

Foreword

In most writing on bilingual education, the principal concern is with linguistic minority groups or with the development of language revitalisation programmes. This book opens a new window on bilingual education. It provides a wealth of information about elite or prestigious forms of bilingual (and trilingual) education provision in different parts of the world, including, for example, privately run international schools, the publicly funded European schools and different kinds of immersion programmes. It also shows how these and other forms of provision have developed in response to globalisation and to the increasing dominance of languages such as English within a globalised economic order.

Anne-Marie de Mejía is uniquely placed to write this book. She has been carrying out school and classroom-based research in English immersion programmes in Colombia for well over a decade now. She was one of the first to lift the veil on classroom processes in the context of research on the immersion experience of young children. Again and again, in her work, she has drawn our attention to the complexity of the bilingual routines and communicative practices that recur in daily life in such classrooms and has argued that these practices and routines need to be seen as embedded in particular cultural and historical contexts, rather than with reference to autonomous models of bilingual education. This argument is taken up again in this book.

Whilst developing her own empirical work in Colombia, Anne-Marie de Mejía has also been assembling a substantial body of documentation on different types of elite and prestigious bilingual education programmes around the world. Some of this material is difficult to get hold of because so little has been written about particular forms of provision, but, over the years, she has succeeded in building up a collection of material that is of considerable historical and contemporary interest. I know of no other equivalent set of resources and, over the past decade, I have found myself turning to her for advice whenever I (or one of my students) needed to know about a particular form of elite bilingual education provision. Now, with the publication of this book, others will also have access to her unique fund of knowledge.

The book will serve as an important new resource for both teachers and researchers in the field of bilingual education.

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