

**Review of FOHLC Europe 2023 conference:
“Harvesting support for heritage language education: How to seek and maximize resources”**

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The Forum of Heritage Language Coalitions in Europe (FOHLC Europe) aims to provide opportunities for those involved with heritage language (HL) education – programs otherwise known as mother tongue lessons or weekend schools – to come together to exchange ideas. The 3rd annual FOHLC Europe conference took place online on Friday, November 10, and Saturday, November 11, 2022, free of charge. There were over 200 registrations for the conference, from over 40 countries around the world, supporting more than 50 heritage languages.

FOHLC Europe offers professional development and networking opportunities to professionals in the field of HL education. It is a collaboration between several groups involved with heritage language education with the purpose of organizing an annual conference and other regular online gatherings for the teachers and managers of HL programs in Europe, as well as for the leaders of coalitions and networks of HL programs. The goal is to provide a European platform for the exchange of ideas about how to promote HL education, improve the quality and professionalism of HL education, and map the situation of HL programs in Europe.

FOHLC Europe 2023 was organized by Móðurmál – the Association on Bilingualism (Iceland), Heritage Language Education Network (Netherlands), Association pour la Promotion et l'Avancement du Multilinguisme - A.P.A.M (Multilingual Café) (France), the Czech and Slovak School Okénko in London (Great Britain), Agnieszka Pędrak, an independent researcher at Trinity College in Dublin (Ireland), and Sabine Little, a researcher at the University of Sheffield (Great Britain).

The theme of the 2023 conference was “Harvesting support for HL education: How to seek and maximize resources.” Over two days, attendees received practical tips and examples of how to find funding, lesson materials, partners, volunteers, and other means of sustaining HL educational programs. The conference program included structured networking opportunities designed for professionals in the field of HL education: teachers, coordinators, and volunteers at HL programs as well as for leaders of HL umbrella associations, coalitions, and networks. Parents, academics, or policymakers interested in the topic of HL education were also welcome. Thirteen presenters were given a voice during the conference. Topics were all devoted to identifying and utilizing various resources, ranging from drama techniques in the class to grant writing to the benefits of joining a coalition. The full conference program and slides can be found on the event description page.

Keynote speakers were Prof. Yongcan Liu, Professor of Applied Linguistics and Language Education at the University of Cambridge and convener of Cambridge Research in Community Language Education (CRICLE) Network, and Lucie Slavíková-Boucher, M.D., chairwoman of the civic association Czech School Without Borders. Two parallel professional development workshops were run for HL teachers and for program managers. For HL teachers, we organized a workshop that showed how drama techniques can be an interesting and effective resource in the classroom. For HL program managers, we offered a workshop to help de-mystify grant writing. A pecha kucha presentation included examples from nine different individuals from across Europe who are active in the field of HL education, to demonstrate a

range of possibilities when it comes to tapping into resources within local and international communities.

Yongcan Liu started his talk “Partnerships as a resource: Enabling heritage language maintenance through home-community-school-university partnerships” by discussing multiple dimensions of HL schools, language maintenance, educational opportunities, cultural inheritance, social integration, and emotional wellbeing (Liu and Hoare, in press), and then he focused on partnerships of academia, HL communities, homes and schools in Cambridge. He introduced the IDENTITY partnership framework. The letters in the acronym stand for (I) identifying HL resources, (D) developing small targeted plans for action, (E) evaluating practicalities with sensitivity, (N) networking with partners with a shared vision, (T) taking initiative to make a difference, (I) inspiring individuals and talents to participate, (T) transforming systems to drive change, and (Y) yielding benefits for sustainable HL maintenance. Partnerships as described by Professor Liu aim at the integration of communities of practice (Wenger 1998), yet to convene such partnerships, “system conveners” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trainer 2021) need to be both visionary and pragmatic, and they need to “think, do, connect, and sustain”. The keynote lectures and the pecha kucha session can be watched on FOHLC Europe’s YouTube channel.

Lucie Slavíková-Boucher is the founder and chairwoman of the Czech Schools without Borders (CSWB) organization. She co-created CSWB’s educational program and initiated a number of legislative changes to gain official recognition for education provided by community language schools, which were successfully incorporated into the Education Act in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic. She reported on the creation of Czech HL schools in several European countries and the process towards their funding and recognition by the Czech authorities. The coalition connects certified and associated schools, offers Czech HL teachers professional development opportunities, and organizes joined projects for Czech-speaking children abroad, such as writing and translating competitions, a maths competition, summer camps in the Czech Republic, participation in creative history projects, and much more. Furthermore, the CSWB advises new schools on how to start and run the HL schools.

Ólafur Guðmundsson ran the workshop “How can you tap into theater techniques when teaching? Theater and drama in language learning”. He is an Icelandic actor and drama teacher with experience in primary and secondary education as well as in community contexts. As an Icelandic as a second language teacher, he has developed drama methods in language teaching and taught Icelandic through theatre. The workshop aimed to provide HL teachers with a basic structure and theory to facilitate incorporating drama into their work, i.e. through establishing connections of the body, the space, the voice, and each other, improvisation, storytelling, and process drama. To that end, participants had to leave their comfort zones and enter the “brave space”.

Sabine Little offered the workshop “How do you write an effective grant application?”. Dr. Sabine Little is a Senior Lecturer in Languages Education at the University of Sheffield and has collaborated on projects across six continents, attracting funding - big and small - from a wide variety of sources. In her workshop, she discussed the many opportunities for funding and the principles of an effective grant application. Through the theory of change, she discussed how grant applications may be phrased for maximum success.

Pecha Kucha is a series of 3-minute presentations. Nine presenters touched upon various resources that the HL schools can explore, student interns, networks of contacts, financial resources, cooperations with other institutions, such as universities and educational organizations, utilizing skills from various fields in HL teaching (theater, science and literature, technology) and internet tools available for free, such as Canva, for marketing HL programs. The presenters and their talks were as follows:

Rósa Björg Jónsdóttir - Shuffling resources (book trade)
 Gisi Cannizzaro - Canva as a free resource for non-profits
 Ania Kijak - Erasmus+ student interns as temporary personnel

Andréa Menescal Heath - Mala de Herança, Portuguese language in Germany
Maja Skender-Lizatovic and Indu Vibha Meddegama - Volunteers' funds of knowledge as a resource
Beata Jedryka - Academia as a source of expertise (teaching materials)
Lenka Kanellia - Grants and other financial resources
Bibiam M. Gonzalez Rodriguez - Global Goals as a resource for curriculum development
Jarmila Bůchová - International competitions as a source of motivation for students

The organizers are proud to report that there was an overwhelmingly positive response to the conference. Because people working in this field are often on the margins, they cherish the chance to connect with others with similar experiences, across countries and languages, to stay motivated and get expert advice. There was enthusiasm about the warm and supportive atmosphere of the conference and the usefulness of the information shared. All of the respondents to our conference feedback survey plan to share with their colleagues the ideas sparked during the event.

"The atmosphere of high-level professionalism combined with the spirit of collaboration and learning is very energizing."

"I liked the networking in breakout rooms as well as the wealth and depth of information shared by the workshop leaders and participants."

"I learned a lot to keep me motivated and enthusiastic to continue creating more projects for our multilingual communities!"

"I liked the warm welcome to all, professional delivery, kept on time, had an opportunity to explore, made materials available quickly, encouraged collaboration related to the topic."

"The conference was absolutely amazing."

References

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