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Instructional strategies to foster the auditory processing of gender agreement in Spanish Heritage Speakers with mild-to-moderate hearing loss

Cristina Manteca-Gacho
The University of Illinois at Chicago, cmante3@uic.edu

Daniel Vergara
Auburn University Main Campus, dzv0013@auburn.edu

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Instructional strategies to foster the auditory processing of gender agreement in Spanish Heritage Speakers with mild-to-moderate hearing loss.

In recent years, there has been a surge in research dedicated to heritage language education, particularly focusing on heritage speakers (HS) who grow up in environments where a minority language is spoken at home but are predominantly exposed to English outside their households. Despite varying linguistic competencies among HS, influenced by factors such as limited exposure to the heritage language beyond familial settings, educational opportunities, and social dynamics, many express a desire to improve their proficiency in their family language. However, existing language programs often inadequately address the unique needs of heritage language learners (HLL), which is crucial for developing effective pedagogical strategies that cater to the specific needs of these bilinguals. In addition, little attention has been given to addressing the needs of HLL with mild-to-moderate hearing loss, a population likely encountered by educators due to the prevalence of hearing impairment among children in the United States. This presentation aims to fill this gap by exploring the challenges faced by Spanish HLL with hearing loss in processing grammatical structures, specifically gender agreement, and proposing instructional strategies to support their learning. Drawing on experiences from HLL with mild-to-moderate hearing loss and language instructors, the study integrates visual and auditory processing methods, such as *Cued Speech* and signing, into Task-based Learning and Form-focused instruction. By bridging heritage language education with considerations for hearing impairment, this presentation seeks to enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of language learning for HS with hearing loss.

Keywords: Spanish, heritage learners, hearing loss, pedagogy, gender agreement