Montrul, Silvina: *The acquisition of heritage languages.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015 xvi, pp. 384.**

The last two decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in the interest in heritage language acquisition, maintenance, and attrition by both scholar and layman alike. The formal study of heritage languages and the status of their grammars have in many ways served as an important missing, complementary subfield of inquiry in our quest to better understand bi- and multilingual grammars in the mind and society. To date, what this nascent field has been sorely lacking is a volume – or a canonical set of works – that functions as a solid reference upon which future research can be built. In this work Silvina Montrul takes on the unenviable task of presenting this type of reference work for both specialist and neophyte to this ever-growing field of study. In my estimation, this book is an invaluable resource for a wide audience, although it is probably most useful for scholars new to the field.

As stated in first chapter of the book, the author's primary aim is to create a work "that provides a comprehensive and authoritative overview of the state-of-the-science of heritage language acquisition" and that "aims to fill this gap by presenting the outcome of linguistic research conducted in the last decade [...] by addressing theoretical, empirical, and practical issues in heritage language acquisition" (p. 11). The scope and content of the chapters in this book are as follows: Chapter 2 takes on the task of making sense of the various definitions that exist in the literature on heritage languages and heritage speakers. The following chapter, Chapter 3, engages in a detailed overview of structural properties commonly found in heritage grammars. Importantly, Montrul, when possible, provides a two-generation comparison of these structures in the parental generation and those who are native speakers who did not grow up in a language contact situation. Here Montrul draws on numerous studies that display a wide array of different languages and language families, which is quite impressive. Montrul leads her readership through a detailed excursion through the language acquisition process in this unique language contact situation, including a focus on the unique sociolinguistic situations that accompany heritage language acquisition in Chapter 4. Discussions of theoretical approaches to heritage language acquisition and methodological concerns when designing studies for these populations are the primary topics of Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. Chapter 7 and 8 share a strong connection with the materials and discussions introduced in Chapter 4, with the former addressing research find-

ings and their implications for formal approaches to language change and language acquisition. In a similar vein, Chapter 8 compares the differences and similarities between heritage language acquisition and second language acquisition. Beyond serving as a summary of key findings, in Chapter 9 Montrul also briefly considers the implications that this research program could have on education and language policy.

Although this book is successful in its presentation and treatment of the acquisition of heritage languages, there are a few areas that could be improved upon, in particular those parts of the book that discuss the controversies surrounding the mental representations of the grammatical systems of heritage languages across the lifespan and critical periods (determined by age and order of acquisition) in L1 acquisition. The idea that the competence grammars of heritage speakers may be 'incomplete' when compared with monolingual baseline grammars has fueled a contentious debate (see e.g. Austin et al. 2015: chapter 3 for an overview of these controversies), and the same can be said concerning the reasons behind age of acquisition effects on ultimate attainment. Occasionally one has the impression that the arguments that support both sides of these crucial debates do not receive equal treatment. With respect to biologically-based theories of L1 acquisition, there is no mention of studies such as Hernandez et al. 2005, which provides an alternatively plausible "competition"-view of age effects in the language acquisition and learning of children and adults. A more comprehensive and balanced overview of these debates would improve an otherwise superb effort. The most unfortunate aspect of this project, which is beyond the control of the author, is the fact that this edition is only available in hardback, thus making it too expensive to purchase for many who actively work on heritage grammars.

This book, when combined with Schmid's (2011) textbook on language attrition, equips its readership with the relevant background and necessary tools to both follow and conduct important research in the area of heritage language studies. This work stands to become a foundational work in the field for years to come.

References
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