



Expert Evaluation on Urgent Research on Heritage Language Education across European countries

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MAY 16TH
WORLD DAY OF
PORTUGUESE AS A
HERITAGE LANGUAGE

10 reasons to speak and nurture portuguese as a heritage language

Brazil em. Monte. www.diaadoph.org

- It's spoken by 244 million people and the 6th most spoken language in the world, the fifth most spoken on the internet, and the third most spoken in social media.
- It's the language of the 7th biggest world economy.
- It makes the child more open to other cultures.
- It promotes creativity and impulses critical thinking.
- It allows the communication with grandparents and other family members.
- It passes down your culture and values.
- It strengthens the "cognitive muscles", shaping the brain in a profound way.
- It makes learning other languages easier.
- It opens new career opportunities.
- It's a gift that your child will cherish for life



We are so concerned that our child refuses to speak our heritage language(s) and how this might affect our whole family and his/her development.



Your child's second language proficiency is not developed enough and he/she is underperforming in our language of instruction. Have you considered using our language more in your communication at home?



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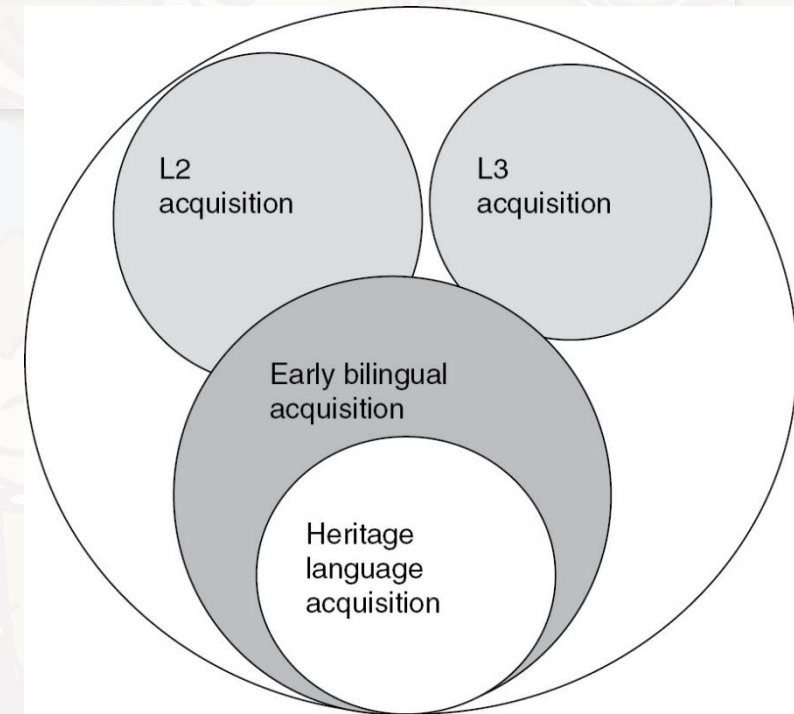
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Inspiring innovation in language
Inspirer l'innovation dans l'édu



Introduction

- HLE refers to the provision of lessons in languages brought to host societies by immigration:
 - Children may have immigrated themselves or may be members of the 2nd or 3rd generation.
 - HLs acquired in a limited number of contexts, such as family, peers or media.
- HL abilities exhibit significant variation – from literacy skills, receptive abilities to complete language loss.
- Limited research on HLE across Europe – we sought to uncover the most pressing research topics concerning heritage languages lessons (HLL) and HLE.



Montrul, 2015



Heritage Language Education in Europe

- Large **differences** in academic, social and political discourses concerning HLs and HLE.
- One argument in support of HLE is the **interdependence hypothesis** (Cummins, 2000), which claims a transfer of skills across different languages, thus having positive effects for the majority language as well as the HL.
- This hypothesis remains contested by the **time-on-task hypothesis**, which is widely supported within educational practice and argues that instruction time spent on HLs negatively impacts the majority language.
- Another supporting argument is that **systematic instruction facilitates academic and subject-specific language skills** in ways that cannot be achieved via family communication only (Mehlhorn, 2017).



HLE across the 5 settings

- Participating countries differ in terms of their **migration patterns, HLE provisions, and research traditions**.
- Host to **diverse populations** of economic migrants and those fleeing crises around the world, representing numerous HLs.
- All countries recognise, to differing extents, **regional autochthonous languages**.
- Vastly **different education systems and provisions for HLE**.
- Across all five countries, HLE occupies a **marginalised position** (whether offered formally or informally), giving rise to a number of challenges in its provision.
- **Extracurricular status** renders participation burdensome, skills in HLs are often not certified, and HL teachers are isolated from general teaching staff.



Germany and the Netherlands

Germany

Federal states are responsible for their education systems; some states offer HLE within the formal school system and others leave it to community, consular or private initiatives.

Netherlands

Policies on HLs have shifted from a pluralistic approach to assimilation (Driessen & Merry, 2011); primary level, there is no offer of HLE within the regular school curriculum; instead HLE is offered by private operators or local language schools as an extracurricular subject; secondary level, lessons in so-called 'new' foreign languages may be offered if there is demand from at least four students for a given language.



Italy, Portugal and Spain

- **Italy** – mainly assimilationist approach to HL pupils is practiced. Each region has the autonomy to offer HLE in accordance with demands and resources.
- **Portugal** – HLE is still largely absent from compulsory education. Single efforts have been made by research projects to introduce bilingual classroom instruction in which the other language is a HL.
- **Spain** – HLE organised mainly by migrant communities themselves, although some bilateral agreements envisage HLLs at selected mainstream schools.



Research questions

1. What are the research priorities for the **effects** of HLLs on linguistic and other aspects of learning in the participating countries?
2. What are the research priorities for **other aspects of HLL** in the participating countries?
3. Are there **differences** in research priorities between the participating countries?



Method



- **Cross-national survey** with a questionnaire originally conducted in Germany via the Delphi method to determine research priorities in the area of multilingualism and language education (Gogolin, Hansen, & McMonagle, 2017).
- The survey was sent digitally to those considered **experts in the field** of research on multilingualism and language education – mainly academics, but also educational practitioners and policymakers
- **Snowball** sampling (Berg, 2006).
- **300 experts** from Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, and Spain completed the online questionnaire.



COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS	MAIN AREA OF WORK (IN %)*				
		FREQUENCY	ACADEMIA	EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE	EDUCATIONAL POLICY ADMINISTRATION	CONSULTING
Germany	100	77	7	10	1	5
The Netherlands	72	60	14	14	4	8
Italy	50	84	10	4	0	2
Portugal	29	90	3	3	0	3
Spain	48	77	19	2	0	2

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS	YEARS' EXPERIENCE WORKING ON MULTILINGUALISM AND EDUCATION (IN %)*				ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE (IN %)**			
		FREQUENCY	1-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-15 YEARS	MORE THAN 15 YEARS	EDUCATION	LINGUISTICS	PSYCHOLOGY
Germany	100	11	33	16	40	36	46	11	6
The Netherlands	72	17	10	22	49	18	49	6	3
Italy	50	2	12	20	64	22	70	0	4
Portugal	30	10	6,67	10	63	53	50	0	0
Spain	48	23	23	15	33	31	54	4	0

RQ1: Research priorities for the effects of HLLs

Subject comprehension

Motivation/the psychological well-being of students

Skills development in majority lang. x

Skills development in the heritage language

Skills development in foreign languages

- **Germany and the Netherlands** – the means of the effects of HLLs on subject comprehension, motivation/psychological well-being, the heritage, and the German/Dutch languages were ranked the highest.
- **Italy and Portugal** – research on the effect of HLs on skills' development of Italian/Portuguese was rated the highest (dominance of 2nd language teaching).
- **Spain** – generally lower importance to research on HLE (lack of a salient discourse on HLE in Spain). Research on the effects of subject comprehension is considered the most important, and the majority language trumps the HL in terms of research priorities.



RQ2: Research priorities for other aspects (1)

Effective organisation of lessons in light of the linguistic heterogeneity of the student body

The necessary teacher qualifications

The impact of coordinated heritage language and regular lessons on linguistic competence

The characteristics of 'good' heritage language lessons

Integration into the regular curriculum

Effective collaboration between heritage language and regular subject teachers

Whether acknowledging achievements in the heritage language impacts students' will to participate

Ways of including students who speak other heritage languages

The types of lessons offered and how they are organised

- **Germany** – research on the effective organisation of lessons in light of the linguistic heterogeneity of the student body was rated most important. Due to the varied abilities of HL learners, this is claimed to be a central challenge in HLLs (Brehmer & Mehlhorn, 2018).
- **Netherlands** – research concerning the inclusion of students with other first languages into HLLs very important. Opportunity for HLE to escape its marginalised position by being offered more broadly.



RQ2: Research priorities for other aspects (2)

- **Italy** – experts awarded high priority to research on ways of including students who speak other heritage languages and the necessary HL teacher qualifications.
- **Portugal** – coordination of HL with regular subject lessons, with two research topics on this aspect (collaboration between teachers and the impact of such coordination on linguistic competence) ranked highest.
- **Spain** – overall lower means underline that HLE constitutes a less important research topic than in the other participating countries. Experts considered research into the organisation of lessons given the linguistic heterogeneity of the students most relevant.



RQ3: Main differences between participating countries (1)

	F	df1	df2	p
Subject comprehension	.729	4	209	.573
Skills development in foreign languages	7.904	4	210	.000*
Motivation/the psychological well-being of students	2.434	4	204	.050
Skills development in the majority language	4.112	4	209	.003*
Skills development in the heritage language	6.171	4	208	.000*

Statistically significant differences between countries with respect to the importance to conduct research on the **effects of HLLs on the majority language, the HL, and foreign language development.**



RQ3: Main differences between participating countries (2)

Post hoc pairwise comparisons between countries for the items of the question ‘How important is it to research the effects of heritage language lessons on...?’.

* G = Germany, N = Netherlands, I = Italy, P = Portugal, S = Spain.

	G*	N	I	P	S
1. Subject comprehension					
2. Skills development in foreign languages	I	I	G, N		
3. Motivation/the psychological well-being of students					
4. Skills development in the majority language (e.g., German)				S	P
5. Skills development in the heritage language	S				G



Post hoc pairwise comparisons between countries for the items of the question ‘How important is it to research the following aspects of heritage language lessons?’.

	G*	N	I	P	S
1. Effective organisation of lessons in light of the linguistic heterogeneity of the student body					
2. Effective collaboration between heritage language and regular subject teachers					
3. The impact of coordinated heritage language and regular lessons on linguistic competence					
4. The necessary teacher qualifications	S		S		G, I
5. Ways of including students who speak other heritage languages			S		I
6. Whether acknowledging achievements in the heritage language impacts students’ will to participate	S	S	S		G, N, I
7. Integration into the regular curriculum	S	S	S	S	G, N, I, P
8. The types of lessons offered and how they are organised				S	P
9. The characteristics of “good” heritage language lessons	S	S	S	S	G, N, I, P

Discussion

- Findings show that HLE is perceived to be an important research topic among experts in the field of language education and multilingualism.
- Experts in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Portugal rated the need for research on HLE as more important than those in Spain.
- In all countries, research on the effects of HLE on subject comprehension or the majority language was found to be more or as important as research on the HL itself.
- Generally, the results concerning other aspects of HLE indicate a desire for the improvement of HLE



Last thoughts on HLE

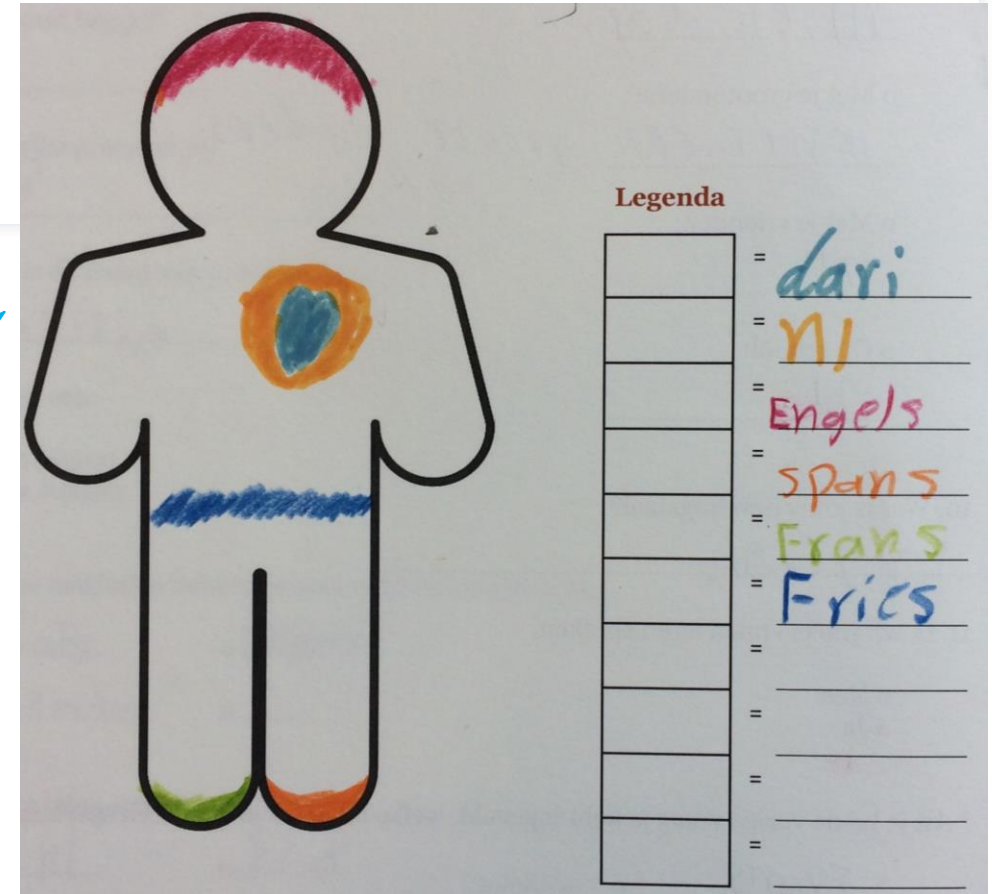
- Although studies show that HL learning does not hinder – but may even support – the language of schooling (Brehmer & Mehlhorn, 2017; Krompæk, 2010; Riehl, 2020) and subject comprehension (Schüler-Meyer, Prediger, Kuzu, Wessel, & Redder, 2019), clearly more research is desired in all five national contexts.
- These findings are noteworthy when we consider that the relevant HLE curricula do not outline majority language or subject comprehension skills as central aims.
- HL development is the central objective of HLE. It is therefore remarkable that research into the effects of HLE on the HL or the characteristics of ‘good’ HLLs are not regarded as particularly urgent among the experts consulted.



Voices of HLE speakers

I: Why did you choose blue for Dari?

P: Blue is my favourite colour. And I love my language, Dari; that's why I chose blue. And for Dutch I chose yellow, because yellow is a cheerful colour, and I am very happy to be in the Netherlands.



Afchim's language portrait, 9 years old, Dari-speaking, 1 year in the Netherlands



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Inspiring innovation in language education: changing contexts, evolving competences
Inspirer l'innovation dans l'éducation aux langues, contextes changeants, compétences en évolution

