

TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES AND LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE GLOBALIZED WORLD

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Abstract

Reflecting the new geopolitical situation of the globalized world, a new type of identity has emerged in recent years among many first and second generation heritage language speakers. Rather than detaching themselves from the country of origin, these speakers take on a “transnational” identity, bridging the host and home countries with strong interpersonal, societal and economic ties. These transnational links are supported by technological advances that enhance opportunities for the maintenance of heritage languages. In addition, scholarly interest in heritage languages has increased substantially over the past twenty years, enhancing the academic community’s understanding of heritage language speakers’ backgrounds and needs. This paper addresses support ethnic and transnational identity in the realm of foreign language (L2) instruction at the university level, applying research on heritage speaker identities and recent developments in foreign language methodology.

Key words: *transnational, language pedagogy, heritage language, slavic languages*

1. Introduction

Reflecting the geopolitical situation of the globalized world, a new type of identity has emerged in recent years among people who undertake long term or permanent shifts in residency to other countries. Rather than detaching themselves from the home country as “emigrants”, many of these people take on a “transnational” identity, bridging the home and host countries with strong interpersonal, societal and economic ties. In a recent doctoral study of the language of Czechs and Slovaks in the United States, McCabe 2014 notes:

As a consequence of globalization, contemporary migrants are equipped with resources, such as communication and information technologies and affordable transportation, that allow them to stay involved in their homeland socially, politically and economically while residing elsewhere, to maintain transnational familial relationships, and to develop unique transnational identities.

(McCabe 2014: 70)

These “transnational” identities are supported by technological advances that enhance both cross-national communication on a global scale, and the ability of individual speakers to retain their native languages and maintain them intergenerationally, passing them on to their children as heritage languages. In addition, scholarly interest in heritage languages has increased substantially over the past twenty years, enhancing the academic community’s understanding of heritage language speakers’ potential at both the personal and the national level. Using Slavic language communities in the United States as the foundation, this paper addresses ways to support ethnic and transnational identity in the realm of foreign language (L2) instruction at the university level, applying research on heritage speaker identities and recent developments in foreign language methodology.

2. Heritage languages in the globalized world

Bolstered by both region-specific geopolitical changes and broader patterns of globalization in the twenty first century, a new type of international mobility has emerged among Slavic language speakers living in the United States. Newly arriving speakers often maintain multiple allegiances and

affiliations, operating “transnationally” between the two territorial spaces of the home and host country. As Appadurai 1990 and Beaudrie, Ducat & Potowski 2015 note, these transnational connections involve five types of interactions, or “scapes” in his terminology: ethnoscapas, involving people of different ethnicities, technoscapas, involving technology, financescapas, based on economic interactions, mediascapas, relating to the flow of information, and ideoscapas, involving the flow of ideas and ideologies. These interactions enable a much tighter bond than in the past between people living in the home country and those who resettle abroad. Consequently, recently arriving speakers tend to greater resources pass on their native languages to their children. Many are highly educated professionals and live in urban areas chosen on the basis of job opportunities, rather than joining traditional heritage communities.

Simultaneous to this increased interconnectivity, a paradigmatic shift is currently underway in the United States in attitudes toward minority languages, and toward the value of knowing multiple languages overall. Schneider 2011 notes that

Since the 1960s, language policy research has been predominantly concerned with the creation, standardisation or establishment of a national language. Newer research in language policy contexts is more often concerned with the issue of language rights, which also shows a change of language ideologies in language policy research itself. Language rights research emphasises the right to maintain a cultural and linguistic identity, especially a minority identity. (Schneider 2011: 55)

In the United States “bilingual education” used to mean, in effect, Anglicization of children speaking a language other than English in the home, with a goal of linguistic homogeneity in schools. This was aimed to support the emigrant children’s ability to function in the dominant, prestige language, and also reflected a language ideology according to which the dominant language, English, was interlinked with national identity and, often, allegiance.¹ Among the most common effects of this policy were a sense of devaluation of the home language and its subsequent loss (Fishman 2004).

Recent years have witnessed an enhanced appreciation for diversity in all of its aspects, including ethnic identity. Community schools, offering heritage language instruction on weekends or after school, are rapidly increasing in numbers, not only in the traditionally close-knit heritage communities, such as Armenian, Chinese, Japanese or Polish, but also in a wider range of less commonly taught languages, and in a greater variety of locations. For their primary source of education, an increasing number of parents are choosing to send their children to language immersion or dual language schools, with core subjects taught at least in part in a language other than English.² These schools are popular not only among heritage language families, but also among those with no familial connection to the targeted language. This reflects the current societal understanding that learning an additional language from an early age can have cognitive benefits that extend beyond the language itself (Bialystok 2001), as well as a growing sense of the marketability of foreign language skills in the globalized world.

At the university level, many students turn to heritage language study as part of exploring or enriching their sense of self identity as they transition to adulthood. A number of recent studies have shown that “heritage affiliation with the language and culture is particularly important as a reason for language study for many students,” especially those who take the so-called less commonly taught languages (languages other than French, German, Italian, or Spanish) (Murphy, Magnan, Back & Garrett-Rucks 2010; see also Brown 2009, Carreira & Kagan 2011, Geislerik 2004 and 2005, Howard, Deák & Reynolds 2010, Lauersdorf 2000, Liu & Shibata 2008 and Seymour-Jorn 2004). This factor seems to be especially relevant for students who continue their language study beyond introductory levels,

¹ See Fishman 1966 for a seminal discussion of language maintenance versus assimilation in the United States (including a case study of Ukrainian), and Schneider 2011, Chapter 3 for a discussion of language, national identity, and transnationalism in the post-modern world.

² See Potowski 2007 for a description of immersion schools in the United States and a case study of one of the first Spanish-English immersion school in the United States.

according to a survey conducted by Murphy et al of nearly three thousand³ students taking first- and third-semester language classes in twenty six languages at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.⁴

Reflecting current trends favoring ethnic self-identification, in a survey of one thousand eight hundred students taking university-level courses as heritage language learners, the majority of the respondents indicated that they considered themselves “hyphenated Americans or Americans with a dual identity (e.g. Vietnamese-American, American Vietnamese, etc.)” (Kagan 2012). Comments reflecting a sense of an “intercultural space” were typical in follow-up interviews with heritage speakers of Russian:

1. “I think I consider myself an American. I am an American with Russian roots” (four years old at immigration);
2. “Most likely I am a Russian American. I feel that I am American but I am from Europe” (6.5 years old at immigration);
3. “In general, I am Russian. I am an American in my daily life, but I am Russian” (seven years old at immigration). (Kagan 2012:74)

While many of these students had the option of fulfilling their language requirement by continuing their high school study of a more “mainstream” foreign language, such as Spanish or French, when given the opportunity, they opted for the more personalized pathway of studying their heritage language.

In parallel to enhanced public appreciation for heritage languages, over the past twenty years a sizable academic infrastructure has developed that is devoted specifically to the study and teaching of heritage languages.⁵ In 1999 the first national forum on heritage languages was held,⁶ which led to the formation of the Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages in 2002,⁷ and the National Heritage Language Resource Center in 2006.⁸ The latter is part of a network of “national resource centers” devoted to language study, and the only such center devoted to a specific type of language learner, rather than a geopolitical region. Among other functions, it hosts an extensive website with resources and bibliographies, conducts surveys and community outreach programs, publishes the *Heritage Language Journal*,⁹ and organizes various types of professional development. In addition, since 2000 nearly three hundred North American doctoral dissertations have focused on heritage themes.¹⁰ Slavic and East European languages addressed in these dissertations include Czech, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian, and the Balkan languages as a whole.¹¹ These new studies have facilitated a deeper understanding of the specific abilities and motivations of heritage language learners, and the development of new courses specifically oriented to their needs. Separate tracks for heritage and non-heritage students are now common in Spanish,¹² and a number of universities offer

³ 2819 students were surveyed.

⁴ The Slavic languages included in this survey included Polish, Russian, and “Serbo-Croatian.”

⁵ In contrast to the United States, Canadian linguists and policy makers have debated issues relating to heritage languages for decades and in fact pioneered the use of the term “heritage languages.” See Cummins 2014, Duff 2008, Haque 2012, Jedwab 2014, among others.

⁶ *Heritage Languages in America*, a conference hosted by California State University, Long Beach

⁷ <http://www.cal.org/heritage/>

⁸ <http://www.nhlrc.ucla.edu/nhlrc>.

⁹ <http://www.heritagelanguages.org>; see Lynch 2014 for an overview of articles published in *Heritage Language Journal* in the first decade of its existence.

¹⁰ See “Dissertation and Thesis Abstracts on Heritage Education 2000-2012”

<http://www.cal.org/heritage/pdfs/dissertation/heritage-language-education-dissertation-and-thesis-abstracts.pdf>;

and “Dissertations with a Heritage Language Focus 2006-2015”

http://www.international.ucla.edu/media/files/Bibliographies_2015.pdf

¹¹ Czech and Slovak: McCabe 2014; Polish: Barski 2013; Romanian: Petruscu 2014; Russian: Bain 2004, Dengub 2012, Dubinina 2012, Geisherik 2005, Karkafi 2014, Kasatkina 2010, Kradinova 2007, Laleko 2010, Lyutykh 2011, Mikhaylova 2012; Moore 2012 and Smyslova 2009; Ukrainian: Seals 2013; Balkan languages: Jevgiovikj 2013. For Lithuanian, see also Tamošiūnaitė 2014.

¹² Beaudrie 2012 cites that 40% of American universities offer specialized Spanish courses for heritage students, an increase from 18% in the early 2000s (Beaudrie, Ducat and Potowski 2015).

specialized courses for students of Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Russian and/or Vietnamese heritage (Kondo 2003, Beaudrie, Ducar & Potowski 2015), in addition to individualized study.

At the same time, globalization has also enhanced certain pressures on heritage languages associated with smaller home-country populations, including all of the Slavic languages except Russian. In the globalized world, knowledge of certain languages can be viewed not only as a reflection of ethnic and cultural identity, but also as a “commodity,” a marketable asset that can enhance professional and economic opportunities (Heller 2003, 2011). This factor favors languages that are associated with business opportunities, such as Chinese and Spanish (Carreira & Kagan 2011), and, in the United States, languages that are viewed as strategically relevant, such as Arabic, Farsi, Hindu-Urdu, and Russian (Eisen 2015, Fishman 2004). In a survey of immersion programs in the United States conducted in 2011, 528 were identified, with nearly four fifths (79.3%) specializing in three dominant languages, Spanish (45.3%), French (21.6%), and Mandarin (13.4%).¹³ The number of Chinese immersion schools is on the rise, and Chinese is also rising in prominence at American high schools, with new programs opening to high enrollment rates.¹⁴ At the same time, this economically oriented factor disfavors languages that are viewed as having less global impact. At a time when a recent economic downturn has caused students to take a more pragmatic view of their studies, taking into consideration the practical value that each course may offer them, this factor has had a strong effect on enrollments in the United States in all of the less commonly taught languages.¹⁵

3. Types of heritage language speakers

In the scholarly literature on heritage language learners at the university level, “narrow” and “broad” definitions of heritage language learners are often distinguished. Heritage learners in the “narrow” sense grow up hearing their heritage language in the home and have some bilingual capabilities (Valdés 2000), particularly oral skills in domains that relate to home life. Other students are heritage learners in a broader, more psychological sense: they may have little or no linguistic skills, but they have a “heritage motivation” and “seek to explore and reconnect with their family’s heritage through language” (Fishman 2001, van Deusen-Scholl 2003).

This broad definition applies to many heritage students of Slavic languages with ancestors who arrived in previous waves of migration. For example, the “Texas Czechs” migrated primarily from Northern Moravia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Living in close-knit communities, until the end of World War II they maintained their language, a Moravian dialect of Czech, quite successfully (Cope 1998, Eckert 2007). At this time, in parallel to broader societal changes, many young people began to move away to pursue educational and career-oriented opportunities. Due to this remoteness from the heritage communities, combined with frequent intermarriage with people of other ethnicities and assimilation, the majority of members of this generation quickly lost active command of the heritage language and did not pass it on to their children. However, many people have retained a strong heritage affiliation, as evidenced by the multitude of Czech heritage organizations, “Texas Czech” heritage festivals, and community-based financial support for university-level Czech language courses.¹⁶ As highlighted on the website of The Czech Heritage Society of Texas, core topics of interest include “Genealogy, history, music, customs, food, costumes, language,”¹⁷ with language one of many components of their ethnic self identity.

In contrast, heritage learners in the “narrow” sense grow up in direct contact with the heritage language in the home. In some cases, the heritage language may be the child’s first language, with English emerging serially, as a second language, when the child begins to attend pre-school or

¹³ webapp.cal.org/Immersion

¹⁴ These programs often supersede traditionally taught languages, such as German and Latin.

¹⁵ http://www.mla.org/flsurvey_search; http://www.mla.org/pdf/2013_enrollment_survey.pdf

¹⁶ See, for example, <http://www.czechheritage.org>, <http://www.czechtexas.org>, <http://ceft.us>, and <http://www.czechcenter.org>

¹⁷ <http://www.czechheritage.org>

elementary school. Serial acquisition is a strong factor favoring heritage language retention, especially when coupled with a single language spoken in the home and strong intergenerational support, such as a monolingual grandparent helping with childcare. Many children in the United States, however, go to daycare starting in infancy, and, in this English-dominant domain, must learn their heritage language in direct competition to English. In addition, intermarriage is very frequent and leads to multi-lingual households, further restricting exposure to the heritage language. Under these circumstances, heritage community schools play an extremely important role not only in maintaining heritage language abilities, but also in acquisition. For many children, these schools may be the only place where use of the heritage language is both mandatory and motivated by the context, since most people of Slavic origin in the United States know at least some English and can therefore understand when their children respond in English. Community schools provide a focused context for cultural grounding and for developing literacy skills, moving beyond oral skills and the domains of the home environment. They also play a critical role in fostering a sense of belonging to the heritage community through positive interactions with other children and families, celebrations of shared holidays, and connections of various types with people traveling from the country of origin. Many transnational families also send their children to the home country during summer vacations, with the immersive, (mostly) monolingual contact with cousins and other family members providing a strong boost in language abilities. Technological advances further support language maintenance, with media resources easily accessible and low-cost and/or free communications such as Skype and social networks facilitating easy and convenient cross-national communication.

However, even with the enhanced resources and opportunities of the transnational era, heritage language maintenance is extremely challenging. Heritage languages are best maintained when spoken regularly in the home, throughout childhood and by both parents, when supported by a combination of home and community educational efforts, and when the language has global applicability (Carreira and Kagan 2011, Laleko 2013, Lo Bianco and Peyton 2013). Since Slavic transnationals tend to choose their place of residence on the basis of work opportunities, rather than settling in previously established heritage communities, many families do not live in areas with sufficiently concentrated heritage populations to support community schools. Due to urban sprawl, even families living in the same city may face considerable travel (an hour or more) in order to meet. Overseas travel is very costly and is not viable for many in the United States, where vacation time may be restricted to one or two weeks. Even for those who can spend summer vacations in the home country, language gains achieved can be short-lived, especially if not reinforced by family and community efforts throughout the year. A particularly critical time for many is middle school, at ten to twelve years of age, when children often face an increase in conflicting weekend commitments with sports, music and other activities. At the same time, they may feel increased pressure to conform to the “mainstream,” however it may be perceived, and to give up ethnic practices that differentiate them from other adolescents. Starting at this age, a tendency toward decreased conversational interaction between parents and children also reduces the heritage language input. Furthermore, since only a limited repertoire of languages is taught in high schools (usually Spanish, French and Chinese), most students must take on an additional foreign language to fulfill graduation and college entrance requirements.

4. Heritage language learners at the university level: evidence from research

Given these disfavoring circumstances, even heritage language speakers of the “narrow” type tend to have considerable gaps in their language abilities. These gaps often stem both from incomplete acquisition and from language attrition during the later childhood and teenage years. Since heritage speakers are immersed in an environment where English is the dominant language for many of their “prime language-learning years,” their range of linguistic and social experiences in the heritage language is limited (Beaudrie, Ducar & Potowski 2015). As Valdés 2000 notes, “because the two languages play different roles and are used in different ways, each of the languages develops different strengths.” In the heritage language, they tend to be most comfortable in informal conversations on topics relating to home life. Some may have advanced oral skills and may even seem fluent in conversation, but others may have only receptive skills, as a result of growing up hearing the heritage

language, but responding in English. In this context, it is important to remember that bilingualism is a “dynamic condition” that can change over the course of a person’s lifetime (Valdés 2000). For example, a person’s active use of the language may vary dramatically over the years of childhood. This can lead to different levels of retention at different ages, as well as more active acquisition of features associated with certain times in childhood. Regardless of the level of oral skills, many have minimal or no literacy skills and little familiarity with academic registers, as their schooling in the heritage language tends to be limited to community school sessions and/or individual tutoring. At the same time, they may have strong academic abilities in English, a foundation that can be tapped in heritage language classes.

The baseline language of heritage language learners is not necessarily the standardized literary language that is typically taught and favored in foreign language classes, as the primary language input is likely to be the spoken variant or dialect used in the home (Kramer 2004, Polinsky & Kagan 2007, Sussex 1993). This is an especially important factor for languages with strong differences between the literary and colloquial variants, such as Czech, or with a range of dialects (Kramer 2004). In addition, many grow up hearing primarily the language of their parents and other adults, whose language has specific generational features. Given the major societal changes over the past twenty five years in Central and Eastern Europe, with correspondingly significant and rapid language shifts, for Slavic and East European heritage learners the language spoken at home may be dated or even archaic relative to the contemporary language of the home country.

The speech of heritage language speakers typically reflects both incomplete acquisition and the influence of the dominant language. Codeswitching, borrowings, and extensions of meaning are common, both in order to compensate for reduced vocabulary and as a consequence of the influence of English and mismatches of meaning across the two cultures. Many speakers borrow, extend, and blend both lexical and grammatical conceptualizations. For example, a “two bedroom apartment” is very different from a Russian “dvukomnatnaja kvartira,” as in the American context only the bedrooms are counted (not living or dining rooms). The hybrid form “dvuxbedromovaja kvartira,” with a code switch to and from English within the word, captures this distinction while allow the speaker to access the full range of Russian morphology, including formal distinctions between adjectives and nouns and distinct endings for case, gender and number. In parallel to English, heritage speakers often extend the word “škola” ‘school’ from primary and secondary schooling to the university context: Russian “ja idu v školu” can mean “I’m going to the university.” Idioms are especially susceptible to influence from the dominant language: heritage speakers of Russian often say “Ja beru avtobus” when talking about a bus as means of transportation, in parallel to English “I’m taking the bus.” Likewise, the grammar of Russian “esli” is often extended in parallel to English “if,” with the two grammatical functions expressed by “esli” and “li” collapsed into one lexical item. This also involves a considerable simplification, with no need for the word order reversal that is characteristic of subordinate clauses with li.¹⁸

Beaudrie, Ducar & Potowski 2015 and many others have noted that inadequate differentiation of registers is a prominent characteristic of heritage language speakers. Heritage speakers tend to overuse the informal forms that they have learned in home-related contexts, including names, forms of address, greetings, formal second person pronouns and their corresponding grammatical forms. This results directly from the limited contextual scope of their language use: they lack the experience and therefore the active language practice that would enable them to differentiate stylistically in contexts requiring a higher register. In addition, syntax tends to be highly simplified, with short sentences and simple conjunctions (parataxis). Their lack of sustained experience in academic contexts is reflected also in their minimal use of participles, gerunds, relative clauses, and complex temporal and causal connectors (Bermel and Kagan 2000, Laleko 2013).

In the scholarly literature, a number of specific features of Slavic heritage languages have been identified, especially in the last fifteen years, reflecting the growth of heritage language studies as a distinct field of study. Like other heritage speakers, Slavic heritage speakers tend to overuse informal

¹⁸ Note that these extended meanings of škola and jestli are also characteristic of standard Czech.

language, such as the informal second person pronoun (“ty”), informal greetings, first names (dropping the patronymic in Russian), and other informal ways of addressing people. This may also reflect interference specifically from English, with its lack of distinction between formal and informal “you,” and from the relatively informal social/linguistic conventions of American English. Polinsky 2000 notes that diminutive forms are often overused (Russian “ručki,” “nožki”), in ways that can comically contradict age-appropriate conventions, but are a natural outcome of the fact that early childhood tends to be the main period of both language input and active acquisition and use. These forms may register in a person’s memory as fixed lexical items, with the adult heritage speaker having no idea that non-diminutive forms even exist. Dubinina 2013 notes that even among high functioning heritage speakers, other types of pragmatic competence may be limited. In a comparative study of how Russian native and heritage speakers ask for favors, she found a strong influence of English pragmatic conventions on the speech of heritage speakers: they tend to overextend the use of the impersonal modal “možno,” omit the face-saving negative particle *ne*, overuse the Russian equivalent of “please” in formal requests, and, in general, orient their requests to the speaker, rather than the addressee (“Can I...?”). As she notes,

The resulting composite pragmatic matrix of HR (heritage Russian) requests... is based on an abstract linguistic structure that combines Russian and English pragmatic conventions. Requests produced by HR speakers do not involve overt code-switching at the surface, but exhibit cross-linguistic influence at the abstract level. The abstract convergence of two languages within HL pragmatics indicates that languages in contact interact within all levels of an utterance.

Grammatical categorizations tend to be simplified or otherwise reanalyzed if not supported by parallel categorizations in the dominant language. For example, heritage speakers tend to have a highly reduced case system, if any (see Albijanić 1982 and Gasiński 1986 on Croatian, Henzl 1983 on Czech, de Groot 2005 on Hungarian, Preston & Turner 1984 on Polish, Laleko 2010, Leisiö 2006 and Polinsky 2006 on Russian, Paternost 1976 on Slovene). However, individual case forms that are frequently used may be fossilized as lexical items. For example, in Russian “u nas” ‘we have’ may be used correctly, but the more general construction of <u + full noun> nonexistent (Polinsky 2000). A considerable amount of research has been done on the acquisition and attrition of Slavic aspect, especially Russian (Gagarina 2000, 2009, Laleko 2010, 2011, Mikhaylova 2012, Pereltsvaig 2008, Polinsky 1996, 2000, 2009, Stoll 2001, Weist et al 1984 and others; see also Kuehnast 2010 and 2012 on Bulgarian). Instead of a full aspectual system of imperfective-perfective pairings, heritage speakers tend to use a single aspect. The aspect of a particular verb can be either imperfective or perfective, depending on the inherent telicity (boundedness) of its meaning in the most frequently occurring types of contexts. Thus, a single-occurring telic event like “to die” is likely to be used only in the perfective, but verbs of liking tend to exist as imperfectives, as they prototypically involve a span of time. This is not only a lexical matter of the verb itself: it involves broader conceptual thinking, at the composite level of the verb plus its arguments and at the contextual level. The following utterance is typical of second-generation speech. Here, the speaker (16 years old) is remembering her great grandmother.

Kogda my priežžali k prababuške v gosti, ona vseгда dala nas torčik i čaj.

‘When we would visit our great grandmother, she would always give (*perfective - one time*) us (*accusative – direct object*) ‘torcik’ (a Polish dessert) and tea.’

The speaker uses some grammatical forms correctly, such as the plural form of the past tense, and she has active command of some high frequency collocations and idioms: “to grandmother,” “on a visit.” At the same time, on a conceptual level, she has no understanding of the underlying difference between the accusative and dative cases (replacing dative “nam” with accusative “nas”), or of the higher order aspectual distinction of iterativity (replacing imperfective “davala” with perfective “dala” on the basis of the underlying telicity of a single subevent). Although she passively understands the differences in meaning when native speakers apply these grammatical categories correctly, the underlying concepts are missing both in her dominant language, English, and in her use of the heritage language.

Syntax is also dramatically altered in Slavic heritage languages. As Sussex 1993 notes in his chapter on Slavic émigré language,

Interference in émigré Slavonic syntax comes from two principal directions: imitation of the syntax of the host language, and the decline in the inflectional system of the Slavonic languages, which reduces the means for marking grammatical relations, and makes the émigré Slavonic languages less synthetic and more analytic.

(Sussex 1993: 1019)

Even in the speech of highly functional heritage speakers, word order often reflects the strong preference in English for SVO (subject-verb-object), rather than communicative factors such topic-comment relations and/or definiteness. For example, in the following sentence, the distinction of definite/indefinite between “a new law” and “the new law” is lost when the verb and subject are reversed.

Heritage Russian: Na prošloj nedele v Rossii novyj zakon vyšel.

Intended as ‘Last week a new law came out.’

Standard Russian (subject -verb): Na prošloj nedele v Rossii novyj zakon vyšel.

‘Last week the new law came out.’

Standard Russian (verb-subject): Na prošloj nedele v Rossii vyšel novyj zakon.

‘Last week a new law came out.’

(Geisharik 2005: 52)

Other typical features of Slavic heritage language include an excessive use of pronouns and possessive modifiers (following English language models), incorrect use or omission of prepositions, and restructuring of gender, agreement and modal systems (Barski 2013, Benmamoun, Montrul & Polinsky 2010, Laleko 2010, Polinsky 1995, 2006, 2008, Zemskaja & Glovinskaja 2001).

5. Pedagogical implications

Slavic departments at the university level can play an active role in helping students of Slavic and East European background maintain their heritage languages. Some programs have developed separate tracks for heritage language learners, especially in Russian and in some areas in Polish,¹⁹ but at most universities and for most of the Slavic and East European languages, this is economically untenable. Therefore, most heritage language learners must sign up for regular foreign language (L2) classes. When differentiating the curriculum for these students, instructors must be prepared to address their specific needs, building on what they are likely to know already, while enabling them to expand their linguistic breadth and overall competence. With the rise of transnational migration patterns, and, consequently, higher levels of acquisition and maintenance in heritage communities, the task has become considerably more difficult, the more so since budget cuts have led to the reduction of many programs to a single year of language instruction.

The literature on heritage language instruction identifies seven main goals, following pioneering work on Spanish as a heritage language by Guadalupe Valdés (Valdés 1995, see also Valdés 2000, Beaudrie, Ducat and Potowski 2015):

1. Language maintenance
2. Acquisition or development of a prestige language variety
3. Expansion of bilingual range
4. Transfer of literacy skills
5. Acquisition or development of academic skills in the heritage language

¹⁹ See <http://webapp.cal.org/Heritage/ProfileListing.aspx>

6. Positive attitudes toward both the heritage language and various dialects of the language, and its cultures
7. Acquisition or development of cultural awareness (Beaudrie, Ducar & Potowski 2015: 59)

In order to meet these goals, Valdés 2000 and Kagan and Dillon 2001/2002 suggest an overarching model based on a distinction between the “interpersonal,” “interpretive,” and “presentational” modes, as advocated by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages.²⁰ Each of these modes can incorporate the four primary skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, as well as a range of stylistic registers. Heritage students tend to have the most experience in oral and informal interpersonal and interpretative communication, and the least in presentational communication. In all three modes, they lack experience in relatively formal and/or academic registers.

Typical foreign language (L2) instruction incorporates a “bottom-up” approach, gradually developing individual skills and adding new ones incrementally (Krashen 1987). This often involves introducing and drilling individual forms before they are incorporated into the students’ speech at the level of a text. For heritage language learners, Carreira & Kagan (2011), Kagan & Dillon, 2001/2002 and Beaudrie, Ducar & Potowski 2015 advocate instead a “top-down” approach, starting at the level of the text. This acknowledges and builds on heritage language learners’ previously acquired language abilities and allows for greater flexibility and more cultural grounding. This “macro” approach is especially effective given heritage language learners’ stronger receptive skills: since they can understand more than they can produce, they can make use of authentic language material from the start. For example, heritage language learners may be able to understand both the language and certain aspects of the cultural context of a movie much more than foreign language learners. Depending on the level of the specific students, Beaudrie, Ducar & Potowski 2015, following Carreira and Kagan 2011, suggest the following activities for heritage students:

1. Discuss or debate interesting themes in the movie.
2. Transcribe lines or write a description of a scene from the movie (individually or in groups).
3. Write an analysis or evaluation of the movie.
4. Evaluate pieces of dialogue as either formal or informal registers; convert one to the other. (Beaudrie, Ducar & Potowski 2015: 71)

Some of these activities, such as discussion, debate and analysis, require at least an intermediary level of language ability, but others, such as transcription or evaluation of registers enable students to build on relatively low levels of language ability, extending knowledge and skills acquired in the home to other domains. Many students have experience viewing heritage language movies passively, and these tasks extend this experience to the interpretative level, while building on cognitive and academic skills that they have acquired in their dominant language. Given recent technological advances that make media more accessible to individuals (including restricted course websites), movies can be viewed independently with a variety of levels of scaffolding: introductory foreign language learners can view the movie with English language subtitles, while heritage students can use heritage language subtitles (captions), no subtitles, or a combination of these three options, as needed. Movie scripts can be used and adapted in various ways, both to scaffold understanding and to help students transfer their oral skills to reading and writing. The Brown University Online Czech Literary Anthology provides a model of how this can be done in combination with a variety of other culturally grounded materials,²¹ and Kaiser 2011 suggests various ways to incorporate highly focused individual clips into language courses at all levels.

A core characteristic approach of the “top-down,” macro-level approach is that, to a large degree, grammar and vocabulary are addressed as they appear in motivated contexts. This presents a significant challenge in mixed heritage/non-heritage classes, especially at the beginning levels, where most textbooks favor a micro-level approach. Instructors can combine these two approaches in

²⁰ For the latest version, see <http://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-performance-descriptors-language-learners>

²¹ See *Náš Jára Cimrman* at <http://www.brown.edu/Research/CZECH/>. Other annotated scripts can be found in the “webliographies” at <http://slaviccenters.duke.edu/webliogra>.

individuated tasks and projects that enable heritage language speakers to focus on their specific needs and interests independently, as spin-offs from the main curricular plan. Combined with reports to the class, this also provides an opportunity for students to practice the presentational mode. For example, in connection with the topic of cities and grammatical constructions of location, heritage students can conduct independent research on locations in the home country that have special relevance to their families. Using their oral skills, they can interview native speakers, both in the heritage community and in the home country, using communication technologies such as Skype and easily accessible recording systems. Internet resources provide an easily accessible way for them to work on literacy skills in a variety of registers (both reading and writing with models).²² These resources beyond the textbook are likely to introduce topic-related vocabulary at a higher level than the students' active command, creating an "island" of higher-level competence (Shtekhman and Leaver 2002). While presentations in mixed-level classes can be problematic for those with lower levels of listening skills, presentation software like Powerpoint or Prezi enables students to provide visual scaffolding and/or dual language reinforcement for students.

Combining heritage themes with the study of modal constructions can be especially fruitful. In connection with studying expressions of purpose, desirability, potential, and alternative worlds (subjunctive and conditional), students can explore and discuss the reasons for their family's migration and/or earlier waves of emigration. Interviews in the heritage community can be supplemented with independent research on personally motivated topics, such as specific historical periods and events, using documentary films, non-fiction texts, memoirs, and other literary works.²³ Students who are motivated to take heritage courses for career opportunities can research and report on job opportunities in the home country and investigate qualifications that they would need, using online advertisements and sample CVs. In this manner, a combination of individualized interpersonal, interpretation and presentational tasks that extend the core curricular topics can enable instructors to differentiate language instruction, while building on the specific strengths and resources that students have previously acquired from their heritage background.

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²² See Chevalier 2004 for an effective program based on using various types of authentic models to develop literacy in heritage language classes.

²³ Martin Votruba's course on "Slovak Transatlantic Cultures" provides an overview of potential resources (<http://www.pitt.edu/~votruba/skprogram/assets/SKTransatlanticDetails.pdf>). For Czech resources, see Rechci 2011, and for other languages, see the websites of various heritage organizations.

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