What heritage speakers know…

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What does it mean to know a language?

What are the crucial stages in language development and attrition?

Is it possible to map out language subsystems that are stable and that are most susceptible to change?
defining ‘heritage’

- **Broad conception**: those who have been raised with a *strong cultural connection* to a particular language, usu. through family interaction (Fishman 2001; Van Deusen-Scholl 2003)

- **Narrow conception**: those who have been exposed to a particular language in childhood but did not learn it to full capacity
  - because another language became dominant
who are heritage speakers?

Tamarine Tanasugarn defeats Jelena Jankovic 6-3, 6-2
Tamarine Tanasugarn defeats Jelena Jankovic 6-3, 6-2

Q: Were you aware that Jelena was struggling with an injury out there?

TAMARINE TANASUGARN: Yeah, also, well, the way of her movement a little bit, but I guess probably, I probably notice when she have to do her serve. She maked a lot of, quite some double-fault at the end of the second set, so I guess probably that's, uhm, bother her. So was it kind of maybe good for me somehow.
typical perception of heritage speakers

• It is embarrassing/frustrating how many things they don’t know (get wrong)
the glass is $\frac{3}{4}$ full

- It is rewarding/encouraging how much heritage speakers already know
- The goal is to release this implicit knowledge and build on it
heritage speakers as a distinct population that deserves special attention
heritage speakers are not the same as...

- Heritage speakers have a different profile than uninterrupted L1 speakers
- Heritage speakers have a different profile than L2 speakers
- Heritage speakers are different from balanced (stable) bilinguals
- Heritage speakers are different from “forgetters” (stopped using L1 in adulthood, show aging effects)
- Heritage speakers are different from “fossilized” child language speakers
HL is like L1...

- Early exposure to language
- Naturalistic setting (auditory input)
- Good control of features acquired early in life (phonology, everyday lexicon, some structures)
- Developmental errors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HL</th>
<th>L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abundant continuous input</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful and complete outcome of</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acquisition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex grammatical &amp; pragmatic</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structures (associated with schooling)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fossilization</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HL is like L2…

- Varying amount and scope of input
- Resulting grammar is incomplete
- Developmental errors and transfer effects
- Variable proficiency
- Fossilized errors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HL</th>
<th>L2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late exposure to language</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with phonology (&quot;accent&quot;)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructed setting</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience with literacy, formal registers</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
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HL and bilingualism

• HL: sequential, not simultaneous, bilingualism
• HL: unbalanced and unstable bilingualism, no diglossia
so who are heritage speakers?

• they simply forgot their language...

• they are fossilized at some stage of child language acquisition...
Heritage speakers and forgetters, performance on grammaticality judgment tasks (GJT): Russian
HL and language forgetting

• Heritage speakers are different from forgetters; main indicator of differences: performance on grammaticality judgment task:
  – HSs are at chance, FGs are close to controls

• Heritage speakers: competence problems. Forgetters: performance deficiency
Null hypothesis: Adult incomplete grammar = fossilized child language, with the level of fossilization roughly corresponding to the age of interruption.
adult heritage speaker vs. child

Correct use of classifiers, Mandarin Chinese

- HS adult: 60%
- HS child: 80%

N = 22

N = 16
heritage speaker is not a cryogenic child

Evidence:

- Narrative structure (children outperform HS)
- Classifiers (children outperform HS)
- Semantics of number/plurality (HS outperform children)
- Relative clause comprehension
- Aspect (children and HS show different errors)
heritage language ≠ fossilized child language

- Hypothesis: Adult heritage grammar = fossilized child language, with the level of fossilization roughly corresponding to the age of interruption.
what exactly do adult HSs know?

• HSs differ from forgetters
• HSs differ from children acquiring their first language
• HSs make systematic errors which are similar to errors found in other special populations
  – Relative clause interpretation matches that of Broca’s aphasics
heritage language

• is a coherent structured system
• is different from the baseline language
what exactly do they know?

- Null Hypothesis: heritage speakers do not control a comprehensive language system; instead, they retain a random collection of "language chunks"
what exactly do they know?

- An incomplete grammar differs from the grammar of the respective full language in a systematic, rather than random way.
- The differences have twofold motivation:
  - Reanalysis in face of insufficient data
  - Lack of automatic access
addressing the deficits

- Reanalysis in face of insufficient data: expanding the range of data in order to facilitate the implicit revision of patterns
- Lack of automatic access: re-learning
re-learning

• Heritage speakers are successful at re-learning because they already have a significant body of language data to add to.

• This is the strength that needs to be utilized more, preferably at a younger age.

• The social matrix of the heritage group is unique: these people do not have to use their L1 but it is still around them.
What does it mean to know a language?
What are the crucial stages in language development?
  – In addition to the upward trajectory (which we are used to in language acquisition field) we need to consider the downward trajectory of attrition and reanalysis
acknowledgments

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