The Benefits of a Portuguese Heritage Language Textbook: Possibilities and Approaches

By Teresa Valdez

Wednesday, July 23rd, 3:00 pm
Administration Building: Board of Trustees Room

Abstract. Despite the opportunities that studies on second language materials have offered to a better understanding of the heterogeneous needs of learners—their language skills, distinct realities, backgrounds, etc.—, research has yet to fully understand the role of heritage language acquisition in guiding materials development. Studies centered on heritage languages have mostly focused on students’ and teachers’ perspectives on classroom organization and work, forgetting at times to look at crucial relationships involving teaching materials, such as those between learners, schools, teachers, and textbook
authors; between parents, communities, and content of teaching materials; etc.

Furthermore, in the United States, research related to heritage languages has focused on populations with relatively large numbers of speakers, such as East Asians or Spanish-speaking immigrants and their descendants, leaving aside other smaller language communities with their own specificities. For these reasons, Portuguese as a heritage language urgently needs more research and, concomitantly, textbooks based on those results.

This dissertation contributes to filling this gap by focusing on the development of materials for Portuguese as a heritage language, which would aim to improve the motivation and expectations of heritage learners towards language courses. This study is also unique insofar as it offers theoretically founded practical guidelines to create a textbook for Portuguese heritage learners, a crucial tool that would provide teachers and learners with more effective methods of instruction, including appropriate topics for discussion, instrumental inclusion of cultural and language variation, as well as meaningfully tailored grammar development. Moreover, the study discusses the benefits of textbooks produced in an electronic format at a time when it is urgent to provide heritage learners and their teachers with materials that respond to their needs and goals towards the maintenance of the Portuguese language.

**Teresa Valdez** will start in her new position as Language Coordinator at the **University of Rochester** in August 2014.

**PhD Committee**
Prof. Anna M. Klobucka
Prof. Victor K. Mendes
Prof. Gláucia Silva (Adviser)

All are welcome to attend. For additional information, please contact Prof. Gláucia Silva, gsilva@umassd.edu.
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