

MINI-RESOURCE

Spanish Heritage Language Speaker in the Foreign Language Classroom

What is a Heritage Language Speaker (HLS)?

Heritage Language Learners might be:

- New arrivals/migrant students/native speakers.
- Foreign-born students who arrived at a young age but have been in American schools for several years.
- Ethnic-American students who were born in the United States to immigrant parents.
- Students who were born in the United States but have no one at home with whom they speak the heritage language. The students would like to strengthen their ties to their heritage language and culture.

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Who is a Heritage Language Learner?



What is a Foreign Language learner (FL)?

A foreign language learner is a student who learns a language in the classroom and the language is not spoken in the home or in the society where the teaching occurs.

(Valdes, 2000) (Fishman, 2001: Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003) (Kagan, 2003)

How do HLS and FL learners differ? How are they the same?

Heritage Language Speakers	Foreign Language Learners
Strong in aural skills, often underdeveloped literacy skills	At beginning levels of learning in all domains
Strong skills in the Heritage Language	Beginning levels in the foreign language
Culturally tied to the language, language of home or community	Strong foundation in first language or home language
Learned heritage language as a child	Began to learn foreign language in late puberty
Heritage Language use in social context strong, may need to strengthen academic language use	Stronger academic language skills in first language
Strengthen pride in culture and community	Motivation might include completing school requirements
HL development strengthens learning in English	Broadens knowledge of the world

How should we place HLS in the FL class? Consider these variables:

- Previous education
- Age of onset of bilingualism
- Amount of HL spoken at home
- Resources of curricular material and teacher preparedness
- Language proficiency in the HL and in English in all four domains of communication.
- Knowledge of other teachers - Discuss with other teachers who know the student: ESL Teacher, Administration.
- Background information - Use a *Heritage Language Learner Survey* (different from Home Language Survey) to gauge literacy in first language/heritage language.

What are some concerns?

Psychological Concerns:

- ✓ HL speakers may be in a minority in your school district. They may feel insecure that their language skills are not as high in the Heritage Language as they expected or that they do not speak a “standard variety” of the Heritage Language.
- ✓ Heritage Language Learners may feel stigmatized. Very often, they do not speak a “standard” variety of the language, or they may speak a variety different from that of the Foreign Language teacher.

Linguistic Concerns:

- ✓ Academic language in the Heritage Language may not be strong due to majority of use with family and community in social settings. Previous schooling in the first language may be interrupted or limited. This impacts vocabulary, too.
- ✓ The knowledge of some English may influence the use of the Heritage Language and errors or invented conventions may occur. This impacts and pronunciation in the HL, too.

What are curricular differences?

Sociolinguistics

1. Students need to understand the connection between language use and society, formal vs. informal context, and be able to use the Heritage Language in different registers, speech structures, and social variations.

Cultural Studies

1. Use authentic materials to help Heritage Language Learners explore their own culture. This helps to build confidence, pride in home culture, and self-identity.
2. For Spanish-speaking Heritage Language Learners, the study of culture can include the studies of Hispanic culture in the Americas. Learners should also study literature, art, history and popular culture and lifestyle.

Linguistics

1. Grammar – “Many HLL have an intuitive understanding of grammar, but do not know why a certain form is correct, or how to access the structures that they do know. Many times, a structure can be elicited by using a “key word.” For example, the word “ojalá” or “I wish” can be used to help Spanish HLL access the forms of the subjunctive that they already know. Then the teacher can help them learn forms and ways to organize their knowledge” (Ohio Dept. of Education, 2017).

2. Vocabulary can be increased by exposing HLL to topics and texts that are not usually covered in spoken language.
3. Writing should be a major focus because while HLL often have well developed aural skills (speaking and listening), they may not yet have well-developed literacy skills. The curriculum should include writing genres, grammar usage, spelling errors and word choice.
4. Reading – While many Heritage Language Learners read well, exposure to a wide variety of texts will deepen their reading comprehension, increase their vocabulary, and help them build academic language skills.
5. Speaking – While speech is often the strongest domain for HLLs, the opportunity to speak in various context and for various purposes will support academic success.
6. Listening – In a similar way as speaking, HLLs often have strong listening skills. But students should have opportunity to practice listening in different contexts, for different purposes, and with a variety of speakers and situations.

What are some ways to effectively engage Heritage Language Learners in the Foreign Language class?

1. Know your students.
 - What is their proficiency level in the Heritage Language?
 - What is their proficiency in English?
 - What is their previous formal schooling?
 - What are their goals, especially for older students, for education and post high school plans?
2. Develop a “we will learn this together” attitude.
Some Foreign Language teachers, because they are second language learners, may feel intimidated by the presence of a native Spanish speaker. But look for ways to challenge students with content, exposure to different texts and genres in Spanish, and other topics in which the HL student may be an “expert”.
3. There may be prejudice about some forms of Spanish.
No language variety is correct or incorrect. But there may be non-standard varieties of Spanish that have English influence, for example. Work to allow student to develop pride and to navigate between the worlds in which they live: home, school, cultural identity and community.
4. Choose materials that will help make learning meaningful, engaging and accessible to all learners. “HLL differ from L2 learners in the yearning for self-understanding and identity about the heritage language and culture, and English. In a mixed class as well as in a Heritage learning class, teachers need to sometimes address issues of identity, biculturalism and bilingualism and utilize the HLL expertise in the language and culture” (Ohio Dept. of Education, 2018).
5. Engage HLL in the classroom activities through active learning.
 - Use strategies that make use of the strengths of HLL strengths and needs.
 - Support independent learning through strategies that facilitate gradual release of responsibility.

What are some teaching strategies we could implement?

1. Create a mixture of strategies that challenge and support both Foreign Language students and Heritage Language learners. Some strategies will be hard for FL students, such as “intuitive knowledge or spontaneous use of target language” (Dept. Of Ohio, 2018). Other strategies will be difficult for HLLs, such as activities in the academic or written register (Dept. of Ohio, 2018). The Ohio Department of Education (2018) notes that HLLs will have greater skills in some areas than the FL students. This helpful chart demonstrates:

Type of knowledge required in basic activity	Learner comparison (stronger -> weaker)	Sample add-ons to make the activity more challenging for the stronger learner
Intuitive, spontaneous use of language	HLL > L2L	An additional writing component. An activity with explicit manipulation of language (e.g. analysis of vocabulary or verb forms)
Academic language	L2L > HLL	An activity that uses colloquial language (e.g. a skit, acting as an intermediary to explain)
Colloquial language	HLL > L2L	An activity that takes language to a higher register (e.g. write a letter to the editor, write a summary)
Home vocabulary	HLL > L2L	A formal debate. An activity with explicit manipulation of language (e.g. write a glossary of key home vocabulary)

2. Macro-based or top-down approach to activities makes use of previous knowledge or skill to fully understand Content (may be easier for HLLs). Micro-based or bottom-up approach makes use of the information presented, the immediate content, to create overall understanding (may be easier for FLs).
3. Thematic planning helps the teacher to differentiate instruction. Consider the example of an early unit in a Foreign Language text book: Foods of Central America.
 - a. A short whole-group introduction to the unit should be taught to clearly explain objective in both content (cultural topics, foods) and language (content vocabulary).
 - b. Break instruction into two groups: FL students will continue on learning the content and vocabulary. HL students, who know the vocabulary, will concentrate on other foods from the area, write directions for making their favorite foods from their home culture, or explore fruits found in US grocery stores, their origin and import the US.

- c. During the lessons in whole and small group, some interaction strategies are implemented, videos support learning, vocabulary review games, and dialogues are used to support grammar structure and practice.
 - d. Each group designs a culminating classroom presentation and shares.
 - e. For other topics or projects, some mixed-ability small groups might be utilized. Some same-ability groups may be utilized.
4. Use differentiated instruction, which is a set of strategies for addressing diverse student instructional needs. Differentiated instruction is a contrast to the one-size-fits-all approach: instead of making the students conform to the teacher's needs, Carol Tomlinson (2002) states, "*In differentiated classrooms, teachers begin where students are, not the front of a curriculum guide. They accept and build upon the premise that learners differ in important ways...In differentiated classrooms, teachers provide specific ways for each individual to learn as deeply as possible and as quickly as possible, without assuming one student's roadmap for learning is identical to anyone else*" (Tomlinson, p. 2, 2000).

What resources should I use?

- Foreign Language text books: These textbooks are designed to introduce a foreign language to students who have no fluency in the language and are learning it for the first time. These are often offered such as Spanish I, Spanish II, and Spanish III.
- Heritage Language text books: These textbooks offer cultural integration that allows learners to expand their knowledge of their rich cultural heritage while developing bilingual skills. This site offers Open Curriculum for Heritage Language Learners: <https://heritagespanish.coerll.utexas.edu/resources/textbooks/> (free! Online! Open source!)
- Use a combination of FL textbooks and HL textbooks to differentiate as needed in the FL Classroom to engage all learners.

Text samples and articles in the target Language/Heritage Language can be found on websites listed below, foreign language magazines and websites. Make sure you know your students' reading levels.

What about English Language Development (ELD, ESL)?

- Make no mistake. Including a Heritage Language Student in the *Spanish as a Foreign Language Class*, does not take the place of *English Language Development* by an endorsed ENL/ESL teacher. English Learners still do need daily English Language Development instruction.
- Do not replace ESL class with a Foreign Language Class. Heritage speakers that demonstrate the best success are enrolled in both ESL/ELD class, as well as classes that allow them to learn their Heritage Language class, as well.
- Heritage Language Learners enrolled in the Spanish as a Foreign Language class build a sense of pride their culture and language, strengthen their literacy in their home language, earn credits toward high school graduation, and are prepared to be College and Career Ready.
- HLLs may qualify for the *Seal of Biliteracy* and increase their job opportunities in an ever-increasing world economy.

We don't have a Heritage Language Class!

Often Heritage Language learners are enrolled in *Spanish I or Spanish II Foreign Language* class. Teachers differentiate instruction based on student need, as described above. Teachers use a variety of resources, instructional strategies and projects to support learning of all students. English Learners build skills in their first/heritage language, while also earning high school credits toward graduation.

What are some resources to learn more?

(This serves as reference list for this Mini-Resource)

1. Teaching Heritage Languages – An Online Workshop
http://startalk.nhlrc.ucla.edu/Default_startalk.aspx This workshop includes three short modules. Modules 1 and 2 focus on “Teaching Heritage Language Learners” and “Strategies for Heritage Language Learners: Differentiated Instruction”.
2. This PDF from the Ohio Department of Education is an excellent resource for any teacher who includes HL students in the Foreign Language classroom. This includes the *Heritage Language Survey*.
https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Foreign-Language/World-Languages-Model-Curriculum/World-Languages-Model-Curriculum-Framework/Instructional-Strategies/Assessment/Heritage-learners_june6_2017.pdf.aspx
3. The Center of Applied Linguistics has created a sister-website called: Heritage Languages in America. <http://www.cal.org/heritage/>
Programming ideas, resources FAQs, Heritage briefs, and a searchable *Heritage Language Data* base that offers a plethora of resources and articles. Use their printable texts in many Heritage Languages to use in your foreign language classroom for differentiation.
4. Heritage Voices Collection: <http://www.cal.org/heritage/research/voices.html>
Part of the CAL Heritage Languages in American, this section offers an online series of documents designed to allow heritage language speakers and programs to share their unique voices with visitor to the website. Templates also provide guidance for individuals or program who would like to submit a profile for consideration. Great project to integrate into your classroom!
5. Two texts to learn more!
 - a. *Handbook of Heritage, Community, and Native American Languages in the United States* (2014) by Wiley, Peyton, Christian, Moore and Liu
 - b. *Heritage Language Education* (2008) by Brinton, Kagan, and Bauckus

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