

Português para Falantes de Espanhol - Ensino e Aquisição: Artigos selecionados escritos em Português e Inglês / Portuguese for Spanish Speakers - Teaching and Acquisition: Selected articles written in Portuguese and English, Wiedemann, Lyris & Matilde V.R. Scaramucci (Orgs./Eds.), Campinas, SP: Pontes Editores, 2008. ISBN 978-85-7113-279-5

Orlando R. Kelm
Associate Professor, University of Texas at Austin

How does one write a review of a collection of articles on the teaching of Portuguese for speakers of Spanish when the collection already contains a preface that is written by none other than Francisco Gomes de Matos? There is a huge part of me that says, "If he says the book is good, then we should all read it." Similarly, how does one write a review of the articles when the editors provide an excellent forward that already reviews the content and contribution of each of the articles? There is no need to repeat that either. Instead I would like to offer some observations about why it should not intimidate us to read a book that has a title that is nearly three lines long! Don't let the title scare you away.

The First Symposium on Teaching Portuguese for Spanish Speakers was held in March of 2003 at the University of Arizona and it was organized by Ana Maria Carvalho, Antonio Simões, and Lyris Wiedemann. I was in attendance at that first symposium and I vividly recall the sense of mission that accompanied that event. For all of us who teach Portuguese, we all relate to the pedagogical issues when some students already speak Spanish and others do not. But the First Symposium also brought together a new combination of language instructors in that there were participants from Latin America, Brazil, and the United States. Although all teach students who speak Spanish, their challenges are unique. We came away with an appreciation of what it would be like to teach Portuguese at UNAM versus what it would be like to teach Argentine students in Brasilia.

This collection is comprised of articles that were presented during the Second Symposium on Teaching Portuguese for Spanish Speakers. This was held at Stanford University in 2006, again with Lyris Wiedemann as the organizer and chair. I was in Brazil during that time and was unable to attend. As such, this collection provided me with a sense of what happened during this second symposium. It does not disappoint. Where the first symposium had the feel of bringing together early pioneers, the second symposium has a feel of scholarship. That is to say, in the first symposium participants were trying to validate themselves as a unit. This allowed the participants in the second symposium to jump right into the pedagogical and acquisition issues.

The scholarship in these articles can be subdivided into two major sections. First there are articles that contribute to the understanding of language acquisition and pedagogy, independent

of the fact that the content deals with Spanish and Portuguese. For example Koike and Gualda discuss the effect of explicit and implicit teaching of grammar and Jensen uses data on language dominance to address syllable and stress timing patterns. This first area exemplifies that we have progressed beyond the “show and tell” phase of Portuguese for Spanish speakers. Instead, we are able to focus on the same issues that all linguists and language instructors are facing. Second, there are articles that build on the specific teaching of Portuguese for Spanish speakers. In this area we see articles like that of Scaramucci who discusses proficiency certification (CELPE exam) and Milleret, whose survey provides really interesting data on the Spanish language background of students in the southwest.

I join Francisco Gomes de Matos in recommending this volume for all who are interested in the teaching of Portuguese for speakers of Spanish. I thank and congratulate all involved.