-Pankova, 2003; Ortega & Byrnes, 2008; Carreira, 2013; Swender et al., 2014; Kagan & Dillon, 2004). In a collaborative project with the National Heritage Language Resource Center, Swender et al. (2014) examined what prevents Spanish and Russian intermediate and advanced HL students from reaching advanced and superior levels. To understand the possible constraints, Swender et al. (2014) analyzed students’ Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) scores and complemented them with autobiographical information and self-assessments; these data were used to determine the proficiency levels of participants and factors that could correlate with the OPI ratings and proficiency overall. The authors found that intermediate-level speakers, even when they sound like baseline (native) speakers, lack the ability to sustain a conversation outside themes of family and autobiography, communicate in paragraph-style oral discourse, and build on textual cohesion (the requirement to be considered an advanced-proficiency student). Students at the advanced level were not considered superior because they used autobiographical information while discussing abstract topics to make hypotheses and support ideas. They also demonstrated limited vocabulary and had difficulty using extended discourse. The authors noted that students who attained higher proficiency levels were those who had the opportunity to study abroad in a country where the target language was spoken (also see Davidson & Lekic, 2013) or had formal college-level language instruction.

In light of these findings, Swender et al. (2014) proposed the following strategies to bring intermediate and advanced HL students to higher proficiency levels: a) use explicit instruction to provide them with the necessary tools and practice to expand their lexical base; b) include more content areas that go beyond the familiar and autobiographical; c) discuss a wide range of topics from an abstract perspective; and d) provide opportunities to produce extended discourse.

Similarly, in a previous study, Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci (1998) also emphasized the importance of formal education in supporting HLLs’ acquisition of “approximative academic registers.” Comparing informal and formal oral presentations from second-, third-, and fourth-generation Chicano students enrolled in a yearlong bilingual program with those of monolingual college students in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, the authors found that the formal presentations of both groups already reflected some of the features of academic registers, including extensive use of

coordination and subordination, and that their lexical choices signaled detachment with the audience, a characteristic of written academic discourse (Chafe, 1984). Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci (1998) proposed that in order for SHLLs to develop academic registers, they should be exposed to the notion of register, as a language variety “associated with situational uses” (p. 474) as well as examples of both written and oral language that reflect formal registers of Spanish.

In sum, the findings discussed in this section suggest the importance of providing intermediate and advanced SHLLs with: a) a broad range of oral and written texts, including those crafted with formal registers of the language; b) a diversity of topics beyond the familiar; and c) opportunities to use extended discourse. The studies also address the importance of providing explicit instruction at two levels: the lexical, which allows students to incorporate content and function words used in so-called high varieties of the language (*‘norma culta’*) into their extended discourse; and the discursive level, which is important for teaching notions such as ‘register’ (Valdés & Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998; Achugar, 2003) in order to expand students’ understanding of the relation between lexical choices and specific communicative purposes and contexts.

To date, we do not have concrete ways of gathering information to show patterns of classroom language development as a result of the HL learning process. Following the call for more empirical research in the advanced HL classroom (Torres, Pascual y Cabo, & Beusterien, 2017; Lynch, 2014; Ortega & Byrnes, 2008; Polinsky, 2008; Valdés & Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998), in what follows we present the results of a pre–post design study (part of a larger pedagogical and research project, Parra et al., 2017) that investigates quantitative and qualitative changes in the oral narratives of advanced Spanish HLLs over the course of thirteen weeks of macro-based college-level instruction. We chose the narrative genre because it is both early and common in language development and is also a complex task. Being a competent narrator requires a broad range of cognitive, linguistic, and social knowledge to understand how different narratives (Preece, 1987) are structured and how various stylistic features are employed (Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2007; Pavlenko, 2006; Barriga Villanueva, 2002). The present study is intended to further the discussion of the concrete linguistic impacts of macro-based interventions on the extended discourse of HLLs. By analyzing narrative productions before and after the pedagogical intervention, we can identify linguistic and communicative resources that students already had, and those that became available as a result of the course methodology.

### 3. The Present Study

Our study addresses two general research questions regarding narrative development of the HLLs enrolled in the innovative advanced HL course described below in this section. The questions are:

- (1) Did the macro-based framework employed in the course support and expand students’ linguistic repertoires and learning of oral Spanish—in particular, their control of narrative skills? If yes, in what way was the course useful?
- (2) Did the students’ narratives show greater linguistic complexity over the span of the course? If yes, which areas became more complex, and if not, what areas showed vulnerability?

We hypothesized that the macro-based course design—with its focus on extended discourse, inclusion of a variety of texts and narratives, and explicit instruction regarding narrative genre characteristics—would provide students with a range of linguistic resources that would allow them to narrate events in more elaborate and complex ways at the lexical and syntactic levels.

### **3.1. Course Description**

Spanish 35 (Sp35 below) at Harvard University, implemented in 2013, was the first Spanish course for Latino students offered at that institution; it was taught by the first author of this article. The class met four times per week for 53-minute sessions over thirteen weeks. The main educational goals of the course included expanding students' oral and written communicative skills as well as their critical cultural and linguistic awareness (for a detailed description of the course, see Parra et al., 2017).

Following the latest pedagogical proposals for advanced HL speakers (Achugar & Colombi, 2008; Carreira, 2000, 2004; Colombi, 1994, 2003; Lacorte, 2017; Leeman, 2005; Martínez, 2003, 2005; Valdés, 1997, 2001, 2005), the teacher developed a macro-based curriculum following the principles already mentioned in conjunction with the *Learning by Design* framework (Kalantzis, Cope, Chan, & Dalley, 2016). This framework has at its core the goal of “enabling all learners to make and participate in meanings that will develop their capacities” (Kalantzis et al., 2016, p. 3) through the educational process. As explained in Parra et al. (2017, p. 58), the *Learning by Design* pedagogical proposal lies in a “pedagogy [that chooses] a suitable mix of ways of knowing and purposefully [weaves] between [the] different kinds of knowing,” which entails working with a variety of materials and developing the most appropriate “activity types, sequencing activities, transitioning from one activity type to another, and determining the outcomes of these activities” (Kalantzis et al., 2016, p. 80).

Following the *Learning by Design* tenets, the teacher and an interdisciplinary team (Parra et al., 2017) organized the course content around meaningful and relevant topics for students that would bring in a sense of belonging (Kalantzis et al., 2016) and the possibility for students to address their linguistic, identity, and cultural needs and interests. Among these themes were family relations in the context of immigration, diversity in Latin America, selected topics on Latin America-U.S. relations, Spanish in the U.S. and its contact with English, language and identity, and cultural traditions.

The course work was based on a functional approach to language, as previous pedagogical research has highlighted the benefits of this framework for working with SHLLs (Achugar & Colombi, 2008; Colombi, 1994, 2003, 2015) and facilitating the conceptualization of the relationship between content, language, and participants in context (Crane et al., 2003). Therefore, the course was organized around five genres: informal conversation, description, narration, exposition, and argumentation. Texts used in Sp35 were multimodal resources that provided students with a broad range of meaning-making models and designs (Kalantzis et al., 2016; Kalantzis, Cope, & Cooland, 2010; New London Group, 1996). They served as a window to explore what Flores (2000) has called the “Latino imaginary.” These materials included films, music, and literary works by Latino and Latin American authors such as narratives, novel excerpts, poetry, and essays. In addition,

following previous success with the integration of visual art into foreign and mixed-language classes (Parra, 2013; Parra & Di Fabio, 2013), art had a prominent place in the course. Academic and formal texts included expository and argumentative essays, op-eds, and book and movie reviews. Classroom work was complemented with the online reading program *Lectura Inteligente Herencia Latina* (see Parra et al., 2017 for a full description of the program and overall course organization).

For each text, the instructor provided detailed handouts with pre-, close-reading, and post-activities to focus specific vocabulary and grammar, comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation (see Appendix A for an example of lesson plan and instructional conversations). This work included analyzing the context of the crafting of the text, i.e. who had written the text, when, with what purpose, and for what type of audience. Special attention was paid to adjectives and discourse connectors, given advanced HL learners' difficulties with sustained discourse (Said-Mohand, 2006; Lynch, 2008; Torres, 2002; Swender et al., 2014). A specific list of connectors was given at the beginning of the course for students to use in different assignments. Samples of these items were also included in each handout. For each genre studied in class, and as a way to include a space for creativity, students had to apply what they had learned by crafting their own version of it. Detailed templates (rubrics) for each genre were provided for these tasks. Throughout the semester, students wrote one formal letter of introduction, three short op-eds, a short story, and an expository essay. They also gave an oral presentation on the theme of their expository essay (see Appendix B for an example of the template for a short story-narrative).

As a macro-based course, Sp35 embraced the general theoretical assumption that languages—in their oral and written modalities—develop through meaningful interactions among actors within purposeful social practices and contexts (Bruner, 1983; Halliday, 2007; Ortega, 2014). For this reason, teacher-student interactions were a central part of classroom dynamics. The teacher, who was aware of these interactions as important factors in the learning process (Beaudrie, 2009), and who wanted to avoid the establishment of power relations with the students (Potowski, 2001, 2002), put particular emphasis on: a) validating and recognizing students' varieties of Spanish and their performance (Carreira, 2000); b) creating a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)<sup>1</sup> to enhance students' possibilities for performing at higher levels; c) modeling different ways to express similar ideas; d) scaffolding (Bruner, 1983); and facilitating “instructional conversations” (ICs) (Goldenberg, 1991) in which the teacher draws from students' backgrounds and previous knowledge, encourages the expression and sharing of different ideas, and establishes a foundation of common understanding. Peer interactions also were a central part of the classroom dynamics since students shared important aspects of their personal lives as immigrants in the U.S. and as Latinx students attending a prestigious university. They also learned new words from each other since speakers of Mexican, Chilean, Argentine, and Salvadoran Spanish were represented. By the end of the course, a strong sense of community had developed among them.

In sum, the classroom setting was designed as a rich language environment where the concern and focus were not only the amount of input, but also its quality (Schwartz, Nir, Leikin, Levie, & Ravid, 2014), understood as the richness in variety of genres and language registers with emphasis on formal registers of Spanish. Providing students with ample opportunities to talk, express their views, and write different texts for concrete and meaningful purposes was also part of the

classroom richness.

### 3.2 Participants

The seven SHLSs in this study were all enrolled in Sp35.

**Table 1.**

*Students' Backgrounds*

	Year in college	Place of birth	Parents' country of origin	Age of acquisition of Spanish	Language spoken at home	Formal schooling in Spanish	Other languages
AriS1	Sophomore	Los Angeles	Mexico	Birth	Spanish (very comfortable) /English	Bilingual program K, 1st and 2nd	Italian (one semester at Harvard)
CarS2	Sophomore	Los Angeles	Mexico	Birth	Spanish (spoke little, felt uncomfortable)/preferred English in school	Four years in high school	German (in Berlin, Germany)
MirS3	Junior	Cathedral City	Mexico	Birth	Spanish	None	None
LisS4	Junior	Santiago, Chile	Chile	Birth	Spanish	None	French (starting in 7th grade through high school)
JasS5	Freshman	Los Angeles	El Salvador	Birth	Spanish with parents/ English with siblings	None	None
GabS6	Freshman	Los Angeles	Argentina (father), Brazil (mother)	Birth, along with Portuguese	Spanish with father	None	French (high school)
EmiS7	Freshman	United States	Puerto Rico (father), Ireland (mother)	Birth (stopped) at 4 years old	Spanish with father	None	None



As Table 1 shows, the group was diverse in several ways. Students were at different points in their college education (three freshmen, two sophomores, and three juniors). All of them enrolled in the class as an elective. A range of Latino ancestries was represented: Mexican (ARI1, CAR2, and MAR3), Chilean (LIS4), Salvadoran (JAS5), Argentinean and Brazilian (GAB6), and Puerto Rican (EMI7). Students had different family compositions and degrees of comfort with the Spanish language at home: ARI1, MAR3, and LIS4 spoke Spanish at home from early ages and felt very comfortable, while CAR2 felt uncomfortable growing up with the language, and once he entered school, preferred English. JAS5 used Spanish with parents but English with siblings (she was the youngest in the family), and GAB6 and EMI7 spoke Spanish only with their fathers. GAB6 also spoke Portuguese with her mother. EMI7 stopped speaking Spanish with her father at age four, which impacted her Spanish language development; she resembled an intermediate FLL in her pronunciation and some grammatical aspects, as we will see later. Finally, the students had varying experiences with formal Spanish education and with other languages: most of them had received little to no formal Spanish instruction growing up. LIS4 arrived from Chile at the age of six and had some basic Spanish literacy; MAR3 grew up in California speaking Spanish, with no literacy; ARI1 had three years of bilingual education (kindergarten, first, and second grade), and CAR2 had four years of Spanish in high school but did not feel confident about his Spanish abilities. However, most students had taken an L2 language class in high school (ARI1 took some Italian, CAR2 studied German in Germany for one semester, LIS4 and GAB6 took several French courses).

### 3.3. Enrollment Process and Students' Motivations

In order to enroll in the course, all students completed an online questionnaire that asked about their linguistic biography, reasons for enrolling, and learning expectations (Parra et al., 2017). The questionnaire included self-assessment questions regarding oral and written proficiency in informal and formal contexts, including communicating with friends and family, making academic oral presentations, and writing academic essays.

Using a Likert scale of 1 to 5, students assessed their oral abilities at the beginning of the semester with a mean of 3.5 for the category "Communicating with friends and family," and 2.75 for "Making school presentations." (We return to these numbers at the end of the article). The questionnaire also included open questions in order for students to write brief texts that would allow the instructor to assess students' writing abilities.

This questionnaire was valuable to the instructor in several respects. First, it gave her the opportunity to become familiar with the students' family and linguistic backgrounds, as described above. Second, it allowed her to learn about the students' interests and motivations for enrolling in the class. It was clear that even though all students recognized themselves as fluent, all of them wanted to improve their language skills, and to possess more *confianza* 'confidence' and fluency in using Spanish in formal, academic, and professional contexts. They were also interested in fluency in reading and writing academic texts. Following are some examples of such statements:

- (1) Aunque crecí hablando español, nunca he tomado una clase formal en español y me gustaría desarrollar la confianza para poder emplearlo en un ambiente académico. También, al tomar esta clase, me gustaría poder tener más facilidad al leer el español. (ARI1)

‘Although I grew up speaking Spanish, I have never taken a formal class in Spanish, and I would like to develop the confidence to be able to use it in an academic environment. Also, in taking the class, I would like to be able to be more at ease when reading Spanish.’

- (2) Yo quiero mejorar todas las partes de mi español. Quiero escribir mejor, quiero leer mejor y tambien aprender como comunicarme en una situacion academica o profesional. (*sic*) (LIS4)

‘I want to improve all of the areas of my Spanish. I want to write better, I want to read better, and also learn how to communicate in academic or professional situations.’

Students also explicitly expressed interest in learning specific aspects of the language such as accent rules, spelling and vocabulary, and grammar rules for the use of the subjunctive, preterit, and imperfect forms.

In addition to the written application, the instructor interviewed each student to ensure all had similar language proficiency for a successful learning experience (Beaudrie, 2016). During this semiformal interview, students talked about similar themes to those in the written application: interests and motivations for taking the course, expectations, family background, and language history. The questions elicited structures such as present and past tenses (preterit versus imperfect), future, and at least the present subjunctive.

Based on data gathered in the written applications and oral interviews, and following ACTFL Standards (2012) as a reference point, the instructor determined that all students displayed intermediate-high or advanced levels of proficiency with the exception of EMI7, whose linguistic profile was more similar to that of intermediate-low: she tended to use verbal tenses inconsistently, especially the past tenses; and given that she stopped speaking Spanish at an early age, her pronunciation was closer to that of a FLL. Of all students, she had the most distant relation to her Latino heritage: her father was half Puerto Rican, and her mother was of Irish descent. Nonetheless, she was extremely motivated to take the course and had important questions regarding her identity as a Latina.

### **3.4. Study Design**

While previous studies have compared narratives across groups (child and adult narratives, Polinsky, 2008; HL and baseline narratives, Isurin & Ivanova-Sullivan, 2008; transgenerational narratives, Silva-Corvalán, 1994), this study employed a pre–post design to explore students’ narrative performance at the beginning and end of the semester. Besides Beaudrie’s study with receptive bilinguals (2009) already discussed, there is not to our knowledge another study that compares students’ (ritualized) narrative performance (Rojas Nieto, 2014) before and after taking an advanced HL course. Pre-post studies reveal areas of student progress, and thus allow us to identify specific areas of language competence that are sensitive to positive change and rapid growth—as well as those prone to being lost, despite instruction. We can also observe individual variation.

The seven students taking the course were asked to watch a video at the beginning of the semester and a similar video at the end. Students then recorded a narrative describing each video and sent it to the instructor. Many studies of production rely on picture plates (for example, the well-known Frog Stories; see Berman & Slobin, 1994), but recently the use of video clips has become more prominent (see Ivanova-Sullivan, 2014).

The two video clips were taken from the Russian cartoon *Nu, pogodi!* ‘You just wait’ (Kotenochkin, Tarasov, & Kotenochkin, 1969-2013), which includes a great number of easily describable actions with no conversation among the characters, making them highly suitable for eliciting narrative production. The two clips were of comparable length: 91 and 98 seconds. Each has the same two main characters: a mean wolf and a smart bunny. In both videos, the mean wolf tries to catch and eat the bunny. We used different clips for the pre- and post-test to avoid the students’ remembering material of the first clip and thus producing an overly repetitive narrative. Below, we refer to the narratives elicited from the students as N1 (narrative elicited at the beginning of the course) and N2 (narrative elicited at the end of the semester).

The students were given the following instructions:

Tu tarea es ver el video en el enlace [ENLACE]. El video dura un poco menos de dos minutos, y puedes verlo sin sonido (hay música que lo acompaña pero no es importante). Debes ver el video UNA vez, poniendo mucha atención. Después de ver el video, por favor, grábate en un ‘video file’ donde hables del contenido del video. Puedes hablar tanto como quieras, solo trata de hablar naturalmente como si estuvieras contándole el video a un amigo. Por favor, manda el video para el [FECHA].

‘Your assignment is to watch the video at this link: [LINK]. The video is a little less than two minutes long, and you can watch it with the sound off (there is music accompanying it, but it is not important). You should watch the video ONCE, paying close attention. After watching the video, please record yourself in a video file where you talk about the contents of the video. You can speak for as long as you like, just try to speak naturally as if you were telling a friend about the clip. Please submit your recording by [DATE].’

The students recorded their narratives in electronic files and sent them to the instructor. All narratives were transcribed using the basic coding system for HL narratives (Parra, Plaster, & Polinsky, 2015), based on the CHILDES database coding system. The transcriptions were glossed and translated by native-Spanish-speaking graduate students trained in glossing and transcription.<sup>2</sup>

#### **4. RESULTS**

We chose to explore the changes in the following relevant areas associated with narrative abilities: organization of narrative structure; use of verbal tense, aspect, and mood (indicative and subjunctive); use of coordination and subordination as an indication of greater syntactic complexity and textual cohesion;<sup>3</sup> cohesion devices such as complementizers and discourse connectors; lexical elaboration, and stylistic devices.

#### 4.1 General Findings

From a structural point of view, all students mentioned the core events of the story in each video, and all narratives included the basic narrative structure elements proposed by Labov (1972): initial orientation, complication, resolution, and coda.<sup>4</sup> Our quantitative and qualitative analysis show that students' N1 and N2 varied in length and complexity. As Table 2 shows, the number of total clauses in N2 was greater in most cases. We analyze the breakdown of these clauses (independent, coordinated, and subordinate) later in this section.

**Table 2.**

*Number of Total Clauses in N1 and N2 per Student*

Subject	Total_Clauses_N1	Total_Clauses_N2
Ari1	29.0	33.0
Car2	38.0	46.0
Mri3	66.0	97.0
Lis4	23.0	19.0
Jas5	32.0	38.0
Gab6	38.0	39.0
Emi7	36.0	34.0

Compared to N1s, all N2s also showed improvements in accuracy and all students had some gain in at least one aspect (i.e. number of clauses, coordination, subordination, variety of verbal tenses, and range of discourse connectors). However, according to a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, the gains were not statistically significant. Nevertheless, as we see in the following pages, the data show some interesting tendencies at the qualitative level, some of which are consistent with the developmental tendencies already found in other studies (mainly, tendency to increase subordination: Beaudrie, 2009; Valdés & Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998), and add some other tendencies, which open new developmental paths to explore in advanced SHLLs. In what follows, we present examples of these qualitative changes and tendencies. In some instances, we provide quantitative information regarding frequencies and percentages of occurrence.

#### 4.1 Changes in Accuracy, Stylistics, and Audience Awareness: Initial Orientation and Codas

At the beginning of each narrative, students oriented the listener by providing important information about the story seen in the video: protagonists, events, time of events. But the main qualitative changes observed between N1 and N2 were related to accuracy of information and the stylistics of these initial orientations and codas: all students with the exception of LIS4 offered a more sophisticated opening in N2 than in N1. For instance, while CAR2 and MAR3 used the general word 'video' in the opening of N1, they used more specific words such as *caricatura rusa* 'Russian cartoon' (CAR2) and *escena* 'scene' (MAR3) in N2. ARI1, GAB6, and JAS5 added a canonical story-opener in N2: ARI1: *al principio* 'at the beginning', JAS5: *un día* 'one day', GAB6 *había una vez* 'once upon a time'. This shows that some students were able to provide the listener with more accurate descriptions of the kind of video they were watching, and that some of them were able to integrate new phrases—canonical openings and endings—related to the ritualized narrative genre, signaling an increase in awareness of the stylistic characteristics of this genre.

Another important qualitative change was students' ability to think about and address the intended audience while narrating (they knew the teacher would listen to their recordings). Some students added expressions that signaled this awareness of the intended audience from the beginning. For example, GAB6 started her N1 with the phrase *te contaré* 'I will tell you'. Two other students incorporated such awareness into their N2, as is the case of ARI1, who used the first person *veo* 'I see' in N1 and the plural *vemos* 'we see' in N2, indicating a desire to include the audience. JAS5 offers us the most impressive example of increased awareness of the audience and her desire to include the teacher in N2.

## (3) N1 opening:

en	este	video	##	hay	un	animal	que	se	parece
in	this	video		there.is	DET	animal	that	CL	seem
como	a	un	perro	que	está	caminando		por	
as	PRP	DET	dog	that	be.PRS	walking		for	
la	calle.	El	perro	parece	ser	rebelde			
DET	road	DET	dog	seem	be.INF	rebellious.M			
porque #		está	fumando		y	tumbando		todas	
because		be.PRS	smoking		and	kicking		all.F.PL	
las		basuras			que	pasa.			
DET		trash.cans			that	pass.PRS			

'In this video, there's an animal that looks like a dog that is walking down the street. The dog seems to be rebellious because he is smoking and toppling all the trash cans that he passes.' (JAS5)

## (4) N2 opening:

buenos	días	profesora	Parra.	
good	morning	professor	P	
este	es	mi	grabación	
DET	be.PRS	POSS	recording.F	
de	mi	resumen	del	video
PRP	POSS	summary	PRP.DET.M	video
del	conejo	y	el	lobo
PRP.DET.M	rabbit	and	DET	wolf
un	día	un	conejo	fue
DET	day	DET	rabbit	go.PST
a	una	tienda		
PRP	DET	store		

para	comprar	unas	comidas...
PRP	buy.INF	DET.PL	food.PL

‘Good morning, Professor Parra, this is the recording of my summary of the video of the rabbit and the wolf. One day the rabbit went to the store to buy some food...’ (JAS5)

As with the openings, N2 codas were more accurate and sophisticated. One student included the word *fin* ‘the end’ (EMI7) in both N1 and N2. But three students used other endings for the first time in N2: *al final* ‘at the end’ (ARI1); *ahí se acaba el video* ‘there is where the video ends’ (CAR2); *la escena termina* ‘the scene ends’ (JAS5). The students also indicated the inclusion of their audience at the end of their narratives through the use of first-person plural—*vemos* ‘we can see’ (MAR3); *no sabemos* ‘we don’t know’ (MAR3, JAS5)—and *gracias, profesora* ‘thank you, professor’ (JAS5). Some students added phrases that allowed them to evaluate the story’s ending: *yo creo que* ‘I think that’ (MAR3), and *qué bien* ‘great!’ (JAS5).

#### 4.2 Organization of Temporality

Since narratives consist of a series of temporally ordered clauses, with preterit serving as the predominant tense to structure a narrative thread (Labov, 1972, p. 376), the use of different verbal tenses is imperative to the development of narrative competence. Table 3 displays the number and variety of verbal tenses students used in both narratives. Four students out of the seven used more verbal tenses in N2 than in N1. Table 3 shows three new verbal tenses (future *ir+a*, past perfect, and imperfect subjunctive) were used for the first time in N2.

**Table 3.**

*Verbal Tenses Used by Each Student in N1 and N2*

	<b>Narrative 1</b>	<b>Narrative 2</b>
Ari1	2: Present, present continuous	4: Present, present continuous, infinitive and imperfect subjunctive in <i>como si</i> structure (used 2 more)
Car2	4: Present, present continuous, infinitive and present subjunctive	5: Present, present continuous, present subjunctive, future (Ir+a) and preterit (used 2 more)
Mari3	4: Present, present continuous, past continuous, simple past	3: Present, present continuous, present subjunctive
Lis4	2: Present, present continuous	2: Present, present continuous
Jas5	3: Present, present continuous, infinitive	5: Present, present continuous, infinitive, future (Ir+a), preterit (used 2 more)
Gab6	4: Simple future, past continuous, simple past, imperfect, past perfect	4: Past continuous, simple past, imperfect, and imperfect subjunctive (used 1 different tense)
Emi7	2: Past continuous and simple past	3: Past continuous and simple past, past perfect (used 1 more)

On the other hand, the data also show that five out of seven students chose a reporting/discursive mode (Bamberg, 1987, p. 108), anchoring their narratives in the present and including related tenses such as present continuous, future, and gerund forms when providing additional information (Bamberg, 1987, p. 121). One possibility for explaining this choice of present tense is that students narrated the story as they were watching it. Therefore, they were reporting/narrating as the story was unfolding. Only two students chose a narrative mode using the simple past to anchor their narratives. To elaborate, they used the imperfect, past perfect, and imperfect subjunctive.

Some students alternated their anchor tenses between present and preterit. For example, MAR3 started her narrative in the present:

(5)

el	video	empieza	con	un	lobo
DET	video	start.3SG.PRS	PRP	DET	Wolf
que	ahí	no	más	va#	por
REL	DEM	NEG	more	go.3SG.PRS	PRP
la	calle	caminando	y	luego	ve
DET	Street	walking	and	then	see.3SG.PRS
un	botecito	y	la#	y#	patea
DET.M	little.can.M	and	OBJ.F	AND	kick.3SG.PRS
el	bote.				
DET.M	can.M				

‘The video starts with a wolf that is just walking # down the street walking and then he sees a little can and it # and # he kicks the can.’

She then switched to preterit and back to the present:

(6)

y	luego#	agarró	un	cigarro	del#	
and	then	grab.3SG.PST	DET	cigarette	PRP.DET.M	
creo	que	de	el	bote		
think.1.SG.PRS	that	PRP	DET	can		
#se	vio	como	si	lo	agarró	
CL	look.3SG.PST	as	if	OBJ.M	grab.3SG.PST	
de	el	bote	y	lo	prendió	así.
PRP	DET	can	and	OBJ.M	light.3SG.PST	ADV

‘And then he grabbed a cigarette from # I believe from the can# it looked like he grabbed it from the can and he lit it like this.’

(7)

Y	luego	va	caminando	muy##	cool
and	then	go.3SG.PRS	walking	very	cool
puedo	//puedo	decir.			
can.1.SG.PRS	can.1.SG.PRS	say.INF			

‘And then he is walking very ## cool I can // I can say.’

There are several possible interpretations of this alternation. Polinsky (2008), for instance, proposed that such alternations are inconsistencies resulting from a lack of knowledge of verbal paradigms. Another view is offered by Silva-Corvalán (1983), who saw tense alternations as a stylistic strategy that speakers use to introduce actions that contribute to the ongoing narrative flow or that interrupt this flow and change the course of the story. According to Silva-Corvalán (1983), when speakers use the present to describe events that happened in the past, “the speaker presents them as if they were occurring in front of his eyes. This creates the effect of immediacy and makes the narrative more vivid and dramatic” (p. 11). A similar interpretation is provided by Bamberg (1987, p. 112), who saw tense alternation as a way to construct foreground and background information. Our data are insufficient to clearly favor any of these interpretations; note, however, that MAR3 used present tense to talk about the ongoing actions of a main character (the wolf walking) and preterit to introduce actions or events that interrupted the flow of such actions (finding and grabbing the cigarette, which interrupted the walking). The student used the same pattern when talking about the rabbit later in the narrative: she used present tense for main actions and preterit for interrupting actions. Because this student showed the ability to manipulate tenses successfully in other assignments (oral and written), we tentatively interpret these alternations as a stylistic or pragmatic (foregrounding/backgrounding) strategy along the lines of Bamberg’s (1987) and Silva-Corvalán’s (1983) proposals. Two other students (CAR2 and JAS5) used tense alternations in a similar way.

#### 4.3 Syntactic Complexity: Coordination and Subordination

Table 4 presents a summary of independent, coordinated, and subordinate clauses produced in both narratives. As we can see, coordination and subordination increased in N2, while the number of independent clauses decreased just slightly.

**Table 4.**

*Total of Independent, Coordinated, and Subordinated Clauses in N1 and N2*

Clauses	N1	N2
<b>Independent</b>	70	68
<b>Coordinated</b>	117	130
<b>Subordinated</b>	75	108
<b>Total</b>	262	306



The main changes occurred in subordinate clauses, which increased from 28.6% in N1 to 35.2% in N2. Table 5 presents the breakdown of independent, coordinated, and subordinate clauses according to student. This table clearly shows the individual variation in production among learners, and also shows how students increased their usage of subordinate clauses, with the exception of CAR2 and LIS4. In what follows, we consider the specific type of coordination and subordination that we found in both these students' narratives.

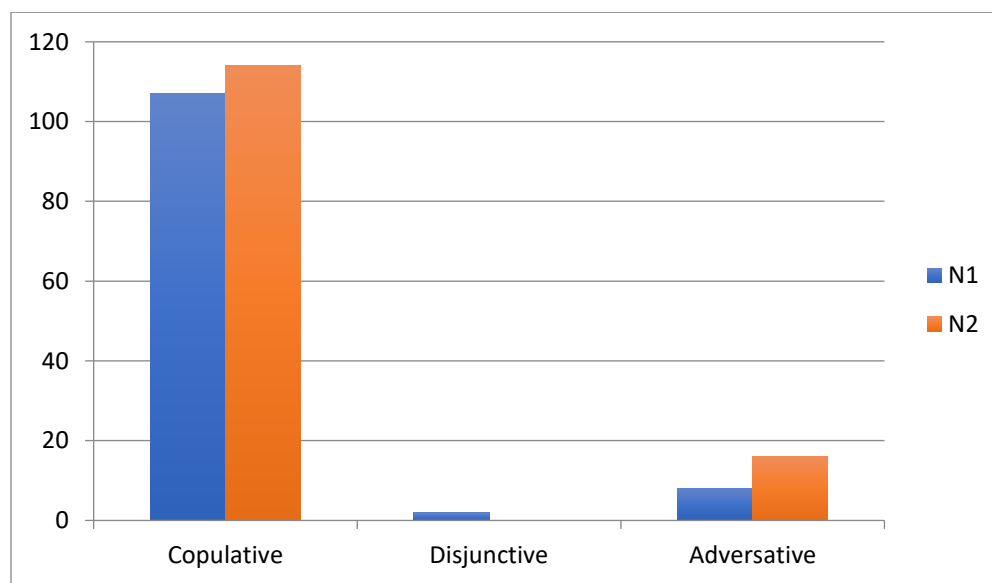
**Table 5.**

*Number of Independent, Coordinated, and Subordinated Clauses per Students in N1 and N2*

Subject	Indep 1	Indep N2	Coord N1	Coord N2	Subord N1	Subord N2
Ari1	8	8	12	9	9	16
Car2	6	8	21	28	11	10
Mri3	22	15	26	40	18	42
Lis4	4	3	12	10	7	6
Jas5	9	14	10	9	13	15
Gab6	14	14	13	13	11	12
Emi7	7	6	23	21	6	7

Looking at the coordinated clauses qualitatively in Figure 1, we see that N2 was more complex than N1 in terms of an increased use of copular and adversative clauses.

**Figure 1.** Types of Coordination in N1 and N2



Across the seven narratives, the number of copular clauses increased from 107 (N1) to 114 (N2). The production of CAR2 and MAR3 showed the greatest increase, i.e., five and nine sentences,

respectively, while the use of copular clauses decreased slightly in the N2s of the rest of the students.

Clauses beginning with connective conjunctions (*y* ‘and’, *además* ‘also’/‘further’, *también* ‘also, too’) were the most frequent in both narratives. We note that connective conjunctions are among the earliest resources employed by L1 learners to link pieces of information (Barriga Villanueva, 2002).

(8)

y	luego	<que>	ve	zanahorias.
and	then	that	see.3SG.PRS	carrot.PL

‘And then he sees carrots.’

(9)

y	de	repente	ve	a[//]	ve	un	edificio.
and	PRP	suddenly	see	PRP	see	DET	building
			3SG.PRS		3SG.PRS		

‘And suddenly he sees a building.’

On the other hand, as Figure 1 shows, adversative clauses doubled in number from eight to sixteen in N2. Three students (CAR2, MAR3, and GAB6) increased their use of adversatives by three to five clauses in N2. Two other students (ARI1 and EMI7) used one adversative in each narrative. Students used adversative expressions such as *pero* ‘but’ in N1 (example 10) and added *sin embargo* ‘however’ in N2 (example 11):

(10)

Pero	luego	viene	el	lobo
but	then	come.3SG.PRS	DET	wolf

‘but then the wolf comes...’

(11)

sin	embargo	el	lobo	no	se	dio cuenta.
PRP	ADV	DET	wolf	NEG	CL	realize.3SG.PST

‘however the wolf didn’t realize it’

The increase in subordination occurred in N2 for five of the seven students, even though it was only by one or two more subordinate clauses, as in the case of JAS5, GAB6, and EMI7. This increase was mainly due to MAR3, who increased the use of subordinate clauses by twenty-four, between N1 and N2. For two students, CAR2 and LIS4, subordination decreased in N2, though CAR2 used more coordination in N2.

Figure 2. Types of Subordination in N1 and N2

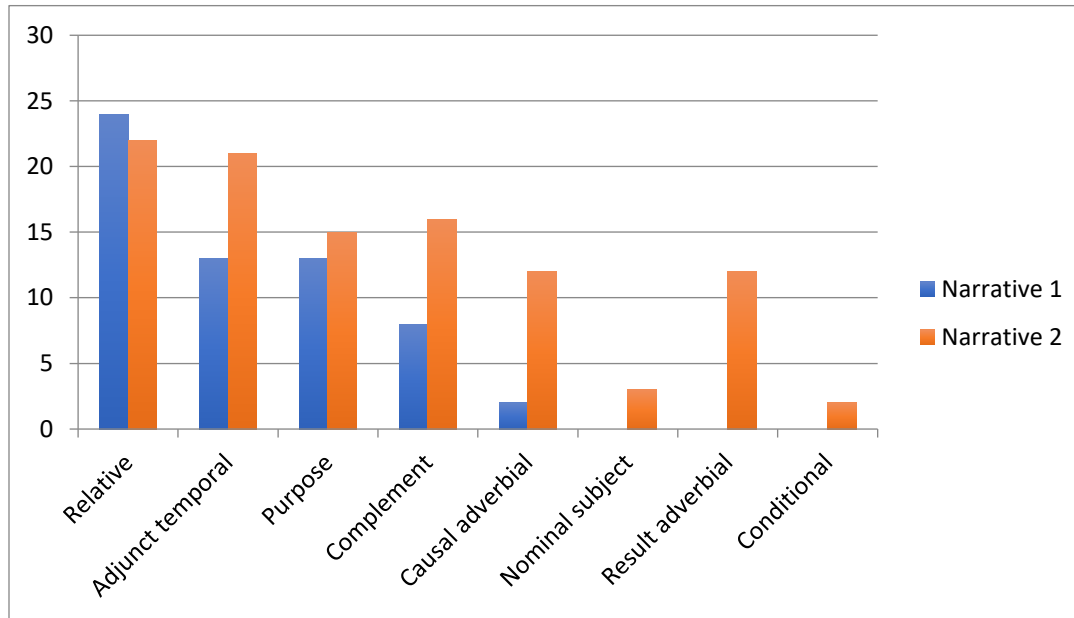


Figure 2 shows that relative clauses were the most common type of subordinate clauses. Three students (CAR2, LIS4, and JAS5) showed increased production of these clauses in N2. Adjunct temporal clauses were the second most common, where most students showed increased production. Causal adverbial clauses reflected the greatest increase between N1 and N2, with an additional total of ten clauses in N2 by four students. Increases were also observed in the use of purpose clauses and complement clauses. Nominal subject clauses, result clauses, and conditionals were used for the first time in N2.

Another important qualitative development in N2 was that some students not only increased their use of subordinate clauses, but also linked different subordinate clauses, reflecting acquisition of complex syntax. For instance, in (12), MAR3 linked a complement clause with a final clause:

<sup>a</sup>

(12)

primero	ve	las	cazuelas	y	
first	see.3SG.PRS	DET.PL	pot.PL	and	
está	midiendo	al	conejito	a	ver
be.3SG.PRS	measuring	PRP.DET.M	little.rabbit.M	PRP	see.INF
cuál	cazuela	estará	mejor		
which	pot	be.3SG.FUT	better		
para	preparar	el	conejo.		
PRP	prepare.INF	DET	rabbit		

‘He first sees the pots and he is sizing up the little rabbit to see which pot # will be best to cook the rabbit.’

CAR2 used a double relative clause in N2:

(13)

hay	un	hipopótamo				
there.is	DET	hippo				
que#	Saluda	a	un	conejito		
REL	greet.3SG.PRS	PRP	DET	little.rabbit.M		
que	va	a	entrar	a	su	tienda.
REL	go.3SG.PRS	PRP	enter	PRP	POSS	store

‘There is a hippo that greets a rabbit that is going into his/her store.’

#### 4.5 Complementizers and Discourse Connectors: Building Discursive Cohesion

Complementizers and conjunctions or ‘discourse connectors’ serve important roles in providing cohesion, i.e., the “relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 4). The main function of discourse connectors is to specify “the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what had gone before” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 227). We were interested in exploring the complementizers and conjunctions that students used to build the narrative framework since they have been identified as key components of narrative competence in L1 (Barriga Villanueva, 2002) and L2 (Pavlenko, 2006).

The increased use of subordinate clauses, described above, was accompanied by a richer inventory of complementizers. Relative clauses in N1 were mostly introduced by the conjunction *que* ‘that’. In N2, some students added the relative pronouns *con (el) cual* and *con (las) cuales* ‘with which’, one of the most sophisticated complementizers in Spanish, as in examples 14 and 15:

(14)

comenzó	a	escoger			cosas
start.3SG.PST	PRP	choose.INF			things
<u>con</u>	<u>las</u>	<u>cuales</u>			
with	DET.PL.F	which.PL.F			
iba	a	cocinar	al	conejito.	
go.3SG.PST	PRP	cook.INF	PRP.DET.M	little.rabbit.M	

‘And then he gets some ingredients with which he is going to cook the rabbit.’ (JAS5)

(15)

Y	después	junta	unos	ingredientes
and	then	bring.together.3SG.P	DET.PL.M	ingredient.PL
<u>con</u>	<u>cual</u> <sup>5</sup>	va	a	cocinar
with	which.SG	go.3SG.PRS	PRP	cook
el	conejo			
DE	rabbit.			

‘And then he gets some ingredients with which he is going to cook the rabbit.’

Along with an increase in the frequency of adjunct temporal clauses (Figure 2), students also expanded their repertoire of conjunctions to express temporality. In her first narrative, for instance, ARI1 used only the conjunction *cuando* ‘when’. In her second narrative, she used three temporal conjunctions: *hasta que* ‘until’ (16), *al* + INFINITIVE ‘while’(17), and *una vez que* ‘once that’ (18):

(16)

Y	todo	está	bien	hasta	que
and	all.SG.N	be.3SG.PRS	fine	until	
empieza	a#	a	empujar	al	conejito
start.3SG.PRS	PRP	PRP	push	PRP.DET	little.rabbit
adentro	de	un	carrito	de	compras.
ADV	PRP	DET	little.cart	de	compras.

‘And all is fine until # he starts to # push the rabbit into a shopping cart.’ (ARI1)

(17)

<u>Al</u>	<u>chocar</u>	con	el	gerente	
PRP.DET	crash.INF	with	DET	manager	
y	como	el	suelo	aún	está
and	since	DET	floor	still	be.3SG.PRS
resbaloso	el	gerente	y	el	lobo
slippery	DET	manager	and	DET	wolf
comienzan	a	resbalarse	por	todos	lados.
start.3PL.PRS	PRP	slip.INF.REFL	PRP	all.PL.M	part.PL.M

‘When crashing with the manager and since the floor is still slippery, the manager and the wolf start slipping all over the place.’ (ARI1)

(18)

Y	al	final	se	ve	que
And	PRP.DET	end	CL	see.3SG.PRS	REL
una	vez	están	en	la	caseta
DET	time	be.3PL.PRS	PRP	DET	booth
se	toman	una	foto.		
REFL	take.3PL.PRS	DET	picture		

‘And at the end, you can see that once they are in the booth, they take a picture of themselves.’ (ARI1)

Similarly, some students showed significant progress in expressing causality. In particular, MAR3, who did not use any causal adverbials in N1, used eight such clauses in N2, including three different conjunctions: *como* ‘since’ (19), *por* ‘because of’ (20), and *porque* ‘because’ (21):

(19)

Y	<u>como</u>	el	conejo	no	es	muy
And	<u>since</u>	DET	rabbit	NEG	be.3SG.PRS	very
chiquito##		agarra	la	cazuela	grande.	
small.DIMINUTIVE		grab. 3SG.PRS	DET	pot	big	

‘And since the rabbit is not so small ## he [the wolf] takes the large pan.’ (MAR3)

(20)

Y	se	está	resbalando	<u>por</u>
and	CL	be.3SG.PRS	sliding	PRP
todo	el	líquido	que	está.
all.SG.M	DET	liquid	REL	be.3SG.PRS

‘And he is sliding everywhere because of all the liquid that is there.’ (MAR3)

(21)

Pero	el	lobo [/]	el	lobo	no	puede	parar
but	DET	wolf	DET	wolf	NEG	can.3SG.PRS	stop.INF
<u>porque</u>	si	para	entonces	se	resbala.		
<u>because</u>	if	stop.3SG.PRS	then	CL	slide.3SG.PRS		

‘But the wolf [/] the wolf can’t stop because if he stops then he slides.’ (MAR3)

For purpose clauses, the most common conjunction (in both narratives) was *para* ‘to; for; in order to’. In N2, ARI1 included other expressions, such as the more learned *con la intención de* ‘with the intention of’ (22):

(22)

Y	lo	echa	a	su	carrito
and	OBJ	throw.3SG.PRS	PRP	POSS	little.cart
con	la	intención	<u>de</u> #	cocinarlo	al
with	<u>DET</u>	intention	<u>of</u>	cooking=OBJ	PRP.DET
rato.					
while					

‘And he puts him in his cart with the intention of # cooking him soon.’ (ARI1)

Finally, along with an increase in complementizers, students increased their variety and use of discourse connectors. All students used at least one new discourse connector in N2. JAS5 added the majority of new connectors (four) between N1 and N2, followed by GAB6, who added three new connectors. Table 6 shows the types of complementizers and connectors students used in N1 and N2. It is clear that students employed a variety of familiar connectors in N1 and N2, but they used more sophisticated ones in N2, e.g. *cuando de repente* ‘when suddenly’, *ya cuando* ‘by the time’, *en el proceso* ‘in the process’, *como* ‘as; since’, and *mientras* ‘while’. Some of these complementizers and connectors, combined, were more frequent in N2 than in N1. For example, the combinations *pero entonces* and *pero luego* (both translated as ‘but then’), *pero cuando* (‘but when’), and *cuando de repente* (‘when suddenly’) were only observed in N2. Some studies suggest that varied discourse markers are indicators of language proficiency, fluency, and bilingual capacity (Lynch, 2008; Torres, 2002). Furthermore, research in L1 (Barriga Villanueva, 2002; Hess, 2013) suggests that such linguistic structures are acquired late in childhood, with formal education playing a central role in their acquisition and use.

**Table 6.***Complementizers and Discourse Connectors in N1 and N2*

Complementizers and discourse connectors	Narrative 1	Narrative 2
Coordination	<i>y</i> ‘and’ <i>pues</i> ‘well’ <i>luego</i> ‘then’ <i>siguiente</i> ‘following’ <i>entonces</i> ‘then’ <i>después</i> ‘after’ <i>de repente</i> ‘suddenly’ <i>pero</i> ‘but’	<i>y</i> ‘and’ <i>luego</i> ‘then’ <i>siguiente</i> ‘following’ <i>entonces</i> ‘then’ <i>después</i> ‘after’ <i>de repente</i> ‘suddenly’ <i>pero</i> ‘but’ <i>sin embargo</i> ‘however’
Subordination	<i>que</i> ‘that’ <i>mientras</i> ‘meanwhile’ <i>donde</i> ‘where’ <i>cuando</i> ‘when’ <i>porque</i> ‘because’ <i>para</i> ‘for’ <i>hasta que</i> ‘until’	<i>que</i> ‘that’ <i>mientras</i> ‘meanwhile’ <i>donde</i> ‘where’ <i>en el proceso</i> ‘in the process’ <i>con (el/las) cual(es)</i> ‘with which’ <i>cuál</i> ‘which’ <i>(ya) cuando</i> ‘and when’, ‘by the time’ <i>al (plus infinitive)</i> <i>una vez que</i> ‘once’ <i>porque</i> ‘because’ <i>como</i> ‘as’ <i>para</i> ‘for’ <i>con la intención de</i> ‘with the intention of’ <i>hasta que</i> ‘until’ <i>por</i> ‘for’

**4.6. Lexical Knowledge**

Although regional variation in Spanish, especially in the lexicon, may pose some challenges in classrooms where speakers of different dialects converge (Escobar & Potowski, 2015; Potowski, 2016), we found little such variation in our students’ narratives. Variation in lexical selection was evident, however. Students used *lobo* ‘wolf’, *coyote* ‘coyote’, or even *perro* ‘dog’ or *animal* ‘animal’, to refer to the wolf; they used *conejo* ‘rabbit’, *conejito/-a* (diminutive), or *gato* ‘cat’ to refer to the bunny. Similar variation was found for ‘cigarette’ (*cigarro*, *cigarillo*) and ‘motorcycle’ (*motocicleta*, *moto*, and even *carro* ‘car’). Some students used more creative (albeit nonstandard) phrases such as *vehículo de las policías* and *coche policial* (presumably a calque from the English



‘police car’). Creative descriptors for ‘trash can’ were also used: *basura* ‘trash; trash can’, *basurero* and *zofocón* (should be *zafacón*, Puerto Rican ‘trash can’), and *botecito* ‘little can’, as well as non-standard options like *jarra* ‘jar’ and *las basuras* ‘(lit. :) trashes’. In N2, the notion ‘photo booth’ yielded the terms *fotomatón*, *caseta* ‘hut; booth’, and *cabina* ‘booth’, as well as complex phrases like *caseta donde pueden tomar fotos* ‘booth where they can take photos’ and *cabina de fotos* ‘photo booth’.

We observed only three instances of code-switching and one calque at the lexical level in N1 (from three different students) and two in N2 (produced by EMI7). English words included ‘cool’, ‘rabbit’, ‘shears’ (all in N1); and ‘spices’ and ‘(photo) booth’ (in N2). The only clear case of calquing was found in N1, possibly not due to the lack of a Spanish equivalent, but due to slow lexical retrieval. When narrating a passage in which the wolf starts climbing a clothesline, the student initially used *línea de ropa* (23 and 24), a calque from the English ‘clothesline’, before switching to *lazo* (25):

(23)

a.

entonces	ve	<u>una</u>	<u>línea</u>	<u>de</u>	<u>rop[a]</u> .
then	see.3SG.PRS	DET	line	of	clothes.SG
donde	se	está	secando	la	ropa.
REL	CL	be.3SG.PRS	drying	DET	clothes.SG

‘then he sees a clothesline, where some clothes are drying.’ (MAR3)

b.

agarra	el # [//]	agarra	la [//]	<u>la</u>	<u>línea.</u>
grab.3SG.PRS	DET.M	grab.3SG.PRS	DET.F	DET.F	line.F

‘he grabs the line’ (MAR3)

c.

a	así	tiene	algo	pa[ra]
and	so	have.3SG.PRS	something	PRP
no	más	tiene	que	subir-se
NEG	more	have.3SG.PRS	CONJUNCTION	go.up.INF=CL
# a-[e]l	lazo.			
PRP.DET.M	rope			

‘and so he has something so that he no longer, he has to climb up the rope’ (MAR3)

This instance suggests that at least some lexical difficulties experienced by HLs are due to slow lexical access rather than lack of lexical knowledge. The word *lazo* is infrequent; the fact that MAR3 successfully retrieved it (after several attempts) suggests that HLLs should be encouraged and supported in their lexical retrieval efforts.

#### 4.7. Vulnerable Domains

Accuracy in agreement and verbal forms is a concern in receptive bilinguals and HL speakers at the low end of the proficiency spectrum (Montrul, 2004, 2007; Benmamoun, Montrul, & Polinsky, 2013; Montrul, Foote, & Perpiñán, 2008). Advanced students tend to be accurate in agreement and verbal conjugation. In the narratives we studied, we saw this tendency toward accuracy, but we also identified particular areas of vulnerability in students' narratives. In N1, for example, six instances of mismatched gender agreement occurred; in three of these, students were aware of the mismatch and repaired it right away. In N2, we found one case of repaired gender agreement, one case of repaired number agreement, and one case of gender mismatch that went uncorrected. Although the overall numbers here are too small to make meaningful generalizations, the trend is clearly toward fewer agreement inaccuracies. It is also important to underline that most students showed an important degree of self-monitoring that allowed them to identify and repair mismatches.

Turning to verbal forms, although students usually conjugated verbs correctly, certain forms (especially complex tenses such as the past perfect) revealed vulnerabilities. In (24a), regular past tense is used to show the order of events; compare this to the baseline (past perfect) counterpart in (24b).

(24)

a.	Y	empieza	a	gotear	y	el	
	and	start.3SG.PRS	PRP	leak.INF	and	DET	
	carro	algunas	cosas	que	ya	compró	
	cart	some	thing.PL	REL	already	buy.3SG.PST	

'and it starts to leak and the cart some things that he already bought' (CAR2)

b.	Y	empieza	a	gotear	y	el	
	and	start.3SG.PRS	PRP	leak.INF	and	DET	
	carro	algunas	cosas	que	ya	había	comprado
	cart	some	thing.PL	REL	already	AUX.3SG.PST	buy.PTCP

'and it starts to leak and the cart some things that he had already bought'

Example (24a) may show interference from English; note, however, that the use of the past perfect in Spanish appears to be decreasing across the board, especially in Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S. (e.g., Silva-Corvalán, 1994). A similar tendency has also been noted for the subjunctive, which presents difficulties for both L1 and HL learners (Silva-Corvalán, 1994, 2003). Only one

instance of difficulty with the present subjunctive occurred in our study (JAS5, N2). In (25), the present indicative *entran* ‘get in’ is used instead of the subjunctive *entren*:

(25)

El	estornudo	causa	que	el	hipopótamo
DET	sneeze	cause.3SG.PRS	REL	DET	hippo
y	el	lobo	entran	a	un
and	DET	wolf	get.in.3PL.PRS.IND	PRP	DET
	fotomatón.				
	photo booth				

‘The sneeze causes the hippopotamus and the wolf to get in a photo booth.’

The imperfect subjunctive presented more difficulties: two students (MAR3 and CAR2) used this tense inaccurately, twice in N1 and once in N2, as in example 26:

(26) N1: indicative used in place of subjunctive *estuviera*:

Y	se	como#	si	no
and	CL	as	if	NEG
está	hacienda	nada	malo.	
be.3SG.PRS	doing	nothing	wrong	

‘And like he acts as if he is not (were not) doing anything wrong.’ (MAR3)

Some students also struggled with the use of the marker *se* (required in reflexive forms). *Se* was omitted once in N1 and twice in N2, as in example 27:

(27)

Estrella	con	él.
crash.3SG.PRS	with	him

‘He crashes with him.’ (CAR2)

On the other hand, we also observed nine cases of overgeneralization of *se*: seven instances in N1 versus only two in N2. In (28) from N1, *se* is overgeneralized with the verb *parecer* ‘to look like’:

(28)

Se	parece	como	a	un	perro
CL	seem.3SG.PRS	like	PRP	DET	dog

‘It looks like a dog.’ (JAS5)

Although in this particular case, the speaker might have confused *parecer* ‘seem’ with *parecerse* ‘look alike,’ speakers also added a reflexive to other verbs when it was not needed, as in example 29:

(29)

Se	entran	a	un	<i>booth.</i>
CL	enter.3PL.PRS	PRP	DET	booth

‘They enter a booth’ (MAR3)

Despite these vulnerable areas, overall, the production in both narratives was quite proficient. This may be partly due to self-monitoring; the speakers likely carefully controlled their production when making their video recordings.

In sum, these findings speak to our research questions in a direct way. Students showed gains in narrative skills, the linguistic complexity of their narratives increased, and the sheer length of narratives increased by the close of the semester. Students were able to provide more accurate and sophisticated information in N2 openings and codas. They presented more specific information about the kind of visual material (*un video* ‘a video,’ *una caricatura rusa* ‘a Russian cartoon’) and they used pronouns such as ‘we’ to give a sense of inclusion to the audience. JAS5 addressed the teacher directly in her story’s introduction. Given that the video narration could be classified as a ritualized narration, it was interesting to observe the inclusion of canonical phrases such as *había una vez* ‘once upon a time,’ *un día* ‘one day,’ *ahí se acaba el video* ‘there is where the video ends,’ and *fin* ‘the end’ for the first time in N2, signaling students’ increased awareness of the characteristics and stylistics of the genre of ritualized narratives.

Even when students presented two possibilities for anchoring their narratives—in the present, adopting a “report” mode, and in the past, using a coherent constellation of tenses to complement the story’s main plot, several students alternated between present and preterit. Our qualitative analysis and interpretation suggest this variability correlated with changes in focus between foreground and background information (Bamberg, 1987; Silva-Corvalán, 1983), showing, again, sophistication in stylistic and pragmatic skills at the discourse level.

Narratives became more complex mainly through an increase in different types of subordination. Students also started to combine subordinate clauses, making their narratives more detailed. Moreover, we emphasize that there was an increase both in number and in variety of clauses. Students combined well-known conjunctions or complementizers and added new ones in N2. This addition allowed some to express the same relation between clauses (i.e., temporal) through different linguistic expressions. This increase in students’ repertoire of complementizers and discourse connectors to link subordinate clauses brought new possibilities to express cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Barriga Villanueva, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006) in more sophisticated ways in N2.

We also observed increased self-monitoring in N2, whereby the students typically noticed and repaired inaccuracies immediately, and several students showed an increase in speech rate.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Understanding the Dynamics of Change**

How can we explain the qualitative changes and emerging trends that we identified in the students' narratives? Can we attribute them to the macro-based approach adopted in the course?

Students' gains in narration reflect important efforts to integrate language knowledge, content, and awareness of participants within the specific context of the task. This integration resembles classroom interactions among teacher and peers while working with specific texts. These interactions not only included discussions about the content of a broad range of texts, but also addressed reconstructing stories and reflecting upon how specific linguistic forms related to content, as well as how these choices were made with specific purposes by a particular author. The handouts and rubrics for each genre included in the course provided students with information pertinent to that genre, rendering a framework of reference through which to understand language use within a context and for a specific purpose or task. The explicit use of phrases to include the audience in N2 and immediate efforts to repair inaccurate forms suggest that the pedagogy and handouts also enhanced students' metalinguistic awareness and self-monitoring skills.

Our results also points to the relationship between written and oral modalities, and its impact on students' language development. Chafe (1984) points out that oral language is more fragmented, as ideas tend to be presented in single clauses with one predicative element. However, written language "packs" more information into an idea unit through "devices" such as nominalization and subordination (p. 39), among others. As L1 and L2 acquisition research has shown (Barriga Villanueva, 2002; Berman, 1996, 2004; Hess, 2013; Kuppersmitt, 2004), including in so-called "academic language," the development of complex language structures—such as coordination and subordination—is closely related to formal instruction, which exposes students to a variety of language resources and registers. Formal instruction consolidates the use of conjunctions for coordination and temporal, causal, or relative subordination (Berman & Slobin, 1994). More recent research has shown that exposure to and production of written texts has a positive effect on oral production. Jisa (2004) found that children who produced a written task first subsequently produced a more elaborate oral text, while an earlier oral task had no such effect on a later written text. A similar effect can be observed in the present study: throughout the semester; exposure to and production of different text genres, among them ritualized narratives, enhanced the use of new linguistic resources, the production of more accurate descriptions, the expression of temporality and causality through a variety of lexical possibilities, and the incorporation of stylistic elements. This leads us to reflect on the role of formal instruction in the development of advanced SHLLs' linguistic capabilities. The observed increase in number (even if small) and type of gains in students' narratives reaffirms the positive impact that formal education can have on students' linguistic development. These benefits were particularly apparent when we measured "expansion and/or refinement" (Achugar & Colombi, 2008, p. 37) of linguistic abilities at the grammatical, discourse, and pragmatic levels of the seven students.

## 5.2. Individual Differences

Our analysis of these seven students' narratives serves to highlight the importance of individual variation in the context of the classroom (Parra, 2013; Ortega 2014), even within a macro-based approach. As shown in Table 1, students had varying backgrounds in Spanish. Their N1s varied, and although all of them showed improvement in some way in N2, the scope of change was not uniform. Furthermore, differences between the narratives of the seven students could have been related to a number of factors beyond overall linguistic capabilities, including previous ability and experience with the language, personal discourse styles (Romaine, 1985), task type (Torres, 2018), motivation and pressure at the moment of recording, and overall comfort and confidence in their language abilities.

Nonetheless, the macro-based approach and overall Sp35 class dynamics had an important effect on one dimension that also homogenized the group: students' self-assessment of spoken language. Recall that, as part of the enrollment process for Sp35, students completed a questionnaire that included a self-assessment regarding informal and formal oral and written tasks. At the beginning of the semester, students assessed themselves (on a scale of 1 to 5) with a mean of 3.5 for the category "Communicating with friends and family" and an SD of 1.03; and a mean of 2.75 for "Making school presentations" with an SD of .88. However, at the end of the semester, students' self-assessment was a mean of 5 for the category "Communicating with friends and family" and a mean of 4 for "Making school presentations." The SD became .46 and .51, respectively, indicating both statistically significant improvements in confidence and more homogeneity in the way students evaluated themselves at the end of the semester. This indicates that the course pedagogy did have a significant impact on students' confidence in their oral language abilities (see Parra et al., 2017 for the description of students' self-assessment scores for written categories). Most students in this study continued taking other Spanish courses (ARI1, JAS5, GAB6); one applied for an internship at the Smithsonian Museum that required Spanish (EMI7), and another joined a study abroad program in Spain (MAR3). These positive results show that students benefited from the support system (Bruner, 1983; Quastoff, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978) and from the validation of students' linguistic and cultural "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) built into everyday classroom interactions that are characteristic of macro-based approaches.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our study confirms the positive impact of a macro-based rich language environment where students expanded their linguistic repertoire through meaningful interactions with texts, peers, and their teacher. The developmental trends observed in the students' narratives speak to similar findings in other research on HLLs, related mainly to expansion in vocabulary, diversification of verbal tenses, and increased use of subordination.

We agree with Carreira (2013) that "the attainment of Advanced or Superior proficiency does not happen spontaneously, but requires the right combination of linguistic, environmental, and institutional factors" (p.149). Our study showed that such a "right combination" for enhancing advanced discourse abilities in HLLs includes a macro-based pedagogy that creates a rich language environment and takes into account the benefits of designing pedagogical activities where written and oral modalities interact (Jisa, 2004). Pedagogy to advance oral skills needs to incorporate the teaching of text genres, along with explicit instruction regarding what makes each genre a cohesive

and rich text (Martínez, 2005; Colombi, 2015). It should also provide written and oral opportunities for students to produce their own creative versions of the genre in question. Special attention must be given to the diversification of linguistic resources (i.e., complementizers and discourse connectors), the context, participants, and purpose.

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**NOTES**

1. Defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).
2. The following abbreviations are used in the glosses below: ADV—adverb; AUX—auxiliary; CL—pronominal clitic; DEM—demonstrative; DET—determiner; F—feminine; FUT—future; IMPER—impersonal; INF—infinitive; IND—indicative; M—masculine; NEG—negation; PL—plural; OBJ—object; POSS—possessive; PRP—preposition; PRS—present; PRT—preterit; PTCP—participle; REFL—reflexive; REL—relative; SBJV—subjunctive; SG—singular.
3. In particular, we were interested in analyzing the use of subordination and relative clauses, documented to be a late-developing structure in different languages (De Villiers & De Villiers, 1985; Barriga Villanueva, 2002) and related to formal education (Barriga Villanueva, 2002; Berman, 1996; Berman, 2004; Kuppersmitt, 2004). As already mentioned, they are also identified as an area of development in receptive and advanced HL speakers.
4. None of the narratives included what Labov called the ‘abstract,’ a summary of the overall story. However, this component is often missing in narrative description, and its absence has been shown to be more pronounced in speakers who have less experience using a given language (see Silva-Corvalán, 1983).
5. The use of *con cual* in this example is not standard; the sentence is missing the pronoun *los* required to cross-reference *ingredientes* ‘ingredients’; furthermore, *cual* should agree in number with *ingredientes*. Thus, the correct form is *con los cuales*. Nevertheless, we interpret S5’s use of *con cual* as a sign of progress because this student used only *que* in the relative clauses of her first narrative.