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# A brief review of key ideas of Heritage Language instruction

**University of Washington, Seattle**

**Excerpts to share March 16, 2019**

from the February 10, 2018 Heritage Language Symposium



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## Heritage Speaker

- **Heritage language speakers are early bilinguals**
- **They grew up in families where a language other than English was spoken;**
- **Their heritage language is typically the weaker language of the two**

Source: The NHLRC White Paper, 2010

## HL learners' strengths

- Functional skills (can do a lot with the language);
- “Everyday” language, including vocabulary;
- Near-native perception, if not, pronunciation;
- Faster progression to the advanced levels of proficiency;

- The formal/academic registers;
- Literacy;
- Vocabulary (academic, formal, abstract);
- Aspects of grammar learned by children later in life (e.g. structures associated with subordination, non-canonical gender, some aspectual features);

# HL learners' **linguistic** needs and strengths are a function of

- The context of learning
- The timing of learning
- The amount linguistic input received
- The type of linguistic input received

# HL learner needs and strengths are a function of

- The context of learning: **primarily, home**  
-> **informal, home register, perhaps non-standard**
- The timing of learning: **early years, diminished or discontinued upon starting school**  
-> **similar to the language of children**
- The amount input: **limited, relative to natives**  
-> **incomplete knowledge of the HL (missing features acquired later in life)**
- The type of input: **oral, informal, spontaneous,**  
-> **implicit knowledge of the HL**



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**As these factors vary from one HL learner to another, so does proficiency**

- The context of learning
- The timing of learning
- The amount input
- The type of input

# Implications for teaching and learning

- Grammar instruction should be HL specific;
- Instruction should build on HL learners' skills;
- Instruction should be differentiated;





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# Spot-treat grammar



# Curriculum and instruction

Home register



Facility with other registers

Grammatical and conversational features learned during early childhood



Facility with grammatical and conversational features associated with schooling and higher levels of proficiency

Functional skills in the oral language



Literacy, formal registers

# The essence of the From-to Principles: Scaffolding to build

Familiar → Unfamiliar





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## HL learners

# The From-To Principles: HL v. L2 learners

## L2 learners

listening → reading

speaking → writing

home-based register → general/academic register

everyday “real-life” activities → classroom activities

motivations + identity → content

reading → listening

writing → speaking

general/academic register → home-based register

classroom activities → everyday “real-life” activities

motivation? →