

## **Rethinking incentives: how to bolster the motivation of students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in heritage language education**

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FOHLC Europe (n.d.) is a collaboration between several groups involved with heritage language (HL) education. It organizes an annual conference and regular online gatherings for HL teachers, managers, and coalition leaders in Europe. The goal is to provide a platform for exchanging ideas, improving HL education quality, and mapping HL programs in Europe. FOHLC Europe offers professional development and networking opportunities.

On 15 and 16 November 2024, FOHLC Europe team organized its 4<sup>th</sup> successful conference with inspirational examples and practical strategies (FOHLC Europe 2024 Conference, 2024). This year, over 260 practitioners and academics registered for the conference, to gather virtually to discuss the motivation of those involved in the crucial work of preserving and teaching heritage languages. The event was truly international, with attendees from over 40 countries representing over 50 languages, all united by their commitment to heritage language education. FOHLC Europe showed yet again that it is unique in its platform to share real-world stories about the challenging work that goes into this form of non-formal education.

The theme of this year's conference was "Rethinking Incentives: How to bolster the motivation of students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in heritage language education". Stakeholder are not only the students, teachers, and parents, but also the wider community like mainstream schools, sponsors, and government officials. It is not only the families who benefit from HL education, but society as a whole. Heritage language programs are more than just vocabulary and grammar lessons, as demonstrated by a quote from Prof. Terry Lamb's opening keynote presentation. A student in England explained, "I GREW UP in high school, however, I was RAISED by my supplementary school." Society benefits when multicultural children are supported in shaping their identities, with a space for them to explore their culture, language, and sense of belonging. Janica Nordstrom, the keynote speaker on the second day of the conference, discussed how to engage students in HL education and explored how different motivations of various stakeholders can enhance students' motivations. She referred to connections with imagined, distant communities, speakers' beliefs about them, and their motivations to belong to them and to learn their languages. To increase learners' motivation, Janica suggested to create an inclusive classroom atmosphere that reflects learners' goals and interests.

Sabine Little explored in her workshop parental motivation to maintain the heritage language and presented her Heritage Language Identity Questionnaire (n.d.) that helps people determine how emotional connections and practical issues influence their motivation and effort to sustain the heritage language at home. Anna Paap gave a workshop on strategies how to engage HL students. As motivation is the foundation of language learning, she discussed the key factors that drive motivation in young HL learners and showed effective strategies to engage and inspire them.

Workshop leader Zoe Kang of the Korean School in Eindhoven shared the story of a transformation in the classes for teenage students. Students were disengaged and Zoe was faced with a class where at one point only one student showed up. Determined, Zoe turned things around with the introduction of project-based learning and drama techniques. Over time, more students joined, bringing their siblings along, and one teenager even told his mother during the mainstream school exam period, "I'm going to Korean School. I can make up my study hours

later.” Thanks to the personal connections and fun activities, Zoe got her students inspired and taking ownership of their learning.

Throughout the two-day conference, speakers further explored the importance of digging deep into the "why" of students, their families, teachers and others. Once the motivations are understood, educators design learning environments that will work. The Pecha Kucha session was yet another highlight of the conference, with 10 presenters sharing within 3 minutes each their insights. This high-paced presentation showed examples how to engage teenagers, advocacy tools such as state policies, the Global Call to Action for HLE (Anderson et al., 2024), EU projects, human rights tools, or why students go back to teach a heritage language programs they graduated from and how to motivate volunteer teachers to stay and develop their professionalism. Each speaker added a layer to the conversation, showing the diversity of angles for thinking about motivation in HL education. The keynotes and the pecha kucha session can be viewed on the FOHLC Europe YouTube Channel (2024).

In the end, the conference was not just about exchanging ideas, but about strengthening a growing global community dedicated to heritage language education. FOHLC Europe 2024 was a reminder why this work matters!

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