

The Path to Heritage Language Development

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The Optimal Input Hypothesis (Krashen and Mason, 2020): The input is,

(1) comprehensible, (2) compelling, (3) rich, (4) abundant.

Krashen, S., & Mason, B. (2020). The optimal input hypothesis: Not all comprehensible input is of equal value. CATESOL Newsletter, May 19, 2020. pp.1-2. <https://tinyurl.com/y7h64zhr>

“A heritage language is one not spoken by the dominate culture, but is spoken in the family or associated with the heritage culture.” (Krashen, 1998)

Iranian diaspora → Iranian people living outside Iran and their children born abroad. In 2010 → estimated between 2 to 3 million Iranians living abroad.

According to the PAAIA (Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans), 500,000 to 1,000,000 Iranians live in the US with the highest number currently living in Los Angeles, California (Tehrangeles or Little Persia).

The Case of Farsi (Krashen & Ashtari, 2020):

Most (?) Farsi heritage language acquirers do not improve beyond basic level of proficiency, heritage language classes are not effective, traditional methods of instruction, blame the children and their parents.

Farsi Bookstores and Farsi Books in Libraries (Ashtari, 2020):

Interviews with Farsi bookstore owners to examine the accessibility and comprehensibility of Farsi reading materials for heritage language acquirers.

(1) Lack of accessibility, (2) lack of comprehensible materials, (3) lack of compelling options.

Ashtari, N. (2020). Reaching Rumi: The accessibility and comprehensibility of Farsi reading materials for heritage language learners. <https://tinyurl.com/ybvscdkd> . Published as “Enabling heritage language reading,” Language Magazine, 19,9: 30-31.

Unobtrusive measure study (Krashen & Ashtari, 2020):

Unobtrusive measure (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest, 2000) to determine perseverance in voluntary foreign language study: whether library books were not just taken out of the library but whether they were actually read.

On the average, Wear and Tear index revealed that for foreign language textbooks, readers read 16.8% of the books, with a maximum of 27%. This number was decreased to 5% for Farsi books.

McQuillan, J. (2008). Does anyone finish the Berlitz tapes? A novel measure of perseverance for commercial language courses. International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching. 4(1), 2-5. http://backseatlinguist.com/blog/wpcontent/uploads/2012/01/Berlitz_Tape.pdf