

INTRODUCTION

Home language or Heritage language (HL) can be defined as the language that children grow up hearing and speaking. However, the maintenance of the language is not something that can happen passively. Without intentional effort the development of the HL will likely stop once children start attending school and will be replaced by English, the language of instruction. It is important to encourage parents and students to maintain the HL because there are many benefits to being bilingual. Not only can HL maintenance help students cognitively during their academic development, and later on in their professional career, it can also help them to stay connected with their culture and with family members who don't speak English.

Problem

The problem is that students are often not motivated to maintain the language due to social and academic pressure, and parents find it hard to help them. The goal of this presentation is to show educators how they can play a positive role in the process of HL maintenance.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- The school environment is of vital importance to ELL's academic success. The quality of the learning environment will have an impact on students' learning. "The negative effects of social comparison and failure feedback may have unique implication for students who are beginning to see their own culture identities as different from those of their peers" (Han 2012, p. 301).
- "Negative perceptions of minority students by teachers and staff are related to poorer performance" (302).
- Portes and Hao (1998) found that "by helping children maintain or improve their native language, the school can help children retain ethnic identity, which has been linked to academic success" (302).



TEACHERS' ROLE

- Teachers need to understand that children have the ability to learn and master more than one language at a time. Therefore, they do need to abandon the first language (L1) in order to acquire and master the second language (L2). However, in order to be bilingual, they need to make an effort to maintain the HL.
- When interacting with students teachers should refrain from "reinforcing 'status differential' between English and home language" (Cummins 2005, p. 586).



- They can teach cognates to increase vocabulary

"This strategy can help these students develop their knowledge of L1 and English vocabulary academic at the same time" (Cummins 2005, p. 589).

Figure 6.3. Cognates

English	Spanish	Portuguese	Haitian Creole
Describe	Describir	Descrêva	Dekri
Define	Definir	Defina	Defini
Analyze	Analizar	Analise	Analize
Evaluate	Evaluar	Avalie	Evalye
Apply	Aplicar	Aplique	Aplike
Clarify	Clarificar	Esclareça	Klarifye
Connect	Conectar	Conecte	Konekte
Interpret	Interpretar	Interprete	Enterprete
Compare	Comparar	Compare	Konpare

Figure 4.2. Cognates in English, History, and Mathematics

English	History	Mathematics
analogía/analogy	agricultura/agriculture	área/area
biografía/biography	cronología/chronology	base/base
debate/debate	colonia/colony	circulo/circle
definición/definition	expedición/expedition	convertir/convert
editar/edit	hemisferio/hemisphere	decimal/decimal
novela/novel	idea/idea	distancia/distance
contraste/contrast	justicia/justice	división/division
propósito/purpose	sociedad/society	geométrico/geometric

Source: Herrera, 2010, p. 96.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

- After school program that meets every day where students can:
 - ◆ work on Dual language book writing.
 - ◆ feel that it is socially acceptable and attractive to speak the heritage language in a larger context outside the home.
- Parent workshop offered twice a month to learn and share effective strategies to support Home Language. Parents can:
 - ◆ receive support from other parents, school, and the community
 - ◆ learn strategies on how to use HL to build background and to engage in the children's academic experience
- Teachers can learn to be intentional about affirming the students' home language in order to "communicate . . . to students . . . The value of their heritage language and culture." (Cummins 2005, p. 586)
- Stakeholders in the community can be encouraged to invest in creating and funding curriculum materials and to offer classes for students. (Wu & Chang 2010, p 31).
- Community surveys can be administered and interviews conducted with parents, students, and teachers to determine their attitudes, practices, and the language learning outcome.

ADVANTAGES OF BILINGUALISM

Figure 1.1. Perceived Benefits of Bilingualism

Careers and Employment	Economy/Trade	Information Technology	Communication/Cross-Cultural Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being valued on the job for the ability to communicate with a diverse range of customers. • Opportunity to move up within the same company or outside the company. • Opportunity to work in a bilingual work environment, enabling people to work in a comfortable workplace. • More opportunities for retaining a job. • Opportunities for travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to conduct business in the language of the customer. • Using the language of the customer is good business. • Businesses must have a larger bilingual workforce to meet to the needs of a global market. • Having bilingual individuals is an advantage. • Provision of a smooth and friendly interaction with other businesspeople. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and continuous access to global and international information. • Direct contact with people and organizations from different cultures and languages. • Ability to understand what information is being disseminated in other languages. • Ability to use information in different ways. • Opportunity to translate/communicate information to colleagues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of knowledge, concepts, and vocabulary from one language to the other. • Able to find solutions to problems by analyzing them through the two languages. • Intercultural mediator in a variety of marketing situations. • Ability to relate to co-workers from other regions by speaking their language and knowing something of their culture. • Ability to bridge the cultural gap through knowledge of the language and culture of other business groups.

N = 25



DESCRIPTION

The Home Language Maintenance program is intended for children in grades PreK-6, but can also be adapted up to grade 12. The goal is to educate children who are not only able to speak and understand the home language, but also are able to read and write in the L1. The hope is that by building a strong early foundation in the HL, students will be able to achieve better academic success by transferring knowledge from L1 to L2. In addition, parents can fulfill their role as their children's most important teacher if they are able to communicate with children in their home language. When teachers work collaboratively with parents and community organizations, the language learning outcome will be more positive.

The program can help "to establish an independent sphere of discourse where heritage language support can be debated on its own merits rather than viewed through the lens of preexisting polarized attitudes towards bilingual education and immigration" (Cummins 2005, p. 586).

References

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