

Language Learning for Heritage and Native Speakers

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and its members encourage learning environments that support heritage and native speakers of languages other than English. It is critical that these students be able to continue to develop their heritage linguistic and cultural skills in order to become fully bilingual and biliterate in today's global environment. By doing so, they will be well-positioned to live and work in an increasingly multilingual environment in the U.S. Native speakers (those raised in an environment using mainly a language other than English) and heritage speakers (those raised in an environment where the language was most likely spoken in the home) benefit from instruction that draws on and enhances their native or heritage language skills and cultural knowledge. In addition, research has shown that continuing to learn their native and heritage language benefits them in their acquisition of English language proficiency.

In keeping with the goal of an educated citizenry that reflects the rich multicultural and multilingual nature of U.S. society, ACTFL encourages the active recruitment, training, and retention of heritage and native speakers as teachers. ACTFL further supports pre-service training and ongoing professional development for all language teachers to help them address the unique learning needs of heritage and native speakers.

Successful language programs ensure the academic success of heritage and native speakers by providing:

- curriculum design that reflects the fact that the needs of native speakers and heritage students are often significantly different from non-native and non-heritage speakers;
- challenging curriculum that builds upon the existing linguistic skills and the cultural heritage and knowledge of the students;
- assessments that integrate language, culture and literature for all students Pre-K through 16;
- opportunities for heritage and native speakers to become involved in their language communities beyond the classroom; and
- systems to award credit or appropriate placement for oral and written proficiency and prior learning for native and heritage speakers.

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- See more at: <http://www.actfl.org/news/position-statements/language-learning-heritage-and-native-speakers-0>