

A Note on Terminology

Although there are many parallels between the educational issues presented by language minorities in English-dominant countries there are also many differences in the language policies that have evolved to deal with them. This book, although not attempting to be explicitly comparative, will draw on the policy experience of several countries in order, as fully as possible, to discuss the educational practice of linguistic minority students. However, the data presented here comes from an English context and the terminology used to describe the schools and their participants will, therefore, be that used by British educationalists.

Sometimes the same terms have different connotations across national contexts (Edwards & Redfern, 1992: 4). In Britain, the term 'bilingual' is used to describe students learning and using English as an additional language (EAL); 'thereby stressing children's accomplishments rather than their lack of fluency in English' (Levine, 1990: 5). The definition does not make 'any judgement of range or quality of linguistic skills, but stands for the alternate use of two languages in the same individual' (Bourne, 1989: 1-2). In the United States, 'English as a secondary language' (ESL) is the term probably most in use to describe children learning English while going through the education system (Adamson, 1993), although 'bilingual' is also used along with a plethora of other terms ('limited English proficient', etc.). Similarly, the term 'LOTE', is in current use in Australia to describe speakers of languages other than English. In this book, both the terms 'bilingual' and 'EAL' will be used to describe teachers' and students' states and goals in the three schools that were the main sites for this book's research.