
THE LEARNER DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL

学習者ディベロップメント研究部会誌

ISSN: 2433-5401

<https://ldjournal.ld-sig.org>

The Learner Development Journal Issue 5: Engaging with the Multilingual Turn for Learner Development: Practices, Issues, Discourses, and Theorisations

Author: Brennan Conaway

Title: A Learner's Review of Horner & Weber's (2018) *Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach*

Date of publication online: 2021

Author contact: <brennanconaway81@gmail.com>

Published by the Japan Association for Language Teaching
Learner Development Special Interest Group, Tokyo

<http://ld-sig.org/>

Copyright 2021 each respective author

The APA citation reference for this paper is:

Conaway, B. (2021). A learner's review of Horner & Weber's (2018) *Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach*. In A. Barfield, O. Cusen, Y. Imamura, & R. Kelly (Eds.), *The Learner Development Journal Issue 5: Engaging with the Multilingual Turn for Learner Development: Practices, Issues, Discourses, and Theorisations* (pp. 153–158). Tokyo: The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Learner Development Special Interest Group.

Articles are published in the Learner Development Journal under a Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY), of which CC BY 4.0 is the most recent version. Under this agreement, authors grant users the right to unrestricted dissemination and re-use of the work. They ask only that proper attribution is given to the work.

A Learner's Review of Horner & Weber's (2018) *Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach*

Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach. Kristine Horner & Jean-Jacques Weber (2nd ed.). Routledge, 2018. xv + 308 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-24449-8

Reviewed by

Brennan Conaway, Tokai University, Japan

<brennanconaway81@gmail.com>

This review of *Introducing Multilingualism: A Social Approach* (Horner & Weber, 2018) looks at interconnections and interactions between language ideologies, dominant discourses, and language use in specific cases across a wide range of contexts. Among many different issues, the book covers the global spread of languages (including English), societal multilingualism, mother tongue education, discourses on migration, and multilingualism in new media. Horner and Weber present a stimulating introduction to multilingual issues in society in this global age. I wrote this review as an adult learner reading the book while completing a TESOL master's program, and I share revelations and discoveries made during the process of reading Horner and Weber and studying multilingualism. I conclude the review with my response to the book and some personal thoughts about my previously held beliefs and assumptions about certain language ideologies.

本稿は、幅広いコンテキストの具体的なケースにおける言語イデオロギー、支配的言説、言語使用の間の相互関連と相互作用に注目した書籍、*Introducing multilingualism: A social approach* (Horner & Weber, 2018) の書評である。様々な問題の中でも、本書は言語（英語を含む）の世界的な広がり、社会的な多言語主義、母語教育、移民に関する言説、そして新しいメディアにおける多言語主義を取り上げている。Horner & Weber は、このグローバル時代の社会における多言語問題について関心をかき立てる紹介をしている。この書評は、筆者がTESOL修士課程でこの本を読み一成人学習者の目線から書いたものである。Horner & Weberを読み、多言語主義を研究する過程で得た発見や気づきを共有する。最後に、この本に対する学習者個人としての反応と、特定の言語イデオロギーに関して以前から抱いていた信念や仮定についての個人的な考えを述べ、この書評を締めくくる。

Esta es una revisión de *Introducing multilingualism: A social approach* (Horner & Weber, 2018) que analiza las interconexiones e interacciones entre las ideologías lingüísticas, los discursos dominantes y el uso del lenguaje en casos específicos en una amplia gama de contextos. Entre muchos temas diferentes, el libro cubre la difusión mundial de idiomas (incluido el inglés), el multilingüismo social, la educación en la lengua materna, los discursos sobre la migración y el multilingüismo en los nuevos medios. Horner y Weber presentan una estimulante introducción a los problemas multilingües en la sociedad en esta era global. Escribí la reseña como estudiante adulto leyendo el libro mientras completaba un programa de maestría de TESOL. Aquí comparto revelaciones y descubrimientos hechos durante el proceso de lectura de Horner y Weber y el estudio del multilingüismo. Concluyo la reseña con mi respuesta al libro y algunos pensamientos personales sobre mis creencias y suposiciones previamente sostenidas sobre ciertas ideologías lingüísticas.

Keywords

multilingualism, adult learner, social approach, identity, language ideologies

多言語主義, 成人学習者, 社会的アプローチ, アイデンティティ, 言語イデオロギー

multilingüismo, alumno adulto, enfoque social, identidad, ideologías lingüísticas

In a time that now feels like a different era, when zoom was a word used in comic books and not for online classes, I entered the TESOL master's program at Temple University Japan. I was pursuing a graduate degree for purely practical reasons: I wanted to learn how to teach English and then find a job somewhere in the Tokyo megalopolis. But as I progressed through

the program and was introduced to different theories about language acquisition and alternate definitions of language itself, I went through a de- and re-construction of my conceptions about the English language. I realized that I had been unaware of my own preconceptions about language, the “ideas and feelings, norms and values, which inform the way people think about languages” (p. 20). That process was helped along by Kristine Horner and Jean-Jacques Weber’s *Introducing Multilingualism - A Social Approach*, which I read as a graduate student, and as a learner new to many of the issues that the authors cover.

Summary of the Book

Introducing Multilingualism is a six-part textbook which includes class activities, discussions, and chapter quizzes. It leads the reader to question assumptions about language, investigates the history and prejudices of named languages, and looks to a future where multilingualism is recognized as the norm, not the exception. (Although this questioning and investigation was reinforced by some of the readings in my master’s program, *Introducing Multilingualism* was not one of my textbooks at Temple University. I was therefore glad to have the chance to read it for this review.) Language, peoples, and identity are all interconnected in the social approach that Horner and & Weber take in their introduction to multilingualism.

With this social approach, Horner & Weber offer a different view of multilingualism, together with many personal, educational and institutional responses to multilingualism. The social approach defines *language* and *multilingual* socially rather than linguistically or cognitively, by looking at how languages are used in society and the real world, rather than bounded within dictionaries and academic subjects. To introduce the social approach and guide the reader towards its use in the study of multilingualism, Horner & Weber divide *Introducing Multilingualism* into six parts, which I summarize below.

Part 1 (*Theoretical and Methodological Considerations*) introduces Horner & Weber’s social approach to the study of multilingualism, and how they “question deeply held assumptions about language and multilingualism ... our ‘language ideologies’ ” (p. 5). They encourage readers to do the same. Those language ideologies are enumerated as the hierarchy of languages, the standard language ideology, one nation-one language ideology, mother tongue ideology, and the ideology of purism. In my reading of this textbook, as a learner and a new student in the field of multilingualism, I did exactly as Horner & Weber encouraged me to do: I questioned my own assumptions.

Part 2 (*Multilingualism Within and Across Languages*) looks at so-called standard English, which is one of the language ideologies from Part 1, and “the fuzzy boundaries of named languages” (p. 37). This linguistic fuzziness suggests an intra- and inter-language continuum where *dialect* and *language* are just different words for the same sociolinguistic practice and, although there are conventionally named languages, there are no separate, bounded and distinct languages. Horner & Weber note: “What we learn in childhood is ‘language,’ and separately, as it were, we discover that the linguistic features we are learning are conventionally associated with a particular named language” (p. 37). This suggests that we each learn a personalized language first, and then learn to conform that language to a standardized named language later. That named language is just a theoretical construct, as nobody speaks the official language correctly at all times because language is “social action and practice” (p. 45). Living languages are wild and dynamic, impossible to contain, despite attempts to standardize them. Part 2 continues this exploration of sociolinguistic practice with discussions of African-American English, Caribbean ‘Nation Language’, Singaporean Singlish, and French youth languages. This part of the textbook also covers the global spread of English, the endangerment of so-called minority languages, and the attempts, both

successful and unsuccessful, at revitalization of those languages through national policies.

Part 3 (*Societal and Individual Multilingualism*) examines multilingualism on the societal, or national scale, in Ukraine, Switzerland, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Africa, and Nigeria, noting that “the distinction between officially monolingual and multilingual states is not a fixed binary opposition but a dynamic and shifting continuum” (p. 89). This continuum at the societal level is similar to the linguistic continua at the individual level, when a supposedly “monolingual” person is proficient with a range of social registers, idiomatic expressions or foreign loan words. In their examination of language and identity, Horner & Weber explain the essentialist concept of identity versus a social constructivist concept of identity by using the analogy of a peach versus an onion: “You believe in a ‘true’, ‘deep’ or ‘real’ self which, just like the stone in the middle of the peach, constitutes your core identity” (p. 107). In contrast, if “you see identity as more like an onion, then you believe in the possibility of having multiple and changing selves ... and none of them forms an essential and fixed core” (p. 107). Some people see themselves as many-layered and ever-changing, and their linguistic identity includes translanguaging, code-switching and language crossing. Horner & Weber conclude that “most speakers in the world are multilingual to different degrees, and many of these multilingual speakers tend to mix their languages ... multilingualism and translanguaging are the norm” (p. 117). The normalization of multilingualism, rather than monolingualism as the default norm, is a recurrent theme in *Introducing Multilingualism*.

Part 4 (*Multilingualism in Education and Other Institutional Sites*) discusses national or regional educational policies for multilingual school students, with case studies in Luxembourg, Catalonia and Basque Country demonstrating the advantage of a flexible approach over a fixed approach towards multilingual schooling. Horner & Weber comment: “Only flexible, local solutions can potentially meet all the children’s linguistic needs in the best possible way” (p. 148). Concerning policies and approaches towards mother tongue education, Horner & Weber also look at South Africa as a case study and highlight three problems: Too many mother tongues represented in the classroom, policy-makers’ arrogance in deciding that so-called minority languages should be kept, and the presumption that a student’s mother tongue is the standard version of that language. To counter these problems, Horner & Weber propose “literacy bridges” (p. 166) based on common links between students’ linguistic repertoires. In policies for heritage language education, Horner & Weber find a continuation of standard language ideology and purist ideology, as presented in Part 1 and discussed in more detail in the next section about critical analysis of discourses. There is a call to action for “teachers to break through the standard language ideology and to valorize all the different linguistic and cultural resources of all the children, including not only standard indigenous or immigrant languages, but also non-standard or not fully standardized varieties” (p. 184). Horner & Weber promote a similarly flexible and non-ideological approach for multilingualism in other state and private institutions.

Part 5 (*Critical Analysis of Discourses*) looks at national discussions about immigration, language, integration policies, as well as concerns about social cohesion and “a deeper and more irrational fear of societal multilingualism and heterogeneity” (p. 207). This is a fear that in turn leads to language-testing for citizenship. Here Horner & Weber look at case studies in Luxembourg, Britain, and the United States, critiquing presentations of multilingualism in the media, where “monolingualism is the norm and multilingualism is exceptional, deviant, abnormal—either all good or all bad” (p. 227). Retrograde “English-only” advocates find multilingualism “all bad,” but Horner & Weber find online attitudes and linguistic practices to be multilingual and accepting of differences in language proficiencies. The internet has limited multilingualism, with English being the dominant language, but, according to the authors, people online tend to use all their linguistic resources, borrowing, adapting and

transforming their language in response to contact with other languages. Beyond the internet, in brick-and-mortar urban streetscapes, the linguistic landscape is also often multilingual and multimodal, and Horner & Weber present methods of discourse analysis for linguists studying the languages used on street signs and shop billboards.

Part 6 (*Further Directions in the Study of Multilingualism*) puts the case for research into multilingualism as it relates to sign language, assessment practices, and gender. *Introducing Multilingualism* ends with a call for “the normalization of multilingualism” (p. 283) through an understanding that the world is linguistically diverse, multilingualism is ubiquitous, and people have complex repertoires of languages, dialects, and registers at their disposal.

Response to the Book, as a Learner

As mentioned in the introduction of this review, *Introducing Multilingualism* helped me to identify and examine language ideologies which have strongly influenced me. Horner & Weber focus on five ideologies in particular, which tend to reduce people's thoughts about languages to basic stereotypes. These ideologies are widespread, complicating our discussions about language. Below is my response, as an adult learner in the master's program at Temple University, to those five ideologies, including some of the lessons I learned by examining the stereotypes I had before reading this book and doing the master's program.

Hierarchy of Languages

An ideology about a Hierarchy of Languages puts language above dialect, and some named languages above others. I was unaware that “it is not possible to distinguish between language and dialect in purely linguistic terms” (p. 21). Horner & Weber dismantle the common argument that named languages aren't mutually intelligible, while dialects are, revealing that “named languages may be seen as socio-political constructs” (p. 21). This revelation about the false dichotomy between language and dialect, as well as the boundaries around named languages, allowed me to see all languages as interrelated, borrowing and lending from each other.

Standard Language

The Standard Language ideology is “the belief that languages are internally homogenous, bounded entities” (p. 21). I was dissuaded from this way of thinking early in the first semester in the master's program at Temple University, but this ideology is persuasive, because it is reinforced everywhere through what Horner & Weber call the *codification rituals* of dictionaries and textbooks and the *pedagogical rituals* in schools. There is some pushback to this ideology, but I feel that almost everyone believes there's a “correct” way to speak or write, even, or especially, among those people who are not correct. I understand this ideology deeply, because it was an unexamined assumption of mine, before the master's program. Learning to move beyond acceptance of World Englishes and non-standard dialects, and to celebrate all forms of this living language, was an important lesson from the TESOL program. The social approach taken by Horner & Weber shows language as a dynamic process, constructed and used by real people in the real world. Throughout my education, from kindergarten to graduate school, I was required to use standardized language for written assignments and subtly encouraged to do so in classroom discussions as well. I now realize that knowing and using so-called standard English allowed me to have the social privileges which many of us take for granted, as the seemingly “natural” benefits of being well educated. That education itself, and access to it, is one of those social privileges.

After thinking about the Standard Language ideology, I had a renewed thankfulness for the opportunity to study at Temple, as well as a newfound humility that my acceptance to the TESOL program was more contingent on my command of a standardized English than I had previously realized.

One Nation-One Language

The One Nation–One Language ideology is just what it sounds like, but when it is dissected by Horner & Weber as the belief that “language can be equated with territory” (p. 22), it shows itself to be absurd. It can also be dangerous, perhaps precisely because it is absurd. Horner & Weber observe: “Because it is so important to many people, they frequently develop ... a more general fear of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, which is perceived as a threat not only to the national language but also to the national identity” (p. 23). Threats and general fear are often exploited by nationalist politicians, of course, but it is the origin of the so-called national language as a construct of the nation–state that allows this fear to be generated and exploited. The national language is designed to be a source of identity. As I was reading *Introducing Multilingualism*, I was enrolled in a course on Intercultural Communication. A Zoom discussion with my classmates who were teaching in Japanese high schools revealed a powerful state–level linking of language and identity that I was previously unaware of. I had assumed that students were going to *nihongo*/日本語 [Japanese language] class to study Japanese, but that’s not the term that’s used. Instead, students are going to *kokugo*/国語 [national language] class, where they study so-called standard Japanese, classic Japanese literature and also classic Chinese literature. The contents of these classes explore the multilingual and multinational history of the Japanese language, but naming them in this way reinforces the One Nation–One Language ideology.

Mother Tongue

This One Nation–One Language ideology is closely related to the Mother Tongue ideology, “the belief that speakers have one and only one ‘mother tongue’” (p. 23). As the father of a child who speaks both better Japanese and better contemporary English than I do, this ideological prejudice never occurred to me, but I certainly did have the attitude that underlies this ideology: that monolingualism is the norm. It is not. And with Horner & Weber’s expansion of the concept of multilingualism to include dialects, registers, borrowed and partial language, multilingualism is not only the norm, it is all there is. Monolingualism has become, and maybe always was, a theoretical concept that does not exist in the real world.

Purism

The ideology of Purism is similar to the Standard Language ideology, but it seems more focused on pronunciation and accent, as “the belief that only some speakers of the language have an accent (in particular lower–class people or learners of the language as a foreign language)” (p. 25). Horner & Weber point out that a Purism ideology has “a powerful evaluative component” (p. 25) which may involve fears of a language dying out or becoming endangered. Racism, classism, cultural supremacism, and other ugly–isms all lurk beneath the surface of language purist ideology. It was a good reminder for me that we all have accents, not just in our second or third languages, but also in our first.

The cumulative effect of my reflections on these five ideologies was humbling. I realized that, previous to the master’s program and reading *Introducing Multilingualism*, my unvoiced and unexamined assumptions were both arrogant and slightly ridiculous. American English

is not better than other varieties, standardized language is not more “correct,” nations are not monolingual, children do not have a single mother tongue, and accent does not equal mispronunciation. All these observations might seem obvious now, but as a learner reading Horner & Weber’s textbook, they led me to fresh revelations about my own beliefs and assumptions to do with certain language ideologies.

Conclusion

As a learner in the TESOL program, I used this book in a way that is probably different than the way a teacher would use it for an introductory class on multilingualism, but I believe the outcomes are roughly similar. When I finished reading, the easy assumptions and folk beliefs about language that I had held at the beginning were gone, not replaced with pat answers, but with more questions. The biggest of which was “How can I use this knowledge in the classroom?” As I move from the role of learner into the role of teacher, I am inspired by Horner & Weber’s discussion of the polynomic approach, which they see as “a positive response to linguistic variation” (p. 77). They continue: “There is no single linguistic norm that is considered to be the only ‘correct’ one” (p. 77). The authors call polynomy an ideology, but it is far different than the five ideologies that I discussed earlier. As I begin my practice, I want to be the kind of teacher who fosters tolerance, celebrates language diversity, empowers students and makes the classroom experience different. The examination of my language ideologies, as a learner, was a big step towards making me better as a teacher.

Author Bio

Brennan Conaway: While writing this book review, Brennan Conaway completed the TESOL master’s program at Temple University Japan and worked as a part-time instructor at Tokai University and Tokyo University of the Arts, where he researched the uses for the visual arts in EFL instruction. Currently, he continues at Tokai University’s Shonan Campus and also continues to explore art and EFL. When he’s not in the classroom, Brennan is either in the ocean, trying to surf, or in the studio, attempting to make some art.

コナウェイ・ブレナン。本書評を執筆する中、Temple University JapanでTESOL修士プログラムを修了し、東海大学と東京藝術大学で非常勤講師を務め、EFL指導における視覚芸術の活用を研究してきた。現在、東海大学湘南キャンパスで勤務し、芸術とEFLを探求し続ける。私生活では、海でサーフィンをするか、スタジオでアート作品を作成する。

Review Process

This paper was open-reviewed by Akiko Takagi and Tanya McCarthy. (*Contributors have the option of open or blind review.*)

Reference

Horner, K., & Weber, J. (2018) *Introducing multilingualism: A social approach* (2nd ed.). Routledge.