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## INTRODUCTION

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# Introduction to Engaging with the Multilingual Turn for Learner Development: Practices, Issues, Discourses, and Theorisations

Andy Barfield, Oana Cusen, Yuri Imamura, & Riitta Kelly

Three years ago the four of us serendipitously met at the JALT2018 conference in Shizuoka, Japan, and shared with each other our interests in learners' multilingualism and learner development. Enthusiastic about researching and understanding such issues further, we agreed that it would be exciting to explore the multilingual turn for learner development with a wider group of teachers. This was the genesis for the proposal that we made to the Learner Development Journal Steering Group in May 2019 for Issue 5 of the Learner Development Journal (LDJ5). Proposal discussed and accepted, we next drafted and publicised a Call for Inclusive Practitioner Research and Reviews. We were extremely fortunate to hear back from teacher-researchers of various languages (English, French, and Japanese) working in Finland, Hong Kong, India, Japan, and Turkey/UK. From mid-February 2020 members of this new community started communicating with each other, and, over the next 18 months, the work for LDJ5 took shape. In this introduction we recall the original Call for Inclusive Practitioner Research and Reviews, as well as highlight the particular genres of writing that LDJ5 features. After introducing certain practices that contributors followed over those 18 months, we conclude with a short overview of the papers in LDJ5.

In drafting the Call for Inclusive Practitioner Research and Reviews, our intention was to encourage writers and reviewers to explore the multilingual turn from various points of view related to learner development, inviting them to look at practices, issues, discourses, and theorisations in the field. For this particular issue of the LDJ, we emphasized the narrative point of view, as well as our intention to create a space for voices from different contexts. Conventional academic writing can often be a distancing experience for writers, reviewers, and readers; we wanted to break away from that kind of traditional writing style and, instead, create a community where everyone's personal voice could be heard, just as if we were talking to each other as teachers. Thus, we hoped to encourage the contributors to turn their research into stories and shape them into narrative accounts. By creating an interactive community where the writing could be advanced with the help of discussions, we aimed to nurture an environment where writers could work together, share their evolving understandings, and discuss the development of their research and writing, and, by doing so, benefit from each other's points of views. Our reviewers were also an important part of this process.

Whilst offering the contributors the support of the community, we also wanted to give them freedom to explore a wide variety of areas and viewpoints to do with the multilingual turn in learner development. These included themes and issues dealing with the importance of multilingualism in languages education, the influence of multilingual approaches in moving beyond current norms and notions, learners' use of multilingual resources in becoming more autonomous, challenges and puzzles encountered in engaging with multilingual practices, and insights gained while raising children multilingually. Writers were encouraged to move between theory and practice as they worked on producing "narrative accounts" of their

own teaching and research, and “practice-related reviews” on a choice of books addressing multilingual issues in education and society.

What do we mean by narrative accounts and practice-related reviews? In the narrative accounts, each contributor focuses on issues that arise from their life regarding the multilingual turn and take on a position (or positions) from which they choose to write their accounts. As editors, we tried to help contributors explore their own style of narration. For example, one of the contributors uses her response community members as a means of reconstructing her learner’s narrative. By doing so, each narrative account becomes a unique piece with new insights into the multilingual turn. For practice-related reviews, authors connect their reading to themselves based on a particular position (or positions) that they have adopted. They also relate their reviews to their own localised learner development practices, as well as to concerns that emerged from their reading. So, these practice-related reviews are not conventional book reviews, but rather individual stories of practice and reflection. For both narrative accounts and practice-related reviews, all contributors assume an exploratory stance in their writing, which allows them to experiment with new forms of generating, analysing, and composing their texts.

In the development process for LDJ5, an important early step was the formation of “response communities” in February 2020. Every contributor was assigned to at least one group to discuss their research and writing in progress. The response communities were organised by genre (3 narrative account groups, 2 practice-related review groups). As might be expected, not everybody started at the same point in the research-writing cycle. Some had already completed their research and wished to write up their inquiries in new, more experimental ways; others were in the middle of doing, or yet to carry out, their research. Everybody, though, had made a proposal for their LDJ5 project, which became the starting point. From then on, the response community groups acted as a home base, so to speak, for contributors where they might have “sustained conversations” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 165) about the development of their research and writing—a safe place in which to video-conference and discuss their incomplete work, share doubts, and talk over different directions they might take. Importantly, all four editors took part as writers in the response communities. Each of us wrote a narrative account, as well as worked together on a co-written practice-related review. We participated alongside contributors and observed the interaction in each response community from the inside. Inevitably, we could not shed our position as editors completely, but, for the first 12 months of the project, we held off on providing any editorial feedback on writers’ drafts.

During this period, contributors went through “insider” development within the response communities, as well as “outsider” review with members of the Learner Development Journal Review Network. The latter took place from October to December 2020, and contributors had a choice between “blind peer review” and “open peer review.” With blind peer review, writers and reviewers did not know each other’s identities. This feedback was mediated by the editors, with reviewer comments anonymised. For open peer review, writers and reviewers could dialogue directly with each other. In February and March 2021, writers completed “first full drafts” and received further feedback. This came from one member of the Journal Steering Group, and two LDJ5 editors. To personalise the process, the editors also recorded a short video discussion about each draft so that writers could get a closer sense of how we saw their writing at that stage. “Second complete drafts” followed in May and June, with writers finishing “complete final drafts” between July and September, from when editing for publication took place through to December 2021. The whole process was incremental and involved different stakeholders taking part at different stages as each piece of writing grew towards completion.

What follows now is a brief introduction to each contribution to LDJ5, including a closing commentary by Maria Ruohotie-Lyhty.

## Narrative Accounts

### Multilingualism in the Foreign Language Classroom: The Curious Case of French in Mumbai .... *Vasumathi Badrinathan*

Vasumathi's narrative account discusses her awakening to the multilingual turn in language education, accompanied by the multilingual usage perceptions of six teachers of French in Mumbai. She juxtaposes the rich multilingual make-up of Indian society with strongly held teacher beliefs about monolingual target language use in the classroom and about students' existing linguistic resources hindering their acquisition of new languages. Vasumathi concludes with a call for the recognition of all these multilingual resources, and for the implementation of multilingual teaching strategies.

### Reconciling with English: An Autobiography to Ruminant Over The Different Meanings That English Has for Us .... *Akiko Nakayama*

Akiko uses her narrative account to embark on a journey of self-discovery by working through her own fraught relationship with English, aided by the discussions she had with Jina, a Korean student struggling to navigate the use of Japanese and English. Akiko's narrative intertwines two threads, Jina's and her own, around attitudes to language learning and use, and the independence they have gained. She also includes experiences involving her mother and grandmother, and thus provides an innovative look at the gendered aspect of language learning.

### Evolving Journeys of Multilingual Teachers of English in Japan .... *Oana Cusen*

In her narrative account, Oana documents a personal journey of reconciling her status as a non-native English speaking teacher (NNEST) with the multilingual practices in her personal life. Through conversations with other foreign NNESTs in Japan, Oana reflects on the contributions that such teachers can make to their learners' multilingual development, as well as ways for foreign NNESTs in Japan to bring multilingualism and multiculturalism to the language classroom.

### Reflections on Co-Teaching Multilingual University-Level Language and Communication Courses .... *Riitta Kelly and Jussi Jussila*

Writing dialogically in their narrative account, Riitta and Jussi introduce a language and communication course taught multilingually (in Finnish, Swedish, and English) by teams of teachers with different specializations at a university in Finland. They engage in a reflective dialogue about their experiences as teachers involved in the planning and implementation of this course, and look at how these experiences have changed them as language teaching professionals.

### Exploring Understandings of Multilingualism in a Social Learning Space: A Duoethnographic Account .... *Isra Wongsarnpigoon and Yuri Imamura*

Isra and Yuri take a duoethnographic approach in their narrative account to discuss the creation of a multilingual environment in the self-access center at a university in Japan. They

juxtapose their perceptions and experiences as advisors in the center with students' interview data on the topic. They also show how their understanding of ways to foster a multilingual culture in the center has evolved through their duoethnographic exploration.

### [Narrative Inquiry: Learning to Walk on Shifting Sands ... Lorraine de Beaufort](#)

Lorraine uses her narrative account in LDJ5 to revisit a narrative inquiry she had previously conducted with a student of French in Hong Kong for her doctoral research. Lorraine focuses on how the narrative text is co-constructed by researchers and participants; she also reconstructs previous narratives with the help of her LDJ5 response community. Through this process, Lorraine discovers new insights into the value of narrative and its importance for learner development.

### [Re-interpreting University Students' Multilingual Lives: Connections, Questions, and Wider Issues in Society ... Andy Barfield](#)

In his narrative account, Andy addresses issues on two sides of the same coin, namely linguistic privilege, and linguistic discrimination and oppression. He reflects on his own languaged life, as well as that of a colleague with whom he teaches a general education course on multilingual issues. Andy's narrative account then focuses on the reconstruction of the language portraits of four multilingual students, and explores potential connections to wider issues in society.

## [Practice-Related Reviews](#)

### [Book Review and Critical Dialogue about \*The Making of Monolingual Japan: Language Ideology and Japanese Modernity\* \(Heinrich, 2012\) ... Ellen Head and Chie Tsurii](#)

Ellen and Chie employ a dialogic approach to discuss questions of native speakerism, and how those are connected with the prevalence of monolingual ideologies in Japan since the time of the Meiji Restoration. They also relate issues arising from Heinrich's analysis and their discussion to their own approaches to English teaching in Japan.

### [Imagining Fair Language Policies: A Practice-Related Review of Piller's \*Linguistic Diversity and Social Justice\* ... Huw Davies](#)

Huw bases his review of Piller's work on the theme of fair language policies in the Japanese education system. He argues that in order to truly move beyond the notion of Japan as a monolingual nation, it is necessary to consider the needs of linguistic minorities in education policies and practices. Only in this way can effective multilingual practices be developed within the Japanese context.

### [Tapping into the Lives of Learners: Review of Kalaja & Melo-Pfeifer's \(2019\) \*Visualising Multilingual Lives: More Than Words\* ... Melike Bulut Al Baba](#)

Melike reviews *Visualising Multilingual Lives: More Than Words* from a number of different perspectives that inform her life: language teacher and teacher educator, as well as multilingual language user and parent. She reflects on how visual narratives like the ones described by Kalaja and Melo-Pfeifer can be applied as research methods in various multilingual contexts.

### [A Learner's Review of Horner & Weber's \(2018\) \*Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach\* ... Brennan Conaway](#)

Brennan brings his recent experiences as a Master's TESOL student to bear on his review of *Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach*. He covers issues related to the global spread of English, societal multilingualism, and multilingualism in new media, among others. Brennan also maps significant personal shifts in his understanding of these issues and other language ideologies.

### [Exploratory and Critical Reading About the Multilingual Turn with Japanese Students: Review of Conteh & Meier \(2014\) and May \(2014\) ... Alison Stewart](#)

Alison adopts a unique approach to her practice-related review, not only by reviewing two books in tandem, but also by including a detailed analysis of the insights she gained by reading these books with her students at a university in Tokyo. While highlighting the importance of introducing new ideas about multilingual theories and practices, Alison also explores certain doubts about pushing the students to change their views of language education based on these new ideas.

### [A Practitioners' Collaborative Review of \*Researching Multilingualism: Critical and Ethnographic Perspectives\* \(Martin-Jones & Martin, 2017\) ... Andy Barfield, Oana Cusen, Riitta Kelly, and Yuri Imamura](#)

In this collaborative review of *Researching Multilingualism: Critical and Ethnographic Perspectives*, Andy, Oana, Riitta, and Yuri each focus on a particular chapter in the book that speaks to them either personally or professionally (or both). Working with what is in essence a book written for researchers of multilingualism, they draw out connections to their own experiences and interests as practitioner-researchers, as well as relate these to the multilingual turn for learner development.

## Commentary

### [Openness, Creativity, Collaboration, and Narrativity Paving Our Road Towards Critical Multilingual Practices in the Classroom ... Maria Ruohotie-Lyhty](#)

Maria read through all contributions to LDJ5 with a keen critical eye, and in her commentary draws out particular themes she sees emerging across the narrative accounts and practice-related reviews. She points out that critical multilingual practices are collaborative, based on openness, and on careful ethical consideration and creativity. On this basis, Maria observes that “narratives, narrative research, and the process of narration” are central resources in the development of critical multilingual practices.

As editors and practitioner-researchers, we are delighted to share this work with you. Throughout the LDJ5 project, we have been deeply committed to supporting writers in exploring and experimenting as they created their own innovative texts outside the mould of conventional academic writing. In some ways, we sought to foster among contributors a sense of creative, collaborative, and critical autonomy for writing about the multilingual turn for learner development. We invite you, as the reader, to join this journey and take these multilingual explorations further.

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