"There is no space for being German":
Portraits of Willing and Reluctant Heritage Language Learners of German

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Abstract

Some heritage language learners (HLLs) are comfortable identifying themselves as such, while others are decidedly reluctant to adopt this term (Piño & Piño, 2000). HLLs in this paper are defined as those students having a parent or grandparent who speaks German or those who have spent a significant part of their childhood in a German-speaking country (as suggested in Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005, p. 13). This paper highlights case studies of six HLLs of German at the post-secondary level who are participants in a motivation study (Dressler, 2008). Three students are 'willing' HLLs. The additional three case studies are of students that I will call 'reluctant' HLLs of German, and this paper explores the reasons behind their reluctance and the components of self-identification, which include language identity (Block, 2007; Pierce, 1995); language expertise; affiliation and inheritance (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997); cultural artifacts (Bartlett, 2007) and positioning (Block, 2007).

Introduction

While some heritage language learners (HLLs) are comfortable identifying themselves as such, others are decidedly uncomfortable or reluctant to adopt this term (Piño & Piño, 2000, p. 13). In a recent study on the motivation and demotivation of HLLs of German at the post-secondary level (Dressler, 2008), I discovered an anomaly between the study's definition of HLLs and the students' willingness to self-identify as HLLs, despite their meeting the criteria of the research definition I had chosen. This anomaly was explored in depth during follow-up interviews with some of the study participants. Case studies of six HLLs of German, three of whom were reluctant to identify themselves as HLLs, will be presented. My discussion of these case studies focuses on sociolinguistic work on language identity (Block, 2007; Pierce, 1995); language

expertise, affiliation and inheritance (Leung et al., 1997); cultural artifacts (Bartlett, 2007) and positioning (Block, 2007) to suggest reasons for the students' reluctance to self-identify as HLLs. In addition, I examine the issue of labeling students as HLLs in the L2 classroom and in research.

The students in this paper are defined by the study as HLLs if they have a parent or grandparent who speaks/spoke German or have spent a significant part of their childhood in a country where German is spoken. Several established definitions of HLL informed the one used for this study, which Polinsky and Kagan (2007) have categorized as narrow and broad. Narrow definitions focus on the heritage language proficiency of the speaker (Valdés, 2000; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007; Montrul, 2008). While all of the students in this study are currently learning their HL, such a definition is too narrow for the purpose of examining identity. Broader definitions are used in other studies investigating motivation in HLLs (Fishman, 2001; Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2003), including one on HLLs of German (Noels, 2005). These definitions are designed to include students who choose to study a language of their heritage, acknowledging that the students themselves may not demonstrate proficiency in that language but rather a "heritage motivation" (Van Deusen-Scholl, 1998). While Beaudrie and Ducar (2005) and Noels (2005) found HLLs to be more integratively motivated than their non-HLL counterparts, neither reports a difficulty with students accepting the study definition. A closer examination of the HLL definition in this study follows.

The definition used in Dressler (2008) has 2 parts. The first part addresses whether the student has a parent or grandparent who speaks/spoke German. In Canada, according to the 2006

Canadian Census, 7.4% of those whose mother tongue is neither English nor French (Canada's

two official languages) claim German as their first language. This number (466,650) accounts for

1.5% of the total population of Canada in 2006. Although immigration of those who claim

German as a mother tongue has been on the increase since 2001 (Corbeil & Blaser, 2008), most

HLLs of German at present are second or third generation Canadians (see Noels, 2005, p. 290) as

German immigration peaked in 1961 (Corbeil & Blaser, 2008). Most parents and grandparents of

these students came to Canada in the 1950s as skilled and unskilled laborers (Prokop, 2007, p.

155). Many were eager to leave the unsettled economic, social and political conditions of Europe

for a country promising employment and land (p. 155). However, upon arrival they found "they

were stereotyped in the media and at their place of work and their children were stigmatized in

school" (p. 156). Consequently home language use has decreased and second and third

generation German-Canadians are unlikely to learn German at home (p. 313). Second and third

generation German-Canadians who choose to study German may be identifying with their

heritage language in a "highly symbolic manifestation of identity" (Jedwab, 2005, p. 107).

The second part of the definition determines whether the student spent time in childhood in a

country where German is spoken. Neither Noels (2005) nor Beaudrie and Ducar (2005) include

such students; however, Beaudrie and Ducar (2005) suggest that language learners who spend a

significant period of time in the target language country may have characteristics[1] similar to

those of HLLs:

> [T]here are students who do not possess the heritage background but have had an extensive
> exposure to the language because they have lived in a country where the heritage language

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[1] These characteristics include incomplete linguistic competence (Kagan & Dillon, 2003) and an integrative
orientation to their motivation to learn the language (Noels, 2005).

was spoken during their childhood, or they have been in other situations of contact with speakers of the language" (Beaudrie & Ducar, 2005, p. 13).

While Beaudrie and Ducar (2005) envisioned the possible inclusion of children raised in the United States by Spanish-speaking housekeepers or friends in the surrounding community (p. 13), an expanded definition that might apply to HLLs of German might include children of diplomats or military personnel who spent years living in a country where German is spoken. This group might also include immigrants to Canada who lived in German-speaking countries after leaving their countries of origin, primarily in Eastern Europe, due to economic or political upheaval. Students who lived in a country where German is spoken for a period of their childhood may possess incomplete linguistic competence or a motivation to learn German that makes them similar to traditional heritage language learners, warranting their inclusion in this group of learners. By including these students, this expanded definition of HLLs reflects the reality of the university classroom in a globalized world and attempts to address the "transnational character" (Ricento, 2005, p. 906) of the group of learners who enters the German language classroom with previous linguistic competence similar to HLLs.

To avoid limiting the German language to an association with the Republic of Germany, the HLL identification question does not include a direct reference to an ethnicity or citizenship labeled "German." The question "Do you have a parent or grandparent who is/was German?" might be interpreted by some as excluding Austrian and Swiss nationals. For the same reason, "Are you German-Canadian?" was rejected as a possible wording. In addition, citizenship in the Federal Republic of Germany has only recently opened up to some foreign born inhabitants to whom it was previously denied, which further complicates identification through citizenship (Rost-Roth, 1995, in Hansen-Thomas, 2007, p. 250).

After reviewing the two part study definition, the students are asked: "Does the above definition apply to you?"[2] This question requires the participants to subjectively decide whether they are HLLs (i.e., to self-identify) according to the study definition, and 41.9% of the study group answered that they were not. (See Appendix A and Appendix B for questionnaires used in this study.)

Literature Review

Insight into reasons why HLLs may not acknowledge or accept this label can be found in the sociolinguistic literature on language identity. Language identity is defined as the "assumed or attributed relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication which might be known as a language (e.g. English) a dialect (e.g. Geordie) or a sociolect (e.g. football-speak)" (Block, 2007, p. 40). According to Pierce (1995), it is through language that a person "negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time" (p. 13). In this paper, identity is used synonymously with the term identification, which Krzyżanowski & Wodak (2008) maintain is a "'a processual, active term, derived from a verb'" (p. 99). Block (2007) suggests that language identity comprises *expertise* (fluency), *affiliation* (personal identity) and *inheritance* (heritage) (Leung et al., 1997, p. 155). *Expertise* captures the aspects of identity associated with the language itself. These aspects can be separate from culture in the mind of the learner when German is studied in a formal foreign language learning context isolated from the natural settings where German is spoken. *Affiliation* can be interpreted politically, as in the case of citizenship (Hansen-Thomas, 2007), but can also include membership in a sports association, participation in a formal educational exchange, or attendance at a high school or university in a country where German is spoken. *Inheritance* looks at a real or

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[2] The entire question reads: "For this study, Heritage Language Learners are defined as those students who have/had one parent or grandparent who speaks/spoke German or who have spent a significant portion of their childhood years in a German speaking country. Does the above definition apply to you?"

perceived connection to the language and culture through extended family. These three components of language identity may be present in equal or unequal proportion in the minds of the HLLs, who then self-identify or self-exclude accordingly.

In addition to the components of identity suggested by Leung et al. (1997), these students see meaning in cultural artifacts in their lives. Cultural artifacts are objects or symbols that have meaning for a specific group of people. An artifact can "assume a material aspect (which may be as transient as a spoken word or as durable as a book) and/or an ideal or conceptual aspect (such as a label, like 'good girls' and 'bad boys')" (Bartlett, 2007, p. 217). For Canadian students of German, these can include German artifacts such as Christmas traditions and punctuality as a held value or Canadian artifacts such as lack of holiday traditions and tolerance of diversity as a value.

How students perceive their language identity and which cultural artifacts they embrace contribute to their positioning of themselves as HLLs as well as the extent to which others position them as such. Block (2007) describes positioning as the adoption of an "imagined" subject position by the language learner. Through language use and other activities such as dress and body movement, students situate themselves "according to their sense of what constitutes a coherent narrative for the particular activity, time, and place" (p. 19), while sometimes also demonstrating awareness of the acceptance of this subject position by others (Kramsch, 2003). Through the demonstration of HL expertise, students may position themselves as competent HL speakers and may be perceived by others as such. Students may choose to position themselves as HLLs based on inheritance, even in absence of expertise, although others may reject this

positioning if they hold the belief that expertise is integral to the definition of HLL. Affiliation with the heritage language may influence students' positioning as well. Students that do not have a positive affiliation with the language may reject the term HLL in spite of expertise and/or inheritance. Those determining students' HLL status (teachers or researchers) may not consider affiliation to be enough for HLL status or may be surprised to discover that it has an impact on a student's self-positioning as HLL. Students may express their positioning through the cultural artifacts they embrace and their positioning by others might be affected by their choices as well. In this paper I investigate the role of positioning in HLL self-identification of willing and reluctant HLLs.

Methodology

This paper follows up on Dressler (2008) which examines motivation and demotivation (negative motivation) in beginner, intermediate, and advanced German language students at a Western Canadian university over the course of one semester through the use of questionnaires (time 1 = beginning of semester, time 2 = end of semester) and post-semester interviews. Results from questionnaire data indicate that HLLs and non-HLLs differ significantly in their integrative orientation to motivation. Over time, the integrative orientation to motivation of non-HLLs decreases, while remaining constant for HLLs. A significant interaction exists between time and HLL for career instrumental motivation. As well, significant differences for HLL status are also found in two motivational intensity variables.

Of the 33 students who completed both questionnaires, 12 participated in follow-up interviews. Nine of the students interviewed are HLLs according to the study definition. Six have at least one German-speaking parent, all 9 have at least one German-speaking grandparent, and one had

spent a significant period of her childhood in a country where German is spoken. The remaining

three students are non-HLLs. For the scope of this paper, I will present the case studies of 6

HLLs. Relevant biographical information is presented briefly in Table 1.

Table 1. HLL Participants[3]

Name	Level of German[4]	Who Speaks German?	Childhood Experience	Self-Identify
Christine	Advanced	Parents, grandparents	None	yes
Magdalena	Beginner	Parents, grandparents	None	yes
Carolyn	Beginner	Grandparents	None	yes
Sue	Advanced	Grandparents	None	yes[5]
Alexander	Advanced	Parents, grandparents	None	no
Bianca	Advanced	Parents, grandparents	Ages 8-10	no

Of the six HLLs interviewed, two students responded "no" to the self-identification question. In

addition, one student who did answer "yes" indicates some ambivalence toward the term in her

interview. The case studies that follow are of three HLLs who felt comfortable with the term

HLL followed by the three students, whom I will term "reluctant HLLs".

Willing HLLs

Of the students listed in the table above, Christine, Magdalena, and Carolyn are HLLs using the

study definition because they all have grandparents, and two of them have parents, who

speak/spoke German. They study German, at least in part, because of this familial connection to

the language and they felt that the HLL definition in the first questionnaire of Dressler (2008)

applied to them.

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[3] The names given are pseudonyms.
[4] Level of German: Beginner = first year university German; Intermediate = second year German; Advanced = third year German.
[5] Although Sue answered "yes" to the self-identification question, she shows some ambivalence toward the term "HLL" in the follow-up interview.

Christine is a student in an advanced German grammar class. She has advanced linguistic and cultural competence in German and describes herself as an HLL. She has finished her German major and keeps up with her German through reading.

She is aware of the deficiencies in her language competence, but takes pride in her accomplishment of relearning a language lost in childhood. She is driven to pursue mastery of grammar as she says that "grammar in German is critical to communicating, perhaps more so even than in English".

Christine's parents spoke German when she was a child. She feels that early exposure to German, albeit incomplete, "affected how quickly I am able to sort of switch into being able to hold conversations in German and things like that." However, the family experienced language loss as a result of societal pressure to assimilate.

> When we came to Canada, we also came at a point where there were a lot of anti-German feelings still and that affected how well we learned German, because our parents felt that they shouldn't speak German to us because that caused greater ostracism or social penalties at the time so our German has all been learnt after childhood.

Subsequently, Christine chose to learn German at university to "open pathways to older members of the family".

She sees herself as German-Canadian[6]. In describing her German-Canadian upbringing, she says: "I think some of the work ethic definitely was inherited from my parents. The German part tends to be a little more rigid. 'This has to be done now. It's got to be on time'".

Magdalena is a first year student who holds dual citizenship from Canada and the Federal Republic of Germany; however, she has never lived in Germany[7]. She previously studied German in high school and at community schools and reports a facility with speaking German that some of her classmates do not share: "My partner [in class] is astounded how easy it is for me to pull sentences out of the air".

She chose to study German to keep up her existing competence; however, she is somewhat demotivated, claiming that in German class she has "seen it all before". Despite this demotivation, she will likely continue to take formal language classes to keep up her linguistic competence. Her comment suggests a lack of fit between the design of the curriculum for second language learners and her educational needs as an HLL.

In describing her language identity, Magdalena makes a comparison between her identity in Germany and in Canada. "In Germany, when we say we are Canadian, we tend to get more attention . . . just because we're from Canada. . . In Canada, I feel like I am like any other person, no higher status or anything."

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[6] The term "German-Canadian" was supplied by the student in response to the question "Would you say that you have a German identity?"

[7] By German law at the time of her birth, Magdalena's eligibility for citizenship was based on the citizenship of her parents and did not require her being born or residing in Germany.

Magdalena considers herself an HLL of German. She struggles with demotivation toward formal learning situations, but is proud of her German language competence and plans to work to maintain or improve it.

Carolyn is a 2nd year student enrolled in a beginning German class. She has a German-speaking grandparent and has "always wanted to know German for a really long time . . . [and is] really interested in that part of [her] heritage". In the future, she plans to do research in German in her subject area.

Carolyn notes that she "wasn't brought up in a classic German household". When asked to clarify, she explains that her knowledge of German cultural traditions comes from "the stories my mother would tell about what my grandfather told her or the ones he would tell us about what they would do". She describes her home as "strictly Canadian".

Carolyn expresses a deep satisfaction with the experience of finally studying German: "It started making my life better. It became the course I would look forward to every day". She feels she was more motivated for this class than for her other university classes.

Carolyn's relationship with the term HLL is new. Despite her lack of previous linguistic and cultural knowledge of German, she feels comfortable with this new connection to her family's linguistic and cultural heritage.

The above three students are 'willing' HLLs. They express comfort with the term HLL and attribute their choice of German as a language of study at least partially to their familial and affective connections to the language. This motivation to study their heritage language is consistent with the motivation of HLLs found in other studies (Carreira, 2004; Noels, 2005).

Reluctant HLLs

The following three case studies are of reluctant HLLs. One student expresses a willingness to take on the label, while freely admitting her inability to explain why, while the other two "exert their agency in determining if they are HLLs" (Hornberger & Wang, 2008, p. 6) by declining to identify themselves as HLLs.

One explanation for this rejection may be negative connotation carried by the term "heritage" as "pointing to the (ancient, primitive) past rather than to a (modern, technological) future" (Baker & Jones, 1998, cited in Hornberger & Wang, 2008, p. 17). This concern was voiced by researchers at a conference for German Canadian scholars where this paper was presented in an earlier form. It was suggested that these students might view the term "heritage" as an association with the Canadian government practice of differentiating languages other than the official languages of English and French as either indigenous or heritage languages. As policy makers try to "set up a pluralist framework that gives recognition to both multicultural groups and English and French minority groups" (Byrd Clark, 2004, p. 97), tensions persist that cause some Canadians to resist the term "heritage" as second class. However, none of the students interviewed rejected their classification as HLL based on the use of the word "heritage". I conclude that most of the students I interviewed are too young to have witnessed the "heritage"

discussion[8] of the 1980s in Canada (Cummins & Danesi, 1990) which began this tension and remains in the minds of Canadians who lived through that period. Rather, these students are more familiar with the *de facto* use of the term for government departments (i.e., Canadian Heritage/Patrimonie canadien). This comfort with the term "heritage" validates its use in current research and in particular in this study can be dismissed as the reason for these students to reject the term HLL. An analysis of the interview data from these reluctant HLLs follows.

Sue is a fourth-year student in an advanced German class. She has German-speaking grandparents and has "always wanted to know German". She desires fluency, but is hesitant to speak in class. "I find I can understand [German] much better than I can produce it, which obviously comes from learning in the classroom environment". Her future plans are to travel and perhaps live abroad in order to improve her German.

Sue maintains that she is proud of her German heritage: "All of my friends definitely know that I am German and know that I speak German (I throw German phrases out there every now and then) so I am certainly not embarrassed by it."

Although she responded "yes" to the self identification question, Sue shows some ambivalence toward the label HLL. When asked "What's important to you about being German, or about being a German speaker?" she is unable to articulate why it is important. "You know what? I'm not sure what is important about it".

In spite of this unwillingness, Sue identifies with German traditions and refers to her language identity with reference to cultural artifacts. "Also, I love the German traditions, in terms of

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[8] Cummins and Danesi (1990) document the changes in legislation that facilitated the beginnings of heritage language instruction in Canada and the subsequent public concern over student achievement (p. 44).

Christmas, and the food and . . . most of my German identity really comes out during Christmas time, we have lots of family traditions at Christmas".

Sue identifies with the term HLL in the questionnaire portion of Dressler (2008). This identification is based strongly in her affective connection to German cultural traditions as well as her linguistic competence. Her inability to explain why this identity is important to her places her with the other reluctant HLLs, albeit tenuously.

Alexander is a second-year student who is also enrolled in advanced German. He has a German-speaking grandparent and feels that "it's nice to have German roots, I have relatives over there, why not keep going with [studying German]".

His devotion is high to German but "not very high" to completing assignments. Similar to Magdalena, he reports: "the class I was somewhat disappointed with, not on account of the you know, [the instructor] or anything, the way it was structured in that sense, it was just the fact that it was 'another grammar class'". He has concrete plans to continue his education in a country where German is spoken.

He does not consider himself an HLL, because of his lack of exposure to the language at home. In addition, he relates the following anecdote about his grandmother, which provides further insight into his reasoning:

> She's German. She never spoke it though. I mean, yeah it's kind of odd, but she never once spoke it. A few years ago, every now and again, I would say a few sentences to her and maybe try to get her to say something. She would understand, but she would never respond in German and I have no idea why that was. That's why I would not consider myself a

HLL because I've never had that, the German spoken to me in my family, even though she's German.

This experience of speaking German to a family member who refused to reciprocate is memorable to him.

Although Alexander is proud of his advanced language skills, he does not feel he can call himself an HLL of German. He feels strongly that a definitive part of being an HLL is language use in the home.

Bianca is another student from the advanced German class. She was born in Romania, moved to Germany when she was 8 years old, and then to Canada at age 10. She remembers speaking German fluently as a child, although she subsequently forgot the language and chose to relearn it "'cause it might be easy for me".

She describes herself as very motivated, because she found studying German interesting. She has already completed a study abroad program and plans to work on maintaining her German by reading and watching movies. She sees language maintenance as a challenge: "I'm afraid I'm going to forget everything I learned previously".

Bianca declines inclusion in the HLL group because she feels strongly that she does not think of herself as German at all and that Germans would consider her an *Ausländer*[9].

> I don't understand why they are intolerant to different people coming in and saying they are German, but because of that, because of the way they define themselves, I also define myself based on that, as opposed to Canadians who define themselves really "we're from everywhere". Well, I'm from everywhere, so I'm Canadian. (Bianca).

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[9] The word *Ausländer* can be translated as 'foreigner' or 'outsider'. It is used by Bianca earlier in the interview.

Bianca feels that the two years she spent in Germany were an "important part" of her childhood. However, because she perceives that her connection to the country and culture would not be acknowledged by others, she does not identify with the term HLL.

Discussion

Block (2006) observes that when studying identity, applied linguists are seeking to go beyond an emphasis on one or more isolated social variables (i.e. ethnic, racial, national, gendered, social class) toward a post-structuralist view of identity as co-constructed (pp. 38-39). Block (2007) suggests an examination of second language identity through Leung et al.'s (1997) notions of language *expertise*, *affiliation* and *inheritance*. Coupled with students' references to *cultural artifacts* (Bartlett, 2007), a clearer picture of students' *positioning* as HLLs is revealed.

As noted above, *expertise* is the level of linguistic ability of the student. Students like Christine and Magdalena see their facility or fluency with the language as contributing to their claim to a language identity. Low expertise might explain why some students are reluctant to identify themselves as HLLs, because linguistic ability might be part of their personal definition of an HLL, However, Alexander and Bianca, have advanced expertise and report positive feelings toward the German language and are still reluctant to call themselves HLLs. "My devotion to German is high." (Alexander). "I like German. I like the way it is structured. I enjoy the language; I have no negative points on it" (Bianca). They make a point of distinguishing their feelings for the language from their feelings about the term "HLL of German". Despite their linguistic ability in German, their expertise does not cause them to self-identify as HLLs.

Affiliation to a language and culture can be political, but it does not have to be officially recognized to be valid. Part of what connects Magdalena to German and Germany is her citizenship. "Me being German, a German citizen, I am German. That's how I always will be" (Magdalena). Part of why Bianca rejects the term HLL was the temporary nature of her family's stay in Germany: "being just someone who passed through Germany, on the way to Canada. . ." (Bianca)[10]. Her lack of affiliation also may have been influenced by a language ideology in Germany that promotes assimilation (Esses, Wagner, Wolf, Preiser, & Wilbur, 2006, p. 655) and affects "minority groups and immigrants by challenging the integrity and validity of their home culture, language, and overall identity" (Hansen-Thomas, 2007, p. 249). Affiliation may play a role in HLL identity as it appears to have influenced Magdalena positively and Bianca negatively.

Inheritance is where we might expect to see HLLs fit best with the traditional broad definition. For the HLLs in this study, this is the most commonly-expressed aspect of language identity. Sue claims that "All my friends know I am German" and Carolyn states: "I was always really interested in that part of my heritage." Christine says her original interest in learning German began because she has family in Germany. Alexander, despite his rejection of the label HLL, sees that having family in Germany gives him "that sort of reason" for learning the language. While this aspect of identity does not serve to predict how HLLs respond to the label, it sheds insight on the relationship between a sense of inheritance and their feeling of membership in this group.

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[10] While Bianca does not reveal the exact political or immigration status her family held while they were in Germany, she emphasizes that they were "passing through" on their way to Canada. Further investigation would entail revisiting this issue with Bianca to determine if the family was aware of their temporary status during their time in Germany or whether their departure from Germany was not their original intention.

In addition to expertise, affiliation and inheritance, three other students make reference to traditions as cultural artifacts or markers of a "classic German household" (Sue). These traditions, especially those around Christmas time, and stereotypical values or characteristics such as punctuality and orderliness, are just some of the cultural artifacts that the students referred to.

Cultural artifacts may also be an "ideal or conceptual aspect" (Bartlett, 2007, p. 217), or in this case, a positive or negative stereotype of a country. The study subjects in this paper make frequent mention of the cultural artifact of Canadian multiculturalism: "There's a broader openness to different cultures, accepting that there can be significant differences" (Christine) and "Canada is a multicultural country: everyone has their own nation" (Magdalena). Bianca, who lived in Germany but was not born there, marks intolerance of non-Germans as a German cultural artifact. "I would never venture to say I have anything German because the society is not very accepting of that". While these opinions may be considered stereotypes, they highlight the contrast between official Canadian government policy supporting multiculturalism (Esses *et al.,* 2006, p. 655) and the German government's official anti-immigration policy (Rost-Roth, 1995, cited in Hansen-Thomas, 2007, p. 250). The differences in societal attitude toward immigration that these policy's represent are important cultural artifacts for some HLLs in this study.

In presenting a "coherent subject position" (Block, 2007, p. 18) of themselves as second language learners, *positioning* appears to best explain the reluctance of some students to identify with the term HLL. Sue, when challenged, did not strongly position herself as an HLL of German, but broadened the context to Europe: "I find it interesting in general to have some kind

of European history behind my family." Alexander and Bianca's unwillingness to situate themselves as HLLs appears to rest primarily in the unwillingness of others to situate them as HLLs. For example, Alexander does not situate himself in an HLL identity, because his German-speaking grandmother refused his attempts to communicate with her in German[11]. Despite her time spent in Germany, Bianca does not consider herself an HLL. "I kinda don't like the heritage part [because it] implies something like long history". When asked about her second language identity, Bianca says:

> I don't feel anything at all. I feel no connection. I already have to juggle being Canadian with being Romanian. Really, there is no space for being German.

Her perception that others would not situate her as having a German identity, combined with her desire to balance her family heritage with her current country of identification, prevent Bianca from applying the term HLL to herself.

As advanced students of German, both Alexander and Bianca have achieved an above- average level of expertise both in and out of the German language classroom. This aspect of language identity does not factor into their decision to reject HLL self-identification. Those who are comfortable being labeled as HLLs mention aspects of language affiliation and inheritance as well as the presence in their lives of cultural artifacts they associate with the target language culture. Alexander recognizes an affiliation and inheritance that Bianca does not. Yet, both reject the term HLL. In addition, both students fail to mention cultural artifacts as a feature of their HLL identity. For those whose HLL identity is tenuous, being positioned by others may influence the subject position they adopt (Block, 2007), as it did with Sue, Alexander, and

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[11] It is possible that the reluctance of Alexander's grandmother to speak German was due to in part to anti-German feelings she encountered upon her immigration to Canada, similar to those that Christine references when she notes that her family "came here and my Mom stopped speaking any German to us" (Christine).

Bianca. Students who reject the label of HLL do not "situate themselves" or consider themselves to be "situated by others" (Block, 2007, p. 18) in an HLL identity and therefore adopt the subject position "non-HLL."

The discovery of reluctant HLLs in the quantitative data of Dressler (2008) led to an exploration of HLL self-identification in follow-up interviews with some study participants. The case studies of three HLLs and three reluctant HLLs presented in this paper illuminate the co-constructed nature of language identity and the role of expertise, affiliation, inheritance and cultural artifacts in HLL identification. The qualitative data reveal the importance of positioning in the self-inclusion of students in the definition of HLL.

Conclusion

This exploration of HLL identity began with an investigation of second language identity through HLL definition questions in the first questionnaire of a motivation study (Dressler, 2008). In follow-up interviews, the study participants were allowed to "speak for themselves, represent their own lives" (Friedman, 1994, p. 71, cited in Ricento, 2005, p. 906). Both tools shed light on HLL identity, by exploring "the student's own sense of ownership of the […] language" (Noels, 2009, p. 303) and in turn, the new cultural identity that goes with this language. While some theorists point out that exercising the power to identify may result in "imposing an ethnocentric ideology" and thereby represent cultural groups as "stable or homogeneous entities" (Ricento, 2005, p. 905), I maintain that failing to identify that which makes HLLs unique ignores the need to diversify our research goals and L2 curriculum to acknowledge an existing diversity in our L2 classroom population.

When some HLLs are not comfortable with the term HLL, university second language co-coordinators must be sensitive to this issue when placing students in separate HLL tracks or granting advanced standing in upper level classes. Challenges may persist as student differences become apparent despite the best efforts at proper placement. For non-HLLs in Dressler (2008) it is quite clear who in the classroom appears to have German heritage or previous knowledge and students either accept the presence of HLLs or see it as a positive challenge: "I was motivated to keep up" (p. 75). However, this may not be the case in all classrooms.

In addition, HLLs may not be aware of their linguistic strengths (e.g., more nativelike pronunciation as shown by Au, Oh, Knightly, Jun, & Romo, 2008) and deficits (e.g., incomplete acquisition of certain morphosyntactic features as shown by Montrul, 2007). They may also not be aware that, where there is no separate HLL track, the curriculum is designed for the true beginner with no previous linguistic or cultural competence in the target language. The discovery of deficits and a lack of fit between curriculum and learner goals may lead to demotivation in HLLs, as expressed by HLLs Magdalena and Alexander in this study, when they reported a negative attitude toward further formal study of German. In addition, teachers may have "higher expectations for correctness and fluency" for HLLs which may result in a negative learning experience for these learners (Potowski 2002, cited in Hornberger & Wang, 2008, p. 24). Ultimately, it should be a goal for all instructors to provide HLL awareness to all learners so that HLLs may self-include and benefit from the awareness this self-inclusion brings. Instructors can emphasize strengths, differentiate instruction, and adapt the curriculum to include both HLLs and non-HLLs. For example, in teaching reading, the instructor may apply a macro approach by introducing "fairly large and complex texts almost from the … beginning" (Kagan & Dillon,

2001/2003, p. 6), while starting with short texts and increasing their length and difficulty for the

non-HLLs (p. 6).

Instructors can teach their students an awareness of HLL status without labeling, by introducing

personal goal-setting for language learning as a classroom activity, exploring students' personal

motivation as well as their definition of achievement (Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998). Classroom

activities allow the instructor to explore aspects of HLL needs that may arise in the classroom

where HLLs and non-HLLs study together. Teaching about the needs and characteristics of

HLLs can easily be done without singling out individual students. I concur with Valdés,

González, García, and Márquez (2008) that instructor awareness of the unique pedagogical and

linguistic needs of HLLs is an important benefit of defining students by their heritage.

In L2 research or teaching, it is important to be aware that not all HLLs will self-identify as such.

In this case, the researcher or instructor needs to be clear about whether self-identification is

important or necessary for the task or classroom in question. This decision will be strengthened

in the future by additional studies that help to determine whether the HLL definitions in current

use by researchers are accurate and justified. In addition, further qualitative research into HLLs'

self-perception would assist researchers and instructors in establishing the heterogeneous nature

of this subset of learners.

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Appendix A and B available from the author upon request.

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