

Bauckus, Susan and Susan Kresin, eds. (2018). *Connecting Across Languages And Cultures: A Heritage Language Festschrift in Honor of Olga Kagan*. Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica. 215 pp.
Alla Smyslova In: *Russian Language Journal*, Vol. 68 (2018): 164

This volume pays tribute to Olga Kagan, who was a pioneer of Russian heritage language studies and a core figure in the rapidly growing field of heritage languages in general in the U.S, and who connected pedagogical research with linguistic one and researchers with practitioners. Sadly, Olga Kagan passed away on April 6, 2018. This loss to the field will be felt through years to come. The editors of the volume continue Kagan's legacy and present a collection of the latest contributions in heritage language (HL) linguistics and pedagogy. The first section of the volume consists of six articles on classroom practices (Carreira, Chik); heritage identity and socialization practices (Avineri); motivation and anxiety (Karapetian); the role of technology (Van Deusen-Scholl); the role of cultural awareness in language acquisition (Friedberg, Kudyma); and discourse practices of heritage speakers (HSs) in comparison with L2 learners (Mikhaylova and Ravitch). The four articles in the second section address linguistic studies of the HL system in various language sub-systems – grammatical (Lynch, Polinsky); lexical (Gor); syntactical (Laleko, Dubinina) and the discourse level (Ivanova-Sullivan).

This volume opens with a bibliography of Kagan's publications, including her last work, a five-hundred-page book that presents a comprehensive overview of HL programs and practices for language maintenance and development, setting the stage for future work in HL education and research¹.

In the *Foreword*, Terrence G. Wiley, a long-time contributor to HL research, provides a concise

¹ Kagan, Olga, Maria Carreira, Claire Hitchens Chik, eds. (2017). *A Handbook on Heritage Language Education: From Innovation to Program Building*. New York: Routledge.

overview of the major turning points in the evolution of the HL field in the U.S., from Joshua Fishman’s groundbreaking work in the 1960s to Kagan’s involvement with the online *Heritage Language Journal* and the National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) in the 2000s. Kagan, who was instrumental in starting the journal and served as a founding director of the NHLRC, was a tireless and passionate advocate of HL education and research. Kagan’s work spanned many disciplines, crossing many academic and geographic borders and engaging scholars and practitioners nationally and internationally.

The articles in the first section detail the different types of relationships that individuals have with their HL in terms of proficiency, identity, and culture. The section opens with Maria Carreira and Claire Hitchins Chik’s article, which summarizes “the main linguistic and affective characteristics of HL learners” and provides an overview of effective HL teaching practices. Carreira and Chik make a compelling argument in favor of HL-specific courses—separate from non-heritage (L2) learners especially in the lower levels of instruction. The differences in language needs between these two types of learners “render L2 pedagogies ineffective, if not counter-productive” (19). Carreira and Chik focus on approaches that have proven most effective for helping HL learners reach the highest levels in language programs tailored to their strengths and needs. The authors assert that language departments can benefit from offering HL-specific courses, thanks to increased enrollments by attracting more students. and enabling departments to increase the number of upper-level courses offered since students in HL-dedicated courses can advance to higher levels of proficiency faster than L2 learners (20).

Netta Avineri and Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl look at different ways individuals connect to their HL. Avineri’s article explores the relationship with identity through the model of a “metalinguistic community” the basis of which is a range of nostalgia socialization practices (27). Avineri argues

that personal experiences and historical context may strengthen or weaken an individual's bonds with HL. Van Deusen-Scholl then takes a closer look at the concept of heritage identity of students of rarely-taught languages, who are remote from their HL speech communities. These students take language courses through the Shared Course Initiative (SCI), which allows American universities to use distance learning technology to conduct language instruction. By evaluating the successes as well as the challenges the program faces, Van Deusen-Scholl demonstrates how SCI has helped students who are disconnected from their actual HL communities maintain their "heritage identity" through virtual communities.

The contribution by Anna Mikhaylova and Lara Ravitch offers insights into the features of the narratives of teenage adoptees from Russian-speaking countries several years after adoption, in comparison with the narratives of L2 learners. Their results support the idea that "early exposure to the heritage language puts HL speakers at an advantage over post-puberty L2 learners" (132). Despite this advantage, Nila Friedberg and Anna Kudyma argue in their articles that even highly-proficient HSs lack cultural knowledge. They reveal that Russian heritage learners are most familiar with classical nineteenth-century writers, while twentieth-century writers fall far behind, and they are even less familiar with films.

Although, as research shows, heritage learners have lower levels of anxiety than L2 learners, their fear of judgment still creates high affective filters and reduces the impact of comprehensible input. Shushan Karapetian's article addresses the struggles that HL speakers experience when they engage with more proficient speakers of their HL and perceive negative reactions. Based on an overview of the research on language anxiety and examples drawn from learners of Spanish, Turkish, and Korean, Karapetian links language knowledge, language output, and language anxiety into "a seemingly vicious cycle" (85). To break the cycle, the author suggests educating

HL speakers, community members, and teachers of HL courses to understand that HL speakers are not failed native speakers but multicompetent speakers in their own right (97).

The four linguistic studies in the second section focus on how close the language system of HL learners of various proficiency levels is to the system of native speakers (NSs). The article by Andrew Lynch and Maria Polinsky examines the linguistic strengths and weaknesses of HL learners, whose abilities widely vary and present the biggest challenge to researchers and instructors. The authors provide a particularly relevant overview of HL research focusing on the “native-like” and “non-native-like” linguistic strategies used by heritage learners of all proficiency levels in language production and language comprehension. Their observation suggests that HL speakers resemble NSs far more than previously acknowledged, leading Lynch and Polinsky to conclude that HL research should be considered “as an extension of research of NS competence or ability in general” (146). The authors recommend that future research in the field should examine second-, third- and fourth-generation heritage speakers (151) to better understand how language change may unfold in real time rather than reconstruct historical changes hypothetically (154).

Two of the other contributions in this section further support the conclusion of “the native-likeness” of the linguistic abilities of Russian HSs. Kira Gor studies the phonological aspects of word storage and retrieval in HSs compared to L2 learners. Previous research has demonstrated that “there are substantial differences in the mechanism underlying native and nonnative lexical access” (166). Gor’s study confirms that highly-proficient HSs follow the NSs’ patterns in word recognition. Oksana Laleko and Irina Dubinina explore the underexplored topic of control over word order. Their data demonstrates that HSs, like NSs, exhibit a strong preference for canonical word order. When using non-canonical word-order, specifically dislocation and inversion, both

heritage and native speakers prefer dislocation (210).

However, the lower the proficiency level of HL learners is, the wider the gap between them and NSs becomes. Tanya Ivanova-Sullivan's experimental study examines discourse coherence at the intersentential level and discourse maintenance in narratives produced by low-proficient HSs. The study demonstrates that low- and intermediate-proficient HSs produce a much higher percentage of ambiguous pronouns and allow much more redundancy in their use of overt pronouns as well as lack variety of temporal and spatial references in contrast to highly-proficient HSs and NSs (184-185).

Each study in this volume addresses the current challenge in the field of HL, namely the diverse levels of language competence among HL speakers, and contributes to the argument for HL-dedicated courses that harness language strengths to compensate for weaknesses in linguistic and socio-linguistic knowledge, enabling heritage learners to attain higher proficiency levels over a considerably shorter period of time than non-heritage learners. This volume, in addition to honoring Olga Kagan's legacy in the field, will help a broad audience of school administrators, foreign language curriculum designers and instructors, researchers better understand heritage learners, their strengths and needs, as well as what foreign language programs can do to attract this group of language learners, potentially leading to an increase in the breadth of offerings in foreign language programs.

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