

The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL and bilingual education, edited by Stephen May. New York, NY: Routledge, 229 pp. ISBN 978-0415-53432-1 (reviewed by Chaoran Wang).

Stephen May is a professor from The University of Auckland, New Zealand, who publishes in the areas of language diversity, language rights, bilingualism, and multiculturalism. His recent edited book *The Multilingual Turn*, collecting recent works by many important scholars in applied linguistics and multilingualism, attempts to justify and promote “a turn from monolingualism to multilingualism” that emphasizes social-cultural aspects in the studies of SLA, TESOL and bilingual education (p. 2). In order to advocate this “multilingual turn”, the book explains how multilingual speakers differ from monolingual speakers and why it is significant and necessary to examine bilingualism and multilingualism from a social-cultural point of view. In recent years, as ongoing research shows that bi/multilingual learning is not purely cognitive language acquisition (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Garcia, 2009; May, 2014), more and more scholars have been paying attention to the correlation between bi/multilingual speakers and the bi/multilingual communities. *The Multilingual Turn* is one of the representative works speaking for many scholars in this field, such as Canagarajah, García, Kramersch, Pennycook.

This edited book is composed of three sections, namely SLA, TESOL, and bilingual education. Each part has a combination of theory and practice in its specific field, which makes the author’s argument particularly strong. From the beginning to the end, May and other authors try to offer a critical view of the ongoing dominant monolingualism, as well as apply “a more additive bilingual approach” to each of the three fields (p. 23).

In the first chapter, May points out the limitations of the foundation and construction of the disciplines of SLA and TESOL themselves. He uses a critical analysis of the history of the three disciplines and reevaluates their hierarchies and structures. Dating back to the 1990s, the problem of “monolingual norms” in traditional bilingual/multilingual research was first raised by Kachru (1994). Based on her observation of speakers learning English as a second or additional language, Kachru attributed the “the monolingual bias” to the dominant interlanguage theory in the field of SLA research (Kachru, 1994). She proposed that instead of focusing on second language learners’ linguistic errors (May, 2014), scholars should study bilinguals’ language competency in real bilingual communities from different countries around the globe and establish a bi/multilingual perspective on SLA. From then until now, there have been continuing debates between the traditional monolingual and linguistic view and the new rising social-cultural view of SLA and TESOL. Although the notion of multilingualism is highlighted in many recent studies such as transglossia and translanguaging (García, 2009), the establishment and confirmation of a multilingual approach have not been fully completed (May, 2014).

In the field of SLA, utilizing Bourdieu’s concept of field and Bernstein’s theory of classification, May argues that it is the linguistic-cognitive approach which views a multilingual’s language competency from a monolingual perspective that confines

the possibilities of establishing the bilingual principles (May, 2014). He criticizes that this approach, studying multilinguals' languages separately with an emphasis on each language's acquisitional stages, fails to see multilinguals' language repertoire as an integrity from which speakers can choose different codes and languages to suit their different communicational goals. I find it quite insightful because he questions the cornerstone of the traditional SLA discipline. Moreover, I appreciate his point of considering the politics of nationalism as part of the reason. He uses LEAP (Language Enhancing the Achievement of Pasifika), an online teaching resource for second language teachers in New Zealand, as an example. LEAP contains a lot of multilingual theories to inspire ESL teachers' teaching and aims to use Pasifika students' different language repertoires as resources. However, this trial is still within an English-dominant country which appreciates only English in education for the purpose of nationalism. Therefore, May (2014) indicates the necessity of a "wider and sociopolitical" change and the needed attention of "the value of bilingualism" (p. 25). To further develop the additive bilingual approach, in Chapter 2 Lourdes Ortega suggests "usage-based linguistics (UBL)" as a platform for SLA research (Ortega, 2014). Viewing grammar and linguistic knowledge as dynamic and experience-shaped construction, Ortega argues that the model of UBL can offer linguistic-cognitive researchers a way towards multilingual cognitive studies. Although different issues are addressed in each chapter of this section, the same emphases are made that monolingualism should be abandoned as the principle in the study of additional language learning.

In terms of TESOL in the second section of this edited volume, the concept of language competence of second language learners is reexamined by Suresh Canagarajah and Constant Leung. In Chapter 4, Canagarajah analyzes how African immigrants improve their "performative competence" through everyday translingual practices in English-dominant countries. He defines "performative competence" as a competence by multilinguals to "negotiate the diverse, unpredictable, and changing language norms in the contact zone" (p. 99). I find his notion of performative competence in alignment with Garcia's theory of translanguageing in the way that both concepts view a bi/multilingual's entire language repertoire not as separate systems but as an integrated system from which a speaker can flexibly select according to their specific communicative purposes (Garcia, 2009; Blackledge & Creese, 2010). Different from Canagarajah who focuses on multilingual practice in a broader social context, Leung (Chapter 6) looks into ESL learners' communicative competence in specific classroom settings. Extending the conventional notion of communicative competence as "language and language use related knowledge", Leung argues that communicative competence should consist of both students' language knowledge and their "participatory engagement" that shows social convention and social interaction (p. 142). What Leung and Canagarajah have in common is that they both emphasize the complexity of multilingual communicative competence. I quite agree with them because speakers have to deal with diverse language and cultural rules in a multilingual context, just as Canagarajah said, "The multilingual speaker engages with the shifting and fluid situations in everyday life to learn strategies of negotiation and adaptation for

meaning-making...acquisition is social practice, not separable mastery of knowledge, cognition, or form.” (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 933). I think, undoubtedly, their extension and development of the notion of communicative competence effectively challenges the traditional single, cognitive perspective of ESL learners’ language competence. However, to some extent, this indicates that evaluations can only be made in a specific multilingual context because there are many elements such as participatory involvement, gender, power, and social values involved (Leung, 2014). Thus, in order to better examine and evaluate the communication process and the communicative competence, more empirical research projects are needed.

As to the field of bilingual education, I will focus on Chapter 8 *Who’s Teaching Whom? Co-learning in Multilingual Classrooms* that discusses the issue concerning Chinese learners because this chapter focuses on a very representative population—children of immigrants and minority groups. In this chapter, Li Wei observes co-learning in Chinese complementary schools in UK. He finds that not only students but also teachers experience “co-construction of identity and cultural values” in these multilingual classrooms (p. 184). Li (2014) suggests that bilingual schools provide both teachers and students a good co-learning environment that helps them discover their new identities by exchanging different funds of knowledge. A reader may have the impression that this chapter has nothing to do with the main purpose of the book. However, actually this chapter not only is closely related to the gist that a social-cultural perspective is important in bilingual education, but also echoes the earlier chapter of Leung’s “participatory engagement” theory that emphasizes the importance of students’ life experience in the process of learning.

In conclusion, *The Multilingual Turn* is comprehensive because it covers the main fields of SLA, TESOL, and bilingual education in discussing the turn towards multilingualism both theoretically and empirically. Therefore, a reader can develop a very good understanding of the origin and the significance of the movement of multilingualism in second language studies and language education, as well as the current trials in favor of this movement. However, with each scholar arguing one particular issue in his or her field in each chapter, the book does not seem coherent enough in itself. It might be better if the author can show the connections of how one field in a chapter correlates, extends, or complicates another field in other chapters. On the other hand, this is also a virtue because the book is able to provide many specific contexts and fields from which we can see how bi/multilingual approaches are applied to and what can be studied for future research. For instance, the study of pedagogic strategies in multilingual classrooms as discussed in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8; learners’ identity construction and negotiation through their multilingual practice as explored in Chapter 5, Chapter 8, and Chapter 9; bi/multilingual students’ language competence and assessment as examined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6; and multimodality in bilingual education as researched in Chapter 3. Overall, *The Multilingual Turn* is a good book that summarizes the most important multilingual theories and showcases some of the most current bilingual and multilingual pedagogical practices around the global.

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