MEETING THE NEEDS OF HERITAGE LEARNERS:
Reflections for Practice

ACTFL STARTALK Program Design Institute
Paul Sandrock & Greta Lundgaard

Learning Targets

• I can describe specific differences of Heritage Language Learners’ needs and wants (different among themselves and different from non-heritage learners)

• I can identify ways to differentiate learning for the wide variety of Heritage Language Learners
STRATEGY: Program Design Institute

- Community-based organizations and institutions serving heritage/native speakers of STARTALK languages
- Create Action Plan to expand current language programs to provide year-round instruction
- Explore WHAT is needed and HOW to develop language proficiency of Heritage Language Learners

What are Heritage Speakers?

- With a partner or small group, develop a definition to this question. How would you respond in your own words and based on your personal experiences?

Teaching Heritage Languages Online Workshop  http://startalk.nhlrc.ucla.edu/startalk/lessons.aspx
What are Heritage Speakers?

Heritage Language Learner: A Working Definition

- **Broad Definition:** those who have been raised with a *strong cultural connection* to a particular language, usually through family interaction, mostly with *no measurable proficiencies* in the language.

- **Narrow Definition:** those who have been exposed to particular language in childhood, did not learn it to full capacity because another language become dominant but can understand it and speak it to a degree, with *some measurable proficiencies* in the language.

  (Polinsky and Kagan 2007)
Ben’s Heritage Language Story

Teaching Heritage Languages Online Workshop  http://startalk.nhlcrc.ucla.edu/startalk/lessons.aspx

What does the data say?

Motivations

Why have you enrolled in HL courses?

- To learn about my cultural and linguistic roots.
- To communicate better with family and friends in the U.S.
- To fulfill a language requirement.
- For a future career or job.
- To communicate better with family and friends abroad.
- To prepare for travel in my country of origin.
- Because it is easy for me.
- Other (please specify)
Applying what we know

- Read the profiles of four 17 year old Russian speaking students, all now in the U.S. Can you match the proficiencies and motivations with each student?
  - Natasha completed high school in Russia
  - Yurii completed junior high/middle school in Russia
  - Vlad completed elementary/grammar school
  - Olga was born in the U.S. to Russian-speaking parents

What is important about the above profiles is that all of these students might be found in ONE heritage language class, thus creating considerable challenges for the teacher.
From a Heritage Learner’s Perspective

Mee & Terry

• What does Mee say is the most difficult aspect of studying her heritage language? Why?
• What does Terry say is the most difficult aspect of studying his heritage language? Why?
Survey of Heritage Learners:
Rank the skill that you feel is most important to improve.

Increase Vocabulary  
Improve Writing  
Improve Speaking  
Improve Reading  
Improve Accuracy  
Improve Listening

Most Important

Least Important

Research on Vocabulary

• Vocabulary is emerging as the best indicator of Heritage Language Learners’ overall proficiency

• Increasing vocabulary may emerge as the primary goal of Heritage Language Learner instruction
Research on Grammar

• Grammar in heritage speakers is selective and localized: Incomplete Heritage Language (L1) grammar acquisition

• However, grammar acquisition is inconsistent: Some areas of grammatical knowledge appear to be more susceptible to incomplete development than others.

Montrul et al. (2008)

Main features of the Heritage Learner

• Limited vocabulary
• Incomplete morphology
• Impoverished syntax
• Spotty socio-cultural knowledge
• Register is not fully developed: Default is Informal
What can I say besides, “That’s Wrong!”

• Read the text, underlining and highlighting important phrases and statements.
• Use the textbox at the bottom of the page to write down additional ideas.
• Be ready to share!

Here is what they want to do . . .

• Use their HL professionally
• Connect with their culture
• Communicate with other speakers of their language in the U.S.
• Communicate with speakers of the HL outside the U.S.

Carreira and Kagan (2011)
In the past six months, which of the following activities have you done in your HL OUTSIDE of class?

- Spoken on the phone.
- Listened to music.
- Watched tv.
- Watched a movie or dvd.
- Listened to radio.
- Visited a website.
- Written an email or letter.
- Attended a community or church event.
- Read a newspaper.
- Read a book or short story.

Here is what they do . . .

Please rate your heritage language abilities

From Olga Kagan, Director, NIHRC, presentation @STARTALK 2009

How good do they think they are?

Teaching Heritage Languages Online Workshop http://startalk.nhlrc.ucla.edu/startalk/lessons.aspx
Learning Adjustments

• Increase vocabulary
  – Don’t confuse **efficiency** with **effectiveness**
  – Don’t be complacent
• Target **certain** areas of grammar
  – Be **Diagnostic** before Differentiating
  – Hold to quality and quantity standards
• Focus on **register** and **culture**
  – Street/home/academic/workplace
  – Home culture + community culture + school culture

From Olga Kagan, Director, NHLRC, presentation @STARTALK 2009

Scaffolding in the classroom

• Scaffolding provides critical support for effective macro-based teaching and the use of authentic materials and tasks
• Scaffolding can include modeling a skill, providing hints or cues, tapping into background knowledge, breaking a task into small, more manageable tasks with opportunities for intermittent feedback (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

From a presentation by Maria M. Carreira, Principles and Strategies for Teaching HL Learners: Focus on mixed classes.
A model of scaffolding for HL teaching: From-to principles from Olga Kagan

- Listening -> Reading
- Speaking -> Writing
- Home-based register -> General and academic registers
- Everyday “real-life” activities -> Classroom activities
- HL learners’ motivations surrounding identity and group membership -> content

From a presentation by Maria M. Carreira, Principles and Strategies for Teaching HL Learners: Focus on mixed classes.

Other configurations that also serve to scaffold and build

From a presentation by Maria M. Carreira, Principles and Strategies for Teaching HL Learners: Focus on mixed classes.
### Use oral skills to build literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Oral Skill</th>
<th>Written Application</th>
<th>Discourse Types</th>
<th>Target Grammar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Written conversation</td>
<td>Dialogs</td>
<td>spelling punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Describing</td>
<td>People, places objects, things</td>
<td>Adjectives, sentence connector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narration</td>
<td>Sequencing, retelling</td>
<td>Stories, events,</td>
<td>Tenses &amp; moods; transition words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>Express opinions</td>
<td>Reviews, critiques</td>
<td>Comparisons, transition phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Sequencing events &amp; relationships</td>
<td>Summaries, reports, integration</td>
<td>Indirect or impersonal phrases, sequencing/frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Persuasion, inference, discernment</td>
<td>Formal writings</td>
<td>Subordination, transition, wishes, wants, contrary to fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
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</tbody>
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### But We Still Need To Do This

– Always Work Within a Context
– Introduce grammar and vocabulary and build accuracy around a clear context
– Use visual aids whenever possible
– Incorporate each of the four language skills into your class whenever possible (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
– Integrate the Modes of Communication whenever possible

Presentation by Texas Language Center, University of Texas, Teaching the Speakers: Heritage Language Learners and the Classroom 2011
LESSONS LEARNED

• Assessment is critical to identify needs of Heritage Language Learners and progress toward goal
• A variety of learning options are needed beyond classroom instruction
• Numerous partners are needed to engage Heritage Language Learners in the development and practice of language in all Modes of Communication

Value of Using Assessment Post-Program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY USE EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify what learners with different prior knowledge of the language could do at the end of the 2017 program</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate how well our program met its proficiency target</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify what learners in their second, third, or more years in our STARTALK program could do at the end of the 2017 program</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help us better plan for a 2018 STARTALK program</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges to Using End-of-Program Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited time during the last few days of the program</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting up the technology needed to conduct AAPPL assessment</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were no challenges with using AAPPL</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ motivation to show all they could do in the language</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modes used for Post-Program Assessment

- All used Interpersonal
- Over half also used Interpretive (Listening and Reading)
- Very few used Presentational Writing

All would use Assessment in the Future!
Pre- and Post-Program Lessons Learned: Arabic and Chinese Program

• Most heritage language learners are most proficient in Interpretive Listening

• Often wide gaps in Heritage Language Learners’ proficiency (speaking lower than listening)

• Many students were stronger in Interpretive Reading than in Interpersonal Speaking (this could be harnessed to scaffold support for speaking)

• STARTALK Programs need to differentiate for HLLs

Pre- and Post-Program Lessons Learned: Portuguese Program

• Heritage Spanish speakers were N or I in Portuguese before instruction (I in all modes, except writing at N); Heritage Portuguese speakers also showed lower writing skills (IM/IH) compared with speaking (A)

• Online course prior to on-site course gave heritage Spanish speakers a boost in learning Portuguese

• As a result: program focused more on writing for Portuguese HLLs (and post-program results showed improvement (with more learners at A)

• STARTALK Programs need to differentiate for HLLs
Pre- and Post-Program Lessons Learned: Chinese Program

- Program needs to teach Chinese character typing skills and recognizing characters (not just doing calligraphy)
- Assessment helped with placement (just being a heritage speaker didn't mean strong in all skills; one student placed with non-heritage learners based on data)
- Returning heritage learners deteriorated considerably in speaking skills between STARTALK summers
- **STARTALK Programs need to differentiate for HLLs**

Designing Your Action Plan

**Program Model:**
What language learning model is currently in place?
Language and culture classes are taught on Saturdays in a local school. There are currently 120 students (3-16 years old) and 18 teachers distributed in 13 classes. Classes meet Saturday mornings (10am-12pm). The annual program consists of 66 hours (two hours for 33 weeks).

What components will be added to sustain learning year-round?
We plan to add weekly after school sessions to tutor heritage language learners to improve their language proficiency to the Advanced Low level (in order to earn the Seal of Biliteracy in our state). These weekly sessions will be supported with once-a-month language activities at our center, tapping our volunteers (to use several of the components below)
Designing Your Action Plan

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| Face-to-Face Learning: After school sessions | Online Learning: Create conversation practice activities (ACTFL's Conversation Builder) | Tutors or Peer Learning: Tap volunteers to provide language practice (interviews, research, etc.) | Collaborative Projects: Students select a topic to work with partners (research, discuss, present to volunteers) | Experiences (Summer, Abroad, In Community): Heritage learners enlisted to work with younger learners in summer camp experience | Community Service Projects: Project created for heritage learners to help businesses using their language skills in all three modes |

Program Design Institute Participants’ Examples

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<tr>
<th>Face-to-Face Learning:</th>
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<th>Tutors or Peer Learning: Tap volunteers</th>
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<th>Community Service Projects:</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Be part of School District’s Summer Exploration Program</td>
<td>Online conversation practice; social media exchanges</td>
<td>Volunteers at community center are interviewed by learners</td>
<td>Create an online blog with learners collaborating on projects</td>
<td>Create list of extracurricular activities in community</td>
<td>Mentors help learners create community center webpage, &amp; newsletter</td>
</tr>
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<td>Weekend and after school sessions</td>
<td>Set up Pinterest page of cultural sites to explore</td>
<td>Higher level learners practice conversation and do story time with lower level learners</td>
<td>Teams research a topic for a presentation given online or in class</td>
<td>Work with multicultural centers to host events for community</td>
<td>Work with recent refugees (tutoring young students; tours of school and community)</td>
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<td>Coach learners to &quot;level up&quot; to achieve Seal of Biliteracy</td>
<td>Homework, games, and vocabulary practice tasks online</td>
<td>Tutoring available via a Discussion Board</td>
<td>Create a cookbook for local community</td>
<td>Visit assisted living centers to interview residents</td>
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**Key Decision Point: Implementation of Guiding Principles of Effective Instruction**

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<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Resources (Materials/Human/Fiscal)</th>
<th>Charting Progress</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What will be done and how?</strong></td>
<td>Who will do it?</td>
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<td>Evidence of Success</td>
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**Key Decision Point: Assessment – Measuring Progress of Learning**

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**Key Decision Point: Planning for Program Growth / Capacity Building**

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**Implications for Professional Development (Teacher Training)**

**Implications for Advocacy for All Stakeholders**

(Parents, Teachers, Administrators, Community Members, Language Learners)

**CONCLUSION**

- Explore partnerships to support learners beyond a classroom
- Set learning goals linked to learners’ motivation to use the language
- Identify ways to chart progress in improving language performance
- Plan learning experiences blending online & face-to-face learning, collaborative and service projects, and community mentors.

Plan to support YOUR learners year-round!  
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