

BOOK REVIEW

Peyton, Joy Kreeft, Donald A. Ranard, and Scott McGinnis (eds.). *Heritage Languages in America: Preserving a National Resource*. McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics. 2001. Washington, DC: CAL, ERIC; [McHenry, IL]: Delta Systems Co., Inc., 327 pp.

Reviewed by Ariann Stern, UCLA

Heritage Languages in America is a product of the National Conference on Heritage Languages in America, held in Long Beach, California in October, 1999. The book is divided into five sections, which reflect the five major themes of the conference: Defining the Field, Shaping the Field, Educational Issues, Research and Practice, and A Call to Action.

The book begins with an overview of the conference, followed by an introduction, "Charting a New Course: Heritage Language Education in the United States". The introduction includes a discussion of the current state of affairs in heritage language education in America, addressing both indigenous and heritage communities. It also addresses the current interest in and importance of heritage language education in the U.S. and the motivations for this interest, including demographic shifts in the American population and the growing national need for a cadre of speakers with advanced level foreign language proficiency.

The first section, "Defining the Field", comprises two chapters, "On Defining Heritage Languages and Their Speakers" by Terrence G. Wiley, Arizona State University, and "Heritage Language Students: Profiles and Possibilities" by Guadalupe Valdés of Stanford University. The definitions and discussions presented in these articles underlie those used throughout the book.

Wiley explores ways of defining heritage learners and underscores the effect that these definitions will have on learners' self-perceptions. Specifically, he looks at definitions assigned by educational programs, including a definition by community needs, by which he means a definition of heritage learners that emerges from their communities; and sociolinguistics definitions, which involve categorizing how the language is used and the varieties that are used, e.g., differentiating between diglossic use, bilingual/multi-lingual use, colloquial use and regional dialect use.

Valdés' definition of heritage learner, "a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken...speaks or at least understands the language, and is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (38), is essentially the working definition for the volume. Valdés' work largely focuses on Spanish language students. Her article includes a discussion of bilingualism as it relates to heritage speakers, in which she defines bilingualism along a continuum that includes but is not limited to heritage learners. She characterizes generational differences in bilingualism, including how a speaker's bilingualism changes as s/he ages and how language knowledge differs among generations of immigrant families. Valdés also addresses the language characteristics of immigrant students and the ways in which bilingual heritage learners develop skills in the heritage language and in English, as well as the challenges faced by heritage language pedagogy in the U.S., and presents an overview of instruction and language maintenance for Spanish-speaking heritage

learners. She also touches on the issue of educators' attitudes towards teaching standard varieties of the language. Finally, Valdés presents models for heritage language instruction.

The next section, "Shaping the Field", focuses on historical, political and economic forces that have affected national heritage language pedagogy. Joshua Fishman of Yeshiva, New York and Stanford Universities History discusses history in his article, "300-Plus Years of Heritage Language Education in the United States." Terrence G. Wiley's "Policy Formation and Implementation" addresses some political issues that play a role in heritage language education efforts. "Professional Opportunities for Heritage Language Speakers" by María Carreira, California State University, Long Beach, and Regla Armengol, Center for Applied Linguistics, discusses economic issues.

Fishman begins his article with a discussion of Native American language education, both in the past and in its current state of revival and recognition. He then looks at colonial America and immigrant groups in the 19th and early 20th centuries, who made few concerted efforts at heritage language maintenance or education. Next he discusses his own efforts at documenting heritage language education in the 1960s and again in the mid-80s, when he found that individual groups worked at maintaining their languages to various degrees. Finally, he examines the shift in the 1990s of Spanish heritage language education to the public schools. One of his most interesting observations is that until the 1990s most heritage language education was provided by the heritage language community rather than by public schools, colleges or universities.

Like Fishman's, Wiley's second article also offers a history of national policies concerning heritage language education and maintenance among immigrant and indigenous groups in the U.S. He traces shifts in policy in the 20th century and notes changes in attitudes towards speakers of heritage languages that include "promotion, accommodation, tolerance, or suppression" (100). An interesting discussion concerns the U.S. government's focus on promoting English as a means of wider communication, which is counter to the logic for promoting foreign language education that is the basis of this volume. Wiley sees this focus as short-sighted and argues that policy for heritage language education cannot lie solely in the hands of public policy makers, but must also come from heritage language communities and educators.

Carreira and Armengol's article begins with a short but powerful contrast between the linguistic abilities of business executives in the Netherlands, Sweden, Japan, and the U.S., with the American knowing the least. They then argue that second language ability in global market as well as in the U.S. is not a luxury but a necessity. They outline the professional needs and opportunities for "multi-lingual, cross-culturally aware workers", in government, business, media and communications, performing arts and the motion picture industry, domestic healthcare, and education. In their conclusion, they point out that while English is still the language of status in the U.S., raising awareness that knowledge of languages other than English will lead to greater economic stability and opportunities is incentive for heritage language learners to see the value in language maintenance and continued study. There is an excellent list of resources on "professional opportunities for bilinguals" (137) following the bibliography of the article.

The book's third section, "Educational Issues", contains articles about difficulties in heritage language teaching faced by community-based schools, K-12 schools and programs, and colleges and universities. There are five articles in this section: "Heritage

Language Communities and Schools: Challenges and Recommendations” by Carol J. Compton, University of Wisconsin, Madison; “Heritage Language Students in the K-12 Education System”, by Shuhan C. Wang, Department of Education, State of Delaware and Nancy Green, Long Beach Unified School District, California; “Heritage Languages and Higher Education: Challenges, Issues and Needs”, by Nariyo Kono, University of Arizona, and Scott McGinnis, then of the National Foreign Language Center; “Truly Less Commonly Taught Languages and Heritage Language Learners in the United States” by Surendra Gambhir, University of Pennsylvania; and “Preparing Teachers to Work with Heritage Language Learners”, by Ana María Schwartz, University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Compton begins her discussion of community-based heritage language schools with a definition of the heritage language community as one that “uses a language other than English” (146), but not exclusively. Compton devotes the bulk of the article to discussing challenges facing community-based schools, which include the need to find community support, improve curriculum and materials, provide teacher training and development, and garner support from parents and “elders”. Other challenges are to be found in the composition of the student body: Compton points out that not all students are necessarily bilingual or biliterate, that they may not all be members of the heritage community, and that there may be variation in student background, age, and interest. The article includes discussions of the varying degrees of professionalism among and compensation for staff and of the variation in curricula at these schools. Compton concludes with a set of recommendations for improving community schools.

Wang and Green have a bipartite goal of 1) defining heritage languages and heritage language learners in terms of K-12 education, and 2) defining learners’ needs and discussing how they can be met in the K-12 school system. They combine Fishman’s definition of heritage language as “a non-English language with a particular family relevance to the learner” (169) with Valdés’ definition, arriving at a designation that encompasses three groups of learners, ranging from new immigrants to the U.S. to children of immigrants or of “indigenous ancestry” (Ibid.). The needs and language abilities (in both the heritage language and English) of these learners vary widely. Therefore the educational system, which must accommodate them all, needs a set of standards and models to work from. Moreover, the heritage language community must work with the educational community to assure that community language and cultural needs are met. The authors discuss programmatic approaches to meeting the needs of both communities. The article is followed by a discussion of identity and the heritage language learner, in which the authors articulate concerns raised in previous articles in the volume in a noteworthy, concise two-page overview. A list of resources relevant to the article follows the references.

Kono and McGinnis focus on heritage language education in higher education. They begin, like Carreira and Armengol, with the assertion that while foreign language study is vital to national, business and educational interests, it is still seen as a luxury. This view in turn affects educational policy and the allocation of resources for heritage language education in the U.S. A more fundamental challenge, however, is the low status of heritage languages in the eyes of both educational administrators, who provide little recognition or support for these languages, and pedagogues, who make prestige judgments based on standard and non-standard language varieties (another recurring

theme throughout this book). Other challenges include defining the learner for the purposes of enrollment and educational planning, and heritage learner motivation and teacher training. The authors then discuss good work being done in heritage language education on the post-secondary level, although they point out that, for most languages other than Spanish and Chinese, much more work is needed, including teacher training and materials development, programs on the K-12 and post-secondary levels, as well as in community schools, and research on heritage language learners' needs, communities, learning styles, etc.

Gambhir begins with a discussion of less commonly taught languages, their importance, and comparisons of foreign language enrollments in the U.S., contrasting the popularity of Spanish with the low enrollments and minimal institutional and programmatic support given the "truly less commonly taught languages" (TLCTLs). Gambhir then explores the needs, motivations and strengths of TLCTL learners with a focus on heritage language learners, and includes a discussion of the types of heritage learners in these languages. He also addresses the problems and needs of TLCTL classrooms which, because of their low enrollments and status in the university, have fewer resources. Consequently, these languages have fewer class offerings, resulting in classes with students of mixed ability. In some of these classes non-heritage instructors are often teaching heritage learners, with varied results. Other problems include a lack of materials and, in some cases, a lack of teacher training and informed methodology. Finally, Gambhir addresses the lack of national and community-based support for these TLCTLs, and the overall lack of policy to promote foreign language and heritage language education. Gambhir concludes with two examples of community-based organizations that have created successful models of heritage language education and support.

Schwartz' article discusses the special training needed by teachers of heritage languages. She begins with a discussion of teachers' need to understand who heritage language students are. She outlines how heritage language learners differ from traditional language learners in a thorough and useful chart (p. 233). Schwartz says there is a need to understand what heritage language instructors bring to the classroom, including strong content knowledge, thorough pedagogical training in instructional strategies and ability to perform assessment, and knowledge of alternate methods to traditional testing. Like Gambhir, Schwartz points to the lack of heritage language teaching materials and resources. Finally, she notes a general foreign language teacher shortage and the lack of incentive for competent teachers trained to teach heritage languages.

Part four, "Research and Practice", focuses on research in various areas of heritage language and contains an article, "Heritage Language Education: Needed Research" by Russell Campbell, UCLA, and Donna Christian, Center for Applied Linguistics. This article is followed by a chapter entitled "Heritage Language Education: Summaries of Research and Practice." The chapter is organized into categories that match those in the Campbell and Christian article: Heritage Language Communities, Heritage Language Learning, Heritage Language Education Systems and Strategies, Language Policies, and Heritage Language Resources. The Campbell and Christian article notes that as the field grows, there is an increasing need for more research into the

five categories listed above. The article poses questions and presents ideas for additional research in each of these five categories.

The fifth section of the book, “A Call to Action” contains two articles: “Heritage Language Maintenance and Development: A Call for Action” by Ana Roca, Florida International University, and “The Genealogy of Language Organizations and the Heritage Languages Initiative” by James E. Alatis, Georgetown University. Both articles offer suggestions for national action in promoting foreign and heritage languages. Both also stress the need for heritage language professionals to work with other foreign language teachers and researchers towards common goals.

Roca’s article offers suggestions for the development of heritage language research and advocacy. She suggests that advocacy for heritage language education will be most effective if it is allied with advocacy for foreign and second language education. She sets out an agenda for making the U.S. a multilingual nation. This agenda addresses two issues:

The formation of sound language policies for education..., government..., and the private sector; [and] the promotion of positive attitudes toward language diversity and bilingualism, foreign and heritage language speakers, and foreign and heritage language instruction.”(308)

Roca discusses ways to promote language learning and to raise its perceived value in American society, including collaboration of national academic language organizations and national centers to create opportunities to promote foreign and heritage language training and research; a national media campaign to promote language education; and calling for businesses and corporations to fund language education since the recipients of such education are part of the pool of multilingual professionals they need. She calls on parents, teachers, school administrators, policymakers and business leaders to help in these efforts.

In his short article Alatis urges heritage language professionals to work with other language education organizations to work toward common goals and purposes. He provides a history of organizations splintering off to form more specialized groups dedicated to narrower goals and argues that this is “healthy” to some extent, but can be detrimental if carried too far. Alatis claims that language educators need to remain unified to affect the changes and meet the needs outlined elsewhere in this book.

Because it addresses so many perspectives on heritage languages in the U.S., and thanks to its variety of useful definitions of heritage languages and learners and well-articulated rationales for heritage language education and advocacy, *Heritage Languages in America* is a good introduction to the heritage language field as well as a solid reference for those who are already involved in it. While many themes are reiterated throughout, each chapter in the first four sections offers something uniquely valuable.