

Heritage Language Teaching: Research and Practice

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What Is This Book About?

There is growing recognition among language teachers and researchers that the profiles of heritage language (HL) students are different from those of traditional second language (L2) learners in ways that are important to language teaching. *Heritage Language Teaching: Research and Practice* provides teachers with knowledge and pedagogical tools to help them meet the needs of growing and diverse groups of heritage language learners in the United States. Addressing important issues related to these students from an informed sociolinguistic perspective will ideally improve their language development outcomes. The following general themes are explored throughout this book:

- The ways in which heritage language students develop their initial proficiency in the heritage language usually differs considerably from the language-learning context of typical L2 students, so distinct pedagogical approaches are necessary.
- The term *heritage language learner* encompasses a heterogeneous population in terms of students' backgrounds, linguistic proficiency, and motivations.
- Heritage language learners and their linguistic and cultural knowledge should be viewed as resources to the classroom mission, which should seek to promote an additive approach of intercultural and, where appropriate, interdialectal awareness.
- Students' affective needs and the important connections between language and identity should be recognized and addressed with respect.
- Involvement with local heritage language communities, as well as study-abroad programs, can promote teacher and student success.

Although no single book can provide foolproof answers to all of the challenges involved in teaching heritage learners, we argue that a ***sociolinguistically informed approach*** combined with differentiated instruction and continuous formative assessment, as well as a focus on students' capabilities and goals, are important underpinnings for successful language instruction.

This text is a starting point for addressing these issues. We summarize current research in the areas of heritage, second language, and first language research where appropriate in order to arrive at tangible pedagogical suggestions for the HL teacher. We also offer suggestions for the administration of heritage language programs.

We address this book to teachers in many different contexts, including practicing high school and postsecondary language teachers, graduate teaching assistants in university language programs, and undergraduate preservice teacher education majors. Each chapter ends with a summary followed by a list of key terms, discussion questions, and a short list of additional

readings. The feature “Pause to consider...”, appearing 7–10 times in every chapter, asks readers to stop and reflect on a particular point and/or apply it to their own context.

A note on the term “heritage learner”: although the term “heritage speaker” is used very frequently in the language education field, we have chosen “learner” to reflect the reality of students who understand but cannot necessarily produce their heritage language.

How Is This Book Organized?

The following ten chapters address the concepts that we feel are most imperative to successful HL teaching:

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Chapter 3	Who Are Heritage Language Learners?
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Chapter 6	Developing Literacy Skills: Reading
Chapter 7	Developing Literacy Skills: Writing
Chapter 8	Approaches to grammar instruction
Chapter 9	Developing Cultural and Critical Language Proficiency
Chapter 10	Administrative Concerns

All three authors are teachers and researchers on Spanish as a heritage language, so many of the book’s examples draw from these experiences. However, we have also consulted colleagues and research on other heritage languages, including Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Vietnamese. It is our hope that this book fills an important need in the professional preparation of language educators.