

Editorial

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This Special Issue reflects the contemporary multidisciplinary variety of research into bilingual education, with ethnographic, statistical and comparative research styles being utilized. Current international research on bilingual education uses perspectives from sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, philosophy and pedagogy, classroom practice and provision, local and national policy formulation, and, not least, ideology and politics.

Bilingual education (used in its widest sense) is thus not just about a school enacting a national, regional or individual education policy; neither is it purely about provision for children who speak an immigrant or minority indigenous language, nor about how two languages are distributed in teaching and learning in classrooms. Bilingual education is a central part of national or regional language planning that, on some occasions, seeks to assimilate indigenous and immigrant minorities, or to integrate newcomers or minority groups. On other occasions, bilingual education is a major plank in language revitalization and language reversal, as is the case for Welsh in Wales. In this Special Issue, contrasting the education of the Turkish-speaking communities in the UK with that of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (Welsh-language pre-school education) and with the Basque bilingual education reveals different underlying political ideologies. Indeed, there is no understanding of bilingual education without contextualizing it within the politics of a nation, region (for example, the Basque areas in Spain) or state (such as California). The most recent political contextualization for bilingual education is in terms of global language death (Nettle and Romaine, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

The rapid growth in concern for preserving the many endangered and dying languages has given an added *raison d'être* to bilingual education. For a minority language to survive, it has to produce new speakers, mostly via the family and the education system (including adult language learning). When

there is a shortfall in the family reproduction of a minority language, the responsibility for maintaining numbers and densities of speakers falls on bilingual education. This is the case in Wales. Language acquisition planning via bilingual education becomes essential for language revival, but insufficient by itself. Language revitalization requires other institutional support systems than bilingual education to succeed. For example, schoolchildren can become competent in two languages, but those languages are subsequently lost in the playground, street and shop, workplace and leisure life. Other forms of language planning are crucial, in addition to bilingual education, for language revitalization (for example, institutionalization, legitimization, corpus planning, language transmission in the family, an economic or instrumental value to the language and an integrative value, such as in cultural, leisure, social, community and religious activities). The reverse is also important. Bilingual education cannot gain its justification solely from language restoration or maintenance. It requires research to demonstrate underlying educational advantages (for example, raising student achievement, increasing employment opportunities).

There is sometimes over-optimism among language planners about what can be expected from and delivered by bilingual education in revitalizing a language, and this is a current danger in Wales. When a language fails to be reproduced in the family, and when there are insufficient support mechanisms outside education (for example, language rights, minority-language mass media, employment utilizing bilingualism), excessive expectations of language reversal via bilingual education are not uncommon. While bilingual education has an important role in language reproduction, and without bilingual education a minority language may not be able to survive except through intense religious usage, bilingual education cannot deliver language maintenance by itself, including in Wales. The 2001 census figures show an increase in Welsh-language speakers since 1991, but almost entirely among the younger age-groups. This reflects that in Wales Welsh is compulsory in the National Curriculum, either as a core or foundation subject. All children aged 5 to 16 should be learning Welsh in school, with some pupils learning through Welsh. Converting Welsh-learners into Welsh-users outside the classroom and school gates is a major task for the future of the Welsh language.

We have a distinguished tradition of bilingual education in Wales that is often the envy of other countries. Our heritage language education spread rapidly a few decades ago, but, as this Special Issue discusses, it has not developed strongly in higher (and further) education. Immersion education has

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become of interest to the Wales National Assembly Government, with small-scale pilot studies in progress. In this we are emulating success in immersion education, particularly in Canada, but also in Australia, Finland and elsewhere (Johnstone, 2002). Globally, particular forms of bilingual education have increasingly been claimed as superior to monolingual education (for example immersion bilingual education in Canada, dual-language bilingual education in the USA, heritage language education in South America).

However, the danger is of sweeping generalizations. Particular models of bilingual education interact with a host of student, teacher, curriculum and contextual variables in complex ways to influence student outcomes. It is too simplistic to assume that employing two or more languages in the school curriculum automatically leads to a raising of standards, more effective outcomes or a more child-centred education. In reality, the languages of the school are but part of a wider matrix of variables that interact in complex ways to make schooling more or less effective.

The articles in this Special Issue indicate that underlying complexity. The precise paths for raising standards via bilingual education are neither simple nor straightforward. There is likely to be an intricate equation between styles of bilingual education and factors such as the support of the home (for example, in supporting literacy development), the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers in school, children feeling accepted and secure, the relationship between bilingual education and cognitive development, and between such education and employment and the local economy.

Traditionally, the benefits claimed for bilingual education include its increasing achievement, not only in two-language competency and bilit-eracy, but also across the curriculum. Such bilingual education is also regarded as child-centred, identity-forming and responsive to parental preferences. The advantages claimed for bilingual education are perhaps strongest at individual person level, and include the following.

- 1) Bilingual education allows both languages (sometimes three languages) to develop fully. This allows children to engage in wider communication, having more options in patterns of communication across generations, regions and cultural groups.
- 2) Bilingual education develops a broader enculturation, a more sympathetic view of different creeds and cultures. Rather than token multicultural lessons, bilingual education gives deep insights into the cultures associated with the languages, fosters a broader understanding of differences and, at its best, avoids the tight compartmentalization of racism and the

- stereotyping of different social groups, and fosters a more multi-perspective and sensitive-to-difference viewpoint.
- 3) Bilingual education ideally leads to biliteracy (Hornberger, 2003; Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000). Being literate in two or more languages allows more possibilities in uses of literacy (for example in employment), widening the choice of literacy practices for pleasure, so giving more opportunities for different perspectives and viewpoints and leading to a deeper understanding of history and heritage, of traditions and territory.
 - 4) The plentiful research on Canadian immersion studies and also on heritage language education suggest that curriculum achievement is increased through dual language approaches to cultivate student learning across the curriculum (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2001).
 - 5) Research suggests that when children have two well-developed languages there are cognitive benefits for being bilingual (Bialystok, 2001). Schools are often important in developing a child's two languages to the point where he or she may be more creative in thinking due to their bilingualism (Baker, 2001), more sensitive in communication as they may be interpersonally aware, for example, when needing to codeswitch, and be able to inspect their languages more (that is, metalinguistic advantages).
 - 6) In heritage language education (developmental maintenance bilingual education), children's self-esteem may be raised (Cummins, 2000). When a child's home language is replaced by the majority language, the child, the parents and the child's community may seem to be rejected. When the home language is used in school, then children may feel themselves, their home and community to be accepted, thus maintaining or raising their self-esteem. Positive self-esteem, a confidence in one's own ability and potential, interacts in an important way with achievement and curriculum success.
 - 7) Bilingual education can play a key role in establishing identity at a local, regional and national level (Baker and Jones, 1998). Sharing Basque or Breton identity is aided by the heritage language and culture being celebrated in the classroom. Developing a Welsh-Chinese, Turkish-British or Greek-Australian identity can be much aided by 'strong' forms of bilingual education, and challenged or even negated by 'weak' forms (Baker, 2001).
 - 8) The economic advantages of bilingual education are increasingly being claimed. Being bilingual can be important to secure employment in many public services and sometimes private companies as well. To secure a job as a teacher, to work in the mass media or to work in local

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government and, increasingly, in the Civil Service in countries such as Canada, Wales and the Basque Country, bilingualism has become important. Thus, bilingual education is increasingly seen as delivering relatively more marketable employees than can monolingual education (Dutcher, 1995; Henley and Jones, 2001).

To this list may be added the potential societal, ethnic group or community benefits of bilingual education (Mejía, 2002), such as: continuity of heritage, cultural vitality, empowered and informed citizenship, raising school and state achievement standards, social and economic inclusion, social relationships and networking, ethnic group self-determination and distinctiveness.

We must also be cognizant of the limits of bilingual education, for example the type and use of language learnt at school. Canadian research suggests that the language register of formal education does not necessarily prepare children for language use outside the school (Cummins, 2000). The language of the curriculum is often complex and specialized. The vernacular of the street is different. Canadian children from English-speaking homes who have been to immersion schools and learnt through the medium of French and English sometimes report difficulty in communicating appropriately with French speakers in local communities. Local French speakers can find such students' French too formal, awkward or inappropriate.

A further concern about bilingual education is that language learning may stop at the school gates. The minority language may be effectively transmitted and competently learnt in the classroom. Once outside the school gates, children may switch into the majority language. Thus, the danger of bilingual education in a minority language is that the language becomes a language of school, but not of play; a language of the content delivery of the curriculum, but not of peer culture. Extending a minority language learnt at school to use in the community is something that is difficult to engineer, difficult to plan, but nevertheless vital if the language is to live outside the school gates.

While there is strong support for bilingual education at individual person level, bilingual education has become associated with political debates about national identity, dominance and control by elites, power relationships among politicians and civil servants, questions about social order and the perceived potential subversiveness of language minorities. Bilingual education is both predicated on prevailing politics, and can be located within attempts to effect social, cultural, economic and political change, particularly in strengthening the weak, empowering the powerless and revitalizing those

most vulnerable. Valdés (2001) engages multi-level explanations: 'Structures of dominance in society interact with educational structures and educational ideologies as well as with teachers' expectations and with students' perspectives about options and opportunities' (p. 4).

Thus new research on bilingual education will almost inevitably meet ideological and political argument. The passionate politics surrounding immigration, social and political cohesion, and real or imagined threats to peace and prosperity, throws such research into the cauldron of political competition and controversy. However, such political debates need to be informed by research. The alternative is decisions about languages and education which are based on ignorance and prejudice, resulting in policies that may increase inequity, injustice and intolerance. Thus the challenge for bilingual education research is to investigate and inform policy and practice so as to increase the probability that today's language minority children experience equity, justice and tolerance, not just in school, but as the empowered citizens of a more tolerant, equitable and peaceful tomorrow.

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