Investigating instructors' in-class actions and stated beliefs about pronunciation instruction in the Spanish FL classroom
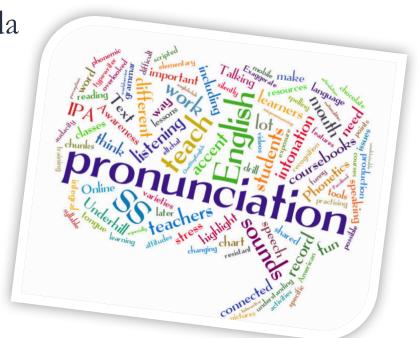
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Study objectives

- Investigate instructors' *stated* beliefs about pronunciation instruction in intermediate-level Spanish as a FL classrooms

- Examine the relationship between those beliefs and select individual difference (ID) factors as well as pedagogical practices observed during one non-experimental, 50-minute class meeting

Presentation outline

- Background
- The study
- Findings
- Discussion
- Limitations and future steps

Beliefs
Pronunciation in the L2 or FL classroom
Pronunciation and beliefs

BACKGROUND

Background: Beliefs

- Why study beliefs?
  - '...beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives' (Pajares, 1992, citing Bandura, 1986)
- Instructors conscious and unconscious thought processes within and about the classroom context carry implications for student learning
  - Individual difference (ID) factors further have the potential to impact these processes, which have consequences for quality and quantity of input (Borg, 2003, 2005b, 2006a; Farrell, 2006; Feryok, 2010) and feedback available to learners (Aykel, 1997; Gurzynski-Weiss, 2010; Mackey, Polio & McDonough, 2006; Polio, Gass, & Chapin, 2006)

Background: Beliefs (cont.)

- Several operationalizations, many of which are unclear (Eisenhart et al. 1988; Pajares, 1992)
- Confusing terminology, likely due to attempt to distinguish beliefs from knowledge (Pajares, 1992)
- Beliefs are *multidimensional*, informed by a variety of cognitive and social factors (Barcelos, 2006)
  - Instructors' belief systems stem from prior experiences as students, teacher education, and practical teaching (Chiu, 2008; Johnson, 1994; Richardson, 1996)

Background: Beliefs and actions

- Inconsistencies between stated beliefs of instructors and actions in the classroom are well attested (e.g., Basturkmen, Lowen & Ellis, 2004)

- Instructors are aware of these discrepancies (e.g., Lacorte, 2005; Phipps & Borg, 2009)

What about stated beliefs and actions related to pronunciation instruction?

Background: Pronunciation in the L2 and FL classrooms

- Very minimal role (Baker, 2011, 2012; Elliott, 1995, 1997; MacDonald 2002)

- Growing literature on effects of pronunciation-related Spanish instruction (Elliott, 1995, 1997; Lord, 2005; Stokes, 2001) and context of learning (Díaz-Campos, 2004, 2006; Díaz-Campos & Lazar, 2003; Garcia-Amaya, 2009; Henriksen, Geeslin, & Willis, 2010; Lord, 2010)

Background: Instructor beliefs and pronunciation

- **MacDonald (2002)**: instructors acknowledge its importance, but lack of materials and absence in curriculum and assessment inhibited incorporation

- **Sifakis & Sougari (2005)**: application of NS model for accent unrealistic for classroom context; no action data

- **Baker (2011)**: prior graduate education and L2 learning experiences had strongest impact on instructor cognition and pedagogical practices

- **Baker (2012)**: prior experience researching pronunciation impact cognition and actions, but instructors still uncertain about "effective" practices

Gaps

- Previous studies investigating the relationship between instructor beliefs and pronunciation instruction have focused on EFL/ESL classrooms

- Inconsistent employment of methodology for analysis of instructor beliefs and action data

- When pronunciation instruction is present, what does it look it and what do instructors think about it?

Research questions for the study

1. What are instructors' **stated beliefs** about pronunciation instruction in intermediate-level courses of Spanish as a foreign language?

2. Is there a relationship between select **individual difference (ID) factors** of the instructors **and their stated beliefs** about pronunciation instruction in the classroom?

3. Is there a relationship between instructors' **stated beliefs** about pronunciation instruction **and their use** of it in the classroom?

Theoretical framework
Operationalizations
Methodology (participants, materials, coding and data analysis)

THE STUDY

Theoretical framework

- Contextual approach to beliefs investigation (Barcelos, 2003)
  - Beliefs are contextual, dynamic, and social
    - Beliefs are part of the individual's experience and are interrelated with his/her environment
  - Combining different methods to interpret beliefs in specific contexts

Operationalizations

- **Beliefs**
  - Ideas and thoughts, whether consciously or unconsciously held, that are expressed as evaluations of 'what should be done'; 'should be the case'; 'is preferable,' and 'is possible' and further serve as a guide to thought and action (adapted from Borg, 2001 and Basturkmen et al., 2004)
- **Pronunciation instruction**
  - Choral repetition, providing pronunciation-related example or rule (Elliott, 1997), providing pronunciation-related feedback

Operationalizations (cont.)

- **Pronunciation error**
  - Utterance or pronunciation that violates the rules of Spanish (e.g. pronunciation of velar fricative [x] for orthographic *h*, etc.)

Methodology: Participants

- 8 graduate student instructors of intermediate-level courses of Spanish as a FL in a US public university
  - 6 L1 English, L2 Spanish
    - 3 with linguistics concentration
    - 3 with literature concentration
  - 2 L1 Spanish, L2 English
    - 1 with linguistics concentration
    - 1 with literature concentration

Methods: Participants' ID factors

Participant	Gender	L1	Area of study	Teaching experience (yrs)	Course level
P1	Female	Spanish	Linguistics	7	4th semester
P2	Male	Spanish	Literature	7	4th semester
P3	Female	English	Linguistics	4	3rd semester
P4	Female	English	Literature	5	3rd semester
P5	Male	English	Linguistics	5	3rd semester
P6	Female	English	Linguistics	5	4th semester
P7	Female	English	Literature	3	3rd semester
P8	Male	English	Literature	1	3rd semester

Methodology: Materials and procedure

1. Observation (video and audio recordings) of one 50-minute class

    ◦ Vocabulary focused lesson

2. Stimulated recall (SR) protocol

3. In-depth interview

4. Background questionnaire

Methodology: Coding & analysis

- Qualitative analysis
- Classroom observation (video and audio recordings) & SR
  - Identification of pronunciation-related episodes
- In-depth interviews
  - Identification and comparison of response themes with regard to instructor stated beliefs and motivating factors of those beliefs
- Background questionnaire
  - L1, teaching experience (years), amount of SLA education, amount of phonetics and phonology education

RQ1: Stated beliefs
RQ2: Stated beliefs + ID factors
RQ3: Stated beliefs + actions

FINDINGS

RQ1: Instructor stated beliefs (interview data)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
L1-area of study	Sp-Lgx	Sp-Lit	En-Lgx	En-Lit	En-Lgx	En-Lgx	En-Lit	En-Lit
Important	X	X	X	X	X	X	Not sure	X
Important for communication	X	X	X	X	X			
Consideration of student IDs	X	X					X	X
Consideration of classroom interaction context		X						
Consideration of specific segments	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Institutional context	X	X	X	X				X

RQ1: Instructor stated beliefs (interview data)

- What is native-like pronunciation?

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
L1-area of study	Sp-Lgx	Sp-Lit	En-Lgx	En-Lit	En-Lgx	En-Lgx	En-Lit	En-Lit
Sounds like L1 Spanish	X	X						X
Avoidance of L1 features	X		X			X		
Mentions certain segments	X		X	X	X	X		

RQ2: Instructor stated beliefs (interview data) and ID factors (BQ)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Is native-*like* pronunciation possible?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Yes
L1	Span	Span	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng
Area of study	Lgx	Lit	Lgx	Lit	Lgx	Lgx	Lit	Lit
Experience (yrs)	7	7	4	5	5	5	3	1
# pedagogy courses	1	1	2	2	4	3	1	1
# SLA courses	1	0	6	0	4	MA	0	0
# phonetics/phonology courses	5	0	4	1	3	5	0	0

RQ2: Instructor stated beliefs (interview data) and IDs (BQ)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Important for instructors?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	**No**
L1	Span	Span	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng
Area of study	Lgx	Lit	Lgx	Lit	Lgx	Lgx	Lit	Lit
Experience (yrs)	7	7	4	5	5	5	3	1
# pedagogy courses	1	1	2	2	4	3	1	1
# SLA courses	1	0	6	0	4	MA	0	0
# phonetics/phonology courses	5	0	4	1	3	5	0	0

RQ2: Instructor stated beliefs (interview data) and IDs (BQ)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Important for intermediate-level students?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**
L1	Span	Span	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng
Area of study	Lgx	Lit	Lgx	Lit	Lgx	Lgx	Lit	Lit
Experience (yrs)	7	7	4	5	5	5	3	1
# pedagogy courses	1	1	2	2	4	3	1	1
# SLA courses	1	0	6	0	4	MA	0	0
# phonetics/phonology courses	5	0	4	1	3	5	0	0

RQ2: Instructor stated beliefs (interview data) and IDs (BQ)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Perceptions of non-native accent?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Not sure**
L1	Span	Span	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng	Eng
Area of study	Lgx	Lit	Lgx	Lit	Lgx	Lgx	Lit	Lit
Experience (yrs)	7	7	4	5	5	5	3	1
# pedagogy courses	1	1	2	2	4	3	1	1
# SLA courses	1	0	6	0	4	MA	0	0
# phonetics/phonology courses	5	0	4	1	3	5	0	0

RQ3: Pronunciation-related episodes (observation data)

	P1	**P2**	**P3**	**P4**	**P5**	**P6**	**P7**	**P8**
L1-area of study	Sp-Lgx	Sp-Lit	En-Lgx	En-Lit	En-Lgx	En-Lgx	En-Lit	En-Lit
Choral repetition				X				
Rule/example provision	X					X		
Feedback provision	X		X	X	X	X		

RQ3: Instructor stated beliefs (interview data) and factors contributing to actions (SR)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
L1-area of study	Sp-Lgx	Sp-Lit	En-Lgx	En-Lit	En-Lgx	En-Lgx	En-Lit	En-Lit
Important for communication	X	X	X	X	X			
Consideration of student IDs	X	X					X	X
Consideration of specific segments	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Institutional context	X	X	X	X				X
Time management				X			X	
Error gravity				X	X	X	X	
Consideration of student IDs			X	X		X		
Consideration of classroom context			X	X	X			
Not noticed								X

Summary of main findings

- All instructors reported that pronunciation is important, but not for intermediate-level learners

- Observed pronunciation-related instruction very minimal

- Area of study as potentially influential ID factor

- There are some inconsistencies between stated beliefs and actions, but instructors are aware of disconnect between beliefs and actions

Discussion

- Disconnect between beliefs and actions
  - Theory-practice interface (Roberts, 1980)
  - Impact of institutional context
- Role of instructor education and previous schooling experiences (cf. MacDonald, 2002; Baker 2011, 2012)
- Implications for L2 phonological development

Discussion: What does this mean for TBLT?

- Instructors are not likely to incorporate pronunciation-related instruction in task-based lessons, even if they believe it is important

- Using task phases to our advantage!
  - During pre-task phase, draw students' attention to pronunciation errors likely to impede comprehension
  - During post-task phase, have students reflect on their errors

Limitations & areas for future research

- Modest sample size (participants, classroom observations, restricted lesson focus)
- Future research
  - Other levels
  - Different institutional contexts
  - Different L1s and L2s
  - Student beliefs
  - Linking beliefs, instructor ID factors, and student learning outcomes

Thank you!

- Questions? Comments? References?
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