



# International and Heritage Languages Association

Newsletter: Volume 13, Issue 1.

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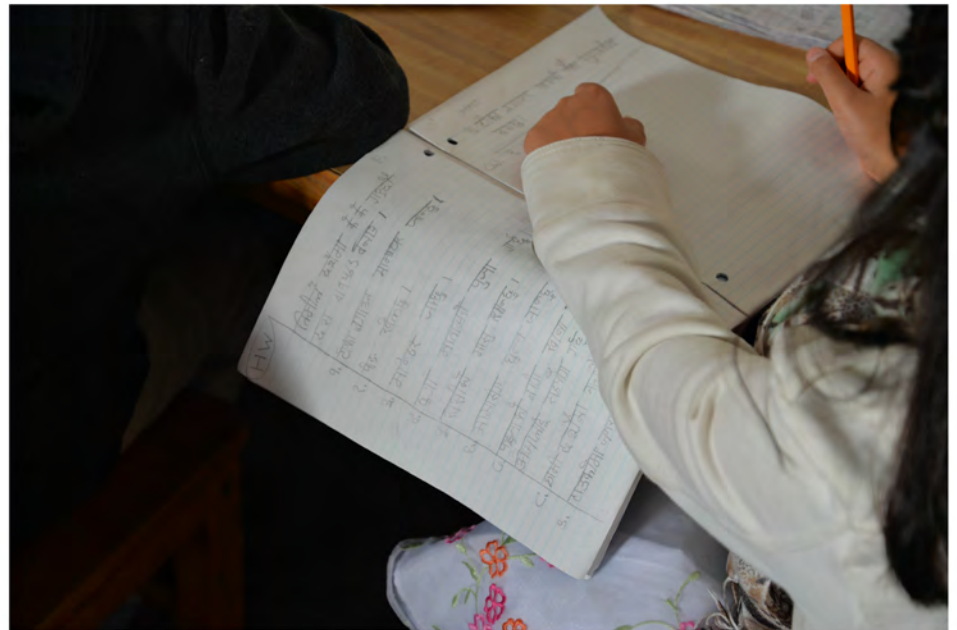
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Like IHLA's Facebook page:



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1513060642278608/?fref=ts>

## Greeting from the President

Dear Esteemed Member Schools and Friends of IHLA,

Welcome to our first newsletter announcing the election results of our Executive Board for 2015/2016:

Antonella Cortese as President  
Cindy Pereira as Vice President  
Krystyna Dembowski as Treasurer  
Iryna Klymkiv as Secretary  
Josephine Pallard as Secretary  
Olga Prokhorova as Past President



As the new President Elect, I look forward to continuing the good work that IHLA does via our engaging and informative workshops for Teachers and Administrators, developing new opportunities for schools, including the introduction of the Mentorship Program for all IHLA Schools to consider and apply, and our Mother Language Day Festivities highlighting our communities in the nurturing and sustaining of our Heritage Languages and Cultures.

My hope, as New President, is that we can strengthen our relationship with the newly elected government, recognizing the importance and necessity of supporting Heritage Languages Education in Alberta. As we move forward, I look forward to working with everyone on the IHLA Board and all Member Schools to increase our profile and to encourage more active participation on behalf of all our Heritage Language Schools and Programs.

I am proud and humbled to having been elected as President of IHLA and will do my very best and work toward continued positive outcomes and developing meaningful avenues for IHLA to flourish.

Sincerely,

Antonella Cortese, President

To contact Antonella with your ideas and suggestions for IHLA, you may email her at: [acortese@mac.com](mailto:acortese@mac.com)

Best of luck to our new executive board. IHLA is entering a new stage.

## Professional Learning

A huge Thank You goes out to Trudie Aberdeen for conducting a wonderful Professional Development session on October 28th and 29th. The sessions were appreciated by everyone in attendance and all teachers have walked away with useful, applicable skills and techniques to be used in their classrooms. We look forward to having you back again, Trudie.



### 2015 - 2016 Professional Learning Calendar

The following are the dates for the upcoming sessions for this year. Note them down in your calendars.

October 28 - 29  
 November 26  
 January 19 - 20  
 February 10  
 March 09 - 10  
 April 05 - 06  
 April 26 - 27  
 May 10 - 11

The sessions are on the topics of:

- Leadership
- Global Citizenship
- Literacy Teaching
- Locally Developed Courses for HL
- Technology Integration
- Beginner Teaching Techniques
- Advanced Teaching Techniques

**Leadership** – these sessions will be offered to the principals of IHLA member schools focusing on successful school management. The principals of schools who are also educators by training will have an opportunity to not only broaden their professional network but also discuss the challenges community language schools are facing today and find possible solutions to them as well as share their experiences.

**Global Citizenship** – these sessions will focus on the Global Citizenship Outcomes from the AB Programs of Study for International Languages. The topics will cover ways in which culture-based themes can be used in lesson planning, community events and reflections on the richness of cultural and traditional knowledge in language communities in the province, and how these can become a resource for learning experiences in the classroom.

**Literacy Teaching in HL Classroom** – these sessions will focus on literacy topics between L1 acquisition and L2 learning. Studies will be reviewed and activities will be presented and practiced to plan for ways in which one's first or heritage language knowledge can enhance the learning of a second or additional language.

**Locally Developed Courses** – these sessions will focus on the development of courses for languages that are not available as a provincial program or LDCs. The sessions will provide practical information on what is required to receive approval by Alberta Education.

**Beginning Techniques for HL Teaching** – these sessions will focus specifically on beginning educators in heritage language schools (but will also be open to any certified language educator in Alberta) around topics such as planning for success, evaluation and integration of community resources.

**Advanced Techniques for HL Teaching** – these sessions will be geared toward experienced educators in heritage language schools. They will focus on emerging studies and innovation in the field of heritage language teaching.



# Mentorship Program


This year, IHLA is introducing the mentorship program which will allow schools to cooperate between each other and learn from each other's experiences. The mentorship program is outlined in detail on the IHLA website: [www.ihla.ca](http://www.ihla.ca) under the Resources session. Make sure to go to the website and learn more about this program.

Schools who wish to participate in the Mentorship Program can submit a proposal to be either a Mentor or a Mentee. The submitted proposals will be posted on the website and a membership email will be sent out to schools to notify them of the submitted proposal. Mentorship proposals will be submitted no later than January 31, 2016 and all Mentorship sessions will be completed no later than April 30, 2016. For more information, contact the Coordinator of IHLA through the email: [edmontonihla@gmail.com](mailto:edmontonihla@gmail.com) or go on the website: [www.ihla.ca](http://www.ihla.ca)

For filling in the Mentorship Proposal Forms follow the following guidelines.

**Mentor:**

In submitting the Proposal, the mentor will provide information on the topics that they are able and willing to share with the mentee. The mentor will need to outline his experience in the selected topics, approach to and style of teaching the selected topics, estimate of time and resources required to teach the topics, mentor's availability (dates when the topic can be taught), preferred location for teaching. The Proposal will outline to whom the topics are geared and who will benefit most from them. The Proposal will have contact information of the mentor.



**Mentorship Proposal Form**

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

You are interested in being:  
Mentor:                       Mentee:

Topics for Mentorship:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Availability Dates for the Sessions:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Location for the Sessions:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Experience in the Topic of Mentorship (If Mentor):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name and Contact Information:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mentee:**

In submitting the Proposal, the mentees will outline the information they are interested in learning. This information can be reflective of the Proposals submitted by the mentors (stating the interest in learning from a particular mentor who has already submitted a Proposal) or it can describe topics of interest for the mentee. The Proposal will need to outline the topics that the mentee is interested in learning and the sought outcomes of the mentorship. The Proposal will state mentee's availability (dates when the topic can be taught), preferred location for learning, and the criteria that the mentee has for a mentor. The Proposal will have contact information of the mentee.



# Mother Language Day Preparation

Mother Language Day is an annual event celebrated by IHLA. It is an opportunity to celebrate heritage languages, cultures and learning. This year the Mother Language Day is held on February 20, 2016 at the Italian Cultural Centre. More information will be provided closer to the event.

## Preparation for the MLD Book

As part of the Mother Language Day, IHLA publishes an annual book of student essays, artwork, and other works. This year the topic for the book is: “My Favorite Traditional Celebration”. Please collect works from your students and submit them to the IHLA coordinator no later than December 20, 2015 for the inclusion in the 2016 MLD Book.

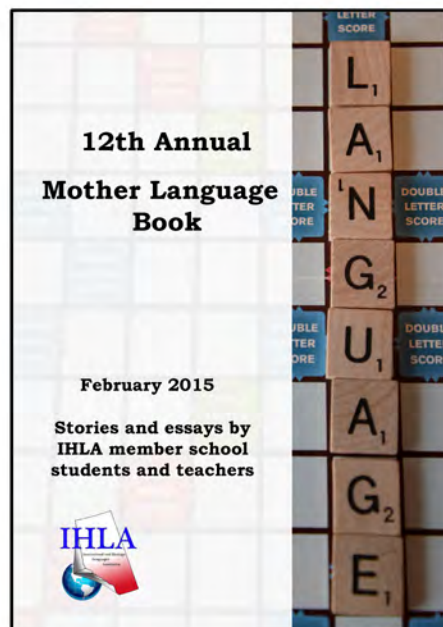
There are several changes to the requirements for submissions for the book. The changes are listed below, and works that are non-compliant to the changes will not be published in the next book.

- Every piece must have a summary in English of what the piece is about.
- Up to 10 pages of content will be given to every school and up to 5 pages extra for English translations. (15 pages total).
- The schools participating in the MLD Book must submit a brief description of their school, preferably with a picture. Every school has 1 page extra for the school description on top of the 15.
- Images should be created by students preferably, or properly cited.
- Title, name of student, grade or age must be provided.
- The works submitted for the book must be appropriate to the topic of the book. “My Favorite Traditional Celebration”.
- A picture of the student that submits the work would be a nice addition to the book.

## Preparation for the MLD

In preparation for the MLD, make sure to send your school’s confirmation of attendance and participation in the Mother Language Day. The confirmation needs to be provided no later than December 20, 2015. Along with the confirmation, make sure to describe if your school will need a table for presenting school materials, if your school will be performing, and how many people are expected to attend from your school. If your school is performing, you must send a brief description of the performance to IHLA coordinator no later than December 20, 2015. The description must include names of students performing, significance of the piece and length. The description must be in English and the heritage language. More information is listed below:

- Language component is mandatory at the MLD. There must be some use of heritage language, either in song, poetry, skits or introduction of the pieces verbally that do not include language components.
- One performance per school will be allowed.
- If any school packs up their displays before the end of the MLD that school will not be participating in further years.
- Every school will provide 1 volunteer for the MLD.
- Title of every performance, names of students, and significance of the piece must be provided.
- MCs can be from any schools that wish to do it.
- Deadline for submission of materials for the book and performances is December 20, 2015.



## **Current IHLA Member Schools**

Meyokumin School  
Comitato Promotore della Lingua Italiana - Italian Preschool  
The Edmonton Korean Language School  
Maria Chrzanowska Polish Language School  
Russian Educational Centre  
Headway School  
Canadian Collegiate Institute  
Sikh Cultural and Spiritual Association  
Filipino School  
St. George's Hellenic Language School  
Ivan Franko School of Ukrainian Studies  
Henryk Sienkiewicz Polish School  
Sw. Jan Pawel II Polish-Bilingual Program at St. Basil School  
Ramgarhia Khalsa School  
Gil Vicente Portuguese School  
Gabriela Mistral Latin American School  
Gurukul Nepal  
Iranian School of Edmonton  
Changing Together  
Truong Lac Hong School

## **Heritage language pen pals - opportunities for friendship, communication and learning.**

*Dr. Olenka Bilash (University of Alberta)*  
*obilash@ualberta.ca*

As you know, on May 16, 2009 the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/61/266 called upon Member States "to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world".

*Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.*  
<http://www.un.org/en/events/motherlanguage/day/>

With migration, adoption, emigration and immigration families around the world are engaged in heritage language (HL) retention. Like IHLA families, they desire that their children learn, maintain and/or develop their oral and written HL skills so that they can communicate with relatives located elsewhere, interact with family members of other generations, gain the benefits of bi- or multi-lingualism (e.g. cognitive advantages, travel and workplace opportunities), and develop a global consciousness.

Despite the many long term benefits of bi and multi-lingualism, children and youth are often only able to see the short term costs - how extra classes and homework limit their time with friends or that so few people their own age communicate in their HL that it does not seem to be a "real" living language for them.

As a guest speaker at a recent Tamil Devali celebration, I was touched by how the community insightfully chose to convey the message of the value of the HL through a multi-generational play. The moving narrative concerns a family in which a grandfather comes to visit his family in Canada only to learn that his 10-12 year old

grandchildren cannot speak Tamil and his daughter and son-in-law believe that it has little value to them in their new life in Canada. No doubt they are also aware of the challenges of parenting in a minority language context: the displeasure of "nagging" their children to speak or respond to them in their HL; the pressure of time, energy, effort and commitment to motivate and drive children to HL classes and monitor homework; and perhaps even of the disillusion of the shame and not knowing how to change these circumstances. Sadly, in the play the children's inability to even understand basic Tamil results in a tragic accident for the grandfather. The presentation underscores the importance of language to human relationships, an advantage rarely cited so succinctly in Western research.

Moreover, the family does not seem to consider important facts such as Tamil falling 17th in the top 30 languages used in the world (it is spoken as a NATIVE language by 68 million people and as a second language by 9 million for a TOTAL of 77 million speakers) or their impressive intellectual tradition with high rates of literacy and a history of three Nobel Prize winners.

The Tamil community is of course not unique in confronting resistance from younger generations to all that passing on and maintaining a HL entails in a minority language context. Many families wonder how they can help their children experience their HL as a vibrant living language without costs of travel and time? In this essay I would like to propose using pen pals in other countries as one way to help HL families develop relationships and build bridges around the world through their HL.

### **HL Pen pals**

Vygotsky (1934/1978, 1981) established that children learn more effectively through experiences that are meaningful and relevant to them. Through letter exchanges with others, children have an authentic opportunity to develop strategies for determining the meaning of written language (Baker & Brown, 1984) and to construct written language in return that reflects their intended meanings (Wells, 1996). Pen pal relationships serve the purpose of providing safe arrangements in which children can form close and open relationships with peers and are most



likely to develop during childhood and adolescence (Barksdale, et al., 2007, p. 58). Although research on the topic of pen pals is limited, there is evidence that indicates that pen pal writing increases learners' motivation in literacy learning, improves language proficiency in keyboarding skills, enhances cultural awareness (Beach et al., 1996; Liu, 2003), and provides opportunities for authentic communication (Liu, 2003).

In Liu's (2003) China-United States pen pal study the teachers reported that "Through E-mail communication, the children learned about each other as fellow students and human beings. They compared their ways of life in terms of daily routines, personal preferences, their environments, etc." (p. 86) "By looking at similarities, the participants realized how well they were able to relate to one another, and they realized they were more similar than different. Meanwhile, by examining the differences, they acquired knowledge of each other's cultural and social preferences." (p. 86) In addition to developing personal understanding of other peoples the pen pal writing activity exposed students to reading, writing, and oral communication and in the process of accomplishing the language tasks, the children also were engaged in problem solving and reflection. Most importantly, "Pen pal writing provided students with an opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts to a real and responsive audience." (p. 86)

In a study with students at the junior high school level, Barksdale et al. (2007) noted topics discussed between learners included descriptions of daily life for the students in both cultures, favourite foods, popular sports and music, weather, seasons and geography, holidays celebrated, and hobbies. In analyzing the pen pal letters, the authors also discovered that the students followed the language patterns established by one another in their letters and made attempts to use terminology that would be readily understandable to one another. They also noted how students often shared emotions such as sympathy, porosity, and passion in a very open way and their anxiety about communicating was lowered.



**Renata Emilsson Pesková of Móðurmál reports that Heritage Language teachers in Iceland are eager to work with their counterparts in Alberta. Iceland's policy for inclusion and multiculturalism encourages families to maintain and develop their heritage languages.**



The only cautionary note made about pen pal projects in the research literature surrounded the time that it took teachers to establish the project and work with their teacher counterpart abroad, as well as local parents and students. It was both valuable for the students and time-consuming to develop and implement such a project. Participating teachers suggested involving as many supporters as possible, so this may also be a project that could involve grandparents or other community leaders.

**Where to find a pen pal**

Although articles offer some sites which a teacher might consult to find reputable pen pals (See Appendix A.), there are still some untried options, namely, looking for HL learners of the same language who live in other countries where their HL is also a minority language. For example, Iceland. Our students could strike up conversations with Icelandic children whose only common language is the HL. There is a time difference of six hours between Iceland and Alberta and considerable flexibility in arranging live chats. Furthermore, HL children in both countries may have more common language ability than that of peers in their common land of origin, thus facilitating communication. limited language



Recently I attended a conference in Iceland and met with Mudermal, an organization that supports families who are raising their children in their mother tongues. Although Iceland is a small country with a population of only about 325,000, Icelanders are also proud of having the oldest democratic parliament in the world. This deep rooted value for democracy and societal participation appears in all of their public school documents and leaves them very open minded and supportive of plurilingualism. In other words, none of the parents with whom I spoke, all of whom were immigrants themselves, felt that they or their children faced discrimination because of the language they spoke. None thought that speaking their mother tongue would bring unwanted attention to their children, nor that they would face insurmountable challenges at school. In fact, it was quite the contrary; they knew of the advantages of bi- and multi-lingualism and sought it out for the children right from the home. Mudermal serves 25 language groups and is interested in collaborating with IHLA schools. To learn more about them visit their site at <http://www.modurmal.com/>. Several IHLA schools have already begun connecting with their counterparts in Iceland. Please contact me or your IHLA representative for more information.

Parents and teachers offer classes in 25 languages to children and youth in Iceland.



### How to get started

Of course, there is much preparation to be done before children might begin a pen pal relationship. Perhaps the following ten steps will help.

1. Teachers connecting with one another must have a common language and invest time in getting to know one another, one another's context and ways to collaborate. For example,
  - a. Do they want to have three to four exchanges over a year for several years? Or a more concentrated series of exchanges over four to six weeks? Or perhaps after a few group exchanges the students in both countries might decide to establish a shared Facebook site?
  - b. Do they want hand written exchanges or do they prefer to use technology? (Warschauer (1996) identified three common factors of student motivation provided by a technology enhanced setting: communication, empowerment, and learning.)
  - c. What should they learn about one another's country so that they can help learners orient toward the new milieu?
  - d. How frequently do teachers need to communicate? Several times per week as the project gets started? Then weekly? And later perhaps monthly?
  - e. How can they exchange other teaching and learning resources or discuss issues of mutual concern?
  
2. Teachers should discuss the idea of a pen pal project with students and parents and school administrators as well. This discussion should make explicit advantages, time commitment, possible outcomes and reciprocal responsibilities. If the relationship is pursued through electronic tools such as Skype, What's up or even Facetime, then parents need to know with whom their children are talking. Furthermore, parents could supplement their children's knowledge of the country where their pen pal lives.
  
3. Students should discuss appropriate contents of an initial self introduction – before drafting a note or video of introduction. The introduction could include name, age, family members, hobbies, favorite foods, pets, genres of movies or books. A few sentences about Edmonton, Alberta and Canada might also help to set the stage. Students could draw pictures or include photos of

their local worlds. Teachers may also prepare a template to help younger or lower level language students with their first entry.

4. The first few exchanges should be carefully moderated by both HL instructors. Teachers might use class time for each student to present his/her self introduction and invite student suggestions for improvement. Once finalized, teachers could send the collection of notes with photos to one another via a technology such as Drop box. If you as a teacher are not comfortable with some of these computer applications then don't be afraid to reach out to members of your community; many students 12-16 years of age can do this.

5. When the first batch of introductions arrives from abroad, all students might read or listen to all presentations so as to get to know the entire group of new peers. Teachers can watch their students to help propose matches and then share their proposals with one another. It might be useful to establish criteria for matching before the first correspondence arrives, or choose to make the entire project a group to group one.

6. Students could prepare their responses partially in class and partially as homework, the latter being designed to integrate parents into the exchange process. All letters might be posted on a school bulletin board or Facebook site.

7. After a few written or video exchanges or after four to six months of writing to one another, students may be ready to meet through social media (e.g. Skype). Due to time differences this might best be done at home and organized through parents.

8. Meanwhile teachers can continue to use HL classtime for student reports about the pen pals. What new information was exchanged over the week? What do the children in Iceland (or elsewhere) do in each season? The enthusiasm of sharing information about new friends could become contagious!

9. Teachers in both countries continue to collaborate on ways to enrich their connections. E.g. Participants can send invitations to one another to special events and then Skype to see and hear one another's concerts, exchange cards

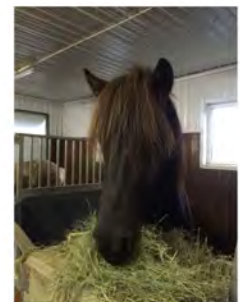
for common celebrations.

10. Research suggests that although all groups benefitted during the pen pal exchanges, benefits varied, so be cautious about expectations. Results for each group may be different, but nonetheless positive and valuable. Making a friend and learning about another country such as Iceland can offer children a broader perspective on the world. Imagine them developing map-reading skills as they locate one another's current location and the location of their family's roots. As they discover more about their school system, annual festivals, geography and history through HL literacy and oracy, they will become more broad minded adults. Who knows, some day the students might even meet in person – in Canada, Iceland (or elsewhere) or a land of common heritage!

**Appendix A: Where to find a pen pal**

- [www.iecc.org](http://www.iecc.org)
- [www.epals.com](http://www.epals.com)
- [www.ks-connection.org](http://www.ks-connection.org)
- [www.kidlink.org](http://www.kidlink.org)
- [www.ipfs.org](http://www.ipfs.org)

Children, youth, teachers and parents can develop a **global perspective** while communicating in their HL and learning about Iceland



Ask your new Icelandic pen pal: why Icelandic horses are recognized around the world and why no other horses are ever imported; why bees are imported every month; how they harness geothermal energy....the questions are limitless!





**Ortega, L. (2009). Understanding second language acquisition. London, UK: Hodder Education.**

*Reviewed by Trudie Aberdeen*

Lourdes Ortega's book, *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, is one of the many titles offered from the Understanding Language Series published by Hodder Education. This short book of three hundred pages covers much of what has been learned about the field of second language acquisition from the 1950s to today. Ortega's text is intended for an audience of graduate-students in an introductory course in which they learn about the multiple facets of learning a language other than the first language. The book's contents are spread among 10 chapters with each chapter containing an introduction which provides the basic question researchers have been trying to answer, a summary which outlines the basic answers to date, and an annotated bibliography for those wishing to know where to look for more information.

In Chapter One, Introduction, Ortega provides definitions for many essential concepts that readers often assume they understand, including second language acquisition (SLA- the field or L2 acquisition- processes); L2 users vs L2 speakers vs L2 participants; naturalistic learners vs instructed learners; foreign, second and heritage learning contexts, and interlanguage. She points out that the field is highly interdisciplinary and researchers come from many fields such as linguistics, education, neuroscience, and psychology. Questions that interest SLA researchers, while theoretical in nature, also appeal to real-world concerns such as the best age to start learning a second language in school, appropriate policies for learning languages in non-majority contexts, the extent to which one can learn a language as one gets older, and models of effective language instruction.

Age is the first variable that Ortega explains. She defines this construct against two well-known queries in the field: the critical period hypothesis and ultimate attainment. According to the critical period hypothesis, there is an ultimate age at which learners must begin instruction if they are to "pass" for native speakers. She teaches the

reader about the research which shows that in second language contexts (such as immigrants to Canada) adults initially out-perform children. However, given lengths of residence of 5 years or more, children's slow start in learning language is adjusted and children begin to outperform adults. However, in foreign language contexts (children and adults overseas learning English), benefits of studying earlier have not been found. For children who begin learning a language before puberty, it is likely that they will develop pronunciation and grammar skills in the native-speaker range, but there are exceptions. Likewise, adults do not usually become native-like in their second language, but some come close. Finally, Ortega points out that some researchers consider it inappropriate to compare second language learners to native speakers since people's brains are shaped by their experiences, and multilinguals have different neural networks as a result of their experiences with multiple languages.

In the third chapter, Crosslinguistic influences, Ortega describes research which examines which features of your first language impact the learning of your second language. She points out that one's mother tongue cannot explain all of the errors that some learners make in a second language. Certain errors appear to be linked with developmental readiness and universal across languages. For example, in English, all learners go through certain developmental stages in learning how to form questions. Yet, one's first language often impacts the rate at which they pass through the stages. In other words, those from certain language backgrounds are found to go through some stages quicker than others. Furthermore, learners of certain backgrounds who know that a language feature is likely to be challenging might actually make less errors simply because they avoid what they believe will pose to be a challenge. Ortega points out four criteria that impact the likelihood of L1 knowledge impacting the second language: "universal constraints and processes", "psychological perceptions of transferability", "inherent complexity of the L2 subsystem in question", and "proficiency level" (p. 53).

The Linguistic Environment is Ortega's third examined variable in language learning and is described in Chapter 4. In this chapter Ortega discusses multiple case studies of second



language learners who can pass for native speakers such as Julie, or second language learners who are able to interact in the language without ever learning basic syntax, such as Wes. Ortega lists five components of language learning which form the noticing hypothesis. These are attitudes towards learning the language, quality input, negotiated interaction with speakers, pushed output, and noticing language features in an understood message. Some of the methods that have been explored in the literature to teach students to pay attention to their linguistic environment include focus-on-form, using metalanguage, receiving negative feedback (corrections), and effectiveness of negative feedback.

Chapter 5 covers Cognition, or brain processes involved in language learning. Perhaps it is unsurprising that researchers have yet to figure out how the brain processes first and second languages. Despite the complexity, Ortega points out important studies that have examined cognitive brain processes throughout the past three decades. Topics covered within this chapter include working memory, skill acquisition theory, proceduralization, automatization, the power law of learning, size and depth of word knowledge, passive vs active learning, incidental learning, and noticing. The best part of this chapter is the annotated list at the end in which Ortega tells the reader where they can find the seminal studies in order to be able to read them for oneself.

Development of learner language is covered in chapter six. Ortega begins by describing interlanguage, a term coined by Selinker in the 1970s. The interlanguage refers to an imperfect grammatical system in the learner which consists of parts of the language learner's first language and parts of the language the learner is trying to master. Researchers have explored four interlanguage processes: simplification, overgeneralization, restructuring, and u-shaped learning. Ortega points out that "Interlanguage is always systematic (a matter of development), but also non-linear (a matter of accuracy), and unevenly paced (a matter of rate)" (p. 142). All three, development, accuracy, and rate combine to describe how language learning happens over time. Other concepts that are covered in this chapter include the aspect hypothesis, revitalization, developmental sequences in

language learning, and fossilization.

If you have ever questioned if some learners are truly "better" at acquiring languages, then you will find the answer covered in chapter seven- Foreign Language Aptitude. According to Ortega, research in this area tends to stem from psychology. Some studies have shown to be predictive, learners with certain capabilities are more likely to do well. However, as Ortega points out, at least two confounding variables are also at play, attitude and motivation. Intelligence correlates at least partially with aptitude, but the match is less than perfect. Ortega also shows that language learning is correlated with early first language reading. In other words, learning to read in one's first language might share a common set of skills also needed in later language learning. She also points out that it is still not clear if aptitude is important for all language learners, or only adults who start learning languages later in life.

Motivation is the eighth chapter. Ortega explains that motivation is a reciprocal construct, not a causal one. In other words, researchers are not sure if learners who are motivated do better or if students who do better gain motivation as a result. Again, at the end of this chapter is a reading list which orients the reader to key studies in the area of motivation. One of the topics that Ortega does not cover is motivation in heritage language learning classes at university. This is important; however, to our profession since in classes where heritage language learners and second language learners are combined, heritage language learners often differ in motivation regardless of skill level. As teachers in a heritage language learning context, we need to be alerted to this so that we can capitalize on it. See KIM NOELS.

Understanding how learners differ from one another in terms of personality, managing their emotions, learning styles is important for us as instructors. These topics are covered in Ortega's chapter nine, Affect and individual differences. She explains that language learning poses a threat to one's understanding of self, and as a result, some are better equipped to learn languages than others. Some of the research has shown that introverts are more likely to study foreign languages than extroverts. Those who are more open to new experiences may also be drawn to

language learning. Extroverts tend to favor fluency activities whereas introverts tend to favor accuracy. Foreign language learning anxiety impacts learners. Those with anxiety have lower test scores, challenges in remembering covered material, and to avoid potential learning situations where they might fail.

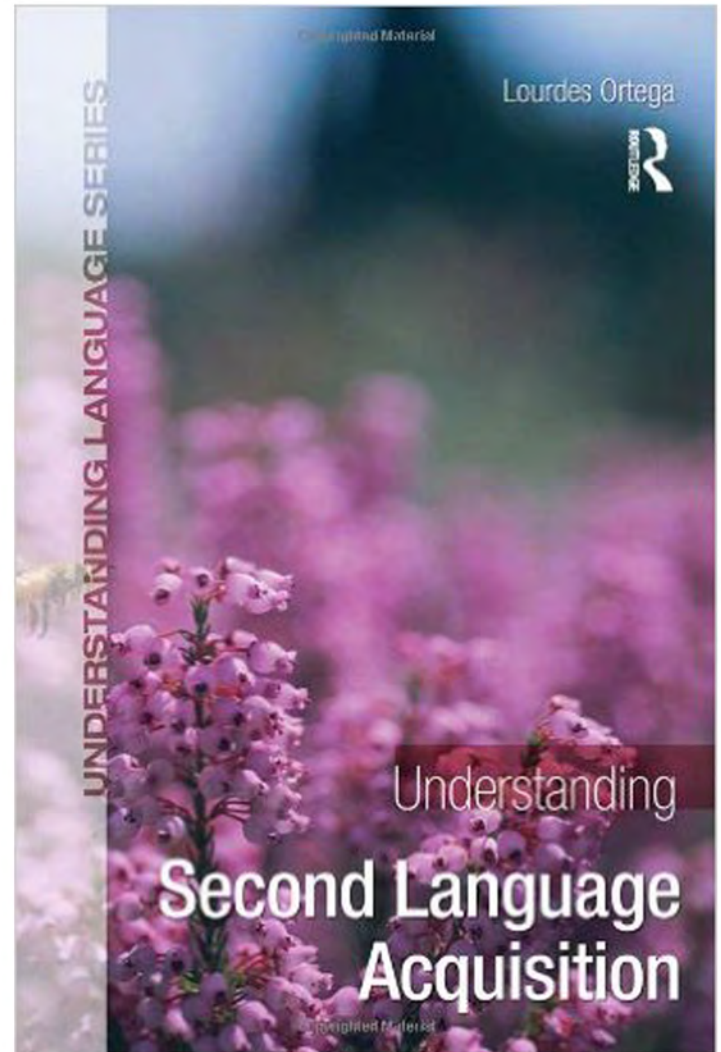
In the final chapter of the book, Social dimensions of language learning, Ortega offers L2 research that does not stem from a positivist slant. In this chapter she makes the following statement:

*As I hope to have made clear throughout this chapter, for many, perhaps most, people who undertake to learn an additional language, what is at stake is not only the odds that they succeed in acquiring the second language or even that they succeed in acquiring the literacy and professional competencies that they desire for themselves or that they may need to function in society. For many, perhaps most, additional second language learners, it is about succeeding in attaining material, symbolic and affective returns that they desire for themselves. It is also about being considered by others as worthy social beings. If this is so, then we must conclude that people who undertake to learn an additional language are engaged in changing their worlds. We can say, in this sense, that L2 learning is always transformative. (p.250)*

Some of the material that Ortega covered that leads to this conclusion includes the work of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, conversation analysis, systemic functional linguistics, language socialization theory, and identity theory.

Overall, Ortega has given a very thorough review of the field and covers many essential topics in a very small number of pages. If I have a single criticism of this book, it would be similar to the field of second language acquisition in general: most of the research focuses on learning English. With so little research exploring non-European languages, it is difficult to know if what is true of learning English is true of learning other languages. Sometimes in a text such as this one, brevity is at the expense of details. While I generally do not find too many absences, there are two notable exceptions. Language learning context (second language learning vs foreign language learning) was touched on in the text, yet

unfortunately heritage language learning was not covered at all. Also notably absent is literacy as a variable. Cutting edge research today explores the impact of literacy in any language on all language learning. Despite whatever absences remain, the text is still a great read and an excellent general text to the field.





## **The “Reanimating adult education: Conflict, violence, and learning” conference summary.**

*by Trudie Aberdeen*

Every two years the Western Region Research Conference in the Education of Adults (WRRCEA) is offered to those who teach adults. This year, Edmonton was fortunate to be able to hold such a special conference. I was one of the lucky 50 participants who attended this special event held October 16 to 18, 2015 at the University of Alberta. Those present were able to listen to two keynote addresses, choose from among 20 lectures, and visit two poster sessions. Papers which complement the sessions can be found at <https://sites.google.com/a/uualberta.ca/wrrcea-2015/> In the remainder of this article, I would like to present you with some food for thought. Although the conference was directed at instructors of adult students, many of the take-away messages could easily be directed at any teacher.

Session One: Evelyn Hamdon presented on her topic A present absence: How Hollywood erases Arab/Muslim women. She shared some of her doctoral research on how Muslim women are portrayed in movies, notably the Hollywood blockbuster Zero Dark Thirty. According to Hamdon, this movie has been largely viewed as a feminist film since both the director and the film’s protagonists are female, yet there are noticeably few scenes with Arab/Muslim women despite the setting of film being held in Pakistan. Through her talk she described how western media stereotypes Muslim/Arab women as “seen but not heard” and how this lack of voice is used to fuel the belief that war is justified because women Arab/Muslim need to be liberated. At the end of her talk she described the need for educators to teach students how to critique stereotypes and to challenge assumptions portrayed in the media.

Session Two: I was fortunate to present a small section of my doctoral research in a presentation called Keeping refugee families connected through heritage language schools. I described to the audience some of the challenges that refugee communities face when starting a heritage language school. In my research I found that establishing a school benefits not only the children, but also the community at large. One of

these such factors is familial poverty which impacts schools at multiple levels. Current refugee families are often quite large and have many financial challenges adjusting to a new life in Canada which impact heritage language loss in unique ways. One such example that I found was that many families have large numbers of children and they often arrive with large debts. Many Canadians may not know that refugees are expected to repay the cost of their airplane ticket, health exams, and other expenses incurred in the refugee camps. Debts can easily be over \$20,000 for a family of 8. In order to cover their bills including their transportation loans, often both parents in large families repay debts by working multiple low-paying, unskilled jobs. They often are forced to get their older children to take care of the younger children. Older children often speak English with their siblings, leaving the family’s youngest unable to speak the heritage language. The refugee parents who may not have high levels of first language education due to their time in a refugee camp, often find learning English a struggle.

Session Three: Two separate posters were presented. The first presenter, Brett Pardy, discussed his poster called Sustainable tourism as informal learning: Exploring curriculum, media, and empathy in which he described an ecotourism trip organized by his university. He spoke of the students who, while well-intended and armed with a desire to make the world a better place, spent their money and their holiday volunteering to build brick ovens in a rural village. Despite the intention of providing services for those in need, they mostly found themselves creating more work for the villagers than they offered. Pardy discussed the need for finding meaningful volunteer opportunities for those who wished to share their fortune. The second group of presenters, Drs. Glanfield, Rempel, and Mhina, outlined their upcoming research project called Social animation and learning for change: A partnership to initiate local action to prevent violence in which they plan to work with a local band to discuss prevention of sexual and intergenerational violence. Their project stems from aboriginal women who despite often being the victims of acts of violence are often not involved in discussions about prevention or punishments.



Session Four: I attended Dr. Paul Kolenick's session on Adult education in the 21st century: Retrieving the emancipatory practice of Moses Coady, Guy Henson, Elizabeth Murray, and Watson Thomas. After providing the audience with a brief background about the history of these four well-known Canadian fighters for justice and equality, Dr. Kolenick lead us in a discussion about the current need for emancipatory practices in modern Canada. We discussed if the work of these kinds of scholars were needed today, and if so, where this kind of work was most needed. This session made me think of the great leaders that have existed in each of our cultures and within our own communities. It left me wondering if we, as educators, do enough to celebrate greatness and to promote role-models of global citizenship?

Session Five: Laura Parson from the University of North Dakota shared her research into syllabi creation in her talked titled Are STEM syllabi gendered? A feminist critical discourse analysis. She studied math, science, and engineering syllabi to see if there were messages within these documents that made these courses less likely that women would want to attend them. She found evidence that in these kind of courses, professors often use language which implies unequal power relations and unfriendly tones.

Session Six: in the session Conflict, learning and transformation: Indigenization, intercultural intersections, and adult learning theory, Dr. Linda Pardy spoke of her experiences running an intensive class for aboriginal college students. This class was their first taken on campus with a non-aboriginal instructor and she worked hard to make the students as comfortable as possible. She used a "pedagogy of hospitality" to make sure that her students felt welcomed and respected. She was able to have all of her students meet their learning objectives, but found that there were many different ways to achieve this. In one of her most poignant stories, she tells of meeting with one of her former students and saying "Nice to see you!" His response was "it is nice to be seen." He eventually explained to her that her methods did more teach him, they validated him as a person. With his comment, it is nice to be seen, he meant that he felt she welcomed him as a valuable person into a learning community. While Dr. Pardy was speaking of adults, her words sent the message that it is essential for us as educators to

make our students feel that their presence is valued and that they feel welcomed into our communities.

Session Seven: Dr. Bruce Spencer, a professor emeritus, shared with us the importance of looking at alternative news sources in his talk called Confronting propaganda: Is there a role for "Public Adult Education" against violent foreign policy? He shared the importance of looking at news stories from multiple sources. Many modern news sources only offer one story, one that is often the desired rhetoric offered by the government. Through his talk, I was able to see the importance of his message for educators of international and heritage languages. We need to teach our children that alternative truths exist to those that are in the media. We need to teach our children to be critical of what messages are passed on.

The Final Keynote Address: Dr. Dwayne Donald shared his insights about his topic Sacred ecology and curriculum for survival: A call for "real people". He shared that there are multiple ways of "knowing" and that many voices get silenced. Unfortunately, many of those that are ignored or forgotten are those that call into question a critique of mainstream thoughts. He shared how his people, the Papschase Cree, view knowledge and acceptance of others. He called for all of us to become more complete human beings. He also shared not only some of the stories of his people, but told of how the stories of his people are more than words, they are gifts from his ancestors. He called for education that was more than just facts; he desires a curriculum that helps us to see how our very survival is related to our interconnectedness and how our citizenship calls on us to be whole people.

## The way we were... About money.

*By Trudie Aberdeen*

1983 was an interesting time: Microsoft word was launched for the first time; Ethiopia suffered from its worst drought on record; China's population reached one billion; and Sally Ride became the first woman in space. While many things were interesting globally, IHLA (or was then known as AELTA- Alberta Ethnic Language Teachers' Association) was interesting, too.

The October 1983 newsletter showcases how we have changed, at times for the better and at times for worse. I will let you decide for yourself which changes fit into which category. However, this newsletter demonstrates what our organization has always been about—excellent people doing excellent work! I would like to direct the reader to some of the more interesting changes.

1. There was discussion about changing the name of the organization from AELTA to the Alberta Heritage Language Association. The reasons cited were that the organization called into question the appropriateness of being a “teachers only” group. Interestingly, we changed our name twice in our history. First we became the Northern Alberta Heritage Languages Association. Later we took on our current name- IHLA.
2. There was a survey of schools in the northern half of the province. It lists that there were 43 schools, with 28 responding to the survey.
3. 4 members of the AELTA executive attended a conference held in Ontario that cost \$2,450. This was paid for by the Alberta Cultural Heritage Foundation.
4. Speaking of the Alberta Cultural Heritage Council, they generously increased the PER STUDENT FUNDING from \$25 to \$50!
5. AELTA began discussions about trying to obtain lottery money from the provincial government. AELTA also began preparation for casino funding. There was an expectation that AELTA could get up to \$30,000; however, the organization would need to apply for a licence and gather 40 volunteers.
6. Schools were able to apply as “private schools” in order to help students get high school credits.
7. Both the Heritage Branch of Alberta Culture and The Secretary of State supplied funds for an office and a summer student.
8. The 1982/1983 budget is listed.
9. And finally, there is discussion about Ontario's Heritage Language Program which operated (operates) through the ministry of education in that province. There is an interesting discussion about the strength of the Albertan system.

It certainly is interesting to see how many of IHLA's current concerns were similar to the AELTA of our past. Yet, it is very distressing to see how heritage language schools were once places where teachers were able to earn a decent salary with support from the government in terms of per student funding.