

Beaudrie, Sara, Ducar, Cynthia, & Potowski, Kim (2014). *Heritage language teaching: Research and practice*. New York, New York: McGraw Hill.

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Book review

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ABSTRACT

EN This review introduces readers to *Heritage language teaching: Research and practice*, by Sara Beaudrie, Cynthia Ducar, and Kim Potowski, which is part of the “Directions in Second Language Learning” series. This handbook offers a comprehensive overview of key concepts, research findings, and pedagogical strategies to better meet the needs of heritage learners, and it underscores the importance of sociolinguistic issues and phenomena in heritage language instruction.

Key words: HERITAGE LEARNERS, HERITAGE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, LANGUAGE TEACHING, HANDBOOK.

ES La reseña presenta a los lectores la obra *Heritage language teaching: Research and practice*, escrita por Sara Beaudrie, Cynthia Ducar y Kim Potowski, la cual forma parte de la serie “Directions in Second Language Learning”. El manual ofrece un panorama completo de términos claves, resultados de investigación y estrategias pedagógicas centrales a la enseñanza de lenguas de herencia, a la vez que destaca la importancia de cuestiones referentes a la sociolingüística en este contexto.

Palabras clave: APRENDIENTES DE LENGUAS DE HERENCIA, ADQUISICIÓN DE LENGUAS DE HERENCIA, MANUAL DE ENSEÑANZA.

IT La recensione presenta ai lettori il libro *Heritage language teaching: Research and practice* di Sara Beaudrie, Cynthia Ducar e Kim Potowski, che fa parte della serie “Directions in Second Language Learning”. Il manuale offre una panoramica approfondita di concetti chiave, risultati di ricerche e strategie pedagogiche volte a soddisfare al meglio i bisogni degli apprendenti delle lingue ereditarie, ed esalta nel contempo l'importanza degli aspetti sociolinguistici nell'insegnamento di quest'ultime.

Parole chiave: DISCENTI DI LINGUE EREDITARIE, ACQUISIZIONE DELLE LINGUE EREDITARIE, INSEGNAMENTO DELLA LINGUA, MANUALE.

Heritage Language Teaching: Research and Practice, by Beaudrie, Ducar, and Potowski, lays the foundation for a sociolinguistically based approach to heritage language (HL) instruction. The ten chapters provide a clear and comprehensive overview of key concepts, research findings, and pedagogical strategies to better meet the needs of heritage speakers. As with all other titles in the series “Directions in Second Language Learning,” there are several *Pause to Consider* boxes interspersed throughout the text as well as discussion questions at the end of each chapter to help readers reflect on the information presented and establish connections to their own contexts. The plethora of examples and resources about several different languages, including sample activities and survey questions, makes the ideas not only easy to follow, but also highly relevant and practical to educators of a wide variety of backgrounds and teaching experience.

The premise of the book is that HL learners are fundamentally different from second language (L2) learners, and the most common differences between the two are explained at length in chapter 3. Although the authors acknowledge that budgetary or logistical constraints might not always permit the development of specially-designated courses for HL learners, the section on meeting the needs of HL learners within L2 classrooms is relatively brief and consists mostly of a summary of research findings and references to outside resources. The section on differentiated instruction, included as one of the three general pedagogical principles proposed by the authors, could have been further developed with more concrete and clear examples for mixed L2-HL classrooms. Even though the reasons for developing separate courses for HL

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learners are evident throughout this book, the reality is that in many institutions, L2 and HL learners are enrolled in the same courses. Educators teaching in those contexts would have benefitted from a detailed discussion on how the sociolinguistically informed approach outlined in the book could be adapted to mixed L2-HL classes.

The first three chapters are perhaps the most valuable part of the book, as they focus on key sociolinguistic principles and concepts necessary to understand the linguistic, cultural, and affective complexity of HL learners' profiles. The authors are successful at raising language educators' awareness of stigmatized phenomena, such as borrowings and code-switching, as well as making readers reconsider the utopian nature of the "standard" variety of language upheld by many language instructors and researchers. Another chapter worthy of praise is the fourth one, where the authors examine the seven goals of HL instruction proposed by Valdés (1995) and Aparicio (1997), and they propose three general pedagogical principles to guide HL instruction. Chapter 4 should be required reading in language teaching methods courses, even in programs that do not offer separate tracks for HL learners.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 focus on developing listening, reading, and writing skills. The authors make an effort to address issues unique to HL learners, but some of the suggested strategies, particularly for reading and writing, are identical to what has been proposed for L2 learners. There is little in the book about how to adjust basic principles, such as using clear rubrics and implementing peer review, to HL learners in particular (e.g., how might rubrics to evaluate HL writing differ from those used in L2 composition courses?). To a certain extent, that lack of distinction between L2 and HL learners when it comes to some of the suggestions in the book might be due to the relative scarcity of research on the effects of various pedagogical techniques on HL development. Nonetheless, it is somewhat surprising that the chapters on reading and writing provide advice that is practically undistinguishable from what has been said in the literature on L2 reading and writing, when literacy skills had been identified in chapter 4 as one of the specific targets of HL instruction.

Educators and researchers interested in the development of spelling skills in particular are bound to be disappointed. Despite the fact that one of the authors of the book has published an article investigating the frequency and nature of spelling errors made by Spanish HL learners, the chapter on writing is lacking a section on orthography; not even the sample rubric included at the end of the chapter includes any criteria related to spelling issues. The only mention of spelling is a two-sentence portion in the section on sentence-level errors, which only discusses the fact that some instructors allow spellcheckers and others do not, an issue that is brought back up briefly in the section on how to prepare Spanish HL learners for the AP exam (i.e., a situation in which spellcheckers are not available). Many would agree with the authors in that spellcheckers are a valuable tool, but it is also obvious that spellcheckers cannot help learners with the type of examples provided in the same section (e.g., *está, más*). Since spelling has not been discussed much in L2 research, instructors of HL learners would benefit greatly from learning of different techniques and principles drawn from L1 research, and unfortunately, the book does not address any of them.

Chapter 8 focuses on a topic that is controversial in both L2 and HL pedagogy: grammar instruction. The chapter begins with an overview of three different ways of conceptualizing grammar, as well as a discussion of how "incorrect" forms are tied to stigmatization. The authors then explain in attainable terms important phenomena like attrition and language contact, which are fundamental to helping HL educators better understand not only why certain features are present in HL learners' linguistic production, but more importantly, why HL learners should not be considered deficient or incomplete speakers of the target language. The chapter concludes with a clear model for teaching grammar to HL learners: a sociolinguistically informed approach based on principles like discovering what students know, investigating community norms, empowering students with knowledge of the sociolinguistic complexity of their own communities, and above all, respecting students' language varieties. The chapter includes thought-provoking questions that instructors of both HL and L2 learners should consider, such as whether there are clear reasons for teaching a particular form explicitly, and whether metalinguistic labels are necessary to acquire grammar. The section on error correction is sure to ignite some debate, as the authors start off by stating that it is more acceptable to correct L2 learners' errors as they "often constitute a violation of underlying grammar," whereas when a HL learner is corrected, the instructor is "demonstrating ignorance of (...) sociolinguistic realities" (p. 175). The question that arises is: what should instructors do when teaching a class with L2 and HL learners, and both make the same type of errors (e.g., gender or number agreement errors, omitting articles, tense/aspect/mood errors, etc.)? It would have been helpful for the chapter to include some guidance on those situations, which are not uncommon in language classrooms.

The discussion about developing cultural proficiency in chapter 9 is quite clear as to how and why to incorporate culture in the HL classroom in particular. While many of the concepts and suggestions will be enlightening to all foreign language educators, it is undeniable that HL learners have a unique connection to the culture, and that the community plays a pivotal role in HL development. It is refreshing to see the topics of community service learning and study abroad being discussed with HL learners in mind, as they are two areas that have been underresearched. The authors do an excellent job at shedding light on the importance of studying abroad for HL learners based on the few available research findings to date. The inclusion of internet-mediated cultural exchanges as an alternative to studying abroad is also commendable.

Although the book is written primarily for in-service and future language teachers, program directors will find Chapter 10 ("Program and Administrative Considerations") to be particularly relevant. Among the challenges of designing and implementing an HL program, the authors discuss and even offer solutions for the issue of lacking "a critical mass of HL students to justify creating a separate course" (p. 194), which will likely resonate with administrators across institutions. Approximately half of the chapter is dedicated to several different options for assessment and proper course placement of HL learners. The authors provide numerous examples and practical ways to implement placement testing, while also acknowledging that any type of proficiency assessment measures will need to be determined by each program, given that the characteristics of local HL populations may vary widely from one context to another.

In sum, the authors meet their goal of advancing the professional preparation of all language educators, and not just HL educators. Although the chapters on developing literacy skills could have been more specific to HL learners, the book successfully addresses many practical considerations and provides research-informed pedagogical guidelines for HL instruction. The book's greatest strength, without a doubt, is the underscoring of the importance of sociolinguistic issues and phenomena, which are seldom discussed in teacher training programs.

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- ES** | **Florencia G. Henshaw** obtuvo su doctorado en adquisición de segundas lenguas y formación del profesorado en la Universidad de Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, donde ejerce actualmente como directora del área de español avanzado. Sus intereses de investigación se centran en la evaluación de las diferentes herramientas y prácticas pedagógicas al servicio de los alumnos que aprenden español como segunda lengua o como lengua de herencia; no solo en lo que respecta a sus mejoras lingüísticas, sino también en cuanto a las percepciones y actitudes de los aprendientes. Es asimismo autora de dos libros de texto para el estudio del español: uno para cursos de repaso de gramática y otro para cursos de redacción y estilo.
- IT** | **Florencia G. Henshaw** ha conseguito il dottorato in Acquisizione Della Seconda Lingua e Formazione degli Insegnanti all'Università dell'Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, dove attualmente è Direttrice del programma di Spagnolo Avanzato. La sua ricerca è incentrata sulla valutazione del livello di efficacia di metodi e strumenti pedagogici nel contesto della seconda lingua e delle lingue ereditarie, non solo in termini di acquisizione linguistica, ma anche rispetto alle percezioni e alle attitudini dei discenti. È inoltre autrice di due manuali in spagnolo, uno per corsi di grammatica ed uno per corsi di scrittura.