

# Foundations and backgrounds

- Characteristics and challenges of heritage language teaching
- Key points of pedagogy, didactics and methodology in the countries of immigration
- Experience reports and practical examples for teaching and planning



Materials for heritage language teaching

## Handbook and workbook



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Basil Schader

Editor

Materials for heritage language teaching

## Handbook and workbook

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## 13A Background text

Anja Giudici

### 1. Introduction

The promotion of languages enjoys a high priority on a pan-European political level. Its declared goal for a long time was primarily the learning of a country's respective school language and a second European foreign language.

With the intensification of international migration, European integration and the growing attention to minority and regional languages since the 1990s, the native languages of the children who attend European schools became increasingly the subject of political focus.

Although the European Council in its 'Recommendation 814 on Modern Languages in Europe' had referred to the importance of HLT in 1977 already, the first recommendations remained quite diffuse. Moreover, the regional languages of national minorities were not or barely distinguished from the migration languages (e.g. see the 'White Paper on Education and Training' of the European Commission of 1995 or the 12th UNESCO-Resolution of 1999).

This has changed. In the newest recommendations of 2006 'Recommendation 1740, The Place of Mother Tongue in School Education' the European Council differentiated between 'strong' and 'weak' bilingual educational models with regard to HLT. The educational models that are considered 'strong' are those with a goal of educating non-native students to become bilingual or multilingual individuals with a spoken and written command of these languages. Those models considered as 'weak', on the other hand, are models where HLT is only seen as a means for the more effective promotion of the school language. The European Council recommends that its member states promote 'strong' bilingual models, as they would deliver benefits for the whole of society. Additionally, the European Council also supports pedagogical efforts in this area, for instance by means of the platform REPA-CARAP ([carap.eclm.at](http://carap.eclm.at); all websites were last consulted in this respect on Nov.17, 2014).

These recommendations were interpreted in different ways by the European states, however. The goal of this chapter is to systematically analyze the various implementations and to demonstrate their advantages and disadvantages.

Knowing the system within which HLT is embedded in one's own country, allows for a better orientation, as well as an awareness of one's own rights and to avail oneself of the resultant possibilities. Moreover, the experiences and the contributions of the individual countries can serve as a basis of information for the work on the continuing development of HLT in one's own country.

The information presented herein stems primarily from three sources: a) from the Eurydice documents, created within the framework of the European Commission, b) from the report 'Language Rich Europe', commissioned by the European Council (Extra and Kuttlay, 2012) and c) from the HSK database of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK) (<http://www.edk.ch/dyn/18777.php>) and the report HSK-education, Examples of good practice from Switzerland (Giudici and Bühlmann, 2014). These documents are a suitable basis for inquiries, particularly since they contain a wealth of sources and references.

## 2. History and expansion of HLT

(see also chapter 1 A.7)

It is probable that HLT occurs in some form in the majority of European countries today. Two thirds of all member states of the European Union have meanwhile issued recommendations to this effect (Eurydice, 2009, 22). However, the financial and organizational burden for HLT is mostly borne by the migrant communities. Government support is very limited in many places.

HLT has the longest tradition in the classical immigration regions. France, Germany, Sweden or the more urban cantons within Switzerland have known HLT as a supplementary offering to the public school since the first larger immigration waves of the 1970s. The HLT classes at the time were based on formal agreements with the most important countries of origin. Such partial offerings existed already in the 1930s, although the goal at that time was primarily not the promotion of the migrant children's language progress, but maintaining a close relationship with their native country. This would enable the children to continue their schooling upon re-emigrating to their country of origin. This tradition continues to play a role, insofar as in many countries governmental support is limited to these traditional immigration countries and migrant groups, respectively.

With the increase of international migration and the European integration, other countries began to recognize, and to partially support HLT as well. In the new EU states in particular, the recognition of their respective national minorities led to the establishment of large-scale programs for the promotion of their first languages, which also benefitted the migration communities.

The degree and the kinds of governmental support are influenced by various factors. The fact that HLT is mostly widespread in the traditional host countries and cities, and also receives more governmental support there, suggests that the presence of larger groups of migrants who speak foreign languages can promote governmental efforts in this area. However, no direct correlation has been established (Eurydice, 2009, 31). Other influencing factors, such as the political aims of a community, the structure, and especially the centralization of the school system play an equally important role in this regard.

## 3. HLT models in Europe

**It is difficult to clearly categorize individual countries' dealing with HLT.**

In decentralized states – particularly Great Britain, Germany, Spain and Switzerland – different models may exist, depending on the region. Additionally, differences may exist as well in many centrally organized states – e.g. Sweden, where the pertinent competencies rest with the individual school community. In many places, individual cities have created their own cooperation projects between regular schools and HLT, in part with governmental support, as in Switzerland and in Spain. For this reason, the below listed examples are grouped on various levels (state, canton, region/land, city/school community).

An unambiguous categorization is also prevented by the fact that a differentiation between native language classes for national minorities and HLT for migration communities is difficult at times. Class offerings which were implemented for the national minorities can sometimes also serve immigrants or children with a migration background. The following statements refer primarily to HLT for migrants; overlapping cannot be entirely ruled out, however.

The complexity and multiple layers of this issue is the reason why clearly separated categories cannot be established that would neatly fit the individual countries of Europe. In light of this fact, we propose a system with the existing models grouped in terms of two criteria: maintaining HSU as a stand-alone subject (vs. integration of its content or the heritage languages into regular classroom instruction). The other refers to the degree of governmental support for HLT, differentiated as: no support, partial support, and strong governmental support. For each model described, one or several portraits from corresponding regions or countries are presented. Depending on the shaping of the particular system, other characteristics may be the focus. Alternative systematic comparisons in terms of previously described criteria can be found in the above cited reports and documentation.

### 3.1 Support of HLT as a stand-alone educational provision

HLT exists in most states as a stand-alone subject or educational provision which can be linked more or less with regular classroom education. We are presenting a few models, grouped according to the degree of support provided by the host countries.

#### a) No support or scant support

**In many European immigration countries, HLT is not actively supported by the authorities. Its organization and financing is left to the initiative of local associations or the countries of origin.**

Such situations exist primarily in countries with scant or rather more recent immigration traditions (e. g. Ireland). Elsewhere, such support was deliberately avoided, as seen in the following example.

##### *HLT in the Netherlands*

The Netherlands already joined the politics of the big immigration countries in the 1970s. As of 1974, HLT was supported and promoted by the government (Benedictus-van den Berg, in Extra and Kutlay, 2012, 164). In those days, HLT took place as a stand-alone program within the framework of the regular public schools and the teachers were paid by the government. However, the program was banished from the primary schools in 2003/2004 which entailed, among other things, the dismissal of 1400 teachers. The government justified its decision with the argument that the students' learning the local and school language was the primary objective of Dutch integration policy. State support of HLT thus impeded the attainment of this objective (Extra and Yagmur, 2006, 55). Local communities (in particular the Turkish speaking population) have since endeavored to preserve the program. They organize HLT programs for the primary schools on their own and are trying to regain government support of the program with legal recourse. So far, legal efforts have not been successful. In Dutch secondary schools, students have the choice of a wide selection of foreign languages, including such migration languages as Arabic, Spanish, Turkish, and partially also Russian. International courts take the view that the decision by the Dutch state does not contradict the European recommendations and that the question of (non) support of HLT is a matter of the individual states (see [www.aa.com.tr/en/world/251542--turks-in-netherlands-struggle-for-education-in-mother-tongue](http://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/251542--turks-in-netherlands-struggle-for-education-in-mother-tongue)).

Among the other countries where no formal support for HLT exists are Italy, Portugal, Wales or Hungary (see Extra and Kutlay, 2012).

#### b) Partial support

Another model is to leave the responsibility for HLT to the local sponsors, but to support them with public funding in certain areas. The degree of support can vary greatly, however, ranging from purely formal support for HLT by way of organizational assistance (e. g. providing classrooms) to the financing of certain school projects or local HLT offerings.

##### *HLT in Switzerland*

In federally organized Switzerland, the cantons are primarily responsible for the educational system and with it also for the support of HLT.

**A number of cantons, however, agreed in 2007 in accordance with Article 4.4 of the so-called HarmoS concordat to support HLT with «organizational measures». In practice, there are many different interpretations of this commitment.**

In certain cantons, schools are only informally required to support the HLT sponsors with rooms and infrastructure. The more urban cantons of Zurich and Basel, on the other hand, developed more formal support and coordination procedures: sponsors who commit to fulfilling certain requirements – among other things, to offer denominationally and politically neutral classroom instruction or to adhere to current framework conditions – will be formally recognized and supported by the administrations in the organization of HLT. For instance, the cantonal authorities coordinate the registration of students, ensure room allocation for and the flow of information between HLT and the regular schools. They organize continuing education offers for HLT instructors and ensure that the students' achievements in HLT are entered into the children's official grade report (Giudici and Bühlmann, 2014).

##### *HLT in Estonia*

Estonia was until 1991 part of the Soviet Union and is therefore a comparatively young, independent state with a relatively large Russian-speaking minority. Formal guarantees for learning minority languages were issued in 2003, and expanded in 2004 to include people with a migration background (see Newly Arrived Children in the Estonian Education System. Education policy principles and organization of education, particularly point 2.3).

**According to these guidelines, if at least ten students request native language education, the schools must offer them the possibility of attending classes in their native language.**



The Estonian state is responsible for the resulting costs for wages and materials and the classes take place during the regular school timetable. HLT instructors are responsible for HLT classes and their design and only must follow certain established guidelines in the assessment process. Students whose native language is not Estonian have been allowed since 2006 to choose their native language as their mandatory third foreign school language. This option has seldom been exercised. (Eurydice, 2009, 25f.).

### c) HLT organization by the host country

The number of immigration countries that assume total care of financing, organization and implementation of HLT is limited. The countries that undertook this step, generally offer HLT in this form only on the primary school level. On the secondary level the native language practiced in HLT may often be chosen as required foreign language. (see below).

#### *HLT in Austria*

In Austria, HLT was integrated in 1992 into the regular school system. The Austrian state has assumed the regulation, implementation and control of the class offerings as well as their partial financing (Giudici and Bühlmann, 2014, 21f.). The teachers of the public HLT are selected, hired and paid by the school authorities.

In Austria as well, ten interested children are required to justify the creation of a language offering.

**Meanwhile about 23 different languages are offered and taught in the regular school in a parallel or integrative fashion in two weekly lessons.**

Parallel means that HLT is offered at a time when other subjects are taught and therefore not attended by those respective children (e.g. religious instruction). In the integrative HLT, the contents of the regular school classes are taught in the language of origin. Since HLT is part of the regular school offerings, a mandatory curriculum was created that teachers must follow, and which is supposed to further the coordination between HLT and regular classroom instruction.

In Austria, HLT is highly frequented. In the school year 2009/2010 almost 30% of all Austrian children participated (Nagel et al. in Extra and Kutlay, 2012, 84f.; [www.schule-mehrsprachig.at](http://www.schule-mehrsprachig.at)).

#### *HLT in Sweden*

In Sweden, HLT was incorporated into the regular classroom instruction in 1975 as an integrative measure. In most schools, this instruction is offered as a supplementary offer. According to Swedish law, all children have the right to supplementary instruction if a language other than Swedish has a significant influence on their socialization. About half of the children for whom this criterion applies (1/5 of the student body) participates in HLT.

**More than 90 languages are offered in primary and secondary schools.**

The communities are responsible for HLT. If five interested children request a course, the local school authorities are required to organize it. Moreover, in a few city schools, HLT instructors were hired full-time to ensure more integrative teaching models (Lehmann, 2013; <http://modersmal.skolverket.se>).

#### *HLT in Germany*

In Germany, the individual federal states are responsible for educational policy and therefore also for HLT. On a superordinate level, the promotion of first languages is supported by the conference of ministers of education. In most German states, the organization of HLT is incumbent upon the migrant communities. In Bavaria, Hesse, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate, however, HLT was integrated into regular school instruction, thus making the local school administrations responsible for its organization.

Thus, in North Rhine-Westphalia, HLT is organized by the state for the «most widely spoken languages» if a sufficient number of learners sign up for them. The authorities have issued binding curricula and established a list of approved teaching materials. In order to be hired by the state, HLT instructors must meet certain linguistic and professional requirements, and take part in mandatory professional development opportunities, organized by the authorities (Giudici and Bühlmann, 2014, 19f.; Gogolin et al. in Extra and Kutlay, 2012, 135ff.).

## 3.2 Heritage language integration into regular school instruction

In cases where heritage language teaching is integrated into regular classroom instruction, the classic HLT as autonomous teaching offer ceases and its contents are taught in other forms. For one, native languages may serve as school languages in regular subjects, for another, they can be integrated into the foreign language offerings of the schools and thereby become part of the regular curriculum.

### a) Heritage languages as foreign languages

The possibility of studying certain native languages as foreign languages exist in various countries, particularly at the secondary level.

Thus, heritage languages count as regular school subjects, subject to their own grading, curriculum, teaching objectives, as well as teaching materials. In most countries, these offers apply for the secondary level I, and in England more recently also at the primary level.

#### *Foreign languages in England*

The new national curriculum ([www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum)), which has been in force since September 2014, provides for the introduction of a first foreign language from the third grade on, and a second one from the seventh grade on. However, even before this introduction, almost half of the English schools already fulfilled these requirements. The schools are free in selecting their foreign language offerings, but they must follow national curricula in formulating their educational objectives. The most selected language up to now has been French, followed by Spanish (Board and Tinsley, 2014, 8). The migration languages are taught less frequently, but some projects appear particularly promising. (see [www.primarylanguages.org.uk/home.aspx](http://www.primarylanguages.org.uk/home.aspx)).

#### *Foreign languages in France*

The learners in French secondary schools have a broad spectrum of languages as mandatory and elective subjects at their disposal. The languages of European member states are primarily offered, as well as the languages of countries which share with France certain foreign policy objectives (e. g. Arabic, Chinese, Japanese). These languages may be taken until the Matura certificate; in 2011 exams, 57 languages were tested (Calvet in Extra and Kutlay, 2012, 118ff.).

HLT has been offered in the public schools in France since 1925 with foreign instructors (Giudici and Bühlmann, 2014, 21). The efforts to integrate HLT into the school foreign language offerings are more recent, and are particularly connected with the expansion of foreign language education in regular public schools.

### b) Overall language promotion

Worth mentioning are a few regional or local projects where the promotion of the children's native language education was integrated into the regular public schools. This means mostly that instructors of HLT were hired by the public schools in order to integrate native language education into the regular classroom education to further all children multilingually. Such models were primarily developed in cities with a large proportion of non-French speaking children. These have often a local character and are based on the engagement of individual persons or committees. At the same time, the support of regional or national authorities is needed in the realization of these projects. Examples of such projects can be found, among others, in Switzerland (Basel-City, Geneva and Zurich), in Sweden or in Austria.

## 4. Closing words

The listed examples demonstrate how differently the various states deal with the HLT concept and the associated requirements. Aside from the countries which do not offer any kind of support for HLT, there are essentially two kinds of different coordination models: whereas some states promote HLT purely formally (e.g. Estonia or parts of Switzerland), other states actively influence the pedagogical work within the HLT framework (e.g. Austria or certain German federal states).

The advantage of the first model is the greater freedom afforded to the communities in the design of HLT, whereas simultaneously the financial and numerical disparities between individual communities can be partially balanced with organizational and financial assistance.

The advantage of a stronger pedagogical influence by the authorities of the host countries on HLT – e.g. by development of curricula, learning materials, or the professional development and continuing education of teachers – lies without a doubt in the improved possibilities of cooperation between HLT and regular classroom instruction. The cross-linking of contents and methods of HLT with those of regular classes or even the integration of parts of HLT into regular classroom instruction holds great advantages for the students and promotes their learning process. At the same time, the monolingually raised children can also benefit from a stronger integration of HLT.

**In any case, it is important to know the language policies of the country in which we work. Only then can we contribute to the improvement of HLT and its framework conditions at various levels. That the knowledge of good examples from within the country and from abroad can be very useful in this effort should make immediate sense.**

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