

***Language Learning and Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Approach.***  
**Hawkins, M. (ed) (2004) Clevedon:**  
**Multilingual Matters.**  
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This book describes how researchers and practitioners have begun to explore and utilize sociocultural approaches in their work as teachers and teacher educators. In the introduction, Margaret Hawkins sets out clearly and succinctly a rationale for a sociocultural perspective on language learning and teaching which addresses, amongst other issues, the co-relationships between language, culture, context and identity. This collection of both theoretical and more practice focused work reflects the shift of perspective in second language acquisition theorizing from viewing language learning as an individual activity to viewing language learning as 'inherently embedded in and shaped by situated social actions'. For teachers it is about creating a learning environment where the emphasis is not only on 'what they (learners) know' but also on 'who they are' in that context. She suggests that teachers contribute not only to the shaping of individual learner's identities and lives inside and outside the classroom, but also to the social transformation of the larger social world. (p.6) This places a responsibility on the teacher educator to help teachers become more critical and reflective, and this requires changes both in the content and process of teacher training. The book takes the reader through the process of change, evidenced in teacher education and classroom practice.

James Gee sets out the theoretical framework for teaching and learning language within a sociocultural perspective in the opening chapter. If one is not familiar with his work, this chapter provides a useful starting point. Gee describes the complexity of learning an additional language, which is not just about learning 'English' but is about learning specific social languages within situated meanings and cultural models. To help the reader he offers an extended example of a Korean student in the United States, through which he demonstrates how her difficulties in understanding the co-relationships of identity, cultural models, social languages and situated meanings affected her progress as a student. He relates this to his work on Discourse, in which he suggests that it is not just 'language' that the Korean student needs, but all that other 'stuff', such that social language plus 'stuff' equals Discourse. He concludes the chapter with a summary of the necessary aspects of Discourse that learners need to acquire.

The second section of the book contains three chapters which address sociocultural approaches in language teacher education in different contexts, one in South Africa, and two examples from the United States. The authors are all well known in the field and provide useful

insights and commentary. In each situation the teacher educators try to establish collaborative relationships and develop pedagogies that work with what students bring to the teacher education context, but which will also enable the students to explore perceptions, understandings and practices in their particular sociocultural contexts and learning communities. However, Jerri Willett does point out that attempts to make teacher training more responsive to students risks encouraging unpredictable outcomes and a mismatch with expected standards and outcomes.

The chapters that follow draw upon teachers' experiences in applying sociocultural approaches and include one by Jennifer Miller, the author of *Audible Difference: ESL and Social Identity in Schools*. This chapter arises from the same study and looks at the implications of bringing together sociocultural theory and ESL teaching in practice. Two parts of the chapter stand out and one is a useful chart showing the conceptual shift from features of a strong linguistic and learner focus in SLA theories to a discourse approach, that is, language acquisition in context and use. This certainly raises some interesting questions and might be helpful to the reader in articulating one's own understandings about language acquisition and learning in a social context. The concluding section of the chapter is also of relevance in that her listing of school practices which reflect a sociocultural view of language acquisition will seem quite familiar, at least in terms of what many EAL teachers aspire to achieve.

The book concludes with a chapter by Donald Freeman, in which he elaborates a theoretical framework for second language teacher education, which draws on the sociocultural perspective set out in the opening chapter. His discussion takes account of the shift in thinking towards language as socially constructed and socially situated, and argues for a reviewing of the content and form of language teaching, and the implications for language teacher education.

It's an interesting collection of work and provides further evidence of the uptake of sociocultural theory in both language teaching and teacher education. Some readers might argue that much of it is familiar in the UK context, however, it would seem that the very detailed unpacking and analysis of the many aspects of sociocultural theory can only contribute to a better understanding and articulation of what is meant by an 'inclusive' classroom for EAL and minority ethnic pupils. The elaboration of the ideas of identity, power, apprenticeship, multiple and social literacies, communities of practice and classroom ecology (see the summary of Margaret Hawkins's article in this publication) can provide a sharper focus to those familiar and general statements about the classroom as a meaningful, language rich environment for EAL learners.

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