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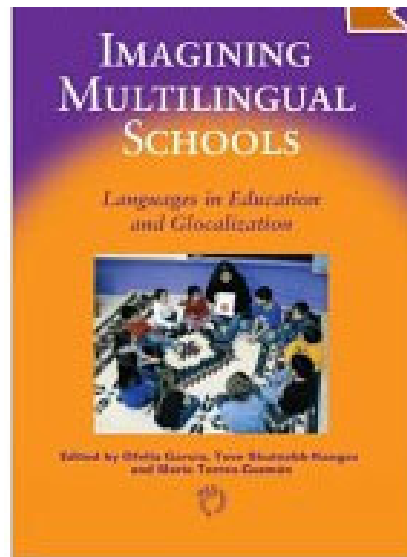
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**A REVIEW OF *IMAGINING MULTILINGUAL SCHOOLS -
LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION AND GLOCALIZATION***

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A GREAT BOOK, AND A TIMELY CONTRIBUTION

This book, *Imagining Multilingual Schools – Languages in Education and Glocalization*, is edited by Ofelia Garcia, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Maria E. Torres-Guzman and published by Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights Multilingual Matters Ltd., Clevedon, 2006. The book is dedicated to “all the world’s teachers of multilingual children.” The Editors present this book in five parts.

WEAVING SPACES

Part 1 is the **Introduction**. It is entitled “*Weaving Spaces and (De) constructing Ways for Multilingual Schools: The Actual and the Imagined*.” The editors, Ofelia Garcia, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Maria E. Torres-Guzman have written this part.

In the age of globalization, where democratic values is the buzz word for socio-economic development, only 13% of the world’s children are lucky to receive primary education in their native language. (page 4) The concerns of this book revolve around mother tongues and a future instead of a situation to choose from the two.

Multilingual education “*is education where more than two languages are used as languages of instruction in subjects other than the languages themselves.*” The ‘multilingual school’ ‘*exert educational effort to build further on the diversity of languages and literacy practices that children bring to school.*”

To imagine multilingual schools is complex, so real in some countries, and unmanageable in some.

VALUES AND SCHOOLS: WHAT KIND OF PEDAGOGY?

Part 2: Pedagogies, Values and Schools

IDENTITY TEXTS

Jim Cummins’ essay entitled “**Identity Texts: The imaginative construction of self through multiliteracies pedagogy**” focuses on three current trends that influence the education system.

1. The increasing mobility of peoples resulting in linguistic and cultural diversity in urban education
2. The growing perception that English is the avenue to social and economic progress and therefore the demand for English medium education.
3. The changing face of the Information Age Economy

The questions therefore are:

- a. How can educators ensure that students from linguistically diverse backgrounds have rights to maintain their home language with the support of the school system?
- b. “How can educators communicate to parents and policy-makers that research support a *both/and* rather than *either/or*, orientation to the development of home language and English literacy?”
- c. “Can new technologies also be harnessed as tools for development of critical literacy that would enable students to gain access to alternatives and resist dominant discourses?”

One approach to success in supporting maintenance of linguistic diversity in the classroom is through the Multi-literacies project which accesses children’s’ knowledge of their home language to evolve identity texts.

LEARNING AND LIVING TOGETHER IN HARMONY

The essay **Imagining Multilingual Education in France: A Language and Cultural Awareness Project at Primary Level** is by Christine Helot and Andrea Young.

The authors have worked out an inclusive model through the “**Didenheim experience**” of Language Awareness and teacher education through activities aimed to integrate languages and cultures based on learners’ knowledge of languages.

They conclude their paper with the statement, “If multilingualism is about *‘how people relate together, the Didenheim project is an illustration of a learning community coming together to learn together to live together in harmony’*”

Thus, responding to needs of bilingual pupils and also education of their monolingual pupils.

A growing number of children of today in France are multilingual. The school system, however, faces obstacles; neglect the linguistic and cultural diversity children bring to the school and thereby continue their *‘traditional monolingual habitus’*.

The ‘language awareness project’ carried out by parents and teachers in a primary school in Alsace, France introduced 18 languages and their associated cultures to children between the ages of six to nine years. The objective was to develop an ‘alternative model’ of language education to transform the traditional monolingual habitus to a multilingual orientation so as to empower speakers of minority languages.

REVISITING MELTING POTS: MULTILINGUAL AMERICA

Teresa L McCarty, Mary Eunice Romero and Ofelia Zepeda focus their paper on “**Re-imagining Multilingual America: Lessons from Native American Youth**”.

The gap between multilingual multicultural society and education policies in a *monolingualist and monoculturalist mold* is a study on Native American students, communities and schools.

Of the 200 indigenous languages spoken in the US and Canada, only 34 are still being naturally acquired as first language by children in the context of their families and communities, in other words 84% of the indigenous languages have no speakers to pass them on.

The paradox, however, is that most children are labeled as *‘limited English proficient’*, which creates *‘culture-negating pressures’* and at the same time, young people believe *‘there is always hope’* that reminds them that *‘linguistic and educational self-determination is an inherent human right’*.

POLITICAL AUTONOMY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Feli Etxeberria-Sagastume writes on **‘Attitudes towards Language Learning in Different Linguistic Models of the Basque Autonomous Community’**.

French and Spanish regions form the Basque country. Euskara, the Basque language, spoken in three territories, has limited space for academic purposes. Through a research project to study perception and self-evaluation of bilingual acquisition the author presents the three different linguistic models as medium of instruction and as subject.

Students value learning languages for instrumental as well as integrative purposes, English for 'high prestige' and local languages for 'deep identity links'. In other words, imagining multilingual schooling is linked with values for language learning in its social contexts.

EXTENSION OF SPACES – OR REGAINING ORIGINAL SPACES?

Part 3: Extending Formal Instructional Spaces

BACK TO BASICS

Viv Edwards and Lynda Pritchard Newcombe present “**Back to Basics: Marketing the Benefits of Bilingualism to Parents.**”

Adding to the debate on multilingual classrooms, the authors focus on the ‘*changing political fortunes of bilingual education*’, with reference to parents’ role in the spread of language and argue that the system of education itself is insufficient to stop language shift. Parents have a major role to play.

Drawing from the Wales experiment, ‘Twf’ an innovative project, the authors present the potentiality of ‘*treating bilingualism as a product*’ that can be marketed directly to parents’ and thereby confront myths about bilingualism.

LANGUAGE RIGHTS, NEW SOCIAL ACTORS, AND GENDERED VOICES

Karen Ogulnick writes on “**Popular Education and Language Rights in Indigenous Mayan Communities: Emergence of New Social Actors and Gendered Voices.**”

Karen presents voices of the Mayan Educational Foundation whose main objective is resilience and preservation of the Mayan Future.

Youth of Indigenous communities are forging a future for their language and culture within the context of the dominant Spanish speaking culture. Through the support of grass root organizations national language policies are taking shape in Mexico, thereby a source of inspiration for other indigenous communities to follow suit. Grass root organizations are succeeding.

PRESERVING MULTIPLE REALITIES

Part 4: Tensions between Multiple Realities

FAILURE OF MULTILINGUALS SCHOOLS?

Elana Shohamy presents “**Imagined Multilingual Schools: How Come We Don’t Deliver?**”

The author presents how fantasy and reality are two concepts that co-exist in the presence of ‘the imagined’. One of the ways to maintain and develop multilingual competence extended in schools is through multiple languages as medium of instruction, which could go a long way in perpetuating multilingualism.

THE NEW BREED OF BILINGUALS

Kathy Escamilla presents “**Monolingual Assessment and Emerging Bilinguals: A Case Study in the US.**”

7.5 million people in the US are ‘language minority’ with ‘limited English proficiency’ commonly referred to as ‘English Language Learners’ – these belong to 350 different language groups.

It is ‘too expensive’ and ‘not feasible to assess and test students in 102 languages other than in English – Is language viewed a problem, a right or a resource? Limited ability in English in the US is perceived a ‘problem’ and schools are supposed to ‘fix the language problem’ of Spanish speaking students.

No Language Left Behind Act (2002) is a federal mandate wherein an annual assessment of reading, writing of various content materials carried out to *ensure school accountability and effectiveness* is conducted.

The focus of this paper is a case study of implementation of large-scale programmes for testing emerging bilingual students. In the state of Colorado, where 80% of the school population has Spanish as first language, are allowed to take the assessment test in Spanish. Findings indicate that performance is higher in Spanish rather than in English, which support the need to assess emerging bilinguals in both their languages.

STRUGGLE FOR MULTILINGUAL SCHOOLS

Lydia Nyati-Ramahobo writes on “**The Long Road to Multilingual Schools in Botswana.**”

At least 28 languages are spoken in multilingual Botswana. 78% of the populations of eight tribes speak Setswana at home. Because most languages are politically powerless and culturally non-aggressive, concern of the author is ‘*that of the knowledge embedded in the many languages that are dying as a result of state efforts to create monolingual schools in a multilingual context. The policy seems to indicate a move towards monolingual schools in English with French as a subject.*’

The current movement is for revival of as many tribal languages and cultures as possible, the intention being is to spread the word that using local languages in school education is beneficial.

A PROPER PLACE UNDER THE SUN

Part 5 covers Negotiating Policies of Implementation.

THE THICKENING CLOUDS OF GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Nancy H. Hornberger's paper is titled as "Nichols to NCLB: Local and Global Perspectives on US Language Education Policy."

It begins with a quote from Dolson (2004)

"Americans aren't used to receiving foreign aid, especially from a third world country such as Bolivia. But in the case of Bilingual education we may have a few things to learn from this poverty stricken Andean country,"

The thrust is on bilingual intercultural education where 'fluently bilingual and well trained teachers with the active involvement of parents in the school governing board have borne fruits in Bolivia's 1994 Educational Reform.

Perspectives on ideological and implementation spaces are presented; cases like the "Lau v. Nichols" created multilingual schools in the US. Through a historical and comparative analysis of the policy of language education in the US the author concludes *'it is high time for the US and other parts of the developed world to accept foreign aid from the developing world.'*

The will to overpower threat and fear for diversity in ways to speak, think, mean, value and live is all that matters.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Luis Enrique Lopez presents "Cultural Diversity, Multilingualism and Indigenous Education in Latin America."

Lopez focuses on the implementation of indigenous bilingual education in Guatemala and Bolivia, the indigenous communities of Latin America. By drawing observations from the intercultural bilingual education (IBE) carried out at PROEIB Andes, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, as well as recent fieldwork, the author presents views on the role of indigenous leaders and organizations on the national policies

Multilingualism and multiculturalism, have legal recognition, however, power controls perceive diversity as difficult and an obstruction to national unity. 41% of the population

in Guatemala and 62% in Bolivia are indigenous. Three hundred years of colonial rule and 180 years of republican governments, never hit the imagination of policy makers, they forced the Amerindian people to learn Spanish.

In presenting Bolivia's tryst with bilingual education the center of attention are the two projects implemented with the speakers of Quechua and Aymara. 33 distinct indigenous languages are spoken

Speakers of the 21 languages from the Mayan linguistic family in Guatemala are stable and dynamic. However, in the midst of internal violence and warfare, "*you had to keep your identity [and your language] hidden to resist*" (Menchu, 1984:220). As of date 13.5% of the rural population is Mayan monolinguals and about 40% young Guatemalans are bilingual.

The national literacy rate ranges between 14.6% and 26.2% in rural Bolivia. The highest illiteracy rate in Latin America is from among the Guatemalan adults.

A brief history of bilingual education is presented. The interesting aspect is where the author discusses strategies in contrast between government and the Mayan school movement. Whereas the former focuses on acquisition of Spanish language and Guatemalan culture, the latter stress on local knowledge and language – mathematics, philosophy, spirituality, way of life and in particular participation and involvement of the community.

In conclusion, the author is of the view that "*Indigenous leaders reiteratively remind the mainstream society that multiculturalism and multilingualism are not traits of the past, but rather features for the future that are related to competencies that all Latin Americans must develop in order to become citizens of the world. As they many times reaffirm, they have always had to adapt to intercultural and multilingual attitude in order to survive. The time might have come for non-indigenous individuals to learn from them and to become multilingual in order to cope with the new world that lies ahead of us in Latin America.*"

Indeed! Very well presented!

INDIAN PANORAMA AND PREDICAMENT

Ajit K. Mohanty writes on "**Multilingualism of the Un-equals and Predicaments of Education in India: Mother Tongue or Other Tongue?**"

The author presents seven features to understand the character of Indian multilingualism. They are

1. Bilingualism at the grass-root level;
2. Maintenance norms;
3. Complementarities of languages;
4. Multiplicity of linguistic identities;

5. Bilingualism as a strategy for mother tongue maintenance;
6. Multilingualism as a positive force;
7. Early socialization for multilingual functioning

Mohanty appeals for a '*comprehensive language-in-education policy for empowerment of tribal and minority languages along with the reappraisal of the role of English in Indian Society*'. The most striking plea is, "*The question is not whether to use the mother tongue OR the other tongue. It is not about whether to use Hindi OR English. Multilingual education in India is about the mother tongue AND the other tongues as it develops multilingualism for all in Indian society.*"

We are conscious that education plays a pivotal role in spreading social development, stability, integration and equity in a culturally and linguistically diverse civilization.

This book sensitizes readers, the thrust, for the interrelationship between home and school language and necessarily the differential performance it generates.

A priceless contribution to the world to recognize and accept bi/multi-linguality as nature's gift for humanity to nurture!

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