

Introduction

Area Specification

This book represents an attempt to describe and demystify a particular type of educational provision which has been referred to in the literature as ‘elite’ or ‘prestigious’ bilingual education. These types of programme cater mainly for upwardly mobile, highly educated, higher socio-economic status learners of two or more internationally useful languages. Elite bilingualism is considered both as an international and an interdisciplinary phenomenon, which is increasingly valued in today’s globalised universe, where proficiency in two or more international languages is becoming ever more necessary to efficient and effective processes of communication in business, in academia and in politics.

While the field of bilingualism in minority contexts has had a long and distinguished history (cf. work by Fishman, 1967, 1972, 1976, 1977, 1980, 1991; Cummins, 1980, 1986, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas 1977, 1981, 1987; Romaine, 1988, 1989, 1992; Hakuta, 1986; Hornberger, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1997; Heller, 1994, 1999; Martin-Jones, 1989, 1995, 2000, among others) there has been relatively little written on bilingualism in elite contexts to date, with the notable exception of the well-known literature on immersion education. The reasons for this have not been discussed in any depth, but a few hypotheses may be advanced here. Firstly, bilingualism in minority communities has perhaps been seen as a more ‘worthy’ object of study than elite bilingualism, in that researchers may be conscious of their role of ‘advocacy’ (Cameron *et al.*, 1992) in writing about the inequalities of provision for development of the first or native language in those who speak minority languages.

Secondly, while many bilingual programmes in minority contexts have received state or federal funding (cf. Title VII in the USA and bilingual support programmes in UK) and have therefore needed to be accountable to official bodies, elite bilingual programmes are generally offered by the private sector and rely on a certain competitiveness in relation to other forms of educational provision. Thus, many institutions have been reluctant to share details of how they organise their language provision, for fear of benefiting potential competitors.

Thirdly, the historical traditions of many International Schools reveal that the

development of bilingualism or multilingualism has not always been considered of prime importance for students. In many English International Schools, for example, which were founded in the first part of the twentieth century, it was taken for granted that the curriculum would be based on models used in British or North American monolingual schools (Carder, 1991). An 'English medium' rather than a bilingual education was offered. This was based on the view that the majority of students in International Schools in different parts of the world came from the expatriate communities, rather than the host nations, and therefore needed to return to the USA or the UK to complete their university studies. As Coreen Sears (1999, personal communication), for many years a teacher and Head of the English as a Second Language Department at the International School of Brussels notes, 'It is one of the problematic areas of English medium schools for those of us who are committed to producing students who function effectively in both the spoken and literacy areas of their two (or more) languages'.

Thus, this book aims, on the one hand, at charting the development of different types of bilingual or multilingual educational provision (which may or may not have been explicitly recognised as such) which cater for upwardly mobile students. On the other hand, it also purports to make an argument for the need to study bilingual education in majority as well as in minority contexts, in order to contribute to the field of bilingual studies in general.

Intended Audience

This book is intended for multiple audiences. It is aimed particularly at teachers, students and researchers working in the area of bilingual education, who have an interest in the development of programmes for majority language speakers, whether they follow the tradition of International Education, Immersion Education, or a European School model. The discussion of each of these modalities has been situated in relation to the historical, sociolinguistic and cultural context of implementation in order to show how specific forces have contributed to the creation of particular types of elite bilingual programmes in particular contexts. Provision of a number of case sketches and case boxes which illustrate ways in which individual institutions have coped with the need to provide bilingual programmes for specific populations, combined with examples of close analyses of bilingual classroom interaction, as well as the analysis of the discourse of International School brochures and language policy documents help to establish the grounded nature of the discussion, particularly in the second half of the book.

Content Overview

The first part of the book, Chapters 1–6, is entitled 'General Perspectives and Issues', and deals with notions of elite bilingualism and bilingual education as a world phenomenon. In Chapter 1, the emphasis is on the relationships of bilingualism and multilingualism with global international concerns, on the one hand, and the influence of specific contextual and historical factors in the development of

different types of elite educational programmes, such as Finishing Schools, Language Schools, International Schools, European Schools and Canadian Immersion Programmes, on the other. Chapter 2 provides discussion and definition of key terms used throughout the book and relates these to the notion of different continua of bilingualism, biliteracy and bilingual education. Chapter 3 discusses socio-cultural aspects of elite bilingualism in relation to three main areas: culture and bilingual marriage, multicultural and intercultural education, and cross-cultural communication in business. In Chapter 4 the emphasis is on aspects of bilingual classroom policy and practice, especially with regard to language use, content and language and cultural considerations. The chapter is illustrated by two extended examples of bilingual classroom interaction, one in Colombia and one in Hong Kong. Chapter 5 focuses on interrelationships between some of those who contribute to bilingual education programmes: parents, school administrators, teachers and students. The final chapter in this section, Chapter 6, summarises some of the main research carried out on elite bilingual programmes, particularly in the field of immersion education. The chapter ends with a description of a collaborative research project in the area of curricular design, carried out in Colombia, aimed at facilitating a process of empowerment among participants.

The second part of the book is entitled 'Overview of Elite Bilingual Provision in Specific Contexts of Implementation'. It contains eight chapters that deal with ways in which bilingualism and bilingual education have developed in different areas of the world. The first five chapters, Chapters 7–11, discuss developments in the field across the five continents. Thus, Chapter 7 focuses on two African nations, Morocco and Tanzania; Chapter 8 deals with the situation of bilingualism and bilingual education in three South American countries: Brazil, Argentina and Colombia; in Chapter 9 it is the turn of three Asian countries: Japan, Hong Kong and Brunei; while Chapter 10 is devoted to developments in four regions of Europe: Finland, Sweden, Belgium and Catalonia (Spain); finally Chapter 11 discusses developments in Australia.

Chapter 12 examines two discourse genres associated with elite bilingualism: International School brochures and language policy statements, from a critical perspective, with a view to showing how selected documents indirectly reproduce and legitimate existing power relations. In Chapter 13 the emphasis is on how practitioners who work in different types of elite bilingual education programmes around the world see aspects of their classroom practice. A series of cases reported by teachers are presented and commented on in the light of current developments in bilingual pedagogy. The final chapter, Chapter 14, draws together the main themes developed throughout the book, suggests further lines of enquiry and makes a series of recommendations for effective policy and practice.