

Heritage Language Maintenance in UK Secondary School Students

Sophie Liggins

University of Essex

The aim of my PhD study is to examine the language learning trajectories of speakers of heritage languages (HLs) born into environments in which the majority language is different to that of their family, and to understand more about ways in which HL maintenance influences scholastic literacy development. I am exploring the view that embracing and utilising multilingualism is a valuable endeavour which not only benefits our understanding of the role of HLs in literacy and language development in young multilinguals, but also in terms of the social benefits of raising awareness of the role of language and literacy in relation to enhanced critical thinking and intellectual development (Cummings 2005).

I am currently carrying out research in inner-city London secondary schools, which yield a wide range of HL speakers from diverse language communities. This involves carrying out tasks to measure HL proficiency, and questionnaires to measure attitudes, usage and dominance. I use these results to investigate the relationships between these variables and English vocabulary scores with a view to develop pedagogical outlooks towards the value of heritage language maintenance in English medium education settings. Findings will be useful in the wider discussion around educational efforts to develop children's plurilingual abilities in the process of educating bilingual students (García and Li Wei 2014).

References:

Cummings, J. (2005) A Proposal for Action: Strategies for Recognizing Heritage Language Competence as a Learning Resource within the Mainstream Classroom *The Modern Language Journal* Vol. 89, No. 4, pp. 585-592

García, O .& Li Wei (2014) *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Palgrave Macmillan. Hampshire