

Book Review

Lacorte, Manel. *The Routledge Handbook of Hispanic Applied Linguistics*. (2014). New York, NY: Routledge. 718 pages.

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In his introduction, editor Manel Lacorte states that the main purpose of *The Routledge Handbook of Hispanic Applied Linguistics* is to support the establishment of the new field of Hispanic linguistics so as to “re-contextualize the notion of applied linguistics as simply the application of theoretical linguistic concepts to practical settings and to consider it as its own field that addresses language-based issues and problems in real-world context” (p. 1). The Handbook, which is the first of its kind for the field of Hispanic Applied Linguistics, is divided into five parts with 36 chapters in total, each one focusing on a specific area of the field. Part 1, “Perspectives on Learning Spanish” includes five chapters; Part 2, “Issues and Environments in Spanish Teaching” has eleven; Part 3, “Spanish in the Professions” has nine; Part 4, “The Discourses of Spanish” includes six chapters; and five chapters comprise Part 5, “Social and Political Contexts for Spanish.” All chapters uniformly reflect the same organization: introduction, history of the area, core issues and topics, future perspectives, conclusions, related topics, and recommended further readings. In this review, I highlight the chapters most relevant to the field of Heritage Language Acquisition (HLA) and for the readership of the *Heritage Language Journal*.

In Part 1, Andrew Lynch presents “Sociolinguistic perspectives” (Chapter 5), which provides a historical context for scholarly treatment of language as social activity from the early 20th century into the present. Four core issues of sociolinguistic research on language acquisition and use are introduced: linguistic variability, context of acquisition, social interaction, and agency and identity. These core issues are not only fundamental to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) but also to the growing field of HLA, and in particular to Spanish in the U.S. In Part 2, the chapter on “Spanish as a Heritage Language” (SHL) is of utmost importance for those researchers interested in the HL field because in addition to presenting key terms, demographic data, a historical perspective on the teaching of heritage languages, and an overview of internal and external factors that impact the maintenance of heritage, it highlights principal characteristics of a sample of SHL programs throughout the world (p. 134). In this chapter, Marta Fairclough stresses the difficulty of trying to cover SHL and Heritage Language Education in different geographic areas in a single chapter. More specifically, the author points out that even though heritage languages share many aspects around the world, the situation of Spanish as a heritage language in the United States may differ from the situation of other minority languages or from the conditions under which one can find Spanish in parts of the world other than the U.S. Despite those challenges, the chapter raises valuable points for consideration, such as the need to find more effective practices in program design, teaching methodology or curricula, including the necessity of a greater number of researchers interested in the field. Among those challenges, one of the most pressing needs is the lack of theoretical proposals in the field, which was already a concern in 2000 when Guadalupe Valdés noted that “the

pedagogies and practices currently used for teaching heritage languages are essentially atheoretical” (2000b, p. 389).

In Part II’s Chapter 16, “Critical Approaches to Teaching Spanish as Local/Foreign Language”, Jennifer Leeman aims to “explore the history of critical approaches and their application to the teaching of Spanish” and to present proposals for “critical alternatives” (p. 275). The chapter offers insights into core issues and topics related to the situation of Spanish in the local context of the U.S., ideologies of Spanish as a foreign language, linguistic hierarchies in Spanish as a heritage language, aspects of standard language ideology in Spanish, and the invisibility of speakers of local varieties of Spanish. The author also explores critical proposals for the teaching of Spanish as local/foreign language. For example, she proposes to address Spanish language education not only through an interdisciplinary perspective integrating fields as literature, cultural studies or anthropology, but more specifically to use Spanish L2 education to allow students to examine language-related sociocultural and political issues. Finally, she proposes that there should be a reconceptualization of SFL (Spanish as a Foreign Language) through critical approaches to teaching Spanish that “call for educators to broaden the curricular content to include more linguistic, cultural, ethnoracial, social, and economic diversity” (p. 287).

Chapter 33 presents an overview of “Language Policy and Planning Spanish in the US”. Reynaldo F. Macías begins with a historical review of the “diversity and policies of the groups that have lived in the territory currently claimed by the US, including diversity and language policies prior to its establishment or political expansion” (p. 590). He differentiates three periods of language policy: independent or indigenous (up to 1492), colonial (between 1492 and 1776) and national (1776 to 2013). The core issues and topics provide the reader with a good basic understanding of language practices in Spanish, speech communities, and the official status of these practices in policies and politics (p. 594). The notion of speech communities is also important to Chapter 35, “Spanish Language and Migrations,” in which Francisco Moreno-Fernández elaborates on the most important linguistic studies and research related to Hispanic migration and its consequences. Topics related to the impact of social and individual factors on linguistic migration and the impact of migration on languages are brought into focus. To be more precise, Moreno-Fernández claims that if we are able to understand what happens to languages in a context of migration, we will be able to better understand its repercussions at the social and individual levels. The author also emphasizes that in the future we will have to become familiar with two phenomena: geographical interconnectivity and global cities. In this context, he states that languages will still have an impact on social and individual levels. Linguistics, in addition to being interested in such impact, will be interested in “the social use of migrant languages in their contexts of reception, and into contacts between languages and varieties” (p. 632). As a consequence of migrations of speakers of major international languages, the author warns us that linguistics will be necessary to design language models and create standards of correctness.

In addition to the above chapters related to issues of the acquisition and teaching of SHL, two other chapters include aspects relevant to the field. Written by Glenn A. Martínez, Chapter 24 about “Spanish in the Health Professions” highlights three main issues: (1) the relationship between language, health care and health; (2) medical interpreting services; and (3) the development of workplace language skills appropriate to health care professions. The author

explains that new issues have begun to emerge in this rapidly growing field, among them “the roles and the training of dual-role interpreters in the health professions, bilingual health professionals and interprofessional communication along the continuum of care, language education across the undergraduate-professional school continuum, and the feasibility of language-specific health systems” (p. 432).

The book’s last chapter on “Spanish and Hispanic Bilingualism” by Ofelia García and Ricardo Otheguy is also highly relevant to SHL, focusing on the Spanish language “as a way of speaking deployed in multilingual social contexts by multilingual speakers” (p. 639). The chapter describes key theoretical concepts such as an “abstract-centered view of Hispanic bilingualism, a disaggregated view of linguistic competence and a translanguaging view of linguistic practices, all sheltered under what is generally known as a heteroglossic ideology” (p. 639). More specifically, for the authors Spanish bilingualism should not be regarded as a set of discrete languages that are compartmentalized in the mental grammar of the speaker, but as something based on the adoption of cultural and political categorizations. In this sense, bilinguals will be seen as translanguagers because they do not use single systems but different linguistic features to create meaning. Five central questions are posed: (1) What is Spanish bilingualism?; (2) What is NOT Spanish bilingualism?; (3) Who are Spanish speakers?; (4) How do Spanish-speaking bilingual communities “language”?; and (5) How is Spanish taught in bilingual contexts and what do we need to consider? This chapter also offers historical perspectives on multilingualism as a feature that has been central in the Hispanic world. In concluding, the authors affirm that we must regard Spanish not only as part of the social and cultural practices of monolingual speakers but also of bilinguals.

This Handbook is highly recommended to anyone who seeks a comprehensive and extremely well referenced overview of central issues in the field of Hispanic Applied Linguistics, ranging from aspects of second and heritage language teaching to matters of Spanish in the professions, discourses of Spanish in academic, institutional and commercial contexts, and in diverse social and political settings throughout the Hispanic world. Its multidisciplinary scope and the sensible combination of theoretical and applied perspectives make it an essential resource for scholars of applied linguistics in general, and of Spanish linguistics in particular. In light of the continued growth of interest in studying Spanish in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, as well as in China and Japan, the cogent and concise overviews of teaching methodologies, issues of program articulation and management, online courses, and emerging technological contexts for teaching Spanish that are presented in this book will surely constitute an invaluable resource for researchers, administrators and practitioners.

Lacorte reminds the reader in the introduction that: “a volume of this magnitude and scope may indeed involve limitations, such as the omission of certain areas of interest within applied linguistics, the way which authors have examined a particular topic or the extent to which a chapter may address the situation of the discipline throughout the Spanish-speaking world” (p. 5). Perhaps one of those points of concern appears in Chapter 8 on “Spanish as a Heritage Language”. The chapter’s purpose is to provide an overview of the SHL field through the HLE perspective. Its relevance to the SHL field lies on the fact that it can contribute to expanding research focused on acquisition and pedagogy of heritage and community languages by fostering

readers' reflections on different kinds of connections across disciplines and as a consequence promoting critical awareness at different levels. Even though the author provides a clear outline of future perspectives for the field, the reader would benefit from a bit more elaboration on the stated need for a guiding theory in heritage language education. This could have been achieved by providing the main points to take into account for such a theory, and briefly describing the possible outcomes and implications of a common framework for the profession. Lacorte clearly anticipated concerns such as this one, prompting his choice to include sections on "Further Reading" and "Related Topics" in each one of the Handbook's 36 chapters. These references will be greatly appreciated by readers, and will stimulate thought and exploration for researchers and scholars, no matter how novice or expert they are. The cross-referenced presentation of concepts in different chapters is also a main strength of the text.

Readers will quickly realize that Lacorte's initial caveat about the book's limitations is not to be a matter of concern, as they venture into its various sections and appreciate the comprehensive and highly accessible review of the most important topics in Hispanic applied linguistics. *The Routledge Handbook of Hispanic Applied Linguistics* is a truly valuable resource for professors, scholars, researchers, practitioners and students. The book is faithful to the editor's stated aim in the introduction to present a view of the field of Hispanic applied linguistics as a "discipline of mediation" (p. 3), covering complex issues of multilingualism, globalization and multimodal communication (p. 3). It will undoubtedly surpass the expectations of most readers, and will serve to foment future inquiries and fruitful debates in the field of Hispanic applied linguistics and in HLA more generally.

REFERENCE

Valdés, G. (2000). The teaching of heritage languages: An introduction for Slavic teaching professionals. In O. Kagan & B. Rifkin (Eds.), *The learning and teaching of Slavic languages and cultures* (pp. 375-403). Bloomington, IN: Slavica.