

BARRIERS TO ADVANCED HERITAGE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

I. THE HERITAGE LANGUAGE SITUATION: TYPICAL CASE

Ok with early stages, but by teenage years, problems talking to grandparents.

“By the time he entered junior high, Rick could speak to his parents in his heritage language about typical family and household topics, but had difficulty talking about matters outside the house” (eg school work, his plans for the future). In 12 years, “Rick has gone from being monolingual in Cantonese to being nearly monolingual in English.” Tse, L. 2001. “Why Don’t They Learn English?” Teachers College Press. p. 31.

1. Theory: The input hypothesis

- A. We acquire language when we understand it, not by study, not by speaking or writing.
- B. The power of self-selected pleasure reading Those who read more spell better, know more vocabulary write better, read better, have better grammar... (Krashen, S. 2004..The Power of Reading. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/books/the_power_of_reading.pdf (second edition)

One of MANY cases: Sophia’s reading scores went DOWN during the school year, but went UP over the summer! Why? Hint: The library.

Lin, S-Y, Shin, F., & Krashen, S. 2007. Sophia’s choice: Summer reading. Knowledge Quest 35(4), 52-55.

http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/sophias_choice_kq.pdf

Features of optimal input: comprehensible, very interesting (compelling), a lot of it.

- C. The value of self-selection –
 1. Ensures comprehensible and interesting
 2. Evidence: our reaction to gift books, assigned reading
- D. Additional benefits:

2. Readers know more. (Stanovich, K. and Cunningham, A. (1993). Where does knowledge come from? *Journal of Educational Psychology* 85, 2: 211-229.) science, social studies, current events, personal finance, health, “daily living technology,” More knowledge of current authors, films. Print exposure better predictor of knowledge than grades.

3. Readers understand others. (empathy): when you read fiction “You’re learning to be somebody else, learning to see the world through their eyes.” (Terry Gross, *Fresh Air*)

E. The Power of Pleasure Reading in Heritage Language Development

1. Tse (2001): subjects clearly successful at developing their HL (Cantonese, Japanese, Spanish). (Tse, L. (2001) *Heritage Language Literacy: A Study of US Biliterates. Language Culture and Curriculum*, 14:3, 256-268)

- a. 9/10 born in the USA, ages 18-24, had native-level competence in their heritage language. None experienced extended residence or education in the country where HL was spoken.
 - b. ... “nearly all the participants developed (an) interest in reading for pleasure”
 - c. Reading included magazines and comic books
 - d. Sources: “Several of the participants recalled seeing their parents read regularly for pleasure. Helen’s father brought home a newspaper in Chinese every day to read after work, and Julie’s mother read newspapers on a regular basis ... Meg’s mother also enjoyed reading novels and did so often. Frequently, parents brought home HL magazines purchased at a local market or news stand, or borrowed them from friends who regularly traded periodicals with one another. Helen had access to her mother’s celebrity magazines and occasionally read articles from her brother’s car magazines in Chinese. As the participants grew older, they purchased or subscribed to magazines themselves. “ (p. 261). “For the most part, the participants read fiction for pleasure” (262).
2. G. Cho (2020) NABE Global Perspectives (44,2): Subjects arrived in US between ages 12-16. LOR = 34 years
- a. All spoke Korean well (!!); Self rating in Korean speaking & listening = 5, reading 4.7, writing 4.3,
 - b. 5/7 were “dedicated readers.” Three explicitly gave reading the credit.
 - c. Howard, now a high school math teacher: “I read every day. When I was hooked on Chinese novels (translated into Korean), especially historical novels, I read for three to four hours a day, spent many hours trying to finish a novel in one sitting.” Among other novels, Howard read the popular “Three Kingdom” series.
 - d. Tony, California state-certified professional Korean translator: “Korean language classes didn’t help much... I think I maintained Korean from simply reading books, magazines, and newspapers and from watching Korean dramas and talking about them with church friends and teachers afterwards.”

THE THREE BARRIERS

1. HL classes – typically traditional. Comprehensible input/ acquisition/pleasure reading rarely tried. (Ashtari, 2020). See (local college course descriptions for heritage languages).
 - a. Ashtari (2020a) interviewed 12 former HL class students: “None found the heritage language classes to be helpful.” Classwork was “Daunting ... “impossible.” (eg forced to master the Farsi alphabet immediately), the classes met on Friday evenings and weekends!
 - b. One students’ reaction (Ashtari, 2020a): “I spent about less than six months in one [HL class] and I hated it. And it actually pushed me away from learning Farsi.”
 - c. College/university level- course description: mostly the focus is on formal aspects of the language such as formal writing, and advanced grammar.

2. Reactions of competent HL speakers: Language Shyness
 - a. “I began to realize as I spoke Spanish to my relatives, they would constantly correct my grammar or pronunciation ... My relatives would say, you would never know that you are the daughter of an Argentine.’ Comments like these ... shut me off to Spanish...” (Krashen, 1998, p. 42).
 - b. “It’s like a tug of war ... I feel like my parents want me to speak Persian, but then they turn around and criticize me when I am not perfect ... and then you go to a Persian mehmoonii [party] and then the older generation, they kind of look down on you and it feels horrible” (Ashtari, 2020a, <https://tinyurl.com/p9abr5h8>).

3. Lack of access to books
 - a. Ashtari: (2020): Visits to four Farsi bookstores in Los Angeles: only classics, textbooks: limited options:
 1. Few “graded” or simplified readers.
 2. Many hard for native speakers, e.g. classic poetry.
 - b. Holdings in 72 LA public libraries, 300 books in Farsi, only 12 taken out at the time.

Ashtari, N. (2020). Reaching Rumi: The accessibility and comprehensibility of Farsi reading materials for heritage language learners. Published as “Enabling heritage language reading,” *Language Magazine*, 19 (9):30-31.
<https://tinyurl.com/ybvscdkd> (Research gate)
 - c. The public library in area with many Iranian families. Unobtrusive study: wear and tear, following McQuillan.

(1) Signs of wear and tear: Note the last page on which any of the following were found: Separation of pages on the binding, Fingerprints or smudges on the pages or the corners, Worn or wrinkled corners likely caused by page-turning.

(2) only 6 books found (learn Farsi, self-study) but results consistent. only 5% of the pages were read. All the books used were traditional, grammar-oriented books and assumed that the path to competence was through hard study and conscious learning of grammar and vocabulary. Ashtari, N. and Krashen, S. 2020. How not to improve heritage language competence: The case of Farsi. Language and Language Teaching. 9,2,18: 53-55.

http://publications.azimpremjifoundation.org/2746/1/9_LLIT%20-Issue%2018%2C%20Vol%209%2C%20July%202020-60-63.pdf

Conclusions: HL do not develop because of:

- (1) Traditional teaching methods**
- (2) Lack of access to interesting/comprehensible reading material. (related to (1), traditional methods)**
- (3) Reactions of more advanced speakers**

Toward a cure:

- (1) CI-based pedagogy, with stories. (story listening) (stage 1) and self-selected reading (stage 2). (GSSR)**
- (2) Small free libraries at first**
- (3) Educate parents and HL speakers: theory as part of the HL course**