

Applying Adaptations in Pedagogical Materials for Heritage Language Teaching to Language Reclamation

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Questions

- How do heritage language teachers **adapt non-heritage (NH) pedagogical materials** for use in the classroom?
- How to apply successful adaptation in **heritage language** contexts to cases of “**reawakening**” languages?

Participants

- 4 heritage language teachers were interviewed.
- 3 teach in MA, 1 in MI
- All experiences **across K-16** and have taught both heritage and NH Chinese learners (separate tracks or combined classes)
- 3 raised children in the US
- 3 ethnically **non-Han** and have reflected on how they perceive their ethnic culture identity

Mixed Proficiencies

- Heritage learners tend to have “**uneven**” **proficiency**: high speaking but low literacy, etc.
- In school, often heritage are placed with NH learners: uneven proficiency makes parts of “**traditional**” **class boring, unengaging**
- Placement of students varies by **both proficiency and age** — grouping by only one ensures some fraction lose interest quickly.
- **Evaluation methods** must focus on **improvement**

- Make an effort to establish classrooms by both age and proficiency
- Abandon **traditional evaluation methods**; these unnecessarily burden students **without providing valuable metrics**.

Material Development

- Most available pedagogical materials are made for **non-heritage learners**
- Teachers **pick and choose** exercises and lessons from **established materials** to cater to students’ needs
- **Cultural materials** and lessons drive engagement more than for NH students
- Emphasis on **language ownership** above practical use as encouragement
- Students more responsive to in depth discussion on cultural stories and **self-reflection**.

- Have less reliance on traditional grammar teaching; cultural and engagement first
- Compartmentalize aspects of language **into different classes** (language vs. other cultural components, etc.)

Community Needs

- All interviewees noted that community was an **integral part** to heritage learning
- **Parents** play a major role in heritage language learning, especially younger students
- K-12 Division of activities: **foreign language classes, after school programs, Sunday schools, tutoring**
- Sunday schools have the most engagement, typically **community organized**, with **cultural classes** taught by **community experts** in arts, music, sport, dance...

- Providing cultural materials **to families** and engaging in community where possible
- Initiate cultural showcases and demonstrations
- Encourage **language use as a cultural activity**

Future Work

- Heritage learners and learners of reawakening languages share:
- Impetus for learning as **cultural self-discovery**
 - Sense of **pride** in language **ownership**
 - **Varying proficiency** across individuals and subjects
- Goal:** to form a **model of language pedagogy** that addresses these similarities and encourages sharing of **pedagogical methods** between these two groups.

Thanks

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