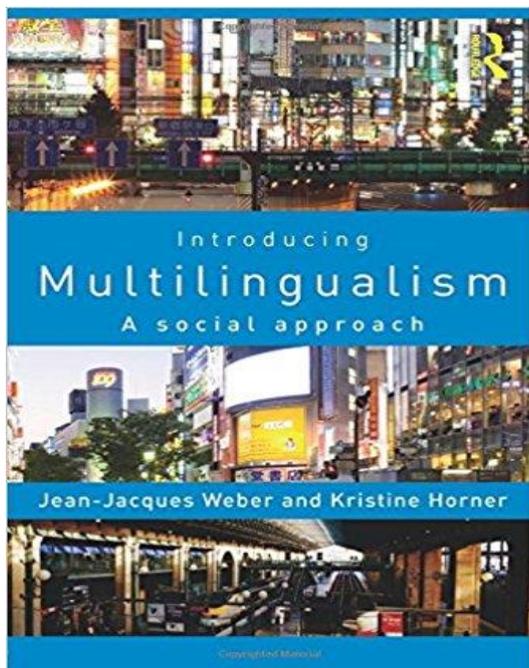# Jean-Jacques WEBER and Kristine HORNER, *Introducing Multilingualism. A Social Approach*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2012, 214p.

Alina OLTEAN-CÎMPLEAN
Facultatea de Litere, Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca
alina_cimpean2005@yahoo.com

In 2012 Jean-Jacques Weber and Kristine Horner published a comprehensive and comprehensible textbook that deals with the ever changing and evolving topic of multilingualism. The book is meant for both students and researchers in the field and it encourages its readers to question many of the present beliefs related to languages and multilingualism. Throughout the six parts of the textbook the authors cover topics such as language variation, types of multilingualism, multilingual education, and public discourses on multilingualism.

Part I consists of two chapters that offer an introduction and a theoretical and methodological framework to the study of language. In chapter one the authors not only introduce the terminology adopted but they also discuss the issues with and limitations of certain concepts and terms such as 'language', 'bilingualism', 'migrant', 'non-standard', 'minority' or 'majority'. For this reason, in the case of language, Weber and Horner propose the use of 'linguistic repertoires' since languages are rather fluid than bound and static entities. Chapter two tackles the construction of meaning by giving an overview of dominant vs. critical readings, ethnographical research and language ideologies.

Part II, entitled *Multilingualism within and across languages*, consists of three chapters that deal with topics such as language, language variation and language revitalization. Chapter three, *What is a language?*, discusses the difficulties encountered when defining what a language is since the name given to a language is merely a label, languages are social constructs and the boundaries between them are based on "socio-political rather than (purely) linguistic factors" (p. 29). The authors use English to exemplify the heterogeneity that exists within its varieties and how this can influence teaching. Since what is taught is not the grammar of all the English varieties but rather that of Standard British English, the authors point out that this creates inequality between varieties with one variety being superior to others (e.g. African-American English). The discussion on the heterogeneity found within a variety is continued in chapter four (*Language variation and the spread of global languages*) where the focus is "on variation and leakage within a language" (p. 39). For instance, in the case of African-American English (AAE) there are certain grammatical features that make it different from standard English (e.g. the invariant or habitual *be*, the use of double negation, etc.) but, as Weber and Horner point out, there is also variation within AAE itself with its varieties being influenced by social and regional factors. To exemplify global languages the authors take the case of English and French which have spread and created hybrid varieties such as Singlish, Nouchi and Verlan. In chapter five, *Revitalization of endangered languages*, the sensitive subjects of language endangerment and revitalization are dealt with from a practical rather than a theoretical point of view. To this end, the authors chose to present cases such as that of Māori in New Zealand as a revitalization success story, of Hebrew in Israel to exemplify the costs of

revitalization since Hebrew was revitalized in the detriment of Yiddish, and of Luxembourgish which was constructed as an endangered language. Each of these cases comes to show the reader that there is both real and perceived language endangerment according to different contexts.

Part III, *Societal and individual multilingualism*, discusses issues such as societal and individual multilingualism and the connection between language and identity. Here, chapter six, *Societal multilingualism*, takes a practical approach to the matter by analyzing in short the cases of six officially multilingual states (Ukraine, Switzerland, Singapore, Hong Kong and China, South Africa, and Nigeria) concluding that there is no difference between the language policy matters from these states and those from officially monolingual states. Chapter seven deals with the very complex topic of language and identity, by first analyzing the concept of identity through the use of an interesting metaphor, namely the peach vs. onion metaphor. An essentialist perspective would have identity as an object that can be *had* or *lost* and that one's core identity is similar to the stone within the centre of the peach. The social constructivist perspective, on the other hand, sees identity as having multiple layers, just like an onion, and losing or adding some layers is considered a normal process. Thus, identity is not fixed but rather *constructed* and *negotiated* (p. 85). Weber and Horner furthermore tackle ethnic and national identity, multilingual strategies such as code-switching, stylization and language crossing, and how the latter are used in order to create identity. Part III is concluded by chapter eight which deals with *The interplay between individual and societal multilingualism*, with a focus on Canada. The information given in this chapter is based on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted by Monica Heller in a medium school from the anglophone province of Ontario. As a result, the chapter presents how although Canada has a policy of bilingualism and multiculturalism institutional monolingualism in French is used by francophone communities to obtain individual bilingualism. The chapter concludes that in Canada individual multilingualism is perceived as something positive while societal multilingualism is seen as negative, which is similar to the view encountered in other countries as well.

Part IV, *Multilingual education*, deals with different aspects of education in multilingual societies with a focus on specific cases. As such, chapter nine analyses two ideologies of multilingualism, namely fixed and flexible multilingualism where the former promotes the idea of double monolingualism, while the latter promotes a more inclusive educational system. The examples discussed are those of Luxembourg, Catalonia and the Basque Country with only the third slowly moving towards a more flexible education with English being used for teaching. Chapter ten, *Mother-tongue education or literacy bridges*, is meant, as the authors mention, as a critique of mother-tongue education since it is based on the mother-tongue ideology and it ignores intra-language variation. Furthermore, policies regarding mother-tongue education are based on assumptions regarding language expertise and they promote standard varieties with non-standard ones being stigmatized in schools. The authors propose an interesting alternative in the shape of literacy bridges which means that common linguistic denominators are to be found among students and then adequate bridges are to be establish thus "providing a link with […] these students' actual linguistic repertoires" (p. 130). The last chapter here moves the discussion from mother-tongue education to heritage language education. The case studies discussed here are those of indigenous heritage languages in the US and immigrant heritage languages in the UK, which are often endangered. The issues presented in both cases stem from the fact that in both countries the acquisition of Standard English is emphasized and one's heritage language is often seen as an impediment in becoming proficient in English.

Part V, *Critical analysis of discourses*, discusses representations of migration and multilingualism in institutional discourses, in the media and within the linguistic landscape. It starts off with chapter twelve, *Institutional discourses on language and migration*, which tackles how public discourses can contribute to the negative situation in which immigrant languages are found. The discourse of integration is quite prevalent within the European Union member-states and it promotes the one nation-one language ideology since by having a common language one can attain social unity and cohesion. In the vein, media discourses also discriminate against ethnic others

(chapter thirteen – *Media representations of multilingualism*). In order to exemplify this, Weber and Horner used three case studies: Luxembourg, the UK and the US with each country giving negative representations of the other in the media. For instance, in Luxembourg the media blamed the bad PISA results (Programme for International Student Assessment) on foreign residents, in the UK using languages other than English has been linked to social disorders and introducing signposts in other languages has been seen as "taking the Britishness out of Birmingham" (p. 170), while in the US the English-Only movement has been started with the purpose of protecting English from the Spanish threat. In chapter fourteen readers are introduced to *Linguistic landscape*, which is the analysis of how languages are used in public spaces such as road signs, street names, or billboards. The authors offer some basic distinctions between symbolic and instrumental uses of language, and top-down and bottom-up signs by presenting specific cases such as the use of English and Swedish in Malmö, and the use of Hebrew and English in Jewish areas in Israel.

Part VI, *Conclusions*, contains one final chapter and the authors use it to give the reader a short summary of the topics discussed throughout the previous chapters, to present new research directions in studying multilingualism such as *Multilingualism and sign language* or *Multilingualism and gender*, and to remind the reader about three subject matters that are of importance in the struggle of normalizing multilingualism – *understanding the ubiquity of multilingualism, acknowledging the linguistic diversity in the world* and *building upon the whole of students' linguistic repertoires* (p. 200).

As is obvious from the presentation above, *Introducing Multilingualism. A Social Approach* gives readers a comprehensive overview of all major topics in the study of multilingualism. Furthermore, being a textbook, it offers a plethora of examples that can help students and researchers alike better understand the subject matter. There are two important approaches to the present textbook: a theoretical and a practical one. From a theoretical standpoint the book offers readers a wonderful overview of the literature in the field of multilingualism and at the end of each chapter one can find references and suggestions for further reading which is very helpful for both students and researchers, especially since the titles are categorized according to topic. From a practical point of view, the textbook offers three types of exercises throughout its chapters: activity – which contains to the point tasks that can be solved with the information discovered in the chapter, For Discussion – which require readers to think about and even question fundamental multilingual matters, and Project Work – which requires readers to do research beyond the textbook itself. Although the exercises are useful for researchers as well, some of them might be slightly problematic since they imply an exchange of ideas and opinions. Another helpful trait of the textbook is that right at its end the authors offer readers notes on some of the activities (p. 203-205). However, it should be bore in mind that, just as Weber and Horner state, the notes are not definitive answers since the questions are open-ended. Another engaging characteristic of the textbook is that it begins and ends with a ten-question quiz, with the first testing one's knowledge on language and multilingualism and with the last one testing the knowledge acquired by going through the book. What is interesting about the first Test Yourself Quiz is that it introduces the topics to be discussed in the textbook as well. Furthermore, after completing the quizzes one can check one's answers at the end of the book (p. 206-207).

Overall, Weber and Horner's textbook is recommended for both teaching and researching multilingualism since it offers a broad range of theoretical information and of practical approaches through its case studies. That being said, one should keep in mind that it is a textbook and that in order to have in-depth knowledge on the subject of multilingualism one has to go beyond the textbook and further one's reading with the suggested bibliography.