

## Abstract

Getting past the ideology of “the language”: the standardization of French and Spanish,  
and its implications in foreign-language pedagogy.

by

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The present study considers the history and ideology of language standardization, and the kinds of attitudes and beliefs about language learning (and language use) that attend and develop through the standardization process. The study focuses on Spanish and French, the two most commonly taught foreign languages in the United States, and develops the notion of a pedagogical “hyperstandard”, defined as the reduction and systematization of the standard language for the purposes of teaching the language, particularly to non-native speakers.

The concept of “hyperstandard” is proposed in an effort to conceptualize and describe how the pedagogical constructs of “the French language” and “the Spanish language” institutionalize a powerful normative point of reference (i.e., “the monolingual educated native-speaker” norm) from which to evaluate certain linguistic forms as “correct” or “accurate” by virtue of their codification in grammars, dictionaries, orthography, and textbooks. The study examines how the hyperstandard exerts a symbolic-ideological force in society and in the minds of speakers that extends its

normative pressure to “appropriate” linguistic and cultural behavior beyond what has been codified in written prescriptive rules. The study appraises the role of “communication” (i.e., interaction according to “appropriate” norms of use) and “grammar” (i.e., codified norms of accuracy) within the overarching standardness.

This study makes a contribution to several research communities: Romance linguistics, applied linguistics, and foreign-language pedagogy. As a diachronic study on the pedagogical implications of the standardization of French and Spanish, the data presented (from historical evidence, as well as from textual evidence from a variety of sources, principally grammars and dictionaries) contributes to research in Romance linguistics with its philological tradition. By exploring how foreign-language pedagogy is constrained by the hyperstandard construct, the critical perspective taken in this study is intended to be a useful and thought-provoking angle on issues of concern to applied linguists and educators, such as the uses of corpus-based linguistic description, normativity, language socialization, and affect. This study also addresses the question of how to incorporate a critical awareness of standard language into a foreign-language profession increasingly preoccupied with standards.

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