

Teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Heritage Language Students: Curriculum Needs, Materials, and Assessment

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Teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Heritage Language Students: Curriculum Needs, Materials, and Assessment, edited by Kimi Kondo-Brown and James Dean Brown, is a collection of empirical research on Japanese, Korean, and Chinese heritage language (HL) education. To contextualize the research, the editors define HL learners as individuals “who have acquired their cultural and linguistic competence in a nondominant language primarily through contact at home with foreign-born parents and/or other family members” (p. 3). The book covers important and timely issues, such as the two-track system of heritage and non-heritage language (NHL) learners, the assessment of HL proficiency, and the intricacies of HL curriculum design, currently under contemplation in the field of HL education. The wide array of articles collected in this publication will interest researchers, policy makers, curriculum writers, teacher educators and teacher trainees at all levels. Prior publications on HL education have been predominately based on Spanish as an HL and do not directly address matters that are unique to East Asian HL education. This volume provides HL educators of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese a much-needed resource that speaks to their unique experience and needs.

The conversation on the current state of East Asian HL education begins with Kondo-Brown and Brown’s suggestion that Japanese, Korean, and Chinese HL researchers generate inquiries into the needs, objectives, assessment, content, pedagogy, and evaluation of their learners and programs. Kondo-Brown and Brown write, “what makes heritage language curriculum development different from other curriculum is not the elements involved but rather the fact that the curriculum must be designed so specifically for the particular population of heritage language students” (p. 7). The argument presented by the authors is important as research on Spanish HL learners also revealed a need to tailor curriculum and instruction toward the specific linguistic needs of HL learners (Aparico, 1983; Garcia & Diaz, 1992; McQuillan, 1996; Valdés, 1995). Valdés (1995), in her research on minority languages as academic subjects, writes that “Heritage language students of Spanish may speak fluent Spanish but not be able to read and write it” (as cited in Kondo-Brown & Brown, 2007, p. 6). McQuillan (1996) also documents that Spanish HL speakers “demonstrate varying levels of both oral and written Spanish proficiency thus indicating a need for developing heritage language curriculum with individual differences in mind” (as cited in Kondo-Brown & Brown, 2007, p. 6).

In chapter 2, Kondo-Brown presents a literature review on Japanese, Korean, and Chinese HL learner needs analysis. Studies reviewed show all three HL groups mentioned above as sharing “a number of serious instructional and curriculum problems” (p. 33), such as failure to take into consideration individual differences among HL learners and the practice of placing HL learners into classrooms with curriculum that was not designed for their needs. Kondo-Brown believes that such problems may explain the lack of correlation between time spent in HL schools and the actual HL proficiency of many learners. To initiate change in the instruction and curriculum design of HL education, Kondo-Brown also provides a general discussion on the importance of innovation in curriculum, teaching materials, and assessment of HL learners that are further elaborated upon in the following chapters of the book.

In response to the need for innovation in language testing and the placement of HL learners in language classrooms, chapters 3 through 6 focus on language needs analyses conducted in college or weekend Japanese and Korean HL programs. Focusing on quantitative research methods, chapter 3 examines the Japanese language ability of students in *hoshuukoo* (weekend Japanese programs that teach children of Japanese sojourners planning to return to Japan). The chapter's authors, Katoka, Koshiyama, and Shibata, conclude that *hoshuukoo* students have a higher chance of becoming bilingual due to the academic language focus of *hoshuukoo*. The study also notes the importance of teaching Japanese as a HL to students that are dominant in English, and providing students that are neither fluent in English nor Japanese with enough academic language support to be competent in either Japanese or English.

In the same vein as the discussion of students in *hoshuukoo*, in chapter 4, Hasegawa brings another dimension to the discussion of Japanese heritage learners by examining the validity of measurement standards used to evaluate child heritage learners of Japanese. The researcher concludes that despite making methodological adjustments and considering the "interest and attention of young language learners" (p. 91) in assessment design, these considerations should not outweigh the importance of assessing the HL proficiency of young learners. Hasegawa writes, "There is a good reason to focus on children in the heritage language learning context, because heritage language learning often takes place when learners are young. It is important to know how children are developing their heritage language proficiency in order to nurture their language learning" (p. 91).

Chapters 5 and 6 build on the previous chapters and expand the discussion on HL learners through examining specific linguistic elements that affect HL learning. In chapter 5, Kim looks at how HL learners and NHL learners process relative clauses in Korean, where the relative clause appears before the noun it modifies. Kim predicted that NHL learners would have higher error rates than HL learners due to a difference in exposure to Korean input. In contrast to the prediction, Kim finds that both HL and NHL learners produced similar processing errors in the experiment. It seems that HL learners, despite their relatively high exposure to Korean language and culture, still exhibited a heavy influence from English when it came to processing Korean relative clauses. The author posits that this is a result of the HL learners' fairly limited exposure to Korean oral language where speakers frequently drop case markings that help hearers comprehend relative clauses more easily. Through her findings, Kim concludes that the psychological strategies learners use to process different structures and their pedagogical implications should be further investigated.

In chapter 6, Kondo-Brown and Fukuda examine in detail how heritage and non-heritage learners monitor and identify zero pronouns in Japanese. The findings reveal that exposure and immersion in the heritage culture contributes to the ability to identify zero pronouns observed in the participants. The more exposure and immersion individuals had, the stronger their ability to identify zero pronouns in Japanese. Through this finding, the authors argue that the current practice of placing HL learners with advanced non-native learners of Japanese in the same class warrants re-examination since advanced non-native learners of Japanese did not exhibit the same ability to identify zero pronouns as the HL learner cohort. Based on this argument, the authors recommend that HL and NHL learners be separated into two different tracks to better serve the need of each cohort at the advanced level.

Shifting the focus, chapters 7 through 9 investigate how nonlinguistic factors such as identity and personal motivation influence HL learning. In chapter 7, Lee and Kim document that while linguistic needs are different for non-heritage and heritage learners, an integrated classroom affords non-heritage learners an opportunity to appreciate the linguistic heritage of their Korean heritage peers while simultaneously giving legitimacy to the Korean language in the English dominant society. According to their findings, the authors also propose that an integrated classroom is an ideal arena to introduce a content-based curriculum designed around culture. This addresses the HL learners' ultimate desire to be integrated into the Korean culture as well as providing NHL learners with ample opportunities to gain cultural knowledge in the target language.

In chapter 8, Yu builds on the idea of an integrated classroom for both heritage and non-heritage learners and introduces a "compromise curriculum" (p. 188) that was implemented in a mixed classroom with both Korean heritage and non-Korean learners. The compromise curriculum is based on a text for Korean HL learners with separately designed activities and assignments for HL and NHL learners. The assignments require active participation by both learner cohorts and place an emphasis on their collaboration. Yu's compromise curriculum presents a needed alternative for language programs that are financially constrained to offer separate tracks of study for HL and NHL learners.

While the debate over having a two-track system or an integrated classroom with heritage and non-heritage learners is ongoing, in chapter 9, Weger-Guntharp reminds the reader that the heritage learner cohort itself is extremely diverse with various needs that have to be addressed as well. Through a qualitative study that examined the different attitudes and motivation within a Chinese HL learner cohort in a university setting, the author argues that learner needs and motivation in learning Chinese could be very different depending on their HL proficiency and identity. The study revealed that (a) perception of self, (b) perception of peers, and (c) perception of teachers are variables that influence the motivation and attitudes of this particular group of students. As a pedagogical implication, the researcher states, "As educators, our goals should include efforts to create an atmosphere where all heritage students can foster a sense of investment in the language learning experience and should include measures to validate all heritage language learners' efforts to reconnect with their ethnic background through language" (p. 230).

Looking into the future of East Asian HL education, chapters 10 through 12 discuss innovative curriculum design approaches that integrate learner needs in both traditional and nontraditional ways. In chapter 10, Douglas offers a framework for curriculum design that incorporates academic subject areas, content, language arts standards, and a learner-centered approach. A sample kindergarten through first grade (K-1) Japanese HL school curriculum is introduced as an example of the proposed framework. For the college language classroom, in chapter 11, Wu presents a Chinese curriculum currently implemented at Carnegie Mellon University. The curriculum was designed around the 5 Cs (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) to address the skills and knowledge that are pertinent to developing a proficient speaker of the target language. In addition to the classroom curriculum, an online component is also in place, which is designed to reinforce the language learning experience in the classroom. As an increasing number of educators look to technology to overcome learning obstacles, in chapter 12, Zhang and Davis provide a case study of a successful online chat program currently used at the college level. The

program builds on the notion that social and peer interaction contribute to successful language learning experiences. By situating students in a real-time Chinese interactive environment, students are able to practice authentic communication in Chinese.

In sum, this volume collects recent research on Japanese, Korean, and Chinese HL education and outlines contemporary issues such as the evaluation of learner needs, the assessment of HL proficiency, and the creation of a HL curriculum that builds on language and content area standards currently implemented in the public school setting. Its discussions raise issues on the importance of incorporating situational as well as linguistic needs in the design of HL curriculum, the need to re-examine the assessment and placement procedure of HL learners to ensure that they are in classrooms that address their needs, as well as the urgency to design language curricula and textbooks that are geared towards the linguistic and situational needs of HL learners.

It is important to note that studies collected in this publication were largely based on data collected from college level HL classes or weekend HL programs that are not part of the kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) public school setting. While suggestions and findings by the various researchers may pertain to HL education at large, its direct applicability to the teaching of HL learners in a public school K-12 setting needs further consideration. However, in spite of this, *Teaching Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Heritage Language Students: Curriculum Needs, Materials, and Assessment* opens important discussions based on research regarding the fundamental issues and arguments in East Asian HL education. It is highly recommended for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers seeking professional development, heritage school administrators, and researchers involved in the promotion and advancement of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean HL education.

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