

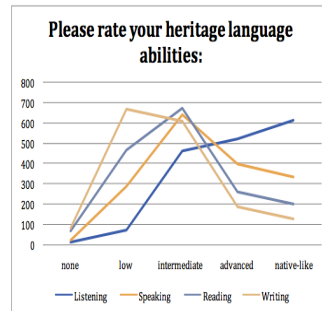
Writing Difficulties in Heritage Language Classes

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Introduction

A **heritage student** is an “individual who is exposed to a language other than English at home but educated primarily in English” (Carreira, 2015). Despite knowing two languages, heritage language students have limited vocabulary and grammar. These struggles, along with different degrees of motivation and interest, contribute to their low performance when it comes to writing in the heritage language.

National Heritage Language Resource Center survey results:



How important is it for you to accomplish the following goals in your HL class?

1 = unimportant, 5 = very important

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
Improve speaking	121	85	144	232	1030
Improve listening	126	113	210	292	868
Improve reading	120	63	143	283	1000
Improve writing	108	53	133	245	1070
Improve grammatical accuracy	109	56	167	287	990
Increase vocabulary	111	44	101	240	1109

(Carreira, 2015)

Conclusion

Writing in the heritage language is an issue for heritage students partly because of lack of interest and authentic task opportunities. Since heritage students often identify with several cultures, they are genuinely interested in topics related to national, cultural, and linguistic identities, to name a few. Assignments that deal with themes of identity encourage students to find pleasure in writing, and allow them to learn more about their culture, to speak and to listen the heritage tongue, and to reconnect with their heritage culture.

Strategies

To help students become greater writers in their heritage language teachers must focus on the development of their students' vocabulary, cultural competence, and grammar in addition to reading, listening and speaking.

Some of these strategies include:

- A variety of writing assignments that allow them to explore diverse methods of writing, such as poems, argumentative, descriptive, and narrative essays.
- Interesting topics such as Spanglish, the origin of student's names, and the immigration stories of family members.
- Oral interviews with community members and written reports of their experience as immigrants in the U.S.

Objective

The objective of this study is to determine effective strategies that help heritage students improve their writing in their heritage language.

References

Carreira, M. (2015). NHLRC: Heritage Language Survey Report. Retrieved May 10, 2015, from <http://nhlrc.ucla.edu/nhlrc/surveyreport/surveyintro>