Heritage Language Instruction for Post-secondary Students from Immigrant Backgrounds

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Abstract

Special instruction for heritage language (HL) learners is on the rise in the United States, especially at the university level. The goal of this paper is to make recommendations for future research on HL instruction for post-secondary students from immigrant backgrounds. The paper starts with a definition of HL learners, which is followed by a review of the literature on the educational, political, and social-psychological contexts of HL or bilingual development among immigrant groups. Then, the paper examines the research on linguistic, pedagogical, and social issues related to HL instruction for post-secondary students from immigrant backgrounds. Specifically, it first asserts the lack of evaluation research that judges the effectiveness of special HL tracks or programs offered at post-secondary institutions. Second, it critiques the methodologies adopted in research that investigated (a) the differences in linguistic skills of post-secondary HL and non-HL students and (b) social-psychological factors associated with the levels of HL proficiency among adult HL learners. Third, it suggests the urgent need for developing appropriate assessment tools for adult HL learners. Lastly, it proposes research-based instructional goals for future post-secondary HL programs.

1. Introduction: The definition of 'heritage language learners' and the present research purpose

In the United States, the term 'heritage language' (HL) encompasses a huge, heterogeneous population with varying historical and cultural backgrounds. Broadly speaking, HL refers to any ancestral language such as indigenous, colonial, and immigrant languages, and therefore, it may or may not be a language regularly used in the home and the community (Fishman 2001). Due to this heterogeneous nature of HL, the term has been used in the literature with varying definitions depending on the perspective involved.

For example, from the 'personal' perspective of an individual leaner, whether or not one may view his or her ancestral language as HL seems to depend on the degree of association one establishes between one's own identity and the ancestral language (e.g., an African American student studying Swahili) (Wiley 2001). In other words, from this perspective, one may regard one's ancestral language as HL even if the learner himself/herself and the immediate family members hardly speak the language. Thus, from a personal perspective, proficiency in the target HL is not a determining factor in

defining who HL learners are. In this definition of HL, many HL learners may be "true beginners" who have "recently renewed their interest in the ancestral language and culture for ethnic and religious reasons" after generations of no family connections with the target language and culture (Gambhir 2001: 214).

From the perspective of language educators in the U.S., on the other hand, the term 'heritage language' is usually connected with an endangered indigenous or immigrant language, and an HL learner is one who "is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken" and who "speaks or at least understands the language and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (Valdés 2001: 38). The term is relatively new to American language educators. For example, among Spanish language teaching professionals in the U.S., HL learners have often been referred to as 'native speakers' or 'bilingual students' (Valdés 2001: 38). Similarly, from the perspective of HL researchers in the U.S., a critical determiner in differentiating HL learners from foreign language learners seems to be that the former have acquired a language at home, and the latter have not:

A defining distinction between heritage language and foreign language acquisition is that heritage language acquisition begins in the home, as opposed to foreign language acquisition which, at least initially, usually begins in a classroom setting" (UCLA Steering Committee 2000: 339).

From heritage language educators' and researchers' perspectives, the establishment of HL education as a valid, and distinct research field is important because, in their view, HL learners are those who have acquired a certain level of oral and/or written proficiency in their ancestral language in the process of using the language at home and/or in the community, and therefore, the process and outcomes of HL acquisition are distinctly different from those of foreign language acquisition (Campbell and Rosenthal 2000; Valdés 1995).

One of the pedagogical challenges that HL educators face in assisting the language development of HL learners, especially those from immigrant backgrounds, is that there are considerable individual differences in linguistic skills in the target HL even within the same generation (e. g., Kondo-Brown 2001a; McGinnis 1996; Sohn 1995, 1997; Yokoyama 2000). For example, within second-generation HL learners of Japanese who have at least one Japanese parent, some do not regularly use Japanese at home and are only capable of using rudimentary Japanese, which is limited to short utterances or fragments (typically, their understanding of Japanese is superior to their production skills), while others may speak Japanese effectively and fluently in various social situations and use the language regularly in their daily lives (Kondo 1997). Also, among the latter group, the degree of Japanese literacy skills seems to vary considerably (Kondo 1997).

The goal of this paper is to make recommendations for future research on HL instruction for students from immigrant backgrounds at post-secondary institutions. Special instruction for HL learners is on the rise, especially at the university level, and the need for rigorous research to help in developing models for instruction at this level has been recognized (e.g., Kono and McGinnis 2001). The UCLA Steering committee (2000) generated "researchable questions" or key research variables in six areas (i.e., the heritage speaker, the family, the community, language specific focus, programs, and

assessment), which seem directly and indirectly related to HL instruction at post-secondary institutions. However, their report provides little discussion of (a) previous research findings on their identified variables, or (b) the appropriateness of methodologies adopted in such research. This paper will generate a future research agenda for HL instruction at postsecondary institutions by examining previous research findings and the adopted methodologies in such studies.

In the next sections, I will first provide an overview of the literature dealing with the educational, political, and social-psychological contexts of HL or bilingual development among immigrant groups. Then, I will examine the research that directly deals with the linguistic, pedagogical, and social issues related to HL instruction for students from immigrant backgrounds at post-secondary institutions.

2. Educational, political, and social-psychological contexts of heritage language development among immigrant groups.

One consistent result of research on first- and second-generation immigrant groups in the U.S. has been that it is important to foster active school involvement in developing students' HLs. This conclusion is based on evidence that those language minority students who maintain their own culture, language, and distinct ethnic identity preserve strong pride in their heritage, sustain satisfying communication within their family, and are more likely to thrive in mainstream school and society (Cho, Cho, and Tse 1997; Cho and Krashen 1998; Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba 1991; Kondo-Brown 2002; Nielsen and Lerner 1986; Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Trueba, Cheng, and Ima 1993; Wright and Taylor 1995).

However, despite the reported educational and personal advantages of HL development, in countries like the U.S., two views of language policy have historically been in conflict: (a) a subtractive policy involving language assimilation for language minorities and (b) an additive policy involving foreign language studies for mainstream monolinguals (Baker 1996; Crawford 1992; Ovando 1990; Wiley and Lukes 1996). Wiley and Lukes view the two language policies as a contradiction:

The first is a policy toward language minority students that is intended to prescribe rapid transition out of L1 instruction into English instruction--often resulting in the eventual loss of the L1. The second is a policy toward monolingual English speaking students that is intended to promote learning a foreign language (1996: 511).

One irony resulting from these two different policies is that high school and university students from immigrant families, who may no longer speak and/or write their HL well because of the process of being educated in mainstream monolingual schools, increasingly study the language in foreign language classrooms as an academic requirement (Crawford 1992). Such situations are very inefficient and can prove frustrating for HL students.

Despite the current subtractive policy involving language assimilation for immigrant groups, researchers have noted that immigrant parents hold positive attitudes toward bilingualism or the development of their child's HL (e.g., Sung and Padilla 1998). However, those parents who attempt to raise their children bilingually in the face of a comparatively monolingual society often find it difficult to accomplish and witness their

children rapidly succumbing to the dominant language and culture (Arnberg 1987; Döpke 1992). In fact, studies show that shifts in language start soon after immigrant children begin socializing with other children who are speakers of the dominant language (Cummins 1993). Indeed, in monolingual communities without strong bilingual program for HL learners, HL children seem unable to maintain bilingualism unless their families remain an intact HL domain (Bayley, Schecter, and Torres-Ayala 1996; Fillmore 1991; Fishman 1991; Gronsjean 1982; Hakuta and D'Andrea 1993; Hinton 1999; Kondo 1997; Romaine 1995).

The difficulty of raising children bilingually in a relatively monolingual community may be caused in part by a lack of input in the target HL (Krashen 1998a). Another critical factor in the HL development of immigrant children appears to be their age at the time of arrival in the host country. For example, Cummins et al. (1984) show that immigrant children who arrive in the host country at an older age maintain their first language academic skills better than younger immigrant children do. Furthermore, socio-psychological perspectives on bilingual development indicate that HL loss or maintenance is a complex matter due to the many socio-psychological factors that interact with learning environments and influence HL learners' language behaviors (Allard and Landry 1994; Baker 1992; Hamers and Blanc 1982). Indeed, research that focuses on HL learners from immigrant backgrounds has shown that a strong relationship exists between HL learning and socio-cultural factors such as identity formation (Cho et al. 1997; Feuerverger 1991; Kondo-Brown 2000; Oketani 1997; Pao, Wong, and Teuben-Rowe 1997; Suzuki 2001; Tse 2000), or the learners' attitudes toward their heritage group or toward learning the HL (Cho 2000; Burnett and Syed 1999; Kondo 1999; Kondo-Brown 2001a; Shibata 2000; Sung and Padilla 1998).

Studies on bilingualism in children also emphasize that children must understand the importance (or necessity) of speaking the non-dominant HL if they are to do so (Grosjean 1992; Hamers and Blanc 1982; Wong-Fillmore 1991). Moreover, self-report data from older HL learners have shown that affective factors -- such as rejection of the HL and culture (Tse 1998) and unwillingness to use the HL because of negative external feedback (Kondo 1997; Krashen 1998b) -- may dissuade such learners from actually using the language. Above all else, researchers agree that, among HL learners, bilingualism is best understood as a dynamic condition. Bilingual profiles of individual HL learners can vary immensely over a lifetime due to changing schooling experiences (Valdés 2001), as well as the dynamic nature of ethnic identity and its accompanying attitudes (Tse 1998, 1999).

3. Separate tracking for HL learners at post-secondary institutions

A considerable number of post-secondary institutions have accepted the idea of separating HL and non-HL learners as pedagogically sound, and offer separate tracks for the two groups in a variety of languages, such as Spanish (Teschner 1983; Valdés Lozano, and García-Moya 1981; Webb and Miller 2000), Chinese (McGinnis 1996), Korean (Sohn 1995, 1997), Japanese (Kondo 1999; Douglas 1999), Russian (Kagan and Rifkin 2000), Italian [in Canada] (Iannucci and Danesi 1987), and South Asian languages (Moag 1995; Gambhir 2001). University practitioners and administrators who offer these programs seem to agree that bilingual HL learners (a) have linguistic skills that are beyond those which are typically developed by non-HL equivalents in

traditional foreign language programs, and (b) they are able to learn the target HL at a greatly accelerated speed.

Various locally developed placement procedures have been adopted for these programs in order to identify HL students who have advanced language skills and who would not fit into a traditional foreign language instructional sequence. For example, in addition to student background questionnaires, some institutions give tests that measure only receptive skills for logistical reasons (e.g., Teschner 1983; McGinnis 1996), but others identify HL students by giving oral interviews (e.g., Sohn 1995). Whatever the procedure, most studies reporting on their own placement procedures for HL learners are descriptive, and there is little research investigating how effective and appropriate the adopted placement procedures are for identifying HL students with different language needs.

Furthermore, separate tracks for HL and non-HL learners, exist only at the elementary and/or intermediate levels, and emphasize literacy skills (e.g, Kondo 1998; Sohn 1995; McGinnis 1996; Moag 1995; see also Kono and McGinnis 2001). For example, the Japanese language program in my home university provides a separate track consisting of two 'Special Reading and Writing Japanese' classes for 'bilingual' students who do not have enough literacy skills to be placed in advanced fourth-year level Japanese courses. Almost all students in this track are HL students who can (a) comfortably and easily sustain casual conversations about a variety of familiar topics with native or near-native intonation and pronunciation and (b) read and write two basic Japanese scripts, namely, Hiragana and Katakana (Kondo 1999). HL students who successfully complete the special track may take the first semester of 4th-year Japanese language class together with advanced non-HL students.

One uninvestigated problem with offering separate tracks only at the beginning and/or intermediate levels is that such a practice is based on the assumption that HL learners learn literacy skills quickly, and in a year or two, the linguistic abilities of HL learners are matched with those of advanced non-HL groups. However, to date, such an assumption has no empirical foundation (Ke 1998). For example, Kondo (1999) reports that, one of the informants, whose oral skills were evaluated as having both features of advanced and intermediate high levels on an OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview), tried to continue studying Japanese in an advanced fourth-level Japanese class after she completed the course work for the special track, but she quit within two weeks asserting that bilingual HLs are misfits in traditional college foreign language courses. Apparently, the efficiency and appropriateness of the current practice of tracking only beginning and intermediate courses needs to be investigated further.

4. Comparison of heritage and non-heritage language learners' language skills

Recent years have seen unprecedented interest among applied linguists and educators in the role of American formal education in assisting HL students to develop their HLs (Brecht and Ingold 1998; Campbell and Peyton 1998; Hinton 1999). They have increasingly emphasized the special language behavior and needs of HL students, which are claimed to be distinctly different from those of traditional non-HL students (Andrews 2000; Campbell 1996; Campbell and Rosenthal 2000; King 1998; Kondo-Brown 2001b; Mazzocco 1996; Pino and Pino 2000). However, there is little empirical research that actually examines linguistic differences between HL and non-HL learners

(Draper and Hicks 2000). Most studies that attempt to describe linguistic differences between HL and non-HL learners seem hypothetical in nature. For example, Campbell and Rosenthal describe characteristics of "typical" bilingual HL learners and "typical" foreign language learners who have completed two years of formal language instruction as their "working hypotheses," based on their own observations and those of others who work with this population (2000: 167). Their working hypotheses for HL students' linguistic characteristics in terms of phonological, grammatical, lexical, and sociolinguistic competence are as follows:

a. Phonology: HL students' pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns conform almost completely to those of educated native speakers.
b. Grammar: HL students have acquired "80% to 90%" of the grammatical rules of a prestige dialect. "The converse of this statement is that 10% to 20% of their grammatical competence is not consistent with prestige dialect structure" (167).
c. Vocabulary: HL students have acquired extensive vocabulary, but the range is limited to social-interactional domains at home and in the neighborhood. Their production is also characterized by frequent borrowings from the majority language.
d. Sociolinguistic rules: HL students can control registers for communicating with family and community members. They can differentiate the use of lexical and grammatical rules depending on their interlocutors at home and in the community.

Although Campbell and Rosenthal (2001) maintain that these linguistic characteristics are significantly different from those of non-HL students, their proposed hypotheses need to be validated by empirical evidence collected from both HL and non-HL learners in future research. To my knowledge, there exist only a few studies that compare the linguistic differences of HL and non-HL learners (Ke 1998; O'Grady, Lee, and Choo, to appear; Nagasawa 1995). These studies will be reviewed here.

Ke's study compared the Chinese character recognition and production performance of Chinese HL students and non-HL students who were all enrolled in first-year Chinese classes at nine universities in the U.S. HL students (n=85) were defined as those who were "bilingual speakers of English and Chinese" and who " had been exposed to some form of Chinese orally and aurally at their homes" (1998: 94). Non-HL students in the study excluded L1 speakers of an Asian or South Asian language. The participants took Chinese character tests, where they were required (a) to recognize the pronunciation and meaning of 30 Chinese characters, and (b) to produce another 30 characters, all of which were frequently occurring characters in a first-year Chinese textbook. The results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the HL and non-HL groups in their performances on both recognition and production tests. Ke concluded that language background does not have a significant effect on the learning of Chinese characters. However, since Ke's study did not control for other language background factors such as the number of years of previous formal instruction in Chinese in the U.S. and/or China, it is hard to tell whether participants' home language was the only factor differentiating the two experimental groups' language background and therefore influencing the results.

In a study by O'Grady et al. (to appear), HL learners' ability to process morphosyntactic clues critical for accurately interpreting Korean relative clause structures was compared to that of non-HL learners enrolled in second- and fourth-semester Korean language courses. The results showed that, with respect to relative clauses, the HL learners

(n=16) were not significantly different from the second-semester non-HL learners (n=20) or the fourth-semester non-HL learners (n=20) in terms of their ability to make use of morphosyntactic clues for the interpretation of complex sentences. The authors concluded that HL learners' advantages in terms of vocabulary, comprehension, and pronunciation may not extend to the morphosyntax of the language.

O'Grady et al.'s attempt is interesting, but for future research in this line, it is recommended that, in addition to collecting a larger number of participants, in-depth information regarding the selection of HL learners be provided. O'Grady et al. only mentioned that HL learners were the ones who were assigned to "an accelerated second-semester course" based on their placement test and interview results. However, with such limited background information, we do not know the degree of bilingualism of their HL participants (e.g., how fluent they were in speaking Korean, how extensively they used Korean inside and outside the classroom). As discussed earlier, HL learners are very heterogeneous in terms of their historical and cultural backgrounds as well as their levels of heritage language proficiency. Thus, to be able to interpret the results of this type of research, it is important to state clearly how HL learners are defined.

In another study, Nagasawa (1995) compared the grammatical competence of three groups of child and adult speakers of Japanese by analyzing their performance on a closed-response grammar test (i.e., sentence completion):

a. Monolingual Japanese children whose primary language both at home and in school was Japanese (8-10 years old) (n=47)
b. Bilingual Japanese children whose primary language at home was Japanese and, in school, English. They studied Japanese at Saturday Japanese language schools. (8-10 years old) (n=20)
c. Second and third-year university students of Japanese who had formally studied Japanese in English for 300-600 hours (n=20)

Although age was not controlled among the groups, Nagasawa's attempt to identify differences in grammatical knowledge among L1, L2, and bilingual HL learners is an interesting one. There were 50 items on the grammar test (reliability =0 .81) divided into ten categories, which, according to the author, are among the hardest for L1 and/or L2 learners of Japanese to acquire:

a. Distinction between the object markers "ga" and "o."
b. Distinction between the locative makers "ni" and "de."
c. Use of the locative maker "o" (i.e., indicates the location of departing point)
d. Transitive and intransitive verbs.
e. Keigo (honorific/humble verbs).
f. Auxiliary verbs of giving and receiving
g. Passives
h. Causative verbs
i. Distinction between two conjunctions: "node" (because) and "noni" (despite)
j. Noun modification

Due to a relatively small number of participants, especially for bilingual and L2 groups, the results should be interpreted cautiously. Nonetheless, the findings suggested that the hardest items for both L1 and bilingual groups were keigo, auxiliary verbs of giving and

receiving, and causative verbs, and the hardest items for the L2 group were keigo, transitive and intransitive verbs, and causative verbs. In other words, keigo and causative verbs were among the hardest for all three groups. The only categories in which the L1 group outperformed the bilingual group were keigo and causative verbs. Although the bilingual group scored higher than the L2 group in most categories, the only category in which the former performed significantly better than the latter was transitive and intransitive verbs. In no other category did the latter outperform the former. Thus, child bilingual HL learners performed equally well or better than intermediate-level adult L2 learners on the ten grammar categories. Since age and overall proficiency were not controlled in Nagasawa's study, future research should be conducted with similar age and overall proficiency levels using larger sample sizes.

In sum, research comparing HL and non-HL learners' linguistic skills is still in its infancy. In addition to the limitations already discussed, it must be noted that the three experimental studies reviewed above used highly controlled discrete-point test items. Future research should also employ less-controlled, more integrative, performance-based tests.(1) Furthermore, two of the above studies (O'Grady et al., to appear; Nagasawa 1995) examined the grammatical competence of HL and non-HL learners. However, as Valdés (1995) points out, language proficiency includes a variety of different competencies that need to be considered in identifying the abilities of bilingual HL learners. According to Valdés (1995), the language proficiency of bilingual HL learners who function in two languages on an everyday basis can be best understood through studying their "bilingual range," which, following Bachman's model of communicative competences, "encompasses different kinds of competencies in two languages including grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and sociolinguistic competence" (1990: 316). As Valdés proposes, we need to investigate the bilingual range of HL learners in different competencies, not just grammatical competence.

5. Proficiency measurement of bilingual heritage language learners

Valdés and Figueroa (1994) identify two categories of bilinguals (i.e., those who possess advanced skills in more than one language): "elective bilinguals" and "circumstantial bilinguals." The former are advanced FL learners who have chosen to become bilingual and who have sought out either formal classes or other contexts (e.g., study abroad) in which they could learn a foreign language; the latter are bilingual HL who have developed high proficiency in more than one language because their first language does not suffice to carry out all of their communication needs. The elective bilinguals are the products of academic programs, and the circumstantial bilinguals are the products of non-academic, informal learning. Valdés and Figueroa argue that, despite the fact that elective and circumstantial bilinguals are "fundamentally different," there is a tendency for the same proficiency measurement instruments to be used for both, and that the question of instrument selection and appropriateness for circumstantial bilinguals has been ignored.

Valdés (1989a, 1989b) argues that, although there is a prevailing assumption that bilingual HL learners have skills, especially spoken language skills, that surpass what is typically developed in several years of foreign language classes, the proficiency measurement instruments for determining the advanced nature of HL learners's linguistic skills are not yet adequately discussed and developed. After analyzing 14 categories underlying the generic ACTFL proficiency guidelines, Valdés (1989a)

questions the discriminatory power of some of them in measuring the proficiency levels for HL learners. She argues that bilingual HL learners do not fit neatly into the hierarchy of language development identified in the guidelines, and therefore, the descriptors should not be used for bilingual HL learners without some modifications. For example, according to Valdés (1989a: 397), "comprehensibility" -- which is one of the most salient dimensions of the guidelines -- "tells us little about the level at which Hispanic bilinguals should be placed along the existing continuum." Although this issue of the appropriateness of using foreign language proficiency tests to measure bilingual HL learners' proficiency levels has been raised by Valdés for some time, to date, there has been little empirical research investigating the problem. Future research should study the appropriateness of the existing proficiency tests, developed for the non-HL population, for measuring bilingual HL learners.

6. Teaching high-level registers in post-secondary heritage language programs

Although HL learners make up a growing proportion of enrollees in less commonly taught languages in U.S. schools and colleges (Gambhir 2001), as the nation's most widely spoken HL in the United States, Spanish leads in curriculum and instructional material development for HL learners at any level (Aparicio 1983; Lewelling and Peyton 1999). Interest continues among Spanish HL educators in developing curriculum models to deal with the discrepancy between HL learners' advanced levels of informal, non-prestigious language varieties (which are primarily acquired at home) and their low levels of formal, prestigious language varieties (which are more valuable for academic learning) (e.g., Fairclough 2001; Faltis 1990; Merino Trueba and Samaniego 1993; Peale 1991; Valdés 1995; Valdés, Lozano, and Garcia-Moya 1981). However, Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci's (1998) study, which investigates the influence of register differences required for the performance of tasks by bilingual post-secondary HL learners compared with monolingual native speakers of equivalent backgrounds, seems to be the first to provide empirical data that illuminates post-secondary Spanish HL learners' specific problems with registers.

In their study, the oral performances of two groups of Spanish speakers were compared: English-dominant Chicano bilingual HL university students and monolingual Mexican nationals of comparable age (18-22), education (university level), and social background (working-class). Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci developed two types of planned, non-interactive tasks that required different levels of register or language variety (i.e., high vs. low varieties). The task for non-academic, low-level registers was an introductory autobiographical presentation in which students were required to speak about themselves. The task for academic, high-level registers was an argumentative presentation about women and the priesthood. Comparative analyses of the autobiographical and argumentative texts produced by both groups suggested that:

a. The organizational structures of both types of texts presented by both groups of students were similar.
b. At the sentence-level, both groups demonstrated the ability to produce (a) large numbers of subordinate clauses requiring both the indicative and the subjunctive moods, and (b) more complex segments and subordinate clauses in the argumentative text than in the autobiographical text. However, compared to the Mexican students, the Chicano HL students' performance was characterized by a greater number of "disfluencies" (less variety in transitional phrases, unfulfilled pauses, abandonment of constructions, etc.).

c. The Mexican and Chicano students exhibited an awareness of academic language (e.g., lexical choice), but, compared to the Mexican students, the Chicano students used (a) fewer academic lexical forms, (b) more colloquial and casual forms, stigmatized forms, and borrowings, (c) more frequently incorrect academic lexical forms, and (d) more high-frequency verbs, suggesting that they had a more limited vocabulary.

Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci (1998) concluded that both groups of students used "approximative" academic registers--variety approximates not identical to the target register--that are still in a state of development. They suggested that for HL students to expand their language variety, exposure to written literary texts is not enough: access to speakers of high varieties of Spanish is necessary, and a strong integrative motivation or motivation to join groups of such speakers might help. They also argued that university bilingual HL students "will profit from direct attention to the notion of register as well as to classroom activities that expose them to the high-level registers that they would be expected to produce in an authentic academic context"(1998: 498).

Acquisition of high-level registers seems an appropriate goal for advanced post-secondary language programs in other languages, too. For example, in the case of Japanese, bilingual college HL learners need to improve their ability to use keigo (honorific and humble forms) required for formal transactions and interactions (Kondo 1999). Future research should investigate (a) how effective formal instruction on register instruction for post-secondary HL students can be using a model discussed earlier, and (b) how the variation in their learning outcomes are associated with such factors as integrative motivation.

7. Vocabulary development of bilingual heritage language learners

Although the number of special programs for HL learners, especially at the university level, has increased in recent years, as Valdés (2001) observes, there has been little formal evaluation of the effectiveness or linguistic outcomes of any of the programs. A notable exception was McQuillan's (1996, 1998) attempt to investigate the effectiveness of a certain type of HL instruction for bilingual HL learners' vocabulary development. The expansion of bilingual HL learners' vocabulary range, which is often restricted to the domain of immediate personal use, should be one of the pedagogical goals for HL programs (Campbell and Rosenthal 2000). One way to approach this problem is to determine the degree to which pedagogical theories and approaches for vocabulary instruction used for non-HL learners can be applied to bilingual HL learners.

Some researchers argue that vocabulary can be learned effectively through "free" reading, where students are allowed to choose texts to read (e.g., Cho and Krashen 1994; Krashen 1993, McQuillan 1996, 1998), while others argue that, while incidental learning of vocabulary through extensive reading may occur, vocabulary is best learned when the texts are modified or accompanied with certain pre-/while-/post-reading activities to optimize the processing and retention of mental lexicon (e.g., Watanabe 1997; Wesche and Paribakht 1996).

As part of the continuing debate concerning the effectiveness of extensive free reading for vocabulary acquisition, McQuillan's (1996) study investigated the effect of incidental vocabulary learning through extensive free reading among bilingual post-secondary HL learners of Spanish. The participants (N=20), who were university

students enrolled in a lower-division HL class, received a ten-week treatment (two three-hour sessions per week) in which they surveyed various genres of popular and classic literature and also participated in self-selected literature circles. The vocabulary acquisition gains, measured by Rodrigo's (1994) vocabulary checklist, showed that overall, with the exception of advanced bilingual HL learners, the students made significant gains in vocabulary knowledge.

Although McQuillan's study has a few methodological limitations (i.e., it is a quasi-experimental design with no control group and small sample size), as one of the first studies that evaluated the effect of a special program for post-secondary HL students, it is interesting and important.(3) Future research should continue to investigate the effectiveness of instruction for enhancing bilingual HL learners' vocabulary, which needs to go beyond the domain of immediate personal use.

8. Social-psychological variables differentiating adult HL learners from immigrant backgrounds with high HL proficiency and those without

As discussed in the first section of this paper, among HL learners from immigrant backgrounds with at least one immigrant parent, the levels of oral and literacy proficiency in the target HL can vary considerably. There are a few studies that have investigated the association between social-psychological variables and the levels of proficiency in the target HL among adult HL learners who came from immigrant families (Cho 2000; Kondo 1997; Kondo-Brown 2000). These studies, which were conducted within a qualitative research framework and exploratory in nature, will be reviewed here.

In Cho's study (2000), 114 HL second-generation Korean adults (age range: 18-35) who were born in the U.S. or those who came to the U.S. at an early age participated. The participants were divided into three groups based on their self-assessed HL proficiency (i.e., weak, average, and strong HL competence): the participants were asked to rate their own levels of HL ability in four skills on a five-point Likert scale. The data were collected through a questionnaire that included two open-ended questions about the participants' perceptions of and experiences with HL. Cho also conducted interviews with 16 selected participants to obtain detailed accounts of their language use, attitude toward, and experiences with their HL. A qualitative analysis of the participants' responses suggests that social and psychological variables associated with the levels of self-evaluated proficiency in Korean include (a) the degree of connection with their ethnic group, (b) the frequency of interactions with Korean speakers and participation in Korean community activities, and (c) the degree of acceptance of Korean values, ethics, and manners.

Kondo's (1997) and Kondo-Brown's (2000) studies focused on six Hawai'i-based second-generation Japanese undergraduate students whose Japanese language proficiency levels were within the intermediate to advanced range. The informants' proficiency levels were judged using an OPI with ACTFL testers, a multiple-choice Japanese language proficiency test called "Nihongo Nooryoku Shaken,' and an essay writing sample. Using screening strategies such as the administration of a language use and attitude survey (Kondo-Brown 2001a) and preliminary interviews, the participants had been selected as representatives of the range of various language profiles among a number of second-generation Japanese HL students studying Japanese at one university

site. Analysis of data collected through multiple interviews with each of the six HL students suggest that social-psychological factors associated with variation in Japanese language proficiency levels include (a) the current and past exposure to Japanese at home and in the community, (b) the degree of family commitment to Japanese language maintenance during the students' childhood and adolescent years, especially the commitment of Japanese mothers who are traditionally the primary care-takers in Japanese culture (Kondo 1997), and (c) ethnic or cultural identity orientation and associated attitudes toward Japanese, local, and American mainstream culture (Kondo-Brown 2000). Since these studies focused on small numbers of students from one immigrant group, their findings, as working hypotheses, need to be further investigated in larger populations in future studies.

In the studies reviewed in this section, proficiency in the target HL was a key independent variable. Therefore, the adoption of appropriate proficiency measurements to make inferences about the participants' linguistic knowledge is critical in determining the validity of such studies. In Cho's study, measurement of HL proficiency was based on self-evaluation only, and in the Kondo and Kondo-Brown studies, standard foreign language proficiency tests were used. However, the appropriateness of using self-assessment for measuring HL speakers' language proficiency needs to be validated in future studies; in addition, as discussed earlier, the use of standard foreign language proficiency tests for HL students has not yet been fully investigated.

9. Conclusion: Previous research findings and a future research agenda for post-secondary instruction for HL learners

The present paper has attempted to generate a future research agenda concerning HL instruction for post-secondary students from immigrant backgrounds by examining previous research findings as well as the methodologies used in such research. This final section summarizes this research agenda for HL instruction at post-secondary institutions.

a. Special accelerated programs for post-secondary HL students are offered in many languages, but they typically exist only at the elementary and/or intermediate levels, providing intensive instruction on literacy skills. However, there is little formal evaluation of the effectiveness of such programs. For example, to date, there is no research that indicates that HL learners in such special accelerated programs acquire literacy skills quickly, and that in a year or two, the linguistic abilities of HL learners are matched with those of advanced non-HL groups. Another uninvestigated issue is effectiveness and appropriateness of the placement procedures adopted for such programs. Clearly, future research should prioritize the need not only to measure linguistic and other outcomes of existing special language programs for HL learners at post-secondary institutions but also to evaluate the appropriateness of the placement procedures used for such programs.

b. Although there is general acceptance that HL learners' linguistic skills in the target HL are distinctly different from those of traditional non-HL students, there are very few empirical studies that have actually investigated the differences in linguistic skills of post-secondary HL and non-HL students. The existing research results do not support the view that post-secondary HL learners are more advantaged than their non-HL counterparts in learning the target language. However, due to several methodological

limitations of the research on this issue (e.g., small sample sizes, lack of control of extraneous variables, use of highly-controlled discrete-point tests), findings need to be interpreted carefully. Further research is definitely necessary on this issue.

c. The issue of the appropriateness of using foreign language proficiency tests such as ACTFL OPI to measure bilingual HL learners' proficiency has been raised, but it remains unexamined. Future research needs to investigate whether this claim is valid, and if so, what modifications are required.

d. One of the most useful goals for advanced post-secondary language programs designed for bilingual post-secondary HL learners seems to be the acquisition of academic, high-level registers. Future research should investigate how effective formal instruction on register is for these students and how variation in their learning outcomes is associated with their integrative motivation.

e. Another useful goal for advanced post-secondary language programs for bilingual HL learners would be to expand their vocabulary range, which is often restricted to the domain of immediate personal use at present. Some argue that vocabulary can be learned effectively through extensive free reading, while others claim that some kinds of manipulations of the input are required to optimize processing and retention of a mental lexicon. The effects of free reading have been investigated within the context of teaching HL for post-secondary students, but due to the methodological limitations, the reported results need to be verified.

f. Research suggests that adult HL learners' proficiency levels are related to various social-psychological factors such as interactions with the target HL speakers at home and in the community, language attitudes, and identity formation. One problem with this line of research is the potential inappropriateness of adopted proficiency measures (i.e., self-assessment, use of foreign language proficiency tests). As pointed out in (c) above, this issue needs to be fully investigated and, if necessary, new proficiency test instruments for adult HL learners need to be developed.

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NOTES

1. Performance-based assessments can take various forms, from traditional direct assessment methods, like composition writing and interviewing, to more task-based testing (Brown and Hudson, 1998).(BACK)

2. The 14 categories are length of utterance, topic areas, vocabulary, fluency, comprehensibility, spontaneity vs. memorization, formality vs. informality, creativity vs. recombination, pronunciation, accuracy, conversational ability, ability to carry out different tasks/functions, use of interactional strategies, and genres controlled.(BACK)

3. A larger-scale study (N=400) conducted by Schon, Hopkins, and Vojir (1985) among junior high school HL learners of Spanish provided inconclusive results concerning the effect of extensive reading on incidental vocabulary learning. For example, while there was no significant difference on vocabulary measures between seventh-grade control and treatment groups, the eight-grade treatment group outperformed the control group.(BACK)

Date Posted: 4/16/2003

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