

Heritage Language Learning and the Portuguese Subjunctive*

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Abstract: In a study of the perception and production of the subjunctive, heritage and non-heritage learners of Portuguese completed four different types of written tasks, besides a questionnaire to determine their linguistic background and some of their beliefs about their own language abilities. Participants were enrolled in college language courses, in three different levels: high beginner, intermediate and low advanced. The results obtained show that heritage learners produce more accurate verb forms than do non-heritage learners, although the latter increase their accuracy notably in the more advanced levels. Since heritage learners produce a high number of accurate forms even in lower levels, it is suggested that differentiated instruction may be in the best interest of both heritage and non-heritage learners of Portuguese.

Keywords: Heritage learners, Portuguese, grammar production, subjunctive, indicative

Since the early 19th century, the Northeast region of the United States has received many immigrants from Portugal, both from the continent and from the islands (Azores and Madeira). By the mid-1800s, there was a “significant and stable” Portuguese community in the U.S. (Stephens). Although immigration rates from Portugal to the U.S. have decreased considerably in the past two to three decades, the American Northeast has seen more recent immigration from other Portuguese-speaking countries—notably, Brazil and Cape Verde¹ (Ferreira, “That’s not”; Jouët-Pastré). With a sizeable Portuguese-speaking population, Portuguese language classes in the American Northeast tend to be attended by learners who have been exposed to the language from an early age—i.e., by heritage learners.

Heritage language (HL) learning is a field that has gained prominence in the U.S. in the last three decades. Valdés et al.’s seminal volume on Spanish heritage language teaching called attention to the fact that HL learners have needs that are different from those of non-heritage language (NHL) learners. These needs have been the focus of much of the research into HL learning (Acevedo; Fairclough; Kondo-Brown “Differences”, *Heritage Language*; Kondo-Brown

and Brown; Tse; Valdés et al; among others). This study contributes to that discussion by analyzing the perception and the production of a particular grammar feature, the subjunctive mood, by heritage and non-heritage language learners of Portuguese in Southeastern Massachusetts. Specifically, this paper investigates whether Portuguese HL learners differ from NHL learners in their perception and production of the subjunctive in written tasks. It also examines whether length of formal instruction affects the production of target-like forms in written tasks, and whether there is a correlation between self-assessment and actual production of the subjunctive in the three different levels. After an analysis of the data obtained, a discussion is offered on what the findings may signify for HL teaching and learning.

Background and Motivations for This Study

As mentioned above, the American Northeast has a sizeable population of immigrants from Portuguese-speaking countries, and college Portuguese language classes in Southeastern Massachusetts are attended by significant numbers of heritage learners (mostly of European descent at this point). In spite of the large number of Portuguese heritage learners in Massachusetts and elsewhere in the U.S. (especially California, New York, New Jersey and Florida), few studies have investigated this population and their needs in terms of language learning. Notable exceptions are studies by Ferreira (“That’s Not”, “Portuguese”), which address sociolinguistic characteristics displayed by her students of Portuguese.

Valdés (“The Teaching”) and others have stated that heritage learners may not have been exposed to the standard variety of their HL, since the use of the HL is restricted to certain contexts. Therefore, heritage learners may face some difficulties when presented with a language variety that does not include forms that they can readily recognize. English is the language of

education for these speakers, while the HL is the variety spoken at home—a variety that may not be the standard for that language. According to several authors, the goal of HL teaching needs to be bidialectalism: teachers must recognize and validate the learners’ variety, while teaching the standard dialect of the HL (Bernal-Enríquez and Hernández Chávez; Fairclough “La adquisición,” *Spanish*; Gutiérrez Marrone; Valdés “Implications”; among others). Teachers would then show that the variety that learners speak/understand is valid in certain situations, whereas other situations (such as professional environments) might require the use of the variety that is considered standard. That way, learners would become bidialectal, having learned one more dialect (the standard) of their HL.

The restricted social use of heritage languages leads to a system which contains innovative (i.e., non-normative) elements (Lynch, “Similarities” 253). Moreover, contact with English affects the variety acquired by HL learners: although the lexicon may constitute the most observable evidence of language contact², the verb system may also be affected by contact with another language (as argued, for Spanish, by Silva-Corvalán 167).

In Romance languages, the subjunctive is a mood that is morphologically marked. In English, on the other hand, the subjunctive appears only residually, as in (1) below:

- (1) a. If I *were* you, I’d do the work.
 b. It is important that she *be* there.

The forms in italics in (1a) (*were*) and (1b) (*be*) illustrate uses of the subjunctive in English. In informal spoken English, however, it may be just as common (if not more so) to find sentences such as “If I was you” and “It is important for her to be there” (or some such variation), in which the subjunctive is no longer utilized. In Portuguese, on the other hand, the subjunctive is generally quite productive³.

But what is verb mood? And when is the subjunctive mood used in Portuguese? Perini explains that mood is “a mixed category having to do with both meaning and form” (167). According to Perini, differences in mood may account for differences in meaning, but a certain verb mood may also be required by the presence of a governing lexical item. In terms of meaning, it has been noted that mood is related to the speaker’s perspective: for example, use of the subjunctive may signify that an event is unexperienced, uncertain, unproven (Bull). More recently, it has been argued that the use of the subjunctive is associated with the notion of relevance (Lunn; Ahern and Leonetti): the indicative mood marks relevant information, what the speaker asserts; the subjunctive, on the other hand, is used for non-assertion, for information deemed of relatively low value by the speaker. Although Bull’s, Lunn’s, and Ahern and Leonetti’s claims were originally made for Spanish, they may be applied to Portuguese as well.

The sentences in (2) exemplify uses of the three simple tenses of the subjunctive in Portuguese (present in (2a), past in (2b) and future in (2c)):

- (2)
- a. Eu prefiro que ela **vá** à reunião.
I prefer that she go to the meeting.
 - b. Se ela **fosse** à reunião, nós chegaríamos a um acordo.
If she went to the meeting, we would reach an agreement.
 - c. Quando ela **for** às reuniões, resolveremos tudo.
When she goes to the meetings, we will solve everything.

The examples in (2) illustrate unexperienced events (as in (2a)) and uncertain events (as in (2b) and (2c)). Furthermore, a verb such as *preferir*, “to prefer” governs the mood of the verb in the subordinate clause: while the main verb *preferir* (as in (2a)) appears in the indicative, the subordinate verb (in (2a), the verb *ir*, “to go”) must occur in the subjunctive. In (2b) and (2c) the subjunctive conveys that the event may or may not happen (and in (2b) there is even less

certainty that the event might happen). If the indicative were used in those examples, the hearer would know that sometimes she does go to the meetings and they do reach an agreement⁴.

In terms of acquisition of L1, the subjunctive may appear late, as argued by Blake for Spanish. Gragera notes that features that appear later in the acquisition process are the first to weaken if the speaker is immersed in a foreign language environment, as is the case with both HL and NHL learners. Moreover, Lynch (“Relationship”) notes that NHL and HL learners have more problems with forms that are less frequent in the language or that appear later in the acquisition process. Hislope reports on a study that focused on production of present subjunctive by heritage speakers of Spanish. She found that production of this verb tense was sporadic, which may be expected if a form is undergoing simplification in the language. Establishing a parallel with Spanish, we may assume that the subjunctive appears late for children acquiring Portuguese. If this is the case, we would expect that learners would have trouble with this mood in Portuguese, as Hislope has found for Spanish.

My experience seems to corroborate what Hislope notes for HL learners of Spanish. Several Portuguese HL learners seem to exhibit difficulties with uses of the subjunctive and the indicative: sometimes, the indicative is used for the subjunctive, as in (3); other times, one form of the subjunctive is used when another would appear in standard (European or Brazilian) Portuguese, as in (4) (the corresponding standard forms are given in (3’) and (4’)):

- (3) Se as pessoas *podiam*, moravam no campo.
 (3’) Se as pessoas pudessem, moravam no campo.
If people could, they would live in the country.
- (4) O que vocês querem fazer hoje quando nós *cheguemos* no Boston?
 (4’) O que vocês querem fazer hoje quando nós chegarmos a Boston?
What do you(pl) want to do today when we arrive in Boston?

The type of production exemplified in (3) and (4) are at the root of this study, which looks at whether and how heritage learners differ from foreign language learners regarding the perception and production of subjunctive and indicative forms, and whether the perception and production of the subjunctive is affected by length of formal instruction. The next section briefly outlines the design of the study.

Project Design

A total of 56 learners took part in this study. Participants were college students enrolled in Portuguese language classes in Southeastern Massachusetts. The classes were taught by three different instructors: a native speaker of Brazilian Portuguese, a native speaker of European Portuguese, and a non-native speaker of European Portuguese. Students filled out a learner profile/self-evaluation questionnaire designed to assess their background (heritage or foreign language learners) and determine level of instruction. The profile questionnaire also contained statements about grammar and about the subjunctive that were assessed in a simplified Likert-type scale. Appendix A contains the learner profile/self-evaluation questionnaire. Learners were also asked to complete four different tasks designed to elicit perception and production of verb forms (indicative vs. subjunctive) in Portuguese. The four tasks were: a multiple choice exercise with eight questions, a cloze-type exercise with 30 tokens, a short paragraph, and a grammaticality judgement task with 10 sentences. The perception and production tasks, written in standard European Portuguese, can be found in Appendix B. The design of the questionnaire and of the tasks was inspired by those presented in Santos and Silva and Fairclough (*Spanish*).

The questionnaire and the tasks were completed anonymously during class time. For matching purposes, participants received a number to write on top of the questionnaire and the

task sheets. On average, learners took approximately 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire and tasks. Participants were enrolled in classes that ranged from high beginning to low advanced levels. The next two sections discuss the results obtained in the background/self-perception questionnaire and in the perception/production tasks.

Learner Profiles and Self-Assessment

In this study, most participants (71.5%) were heritage learners of European Portuguese. As mentioned above, for the purposes of this study a heritage learner was someone who was exposed to Portuguese when s/he was growing up. In other words, participants who included Portuguese in the answers for questions 1 and/or 2 of the learner profile questionnaire (see Appendix A) were considered heritage learners.

In terms of enrollment, 41% of learners were enrolled in low advanced classes. The second largest group (34%) were enrolled in high beginning classes. The remaining participants (25%) were taking classes at the intermediate level. All three groups had had some formal instruction on the subjunctive, but learners in high beginning classes only received instruction on each tense of the subjunctive as it appeared in the textbook, which only addressed each tense once. Uses of the subjunctive were discussed and practiced at least one more time (over several class meetings) in each of the two other groups.

Overall, respondents (both HL and NHL learners) felt comfortable or somewhat comfortable with their grammar skills. Nevertheless, learners were divided about their own production of verbs in Portuguese: while most NHL learners (62.5%) agreed with Statement (c) (“I have problems with different verb tenses in Portuguese”), HL learners were split between agreeing and disagreeing with the statement: 45% agreed that they had problems, while 35% did

not agree (the remaining 20% neither agreed nor disagreed). However, when looking at the results by level, there appears to be some correlation between level and answer for HL learners: the higher the level, the less HL learners agree with Statement (c). While 64% of learners in the high beginning level admitted to general problems with verb tenses, only less than half the learners in the low advanced level thought that verb tenses in general were problematic. This correlation does not exist for NHL learners.

Although most NHL learners stated that they had problems with verbs in general, only 25% of learners in this group agreed that the subjunctive is the most difficult verb form in Portuguese (Statement (d)). As a group, HL learners did not think that the subjunctive stood out in difficulty either. At first glance, these results appear to indicate that learners in general do not perceive the subjunctive as a particularly challenging grammar point. This preliminary conclusion is warranted by further analysis of the results: learners in both groups appear to be fairly confident in their abilities to employ the subjunctive in written language, as evidenced by responses to Statement (g): in both groups, over 40% of learners agreed that they know when to use the subjunctive in written language. However, it must be noted that NHL learners were more confident about the use of this verb form in written than in spoken language: the majority of NHL learners (over 55%) neither agreed nor disagreed that they know how to use the subjunctive in spoken language. Finally, the two groups of learners exhibit differences regarding whether they consider their speaking abilities in Portuguese better than their writing abilities. This is shown in the results for Statement (e) (“I speak Portuguese better than I write it”). Not surprisingly, HL learners tended to agree with (e), while most NHL learners disagreed with the statement. Figures 1 and 2 show the results of the self-assessment questionnaire for HL and NHL learners, respectively.

Figure 1: Self-assessment by HL learners.

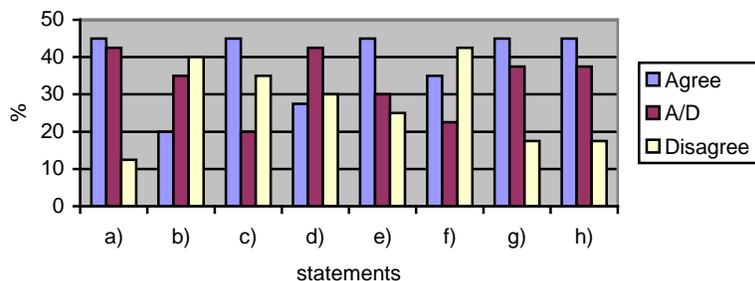
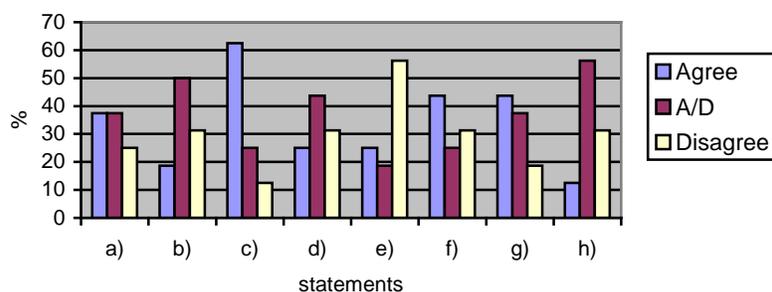


Figure 2: Self-assessment by NHL learners.



Perception and Production Tasks

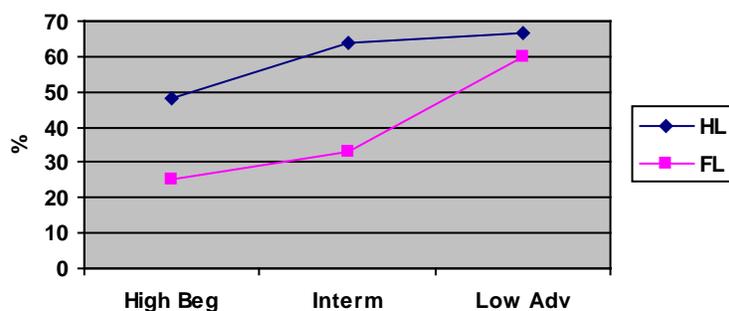
As mentioned above (see Project Design), this study included four written tasks, two that can be considered perception tasks (a multiple choice exercise and a grammaticality judgement task) and two production exercises (a cloze-type exercise and a short paragraph).

Multiple Choice Task

The multiple choice exercise contained 8 sentences with one verb left blank (see Appendix B). Learners were given three choices to complete the sentence. In standard dialects of Portuguese, all blanks corresponded to a form of the subjunctive (either present, past or future).

Results of this task indicate that HL learners recognize uses of the subjunctive more often than do NHL learners. The difference between the performance of HL and NHL learners was more pronounced for learners enrolled in lower level classes, as seen in Figure 3:

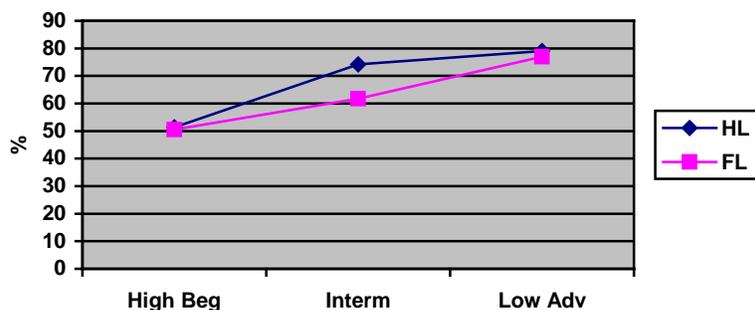
Figure 3: Accuracy for multiple choice task.



Cloze-type task

The general results for the cloze-type exercise also indicate that NHL learners progress consistently over time regarding uses of the subjunctive and the indicative moods. In this task, the difference between the performance of the two groups is much smaller than in the multiple choice task. The biggest difference between the groups is found in the intermediate level, where HL learners performed with 74.2% accuracy, while NHL learners gave target-like responses in 61.7% of the cases. In the other two levels, HL learners performed only slightly better than NHL learners: the differences are 1% for the high beginner group and 2% for the low advanced group. Figure 4 illustrates the performance of HL and NHL learners in the cloze task.

Figure 4: Accuracy in cloze-type exercise.



The inaccuracies in the cloze exercise were not all cases of indicative used when the subjunctive was expected and vice-versa. We also found that learners may use the subjunctive or the indicative in a tense that is different from the target form. This is the case, for example, in (5) (which corresponds to blank 29 in the exercise—see Appendix B):

- (5) Se o tempo *esteja* mau, (Pedro) ficará em casa.
If the weather is (pres. subj.) bad, Pedro will stay at home.

In (5), the target form of the verb *estar* is the future subjunctive (*estiver*). The present subjunctive was produced by learners in all three levels, and both by HL and by NHL learners. This type of production indicates that both HL and NHL learners may realize that the subjunctive should be used in certain cases (such as hypotheticals), even though they may not know which form of the subjunctive to use. The same type of mix-up is also found in the indicative mood, as exemplified in (6) (blank 20 in the exercise):

- (6) ...mas a irmã ainda não *descobre* e talvez não descubra nunca.
...but the sister still has not found out (pres. indic.) and maybe won't ever find out.

The target form of the verb *descobrir* (“to find out”) in (6) would be the preterite (*descobriu*), but some learners (both in the HL and in the NHL groups) produced the present and not the past form of the verb.

In the cloze-type exercise, we also found inaccuracies related to spelling: in some cases, learners appeared to know which form to use, but not how to spell them, as shown in (7):

- (7) Se eles **dizerem** que vai fazer sol, ele vai ao norte.
If they say that it will be sunny, he will go to the north.

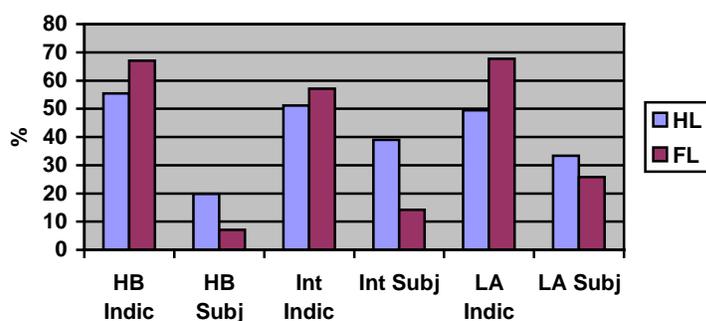
In (7), the verb *dizer* (“to say”) should appear in the future subjunctive, *disserem*. A few learners in all three levels (both HL and NHL learners) spelled the verb with a *z* instead of *ss*. This example is noteworthy because this mistake transcends a mere spelling error: the form *dizerem* also exists in Portuguese, but it is a form of the inflected (or personal) infinitive. The relevance of (7) lies in the fact that learners may have been exposed to the form that they produced and were confused by the close spelling.⁵

The production found in the cloze-type exercise also includes some more trivial spelling errors, such as *fassa* for *faça* (“do” in present subjunctive, first or third person singular) by a high beginning HL learner; *chouver* for *chover* (“rain” in future subjunctive, third person singular), by an intermediate NHL learner; and *descobreu* for *descobriu* (“discover” in simple preterite simple, third person singular), by a low advanced HL learner. Other spellings reveal what the learner had heard before receiving formal instruction, as is the case of *oiça* (“hear” in present subjunctive, first or third person singular). Although the textbooks used by the learners surveyed have only the form *ouça* for the present subjunctive of the verb *ouvir* (“to hear”), the form *oiça* is also found in European Portuguese, and was produced by a few HL learners. Note that *oiça* was considered accurate in the coding of the data.

Short Paragraph

The short paragraph task intended to elicit forms of the present subjunctive. For that end, the prompt was *O que esperas do próximo Presidente?*, “What do you expect from the next President?” There was no minimum or maximum number of words specified in this task. As a result, some paragraphs were rather short. The coding was done by counting how many verb forms were accurate indicative, inaccurate indicative, accurate subjunctive, and inaccurate subjunctive in each level (separating HL and NHL learners). Then the percentage of verb forms represented in each category was calculated. Figure 5 shows the percentages of accurate indicative and subjunctive use by HL and NHL learners in all three levels (where HB stands for High Beginning, Int for Intermediate, and LA for Low Advanced):

Figure 5: Accuracy in paragraph task.



The results for the paragraph task indicate that in all three levels, the HL group produced more accurate forms of the subjunctive than did the NHL group. Note that the NHL group produced proportionately more accurate forms of the indicative than did the HL group in the three levels. At first glance, this might suggest that the NHL group is more proficient in the indicative mood than learners in the HL group. Closer examination of the data, including the incorrect tokens, shows that NHL learners overall used the subjunctive much less than did HL

learners: while 34.4% of the verbs used by the HL group were in the subjunctive mood, only 20.2% of the tokens produced by NHL learners were a form of the subjunctive. Thus, we find among NHL learners a tendency to rely on the indicative mood, which may account for the higher number of accurate forms. Naturally, this tendency also correlates with the higher number of accurate forms of the subjunctive found in the HL group. Therefore, a relevant result of the analysis of the paragraph task is the fact that HL learners produce proportionately more tokens of the subjunctive than do NHL learners.

Analysis of the forms produced in the paragraph task reveals that HL learners may use both the subjunctive and the indicative in structures where the subjunctive is the target form, as illustrated in examples (8-10):

- (8) Espero que os próximos presidentes *ajudam* o país. [...] Espero que eles *façam* mais [...].
I hope that the next presidents help (pres. indic.) the country. I hope that they do (pres. subj.) more.
 (High Beginner level)
- (9) Eu espero que o próximo presidente *termina* a guerra e *traga* as nossas tropas [*sic*] [...].
I hope that the next president ends (pres. indic.) the war and brings (pres. subj.) our troops...
 (Intermediate level)
- (10) Eu espero que o próximo presidente *seja* melhor. [...] Mais importante é que ele *acaba* com a guerra.
I hope that the next president is (pres. subj.) better. More important is that he ends (pres. indic.) the war.
 (Low Advanced level)

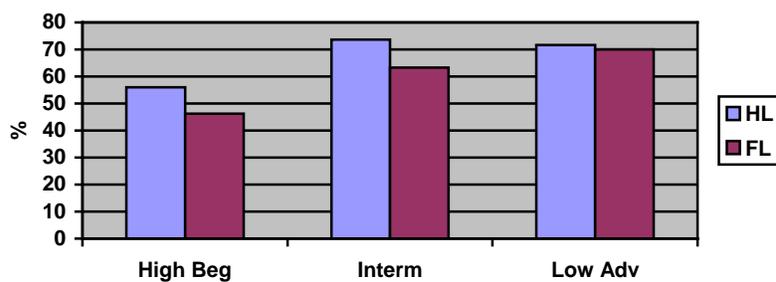
Among NHL learners we found some inconsistency regarding use of tense of the subjunctive in the same type of structure. In (11), both verbs in italics should be in the present subjunctive, but the verb *considerar* (“to consider”) appears in the past tense, while the verb *tomar* (“to take”) is in the target form:

- (11) Espero que ele *considerasse* os desejos do público e que não *tome* tão [sic] dias de férias.
I hope that he considers (past subj.) the desires of the public and that he does not take (pres. subj.) so many vacation days.

Acceptability Task

The acceptability task consisted of 10 sentences which learners were asked to rate as either correct or incorrect. Results for this task are shown in Figure 6:

Figure 6: Accuracy for acceptability task.



As we can see in Figure 6, HL learners performed better in this task than NHL learners in every level. We also see that NHL learners performed progressively better as the level of instruction rose. This was not the case for HL learners: those enrolled in intermediate classes performed a little better than those taking low advanced classes (a difference of roughly 2%). Note, too, that in the low advanced level the difference between HL and NHL learners is also very small, at less than 2%.

In this section, results were presented for the four tasks completed by participants in this study. We saw that, overall, HL learners perceive and produce the subjunctive more accurately than do NHL learners. The next section presents a discussion of these findings as they relate to the questions posited in the beginning of this paper.

Discussion

The first goal of this investigation was to determine whether heritage language learners of Portuguese perceived and produced subjunctive forms more accurately than foreign language learners. From the results presented in the previous section, we can conclude that HL learners did in fact perform better in the tasks at hand than did NHL learners. The difference between the two groups did not always appear to be very significant, however. The largest differences between the two groups of learners were attested in relation to the multiple choice task. For the other tasks, the differences found were smaller. This finding is somewhat consistent with those described in Fairclough (*Spanish*), although in that study larger differences were found between accuracy of forms produced by HL and NHL learners. Lynch (“Similarities”) did not find a large difference in the production of HL and NHL learners of Spanish, but the participants in his study were lower-proficiency learners. In this study, the tendency is for the difference between HL and NHL learners to become smaller as the level of proficiency rises, not the opposite.

The second question addressed in this paper regards length of instruction and whether learners enrolled in more advanced levels perceive and produce the subjunctive more accurately than those enrolled in less advanced classes. The answer to this question seems to be affirmative for the NHL group in every task. Heritage language learners, on the other hand, do not necessarily perform better with longer instruction. It is true that the scores for the HL learners in the high beginner level were always lower than for HL learners in the higher levels. However, HL learners enrolled in intermediate level responded more accurately (even if by small margins) than HL learners in low advanced classes in the acceptability task and in the paragraph task. So, length of instruction appears to correlate to performance only weakly when it comes to the HL

learners in this study. Furthermore, as noted above, the differences between the HL and the NHL groups in most tasks become smaller as length of instruction increases.

The final goal of this study was to find out whether there is some correlation between self-assessment and actual production of accurate forms of the subjunctive. Learners enrolled in lower levels displayed less confidence in their abilities, which correlated positively with the results of the tasks (learners in high beginner classes did not perform as well as those in intermediate/low advanced levels). Even though, overall, both HL and NHL learners appeared to be somewhat confident in their abilities regarding the subjunctive (as assessed by Statement (g)), NHL learners in low advanced classes were even more confident than their HL counterparts and than NHL learners in other levels: every NHL learner in low advanced classes agreed with Statement (g). Although they did not display perfect accuracy in the tasks, the low advanced NHL group did perform well and very close to their peers in the HL group. Therefore, there appears to be some correlation between self-assessment and perception/production accuracy for participants in this study.

Since HL learners perform more accurately than NHL learners already in lower levels, differentiated instruction may be in the best interest of both groups of learners. With instruction designed for heritage language learners, this group might be able to increase accuracy more quickly than they normally do and might not display the slight decrease found between the intermediate and the low advanced groups in some cases. With the current type of instruction, which aims at foreign language learners (including the textbooks used in the classes surveyed), heritage language learners may not have the opportunity to develop standard forms of the subjunctive mood as rapidly or as accurately as they might if classes targeted their specific needs. As Lynch points out, HL learners in traditional foreign language classes “spend extensive

amounts of time formally studying some basic elements of the language that they already control and not giving adequate attention to other basic elements that they do not” (“Similarities” 274). Moreover, explicit grammar instruction, which is typical (and perhaps needed) in NHL classes, may not be so useful for heritage language learners: Schwarzer and Petrón report that the heritage learners of Spanish in their study found the grammatical focus in their classes to be of little use to them. On the other hand, Hislope calls for more explicit grammar instruction with a focus-on-form activity for heritage speakers.

In terms of language teaching, there may be several ways to help learners develop grammatical accuracy. Researchers such as Ellis and Fairclough (*Spanish*) have called for use of awareness-raising activities. These activities may include task and test correction, where learners have the opportunity to analyze their own language, individually or in groups (if carried out collectively, the errors must remain anonymous, of course). Learners may also interview native speakers, transcribe the interviews and identify/describe the cases when the subjunctive is used. HL instruction would focus on the form that is appropriate in a given grammatical and sociolinguistic context. This approach would be in line with what Parodi suggests for grammar instruction for heritage learners. She argues that grammar should be presented as an analytical subject, since the process of learning grammar is not the same for HL learners as it is for foreign language learners: “While foreign language students employ grammar to have access to the language, heritage speakers use the language to have access to the grammar” (211).

The goal of HL instruction is to teach standard dialects without losing sight of the importance of learners’ home dialect. As highlighted by Fairclough (*Spanish*), Valdés (“The teaching”), Lynch (“Similarities”), and others, HL teaching needs to build on the linguistic knowledge and social experience that learners bring. These same authors also call attention to the

importance of socio-affective factors, arguing that negative attitudes toward the learners' home dialect can hinder the learning process. Therefore, in what regards heritage language teaching, it is important to contrast and compare the home dialect and the standard dialect, in order to facilitate the separation of the two. Fairclough (*Spanish* 136) also reminds us that teaching a different dialect is a lengthy process that should be carried out over several semesters.

Concluding Remarks

This paper reports on investigation related to the written production of learners of Portuguese in what regards the subjunctive vs. the indicative mood. Participants were divided into heritage and foreign language learners, in order to assess whether the two groups exhibited differences in grammatical accuracy. Results point to differences between the two groups of learners regarding perception and production of the Portuguese subjunctive. These differences decrease with length of instruction: the more advanced groups in this study displayed results that were rather close in percentage terms. The smaller difference between the two groups of learners may be interpreted in two different ways. On one hand, it may suggest that NHL learners “catch up”, as it were, with HL learners over the course of instruction. On the other hand, the smaller difference between the two groups in more advanced levels may suggest that HL learners do not have the opportunity to access their knowledge of grammar, since they have the same kind of instruction provided to NHL learners. Following authors such as Valdés (“Implications”), Parodi, Lynch (“Similarities”), and many others, it has been suggested that instruction be differentiated for HL and NHL learners. Since HL learners tend to possess some knowledge of the subjunctive from very early on, differentiated instruction may help HL learners build on what they already know. After all, “traditional” grammar lessons may be of little use to these learners, as argued by

Parodi (206) and Schwarzer and Petróon (574). Furthermore, in teaching heritage language learners, it is imperative that instructors keep in mind the importance of socio-affective factors and of the learners' home dialect. Heritage learners of Portuguese should be exposed to different registers of the language, which would allow for some experimentation with the language used in various situations (Schwarzer and Petróon 577).

This study has contributed to the incipient field of Portuguese heritage language learning. However, even though it included four different written tasks, it did not include any oral production tasks. Future studies may compare the oral production of HL and NHL learners to confirm (or not) the findings presented here. Furthermore, other studies may include a larger percentage of NHL learners, since only less than 30% of the participants in this project belonged to this group. Other linguistic features (not only grammatical, but also pragmatic, sociolinguistic, discursive, etc.) should also be investigated in order to determine to what extent the production of NHL and HL learners of Portuguese differs, and to what extent it is the same. With this type of data, we may be able to design courses that are better suited for both groups of students.

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| |
|-------------|
| Your Number |
|-------------|

Appendix A

1. When you were growing up, what language(s) did you speak at home?

2. When you were growing up, what language(s) did your relatives speak at home?

3. Portuguese class(es) you are taking: _____

4. Please rate the following statements regarding your perception of grammar in Portuguese.
Please be honest in your answers; they will NOT affect your class standing.

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree |
|--|-------|-------------------------------|----------|
| a. I know Portuguese grammar well. | | | |
| b. I think “correct” grammar is not essential for people to understand each other. | | | |
| c. I have problems with different verb tenses in Portuguese. | | | |
| d. The subjunctive is the most difficult verb form in Portuguese. | | | |
| e. I speak Portuguese better than I write it. | | | |
| f. I write Portuguese better than I speak it. | | | |
| g. I know when to use the subjunctive in written language. | | | |
| h. I know when to use the subjunctive in spoken language. | | | |

Appendix B

Responde às questões abaixo em português.

A- Escolhe a forma correcta do verbo:

- 1- Duvido que eles a) concordem com isso.
b) concordam
c) concordariam
- 2- Mesmo que ela a) venha nós vamos ao cinema.
b) vem
c) vier
- 3- Talvez a) vou visitar-te este fim-de-semana.
b) váia
c) vá
- 4- Se a) ganhes a lotaria, compras uma casa.
b) ganhares
c) ganhasses
- 5- Era necessário que a) consigamos ultrapassar o problema.
b) conseguíssemos
c) conseguirmos
- 6- A não ser que a) encontro outro livro melhor, levo este.
b) encontre
c) encontrasse
- 7- Quando a) cheguei a casa, telefono-te.
b) chegar
c) chegue
- 8- Se a) quiseses, ia buscar-te.
b) quisesses
c) queres

B. Completa com a forma correcta entre parêntesis:

O Pedro é habitualmente uma pessoa calma. (1) (*Gostar*) _____ do silêncio, de uma música suave e de ler... (2) (*Ler*) _____ muito, em casa. Mas a irmã (3) (*ser*) _____ exactamente o contrário e por isso às vezes eles (4) (*irritar-se*) _____ um com o outro. Ela quer que ele (5) (*sair*) _____, que se (6) (*divertir*) _____, (7) (*ir*) _____ ao cinema, (8) (*ouvir*) _____ música rock, (9) (*participar*) _____ em festas, sei lá... Mas ele não (10) (*ser*) _____ capaz e (11) (*tentar*) _____ que ela (12) (*compreender*) _____ que os

gostos dele não (13) (*ser*) _____ os dela. E (14) (*querer*) _____ que ela (15) (*saber*) _____ que ele (16) (*ser*) _____ mais feliz assim. Mas parece ser impossível que ela (17) (*ser*) _____ tão feliz como ele... Ele não (18) (*duvidar*) _____ que a felicidade (19) (*estar*) _____ dentro das pessoas mas a irmã ainda não (20) (*descobrir*) _____ e talvez não (21) (*descobrir*) _____ nunca. Ela só (22) (*saber*) _____ andar à velocidade dos outros...

O Pedro tem agora cinco dias de férias e está a pensar ir ao norte do país se não (23) (*chover*) _____ e não (24) (*fazer*) _____ muito frio. É sempre imprevisível saber o tempo no Inverno. Por isso o Pedro (25) (*decidir*) _____ telefonar para os Serviços de Meteorologia; se eles (26) (*dizer*) _____ que (27) (*fazer*) _____ sol ele (28) (*ir*) _____ ao norte; se o tempo (29) (*estar*) _____ mau (30) (*ficar*) _____ em casa.

C. Escreve um breve parágrafo sobre o seguinte tema:

O que esperas do próximo Presidente.

D. Na tua opinião, as frases abaixo são correctas ou incorrectas? Marca com um C as que consideras correctas e com um I as que consideras incorrectas.

1. _____ Eu estudava mais se tinha tempo.
2. _____ Quando eu for a Portugal, vou ao Algarve.
3. _____ Se eu vá a Portugal, ficarei em Lisboa.
4. _____ Espero que a Maria está em Coimbra.
5. _____ Parece que a Maria está em Coimbra.
6. _____ Telefona-me quando chegarás.
7. _____ Sempre que puderes, vem visitar-me.
8. _____ Amanhã vamos à praia a menos que chova.
9. _____ Mesmo que faz sol, o Carlos vai ficar em casa.
10. _____ Se estivermos em casa, assistiremos a novela.

Notes

*I am greatly indebted to Sandra Sousa for her invaluable help with data collection and tabulation. I would also like to thank the learners who participated in this study. Finally, thanks are due to the anonymous reviewers who read a previous version of this paper. Needless to say, all shortcomings are my own.

¹ Note that the linguistic situation in Cape Verde is far from simple. In that archipelago, Portuguese is the official language and is learned in schools and is heard on radio and television. However, the language of oral communication in everyday life is Capeverdean Creole. The linguistic issues in Cape Verde fall outside of the scope of this paper.

² Heritage (and many native) speakers of European Portuguese in the American Northeast use *sinó* for “snow” (Port *neve*), *estoa* for “store” (Port *loja*), *televeijo* for “television” (Port *televisão*), and many other calques. Speakers of Brazilian Portuguese residing in the U.S. may use *bisado* for “busy” (Port *ocupado*), *parquear* for “to park” (Port *estacionar*), *printar* for “to print” (Port *imprimir*).

³ Note that (at least certain) dialects of Brazilian Portuguese display a tendency to substitute the present subjunctive with the present indicative, as attested by Wherritt (1978) and several studies in Roberts and Kato (1993). This tendency does not apply to the past and future subjunctive. To the best of my knowledge, European Portuguese does not exhibit the same tendency.

⁴ Note that the present indicative in the subordinate clauses in (2b) and (2c) would only be possible if the verbs in the main clauses also appeared in the present indicative:

(i) Se ela *vai* à reunião, nós *chegamos* a um acordo.

If she goes to the meeting, we reach an agreement.

(ii) Quando ela *vai* à reunião, nós *chegamos* a um acordo.

When she goes to the meeting, we reach an agreement.

⁵An anonymous reviewer considers this a common mistake among NHL learners.

According to the reviewer, the error may occur even before students learn the personal infinitive.

The reviewer considers that it may be related to not remembering the irregular past tense conjugation of *dizer*.