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Heritage Languages: Extending Variationist Approaches

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ABSTRACT

Extending the purview of variationist sociolinguistics to a set of under-described languages, this book describes *Heritage Language Variation and Change in Toronto*, the first large-scale project investigating variation and change in heritage languages using a unified methodology for data collection, curation, analysis and interpretation across languages and generations.

This is a variationist sociolinguistically-grounded analysis of patterns in eight heritage languages spoken in Toronto. Generations (since immigration) are compared to each other and to homeland speakers. Quantitative analyses, based on spontaneously produced speech in ecologically valid environments (settings where speakers typically use their heritage language), contrasts with that from experimental psycholinguistics. The latter approach often depicts heritage speakers as distinct from monolinguals, exhibiting incomplete acquisition or language loss. In contrast, these analyses highlight similarities between heritage and homeland spontaneous speech.

The heritage languages examined are Asian (Cantonese, Korean), Austronesian (Tagalog), Romance (Faetar, Italian) and Slavic (Polish, Russian, Ukrainian). Their descriptions constitute an original contribution, broadening variationist sociolinguistic research to a wider array of languages and to systematically considering issues relevant to multilinguals.

This book outlines motivations and methods for researchers and advanced students, to encourage and support sociolinguistic research on heritage and other minoritized languages.

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