

The Multilingual Self: An Inquiry Into Language Learning

Author: Natasha Lvovich
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www.erlbaum.com
Reviewer: Natacha Trudeau, PhD, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Although the title of this book, *The Multilingual Self: An Inquiry Into Language Learning* is quite theoretical, and somewhat daunting, the reader is quickly reminded not to judge a book by its cover. *The Multilingual Self* relates the author's journey through languages, cultures, and countries, from her origins in Moscow to her new life as an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teacher in New York, with brief stops in Rome and Calgary. Through the chapters, she takes the reader along, on her quest for linguistic and cultural identity.

In the preface, Lvovich outlines several goals and applications for her book. First, she views it as a learning tool for second language learners, who might identify with her stories and be prompted to take a closer look at their own behaviours and attitudes towards their language learning. Second, she suggests that it could be used to structure an advanced ESL or foreign language course around the issues and theories addressed in the chapters. Third, Lvovich suggests that second language teachers and graduate students considering a teaching career may find the book useful, since it would provide them with insights regarding their students' experiences, while offering some suggestions for teaching. Beyond the second language learning

issues, the author also views her book as potentially useful for college courses in the social science realm (e.g. sociology, anthropology, linguistics), because of what she calls the "multidisciplinary nature" of her stories. Last, but certainly not least, she hopes that this book can be received by the general population as a message to people who are in the process of developing their own multicultural identity.

The stories told by Lvovich cover multiple topics related to language learning in general, and the impact that social and cultural variables may have on the language learning process. For instance, in the first chapter, she describes how she immersed herself in French language and culture, in order to escape the daily life of a young Jewish girl in Moscow in the 60s and 70s. In subsequent chapters of the book, she shares her discovery that her 'French' self was a make-believe, romanticised conception she had built, without having to go through the difficult reality check that would undoubtedly have been necessary had she actually lived in France. This luxury was not afforded to her again when she immigrated to the United States. There, no longer able to use her French self as an escape from the demands of her new life, she had to come to terms with the reality of the American society. Unable to do so, she removed herself from that society temporarily, taking a position as a teacher of Russian in Calgary. It was during her experience in Canada that the pieces finally fell into place, as she saw herself through the eyes of her students, and was able to assume her multicultural self.

A number of chapters also address issues related to language learn-

ing in general. For instance, the author explains how spoken words trigger visual representations in her mind, independent of meaning, different from one language to the other, and how she has tried to convey these images to her students in an effort to facilitate their learning. She remembers close friends, and how sharing a common language was determinant in building their friendships, but also how the friendships were determinant in motivating her language acquisition. Finally the author discusses the struggles of immigrant life, and what embracing a new language and culture entails. For instance, how can she be American without betraying her Russian heritage, and her love of the French culture? And perhaps more challenging yet, how can she respect her daughter's wish to be a real American child, and to fit in, while passing on to her a love of her roots?

Speech-language pathologists are likely to read this book with great interest. The author's self-portrait as a language learner provides a unique outlook on some concepts and questions that are central to our work (e.g., what are the best approaches to support language learning, how important is the linguistic context in acquiring language). However, the true value of this book lies elsewhere. It provides the reader with a starting point from which to try understanding the struggles and challenges faced by some of our clients and their families (e.g., the sense of loss when a native language becomes inadequate to function in a community). It also illustrates very eloquently what the harmonious integration of several linguistic and cultural facets may lead to. Reading this book may change the way some of us

approach multiculturalism as it relates to our practice. In addition, bilingual speakers will likely be touched on a personal level by Lvovich's stories. Some may begin a reflection regarding their own linguistic and cultural identity, and how their life was, and is being shaped by the way they define themselves in relation to different communities.

Children with Hearing Impairment: Contemporary trends

Editor: Fred H. Bess
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This book represents chapter versions of papers presented at the Fourth International Symposium on Childhood Deafness, held at Kiawah Island, South Carolina in 1996. This book falls in the tradition of its earlier predecessors (Bess, 1977, 1988), and serves as a thorough update of prevailing issues in paediatric audiology. However, this book differs from these earlier versions in that "rather than couching the topic areas within the themes of causation, assessment and management... [this book] is intended to highlight what... are believed to be the ten salient issues confronting professionals concerned with hearing loss in children" (p. vii). The contributing authors include a diverse group of knowledgeable and well-respected individuals in the field of pediatric audiology. The authors address a wide range of issues related to early identification and assessment of hearing

loss, central auditory processing disorders (CAPD), otitis media, amplification, intervention, family involvement, and health care change. In general, good overviews of the central issues and questions, as well as empirical studies that have shaped current practices in pediatric audiology are presented. The book is graced with an exquisite quotation from Sir Terrence Cawthorne, an eminent ear, nose, and throat surgeon, that represents the theme of this book: "The management and care of deaf children is a combined operation calling for the wholehearted co-operation of many disciplines - one that does not delegate to any discipline the automatic right to leadership."

The book has seven sections that include 27 chapters. In the first section, the reader finds a review of recent epidemiological data, factors affecting permanent childhood hearing impairment, recent developments in neonatal care, current notions related to age of identification and intervention of hearing impairment, ethical and legal issues related to newborn hearing screening, and the contemporary status of newborn hearing screening programs. In the fourth chapter, E. W. Clayton and A. M. Tharpe emphasize the need to base our decisions regarding the hearing screening programs on existing empirical data:

We all are eager to ensure that children with hearing impairments receive the services they need, but it is our ethical obligation as health care professionals to recognize the limitations of what we know and to base our decisions on which technologies to incorporate into practice and what sort of legal mandate to pursue, not on understandable enthusiasm but on a consideration of all the consequences of

our choices (p. 42).

The second section encompasses three chapters that emphasize the need for a test battery approach for the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of our audiological services and the need to adopt a test battery for a child with special needs. Also covered are suggestions to improve the validity and reliability of the commonly used pediatric audiometric tools for a special child. Finally, a discussion of how functional assessment tools such as the Meaningful Auditory Integration Scale and Meaningful Use of Speech Scale would complement information obtained from traditional audiological testing is offered.

The third section highlights the recent issues in CAPD. This section includes five chapters that deal with issues such as the predictability, reliability, and validity of CAPD tests. In addition, an appraisal of behavioral strategies and a compendium of various electrophysiological tools for assessment and management of children with CAPD are provided. One also finds an intriguing chapter by S. Jerger and J. S. Allen that questions the specificity of behavioral tests for the evaluation of children with CAPD and how the interpretation of such tests may complicate management. Also covered is a critical chapter by A. M. Tharpe, that expresses concern of the prevailing "fad" or dubious treatment techniques, that make grandiose claims of effectiveness before their worth has been demonstrated empirically.

The fourth section provides a succinct update on the status of research in the area of otitis media. The three chapters included in this section acknowledges the ubiquitous nature of otitis media in the pediatric population and emphasizes the evidence amassed from recent literature of the probable long-term effects of recurrent otitis media on language development and auditory processing.

Recent developments in fitting amplification for children with hearing impairment are the focus of the fifth section. Four chapters address a number of topics including quantification of hearing loss for the purpose of selecting and fitting hearing aids, evaluating the efficacy of hearing aids and cochlear implants, issues related to classroom amplification for the hearing impaired children, and a comprehensive review of recent developments in rehabilitation with cochlear implants. In Chapter 20, D. E. Lewis expresses her sentient concern for the prevailing situation in classrooms for the hearing-impaired child: "The truth is classrooms most often are the places where teachers are trying to teach, and students are trying to learn in a far from ideal environment" (p. 277).

What makes this book exceptional is the nature of information that is presented in sections 6 and 7. These sections deal with family participation in intervention and professional issues impacting hearing health care. The sixth section includes four chapters highlighting the importance of the parent-profession "partnership" in the intervention of a hearing impaired child and how "...our sensitive inter-

actions with families are at the heart of all we do" (p. 305). This section includes a chapter by Noel D. Matkin (to whom this book has been dedicated) who outlines a family-centered approach to intervention. A highly inspiring chapter by a parent of a hearing-impaired child is also provided; S.J. Maliszewski narrates the hurdles she had faced in educating her hearing impaired child, and how compassionate and dedicated professionals had immensely helped her in the process.

The last section in this book includes three salient chapters that address issues such as the need for measuring the efficacy of intervention strategies, designing efficacy research, and ethical and economical concerns related to the prevailing health care system.

Though the primary focus of each chapter is unique, some of the information is redundant. This is an inevitable consequence of an edited multi-authored work. The editor has performed a highly commendable job at minimizing this redundancy by maintaining the specificity of each topic, though the style and depth of coverage varies across different chapters. Most of the chapters include a

summary table with an ample number of figures, illustrations, and flowcharts for models, making the text easy and informative to read. Each individual chapter includes an exhaustive reference list on current issues prevailing in the respective area, and the inclusion of a subject and author index, which are a great help to the reader. Chapters by D.E. Lewis (i.e., Classroom amplification), N. D. Matkin (i.e., The challenge of proving family centered services), and S. J. Maliszewski (i.e., Reflections on family support: One parent's perspective) are recommended for undergraduate and graduate students. These chapters introduce important issues related to pediatric audiology and serve to motivate and create empathy for the problems faced by a hearing impaired child. However, most of the other chapters are not sufficiently detailed to serve as a comprehensive learning tool for the seasoned pediatric audiologist.

In summary, this text is a worthwhile possession for the practicing professional, researcher, and advanced student as it provides a concise compilation of recent developments in the area of pediatric audiology and is highly recommended by the present reviewer.