Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:00:00]:

I told my students, write a poem. And they're like, oh, but I can't write a poem in Spanish. I'm all, write it in whatever comes to you. Try to use Spanish because it's a Spanish class. Use as much Spanish as you can. And what I noticed is that when I gave students the agency to use language on their own terms, they started off with Poquito Espanol, and it just became mas Espanol, more Espanol and more Espanol. And then at the end, they were writing like full poems in Spanish.

Chisa Ueki [00:00:30]:

Welcome to the Mount San Antonio College Podcast. I'm Chisa Uweki, a Mount SAC professor and librarian, and I'm pleased to be your host for this season. Our goal is to keep you connected to our campus by bringing you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, to share the interesting things our colleagues are creating and innovative ways they are supporting and connecting with Mount Sac students. Join me as we explore Mount sac.

Ivan Sanchez [00:01:04]:

Hi everyone. My name is Ivan Sanchez, co host of the Mt. SAC Podcast. And as we think about this new season, something that really comes to mind is the way we use our words, how we express ourselves, how that changes depending on the settings that we're in, the way we use language as a learner and the way we use language as educators. Of course, it's not always the same. Our roles change. Sometimes I'm expressing myself as an educator, sometimes as a dad, sometimes as a friend or a co worker. And I like to think as a student too. But something I took away from Dr.

Ivan Sanchez [00:01:37]:

Lisbeth Sanchez's session is that my sense of identity is always imbued in my language. And these were just some of the themes of Lisbeth Sanchez's lecture, Language, Love and Liberation, presented for faculty and staff right as the school year was kicking off. She talked about language and identity, how we present ourselves in our syllabi, the way we present language in our classrooms, stories that we tell, and the truths that we teach. I'm still thinking about her words and about the poetry I heard, which you'll hear at the very end. So enjoy.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:02:13]:

What do languages mean to you? What's your relationship with language? What word or phrase best describes your relationship with language as an educator? So you at a personal level, and you as an educator. One of the many points that Gina Garcia, Dr. Gina Garcia, wants us to stress when we talk about language is that we are not all a monolith, right? Within the Spanish speaking or non Spanish speaking, Latinos, Latin, Latinx community. Okay, we need to stress that it's not a monolith. And we can't assume that you speak. Don't speak what you speak, how you speak, and why you do, or you don't speak it. Right. So it's part of that whole judgment idea as well.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:02:53]:

To be honest with you, I personally feel that when we talk about DEISA, DEISA+ plus, language is one of those overseen. It's like an invisible discrimination. We don't usually talk about it. We may talk about it as terms as like, pronouns, but we don't talk about mixing languages. Right. Spanglish. We don't talk about being an English learner. We don't talk about that.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:03:18]:

So then we offer this course here at Mt. Sac for Spanish speakers. We have a really hard time getting them to come in. And for a long time I thought, oh, these students don't want to take Spanish for Heritage speakers because they want to take Spanish one because it's easy. And when I did my research, I realized that's not true. And I kind of knew, but not I needed the data. And what the data showed me is that they do not enroll in a Spanish for Heritage Speakers class because when they're in high school oftentimes and they take a Spanish class and they're told that their Spanish is bad because their grammar is horrible, but how are you expected to know grammar if you weren't taught or immersed in it grammatically as a child? Right. So it's a bias. Right.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:04:05]:

So in our classes in Spanish for Heritage Speakers, we call ourselves linguistic therapists. Right. Because we work with healing. Our classroom is a healing space. And what we want to do is we want our students to feel validated, seen, and we want to hear their testimonial. So their testimonials are truth telling, their healing plus healing plus cultural identity. So it's not just sharing a story, but it's also a collective story. So earlier when we heard about healing centered engagement, going from the individual to the collective, it's the same concept here.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:04:42]:

Because when we talk about testimonials based in Chicana Latina epistemology, it's not just about what happens to one, but it's what happens to the community, as you mentioned. Right. Then these testimonial platicas. Platica means to chat, Right? That's the word. And when I decided to do my dissertation, I purposely chose the word platicas because when I realized that it was a methodology and epistemological tool, it took me back to an experience that I had with My own self, a language learner or a heritage speaker. So when I was in college, I went to study in Spain for a year. And lord and behold, when I go there, I realize that my Spanish is not accepted in Spain, right? So I had a roommate, and I love her to death. We're still really, really good friends.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:05:32]:

Her name is Diana. And we, to this day, we message each other all the time. We talk on WhatsApp, whatever, okay? But at the time, one of my first experiences with her was I was platicando con mi mami por telefono. I was talking to my mom on the phone. She walks by and she's like. She just laughed like that. She's like, yes, like that. And I still remember because I was like, madre mia.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:06:02]:

You know? And then. Then I got all Spanish on her, right? And I was like, after, you know, I hang up with my mom, and I was like, que unda? Like, what happened? What was that all about? And she's like, you Mexicans, you speak funny. That word is archaic and we don't use it anymore. That's like old school Spanish. You need to get with the program. It's conversad. Es hablar. But no platicar.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:06:30]:

I was like, oh, and it hurt me, right? Because that's how I platicar with my mama, right? And that was my home language. So when I realized that it was a part of, like, a theory or like a methodological tool and an epistemology, okay, It's a tool, all right, that you could use in the class. Methodological and epistemological tools rooted in Chicana Latina feminist epistemology. I decided that I wanted to use that kind of, like, to validate myself. Like, I saw, like, how chingon, right? That I. Badass. Sorry, excuse me. That I could use a word that I was told that I couldn't use when I was 18 or 19 years old, right? So the other terminology that I want to introduce, and this goes back to Spanglish translanguaging.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:07:15]:

In Chicana Latina epistemology, translanguaging means that I am my agent and I could use language as I please on my own terms. I could use Spanish, I could use English, I could use Spanglish, and I could use them both. And it's something that is used in the K through 12 system often. Well, not everybody, but it's used a lot in English learning. When children are being taught English, but we don't want to tell them not to speak whatever other language. It's not just Spanish, it could be Chinese because, you know, it's not just Chinese. There's also Chinglish. There's like, all these, like, issues out there.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:07:54]:

Okay, so translanguaging is, like, super, super important. That's something that I discovered while I was doing my research and translanging, and I thought, like, wow. So then, you know what happened? I brought it to my class and I told my students, write a poem. And they're like, oh, but I can't write a poem in Spanish. I'm all, write it in whatever comes to you. Try to use Spanish because it's a Spanish class. Use as much Spanish as you can. And what I noticed is that when I gave students the agency to use language on their own terms, they started off with poquito espanol, and it just became mas espanol, more Espanol and more Espanol.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:08:31]:

And then at the end, they were writing, like, full poems in Spanish when they started off mixing it. But I never told them that they couldn't use what they felt in their heart, but because they were mindful that it was a Spanish class, and I did ingrain that. You know, the target here is we want to improve our Spanish. We're going to use our repertoire, and we're going to do it as we can, as we wish. Okay? Critical language awareness is making sure that our students understand that within languages as well, there are hierarchies of power. Right? So it's not what you say, but it's who says it. I'll give you a perfect example. Everybody know who Michael Jackson is.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:09:09]:

Okay? Right. Okay. Right. So that's one Michael Jackson. Okay, but there's another Michael Jackson. Right? There's a Michael Jackson that was a news reporter. Has anybody ever heard about Jorge Ramos? Okay, so who is Jorge Ramos? A journalist. Right? And he's like, he's an advocate.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:09:29]:

He fights for people's rights and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Okay? And when he was trying to become a news reporter in English, because that his first dream when he came to the United States, he wanted to be an anchor. In English. In English. And they told him that his accent was horrible. Just forget about it, buddy. You're never going to get over your accent. But he spoke English after a while.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:09:51]:

Not initially, but he practiced it. But his accent. Professor told him that he would never be able to get rid of his accent. However, at the same time, there was a journalist named Michael Jackson, right? Not the other Michael Jackson. That Michael Jackson had an English accent. Like English from England. Right. Why was his accent okay, but not Jorge Ramos's accent.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:10:13]:

So that's where we get into, like, racial linguistics. And when we're talking about how there's a hierarchy, it's not what you say, but who says it. All right, so this is what my research found. I found that heritage speakers experienced shame, erasure and resilience. Laticas helped build community confidence and linguistic pride. Testimonial created healing, centered spaces in the classroom because they were listening to each other's stories and they were realizing that they were not alone in their struggle of going back between English and Spanish, speaking one thing with one person, speaking another with another person, or feeling shame for speaking or not. But I also found that as a faculty, what we said to them also mattered. Right.

Dr. Lisbeth Sanchez [00:10:55]:

So if we welcome them into a space where we made them feel validated and seen and okay to use anything that they wanted, they were more likely to share more during their platicas, which were there. So platicas is just like a dialogue, like having group talks. Right. And it's just we labeled it.

Speaker D [00:11:21]:

I learned Spanish from my grandma. Mijito, don't cry, she'd tell me on the mornings my parents would leave to work at the fish canaries. My grandma would chat with chairs, sing them old songs, dance waltz with them in the kitchen. When she'd say Nino Barrigon, she'd laugh. With my grandma, I learned to count clouds, to recognize mint leaves in flower pots. My grandma wore moons on her dress. Mexico's mountains, deserts, ocean. In her eyes, I'd see them in her braids.

Speaker D [00:11:55]:

I'd touch them in her voice, smell them. One day I was told she went far away. But still I feel her with me, whispering in my ear, Mijito Foreign.

Chisa Uyeki [00:12:18]:

Thank you for listening to the Mt.San Antonio College Podcast, brought to you by Mt. SAC's POD office and created in partnership with Avant House Media. Original music created and edited by Neera Azira. Be sure to check out our growing library of over 230 episodes and let us know your thoughts. You can reach me, Chisato Uyeki at C U Y EKI @ Mtsac.edu. Wishing you an amazing year and happy listening.