

**Review: Kagan, Olga, Carreira, Maria M., & Hitchins Chik, Claire (Eds.).  
(2017). *The Routledge handbook of heritage language education: From  
innovation to program building*. Taylor & Francis.**

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Book Review

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**ABSTRACT**

**EN** | *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Language Education* successfully contextualizes heritage language education initiatives across a wide range of languages and geographical settings. It comprises an impressive range of studies that cover all levels of education and show the institutionalization process of heritage language education initiatives. The book is recommended reading for researchers, scholars, educators, language planners, and practitioners.

**Key words:** HERITAGE LANGUAGE, INSTITUTIONALIZATION, MINORITY LANGUAGE, INNOVATION

**ES** | *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Language Education* contextualiza con éxito las iniciativas educativas realizadas en el campo de las lenguas de herencia en una amplia gama de entornos geográficos. Incluye una impresionante variedad de estudios que abarcan todos los niveles educativos y muestran el proceso de institucionalización de las iniciativas de enseñanza de las lenguas de herencia. El libro está dirigido a investigadores, académicos, responsables de planificación lingüística y profesores de lenguas.

**Palabras clave:** LENGUAS DE HERENCIA, INSTITUCIONALIZACIÓN, LENGUAS MINORITARIAS, INNOVACIÓN

**IT** | *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Language Education* inquadra con esito positivo le iniziative di percorsi educativi che riguardano lo studio delle lingue ereditarie in numerose aree geografiche. Il lavoro comprende una gamma sorprendentemente vasta di studi che riguardano tutti i livelli di istruzione, e rivela il processo di istituzionalizzazione delle iniziative a livello educativo riguardanti le lingue ereditarie. Il libro è rivolto a ricercatori, studiosi, responsabili delle politiche linguistiche e insegnanti di lingua.

**Parole chiave:** LINGUE EREDITARIE, ISTITUZIONALIZZAZIONE DI PERCORSI EDUCATIVI, LINGUE MINORITARIE, INNOVAZIONE

## 1. Introduction

Recent significant developments in heritage language (HL) education have enhanced the understanding of HL teaching and consolidated HL education as an emerging field in education (Felices-De la Fuente, 2020). A heritage language refers to the home language of a bilingual speaker who is dominant in the main societal language (Polinsky, 2018). Growing awareness of HL education, a greater appreciation of HL programs, and attempts by schools to build or improve HL teaching programs have led to renewed interest in HL teaching across the world. With recently developed pedagogical approaches to foster HL competence, more and more traditional language teaching programs have been replaced by education programs promoting multilingualism. For example, positive pedagogical changes were documented thanks to increased visibility of HLs in 23 New York City schools participating in the CUNY-NYSIEB project (Menken, Pérez Rosario, & Guzmán Valerio, 2018). Elsewhere, a report by the Minnesota Department of Education (2018) shows an increase in primary home languages other than English. In addition, Leonard, Vitrella, and Yang (2020) published a report on the 2019 Summit, which drew attention to the need to engage more HL learners and created a series of calls to action for students, families, teachers, educational institutions, and state agencies to develop and promote HL programs. European policies identifying multilingualism as a goal for European citizens have also led to an increase in the number of HL teaching programs in Europe. Recent developments such as these have made it necessary to revisit *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Language Education: From Innovation to Program Building*, published in 2017 and edited by Olga Kagan, Maria M. Carreira, and Claire Hitchens Chik.

Agnes He (2010) refers to HLs as “the language[s] of the heart” (p. 66). As HLs are the very first languages that children are exposed to within the family setting, these languages have a special meaning for heritage speakers. As the HL speaker population grows, the need to promote HL acquisition and maintenance is also expanding. An increasing number of educational institutions have recently begun to support HL development or to offer instruction in HLs, but the question arises of whether to teach these languages as L1 or L2. Heritage speakers fit neither into the model of a monolingual native speaker nor into that of a balanced bilingual (Chang, 2016). Therefore, it is vital that educational institutions foster pedagogical innovation in HL teaching and meet the linguistic needs of this special group of speakers.

The title of the handbook implies to its readers that its aim is to introduce innovative approaches to HL teaching within the framework of institutionalization. The volume adopts Ekholm and Trier’s (1987) definition of *institutionalization*, which refers to the assimilation of an innovation into an organization, such as a school, until it becomes stable and routinized. This explanation points out how innovation and institutionalization are interrelated in an education context. The studies in this handbook successfully represent the process of institutionalization, through the acceptance of changes in teaching (e.g., the adoption of a new curriculum or new teaching practices by different educational institutions).

With 31 chapters by 50 authors, this handbook makes significant contributions to the field of HL education, which is itself an emerging field. It reaches a wide audience by covering all levels of education on an international HL teaching spectrum and enriching it with carefully designed studies. These studies are likely to appeal to researchers, language planners, and practitioners who would like to establish a new HL education program or adopt a new curriculum or approach. The handbook’s significant contributions to the field lie in the compilation of an impressive number of studies and in the diversity of educational contexts described.

## 2. Summary of content

The handbook is a single volume comprised of studies on 22 languages, conducted by researchers in various areas of the world. The volume is divided into seven parts, each of which includes four to five chapters. Its 31 chapters cover all levels of education and encompass studies focusing on HLs spoken by both immigrant and diasporic communities. These studies investigate HL education practices within the framework of institutionalization, on both the micro- and macro-levels.

The first part of the volume is devoted to the changing demographics of HL communities in many parts of the world. The five chapters in this part provide a historical overview of changing demographics and immigration patterns; they also cover immigrant languages and HLs in Europe, Australia, the United States, Latin America, and Canada. For example, Wiley and Bhalla’s chapter (Chapter 3) on the demographics of heritage and community languages in the United States enables readers to gain insight into the sources of linguistic diversity in the United States by comparing historical and current census data. Wiley and Bhalla identify a disconnect between the top 10 languages spoken in U.S. homes and the most popular foreign

languages offered in the U.S. schools. This chapter concludes with useful recommendations to adopt a broader and more comprehensive national policy that embraces the multilingual reality of the United States.

The second and third parts of the handbook introduce HL education paradigms initiated by minority communities such as after-school programs and all-day pre-, primary, and secondary schools. The nine chapters in Parts 2 and 3 outline the stages of institutionalization of these community initiatives and the process of adopting innovation. Chapter 6, by Uriu and Douglas, describes how a Japanese weekend school in California went through a significant institutional change by adopting a new HL curriculum. Implementation of the new curriculum was well-known to the authors through their own involvement in the curricular change. The chapter presents a very realistic picture of adopting an innovative curriculum, acknowledging negative developments such as skeptical parents, overburdened, overworked, and underpaid teachers, and the loss of a third of the students as well as more than half of the teachers. A particular strength of this chapter is the way that it reflects students', parents', teachers', and the school administration's perspectives on the challenging political process of initiating a curricular change, and recounts how the school overcame this crisis. The authors conclude that although there is still a long road ahead of them to fully stabilize the curriculum, they are making progress.

Chapter 12 (by Bourgerie) takes a close look at how Chinese education has evolved in line with political and cultural changes in the Cambodian Chinese diaspora. The historical overview of Chinese presence in Cambodia, the background of the Chinese language, the number of Chinese dialect speakers and Chinese populations in Cambodia offers important contextualization to readers with limited or no background knowledge on Chinese as an HL in Cambodia. The author first identifies factors such as the teachers' backgrounds and the students' levels of language use at home and elsewhere, literacy levels, ethnic identity, and religion, before delving into the issues of the pedagogy and approaches used in teaching Chinese as an HL in four schools in Cambodia and comparing these with those used in Mainland China. The examination of these factors enables readers to understand the reasons for shifting attitudes towards Chinese language in Cambodia and, accordingly, perceptions about Chinese HL education as a professional asset.

The nine studies in Parts 4 and 5 of the handbook investigate to what extent public education systems meet the linguistic needs of HL speakers and how societal and governmental policies and ideologies shape the organization of these paradigms. In Chapter 15, Kagan depicts the vivid multilingual landscape of the metropolitan area of Los Angeles and investigates whether the local high schools offer the languages spoken by the ethnic communities that they serve. Kagan's findings highlight a disparity between the languages used by residents and the foreign languages and HLs offered by the schools in the region. The chapter is limited to one specific area and a small number of interviewees and survey respondents. However, it achieves its goals by identifying the vital need for schools to offer instruction in languages spoken by the community in which a school is located. It also highlights the importance of offering these languages in a way that meets the linguistic needs of both foreign language and HL learners. With this goal in mind, the author moves on to describe successful HL programs and concludes with useful recommendations for schools to make the most of the linguistic and cultural richness of their surrounding communities. The chapters in Part 5 continue to exemplify the institutionalization of various types of HL programs in public schools from Japan, New Zealand, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, and Germany.

Part 6 addresses the presence of HLs in higher education. In Chapter 25, Nielsen's framework of "Arabic-as-resource" or "Arabic-as-problem" engages readers with the teaching of Arabic as HL in Danish higher education and helps readers to understand the status of Arabic in Danish media, politics, and language education policies. The author outlines key issues in the design of Arabic programs, which were expected to achieve short-term economic goals in Danish postsecondary education, in addition to the challenges that Arabic HL learners face.

The last part of the volume, Part 7, addresses HL maintenance. The four chapters in this part provide examples from learning Chinese, Turkish, Korean, and Yiddish as HLs in formal and informal contexts. Pfaff, Dollnick, and Herkenrath present an outstanding chapter on Turkish HL maintenance in Germany. Their chapter, Chapter 29, shows how an extensive collaboration between formal and informal structures may lead to an increase in support for HL instruction. This chapter documents macro-level demographic and social factors affecting Turkish in Germany, including micro-level language programs. The authors come to the uneasy conclusion that the institutionalization of Turkish HL education in Germany is controversial; although there is a great deal of support for Turkish, language instruction is still not available for all HL learners and HL classes are still very restricted in mainstream schools.

One of the main messages of this handbook concerns the integration of HL education in a manner that is not limited by bottom-up attempts. To do this, the authors opt for a common approach of institutionalization through innovation to investigate HL teaching programs. Therefore, in order to identify to what extent HL education programs are institutionalized, the studies present evidence from educators, directors, families, and students through observations, interviews, surveys, and linguistic biographies. This volume diverges from others in its field because it does not attempt to present ideal models for teaching HLs. In addition, although the field of HL education has yet to be fully developed, the volume consists of studies on HL maintenance in formal education contexts, unlike others that mainly focus on the home setting.

### 3. Analysis and evaluation

*The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Language Education* covers a wide range of languages and geographical settings. Despite the immense scope of the book, the concept of institutionalization provides readers with a common framework for approaching different HL programs in various educational settings. While the studies in each part present a number of approaches to HL education, certain indicators of institutionalization are identified in the volume such as linguistic resources, teacher qualifications, and funding. These indicators enable readers to compare the degree of institutionalization of different HL education paradigms and initiatives.

One of the main strengths of the book is the way it successfully contextualizes HL education initiatives through a number of studies conducted in various parts of the world. Each study introduces the teaching of a non-dominant language in a different educational setting. These studies provide readers with a comprehensive historical and methodological overview of the HL programs, as well as demographic analyses, information on the status of foreign/minority language instruction in the mainstream education systems of the host countries, multilingual practices in particular cities, and language ideologies within immigrant and host communities. A well-presented background of the status of HLs and multilingual practices in the host countries helps readers to gain a better understanding of HL teaching initiatives.

Another strength of the book is its engagement with micro- and macro-levels of HL teaching initiatives. HL teaching programs are evaluated through both the work of researchers and linguists, as well as through the statements of families, students, and teachers who are actively involved in this process. Direct statements from teachers and members of executive committees are, for example, used in the study conducted on Brazilian complementary schools in London and Barcelona (Chapter 8). The sixth chapter, concerning a Japanese weekend school in California, presents perspectives of teachers, parents, and students. These studies, with their use of personal narratives, enhance insight into the possible challenges and risks inherent to the process of adopting a new curriculum, while suggesting ways to overcome these obstacles.

One of the shortcomings of the handbook is that, although it covers all levels of education in various types of educational institutions, it does not detail the efficiency and outcomes of these HL education programs or long-term consequences of the innovations made by adopting a new approach, strategy, or curriculum. The outcomes of these programs are not only significant to understanding the impacts of different approaches to institutionalization, but also to helping educators, administrators, and policymakers to decide what kind of models or strategies to adopt in establishing or improving an HL teaching program. The “Lessons Learned” section of the introduction does present useful tips from the studies in the book about the requirements and challenges of the institutionalization of HL practices into the curriculum. Devoting an entire chapter to learning outcomes, however, could have been of greater help to readers and offered better insight into comparing different HL teaching approaches and models.

This handbook is immensely useful for HL scholars and educators and it makes significant contributions to the field of HL education. It deepens an understanding of HL education by emphasizing that it is an issue that must be tackled on an international level. The variety of theoretical and pedagogical approaches—including bottom-up education program initiatives, introduced by many researchers—is another tremendous achievement of this book. The handbook may also be useful for comparing and contrasting the experiences of other teachers and administrators in diverse educational settings around the world.

### 4. Conclusion

The book sheds light on innovations in HL teaching pedagogy and provides a broad outline of HL education programs across various parts of the world. Most of the studies are conducted by researchers who

are members of the minority speech communities in which they conduct their research. These studies and observations help readers gain better insight into the status of immigrant languages and HLs. The theoretical and practical overviews of the educational paradigms make a significant contribution to future work in this area through identifying the limitations of the studies and introducing novel approaches.

Mobility in the 21st century and the changing face of multilingualism are well-reflected in the book. A limitation of the handbook is the fact that learning outcomes from the HL education programs are not addressed in the studies. However, diverse approaches to HL education, teaching methods, assessment tools, and language teaching materials present readers with a rich source of HL maintenance practices that may be adapted and applied by educators working in and with minoritized communities.

The handbook's dedication to parents and educators indicates an appreciation of their diligent and often voluntary work, in the face of many challenges, to maintain their community languages or HLs. The efforts made by these dedicated people result in inspiring bottom-up HL teaching initiatives. In sum, the handbook contributes to the field of HL education by encouraging other minority speech communities to create bonds, to collaborate as a means to learn from each other's experiences, and to initiate teaching programs. The handbook is worth reading for those who intend to establish and maintain sustainable and successful minority language teaching programs.

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