

International Perspectives on Bilingual Education

Policy, Practice, and Controversy



edited by
John E. Petrovic

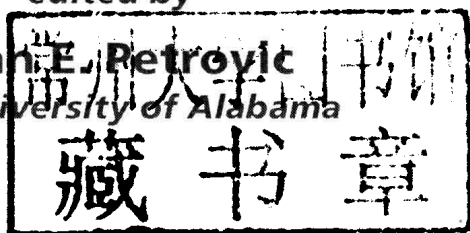
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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATIONAL
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International Perspectives on Bilingual Education: Policy, Practice, and Controversy

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International Perspectives on Bilingual Education: Policy, Practice, and Controversy

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FOREWORD

Terrence G. Wiley
Arizona State University

This collection is offered largely as a defense of linguistic pluralism, in an attempt to “provide scholars an international comparative understanding of language policy, its relation to educational policy and practice, and current debates within the field” (Petrovic, herein). Explicitly or implicitly, most of the contributions deal with language policies, ideologies, needs, practices, and discourses. Language policies may be *official*, result from *implicit institutional practices*, or be derived from the *agency of language strategists* who have been able to influence the linguistic market through mass sales of dictionaries, primers, and/or literature that provide models for “common” language usage (Weinstein, 1983).

An important contribution of this collection is its emphasis on the role of understanding the varied contexts in which policies are prescribed and its chapters that cast a critical eye on accepted theories of bilingual education (e.g., MacSwan & Rolstad). Many of the chapters help to demonstrate the importance of language policy as an instrument of *social control*, in facilitating or limiting access to the political arena, education, and social and economic benefits (Leibowitz, 1969, 1974, 1976).

During the past five centuries, in those parts of the world dominated by eurocentric nationalism and colonialism, language policies have been in the domain of educators, missionaries, and colonial functionaries. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, educational policies often went hand in hand with the colonial project (Willinsky, 2000) and grand narratives that constructed hierarchical language and racial statuses (Blaut, 1993; Mignolo, 2003; Wiley, 2006). Educational language policies have often been framed

in terms of acquisition planning. Acquisition planning has focused on national languages and colonial languages, as well as languages of literacy and mass communication, in postcolonial contexts.

The chapters in this volume may be indexed to many of the themes regarding language policy that have developed over the past several decades. These include discussions regarding language policy and planning that have moved from technocratic prescriptions for linguistic standardization and how they relate to various modernist and nationcentric ends regarding linguistic assimilation, unification, mass literacy, and universal education. This has been followed by focus on the value of mother tongue(s) in promoting educational access and equity while fostering positive identity and concerns regarding policies that result in rapid language shift and negative social and psychological consequences associated with language loss, the loss of language as societal resources, concerns over the relationship between linguistic genocide as a form of cultural genocide, and comparisons of linguistic diversity as being analogous to the loss of biodiversity, followed by efforts to reverse language shift. Along with these concerns, there has been a struggle to promote minority language rights as linguistic human rights. Recently, the field has entertained internal debates among scholars regarding the role that applied linguists and educators should play in shaping language policies, and there has been concern that scholars can become complicit, wittingly or unwittingly, in formulating or implementing policies that undermine language as a resource or that result in linguistic discrimination. More recently, there has been critical reflection among scholars who support language maintenance, choice, and linguistic human rights concerning the role of language policies in promoting educational, political, social, and economic access and equality, as well as introspection regarding the very discourse and metaphors that are used in defense of these goals. For some, long-used constructs such as *native speaker* and even *language* have become suspect.

No single collection could address all of these issues, but *International Perspectives on Bilingual Education: Policy, Practice, and Controversy* makes an important contribution to many of the important issues and debates within the field. The division of this text into three major sections—national policies, applied considerations, and debates within the field—is a reasonable way to organize the various topics presented, but we can also note the intersection of many themes across these boundaries. One motif that is largely implicit in the various chapters is the role that language ideologies play in privileging one language over another, which has relevance in Part I (Petrovic, Ricento & Cervatiuc, and Balcazar) in terms of national language policies. Ideologies also have bearing in Part II in considering educational language policies that have been designed to promote monolingualism and monoliteracy or bilingualism and biliteracy (Escamilla & Hopewell; Rao, Shanbal, & Khurana; and Vila i Moreno) and multilingualism and multiliteracy, or that privilege-school-taught varieties

of language and academic discourse practices (MacSwan & Rolstad, in Part III).

Petrovic notes that monolingualist policies favoring English-only (Chapter 1) or castellanización, for example, in Guatemala (see Balcazar, herein) have been dominant in many modern nation-states, regardless of whether they have positive immigration, as in the case of the United States, or negative immigration, as in the case of Guatemala. In modern nation-states, statuses have often been ascribed to speakers of various languages. The U.S. case is often framed only in terms of immigration, but it involves also historical modes of incorporation of others, including so-called involuntary immigrants who were enslaved and transported against their will or forced to be assimilated (as in the case of indigenous peoples, initially conceived as *dependent domestic nations*). Thus, seemingly similar language policies favoring English have had differential impacts on language minorities depending on their legal status during the initial mode of incorporation and their subsequent treatment after incorporation (Wiley, 2000).

Monolingualist ideologies as a basis for modern conceptions of language policy have been influential tools for “unifying” nation-states. Schools have been major instruments in this process through imposing normative language practices. Five centuries ago, the scholar Antonio de Nebrija was among the first to advocate for overt instruction in a standardized language as a means of advancing the interests of the Castilian state (Illich, 1979). We can trace the origins of modernist prescriptivism, which privileges literate discourse, to the promotion of Nebrija’s Castilian grammar and consider how notions of alphabetic literacy were used to position indigenous peoples in the ideological schemas and grand narratives of colonialism (Blaut, 1993; Mignolo, 2003). Similarly, the promotion of standard languages has been seen as the tool for national hegemony and strength in modern France since the time of François I of France (Christ, 1997) and as a model for the emerging Meiji Japan and its efforts to promote modernization through mass education (Carroll, 2001; Weinberg, 1997). Educational expansion was tied to reforms in the writing system and the unification of spoken and written language, as well as the incorporation of new concepts into the Japanese language from abroad (Coulmas, 1990). The hegemony of such ideologies has provided the rationale for linguistic assimilation around reified notions of language as well as deficit views that have positioned bilingualism, multilingualism, and codeswitching as aberrant. As Stroud notes in the final chapter, “language has been socially and politically construed in ways that serve to regiment and order peoples into administrative constituencies, in constructing moral images of speakers, and in the semiotic framing of discourses of tradition and modernity, agency, and citizenship.”

Vernaculars, patois, dialects, idioms, pidgins, and mixed codes all became suspect forms of speech, marked as “nonstandard,” “substandard,” or even so-called “semilingual” indicators of an alleged cultural, technological,

and intellectual *great divide* between schooled “literates” and “polyglot hordes.” Some vernaculars were redeemed as national or regional languages once they became standardized based on classical models of grammar and then promoted as national languages. With the rise of common public schooling during the mid to late nineteenth century, in a number of western European countries, as well as in the United States, ideologies and discourses of monolingualism and standard language have been implicitly at the core of teacher education when teacher education itself has been available (Wiley, 2008).

Language diversity is often presented as being a “problem” in the popular media. Within applied linguistics, however, it has generally been defended as a human right or societal and individual “resource.” Ruiz (1984), in a frequently cited article, argued for the merits of the language-as-resource (LAR) orientation. Although the resource orientation has been widely endorsed, some scholars (see Ricento, 2005, and Petrovic, 2005) have critiqued the position for its instrumentalist stance, which can be appropriated in the service of the neoliberal state. Certainly, the resource metaphor has been co-opted in recent years in the United States by those interested in promoting foreign language study for purposes of national security (Wiley, 2007a, 2007b), but appeals to this orientation have long been prevalent and independently constructed outside of the field of applied linguistics (see Simon, 1988). Ruiz’s reflection on the LAR orientation in Chapter 7 thus provides a thoughtful, measured clarification and response.

Stroud’s final chapter provides a fitting conclusion for the book as he provides a useful critique of discourses related to linguistic human rights and notions of citizenship. As he notes, historically the notion of “rights” has been understood either positively (involving access to resources) or negatively (requiring from the state) (see Stroud, herein). Calls for policies that promote “linguistic justice” (cf. Ricento and Cervatiuc, this volume) can be interpreted as a call for positive rights. Appeals for promoting language rights have resource implications (as Ruiz also notes). Appeals for linguistic justice require an equitable allocation of resources for the maintenance or promotion of community languages, which implies some form of distributive justice that requires a formula for a more equitable allocation of resources within the neoliberal state.

As Stroud notes, linguistic rights discourses “tend to channel discourses on diversity into specific predetermined cultural and linguistic identities.” They also raise the question of where the locus of agency for language promotion and preservation should be—that is, *from the state* on behalf of the group (positive rights), or *from groups* based on their own resources without interference from the state (negative rights). Whichever the case, Stroud notes that “LHR, as currently conceived, also privileges the official and group values and perceptions of what might constitute the language in question” without considering “alternative-language practices

as part of the language.” These result in new “hierarchies of difference and disadvantage . . . rather than consensus and accommodation.” Stroud encourages us to think beyond linking languages and notions of citizenship to “national borders” and to reconceptualize them as “meeting places” where speakers of different languages and dialects nevertheless communicate. Drawing from notions of *deliberative democracy* and *cosmopolitan citizenship*, he sees languages as political resources that are both a “prime means (rather than a problem) for the material realization of democracy.”

This collection offers a number of perspectives in defense of linguistic pluralism within a variety of contexts. The final section helps to elucidate some of the schisms that persist in the field. Beyond its critique of linguistic human rights discourses, Stroud’s concluding chapter offers a fresh perspective that locates language diversity within the discourses of citizenship as “the very medium whereby citizenship is enacted and performed.” This ideal certainly relates to and informs the positive language policies and educational practices endorsed in Parts I and II of this volume, respectively, just as the other two chapters in the final section have implications for policy and practice.

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INTRODUCTION

The unifying theme of this book is a defense of linguistic pluralism generally and of language policies and practices in education that sustain that ideal. While I hope that the phrase “bilingual education” captures the general purpose of the book, the title is, in fact, misleading. In the United States, for example, bilingual education has historically referred to the idea of using a child’s native language as a language of instruction in addition to the second language, English. In Canada, however, one might consider French immersion programs for English speakers as bilingual education since the goal is bilingualism. In Cataluña, students might attend a school wherein both Castilian and Catalán are languages of instruction even as the student’s first language is something different.

Educational meanings and models are influenced by different populations and different social and historical contexts. Thus, it is important to look at these issues internationally as social contexts change the meanings of, and needs around, linguistic pluralism. Therefore, the purpose of the book is to provide scholars an international comparative understanding of language policy, its relation to educational policy and practice, and current debates within the field. The aim is to develop, in some small way, a greater sense of the commonalities and differences in perspectives, issues, and approaches across the globe. The book is divided into three sections dealing with the general topical areas of policy, practice, and controversy.

In the first section of the book, the authors consider national level language policies and their relation to educational policy. Specifically, these first three chapters present the historical development and impact of language policy in the United States, Canada, and Guatemala.

In Chapter 1, I provide a brief definition of language policy and present a historical overview of the development of language policy as it has impacted education in the United States. I argue that language policy in

the United States has frequently been driven by “reactionary attempts to maintain an imagined national community,” and that these reactions “have given rise to negative language policy.” I divide this history into distinct periods, analyzing each in terms of the primary language policy goal that distinguished them: to maintain, to reform, or to transform extant patterns of access in U.S. society.

In Chapter 2, Thomas Ricento and Andreea Cervatiuc trace the roots of the current official bilingualism paradigm in Canada that frames educational policymaking for the teaching of foreign, second, and heritage languages. They review the “mixed results” of enactments, such as the Official Languages in Education Program, that have come from this paradigm. In addition to the bilingual paradigm, Ricento and Cervatiuc argue that Canada has “a distinctive multicultural paradigm” which is “unique in the world.” This has raised a great deal of debate and demanded a great deal of compromise. In the end, they argue, multiculturalism must promote linguistic justice “in which all ethnic groups . . . have the right and financial support to preserve both their languages and cultures.”

In Chapter 3, Ivonne Heinze Balcazar discusses the history and contemporary status of language policy in Guatemala. In a contrast to the first two chapters, the focus of this chapter is solely upon the effects of language policy on the educational experiences of indigenous peoples. Unlike the United States and Canada, Guatemala has a negative net migration rate. Thus, linguistic diversity owes almost completely to the various indigenous communities. Therefore, Heinze Balcazar’s primary language policy concern is about language shift, the shift toward the use of the majority language, Spanish, by indigenous peoples at the expense of their own language. She notes that grassroots movements have “successfully channeled the focus of the Ministry of Education to issues of . . . educational quality and . . . cultural relevance” and that bilingual education is a key component of these educational efforts.

On the one hand, the histories and policies discussed in these chapters have many similarities. For example, restrictive language policies, such as English-only or *castellanización*, have had negative consequences on language minority and indigenous groups. Such consequences have included, in each of the cases, language shift and loss, denial of equal educational opportunity, and the squandering of linguistic resources and cultural enrichment. The authors of each chapter argue that commitment to an ideology of “one nation, one language” is fatally misguided.

On the other hand, it is important to understand that the historical and sociopolitical contexts do differ greatly. Therefore, while we can learn much through international comparisons, we must resist the temptation to generalize approaches to addressing issues of language diversity outside of their particular contexts. As Ricento and Cervatiuc point out in the concluding section of their chapter, policymakers “in the United States who

seek to avoid what they consider to be a fragile accommodation achieved between French- and English-speaking Canadians by declaring English the only official language of the United States fail to understand” the different realities of the situations. For example, the language demographics (the number of speakers of various languages and their geographic concentration), language shift (the stability of these various languages over generations), and language prestige (the correlation between language spoken and economic wellbeing) are in no way comparable between Canada and the United States and Belgium and the United States (Canada and Belgium being oft-cited cases in which linguistic instability leads to political strife) (cf. Petrovic, 1997/1999).

In its own manner, each of the chapters in the first section highlights the ways in which language has served as a proxy for what are in fact other historical sources of ongoing political strife (e.g., oppression). These histories must be taken into account in the current development of relevant and just language policy.

In the second section of the book, the authors address more practical considerations of language policy, one aspect of which is acquisition planning. Acquisition planning considers the processes by which the goals stated in given language policies will be achieved. Schools are, of course, among the primary institutions upon which the achievement of given language policies rests. Thus, this section addresses the program models and practices needed to serve children of multilingual backgrounds in order to promote linguistic pluralism.

Cooper (1989) presents three overt goals of acquisition planning: acquisition of a language as a second or foreign language, reacquisition of a language by populations for whom it was once a vernacular or language of specialized function, and language maintenance. One of the overarching values of each of these chapters is the lens through which bilingualism is viewed. While each of these authors embraces the ideal of becoming bi- or multilingual (as in Cooper’s first overt goal), they argue, each in his or her own way, that effective, positive language policy cannot proceed from this singular position. In each of the contexts described in these chapters, the default position is being (as opposed to becoming) bilingual, and that bilingualism is a natural state of affairs. The bilingual person is not simply someone who can translate from one language to another. Policy must derive from a much more robust theory of bilingualism—a theory that sees the bilingual person as someone engaging in language in much more complex ways, using language in different situations for different purposes, and acquiring, processing, and making sense of information in ways unique from a monolingual person or from someone acquiring a second or foreign language.

In this vein, Kathy Escamilla and Susan Hopewell, distinguish in Chapter 4 between simultaneous bilinguals and sequential bilinguals. They report

the results of their empirical study of a literacy intervention program designed specifically for simultaneous (Spanish–English) bilingual children. The question of whether literacy should be introduced in a child's first language, second language, or both has nagged bilingual educators for many years. August and Hakuta (1997) summarize this research as follows:

The evidence that better academic outcomes characterize immigrant children who have had 2 to 3 years of initial schooling (and presumably literacy instruction) in their native countries is consistent with the claim that children should first learn to read in a language they already speak. However, it is clear that many children first learn to read in a second language without serious negative consequences. (p. 60)

Escamilla and Hopewell's research sheds important light on this question. In the end, I suspect they would quarrel with any policy and practices that might emerge from August and Hakuta's summary of the research to the extent that it proceeds from a theory of sequential bilingualism.

The idea of simultaneous bilingualism is put into starker relief, and thus becomes even more important, in the case of India where, as is not the case in the United States, bilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. In Chapter 5, Prema K. S. Rao, Jayashree C. Shanbal, and Sarika Khurana provide an overview of the immense linguistic diversity in India and the implications for educational policy and practice. Most important, as concerns the purpose of this section of the book, the authors review their own and other studies in the Indian context that examine certain factors such as linguistic and orthographic structures that influence acquisition of multiliteracy. The subtle differences in the processing of languages and scripts, particularly between those of Indian languages and English, are examined from the perspective of deriving the best possible policy and practice for the bilingual/multilingual children in India.

In Chapter 6, F. Xavier Vila i Moreno presents the case of Catalan. The story of Catalan takes us through each of the goals of acquisition planning presented by Cooper. For example, during the dictatorship of Franco, (negative) language policy was designed to force language shift among the Catalan people, encouraging the acquisition of a second language (many Catalans would argue a *foreign* language), Spanish. Subsequent to this, Catalan had to be reacquired by many people of Catalan heritage, and current policy seeks to maintain Catalan as a national language in the region. In this chapter, Vila i Moreno explores the extent to which, and ways in which, Catalan is being promoted and maintained in schools in Catalan-language areas spread through Spain, France, Andorra, and Italy.

As I reviewed the chapters in this section, especially the ones on India and Catalonia, I was reminded of the ignorance of policymakers in the United States, and of a comment made by former Speaker of the House

Newt Gingrich. In the midst of debate on English-only legislation, Gingrich quipped, "I think that anyone who thinks we should have more than one national language doesn't understand how human societies operate." In fact, human societies operate bilingually/multilingually. Progressive language policy demands that this condition be reflected in school practices. What such practices might be is the concern of these chapters.

As will be outlined in the first section of the book, the purpose of language policy, very generally, is to manage, encourage, and/or discourage the use of particular languages. On the one hand, multilingualism is simply a fact in human societies. On the other hand, promoting it is certainly not uncontroversial. For the most part, what controversy exists is driven by ideological presumptions of one nation—one language in the age of the modern nation-state—recall the Gingrich comment above. Such presumptions dictate negative language policy nationally, locally, and educationally.¹ In education, debates swirl mainly around the issue of providing literacy and content area instruction in more than one language. Empirical debate has resolved overwhelmingly in favor of providing bilingual/multilingual instruction, yet political debate continues. The minister of education in the Northern Territory of Australia, for example, continues to support severe restrictions on bilingual education. She maintains her position in spite of two recent reports from her own department—corroborated by research conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research—concluding that indigenous children taught through their own language ultimately achieve better English literacy skills (Northern Territory News, 2008).

The first two sections of the book proceed unapologetically from a belief (no less ideologically) in language pluralism and bilingual education. The third and final section of the book continues in this vein. But the controversies covered here are not between language pluralists and assimilationists, as might be anticipated. This section instead considers current debates and disagreements among language pluralists who are nevertheless in general agreement about bilingual/multilingual education. Such disagreements "among friends" (as Richard Ruiz puts it in his chapter) are healthy and an important component of our continuing efforts to promote positive language policy.

¹To provide some examples from the U.S. context, we can consider at the national level the movement to make English the official language. While the movement has been so far unsuccessful at the national level, it has enjoyed broad success at the state level. Locally, in 1987, the City Board of Monterrey Park, California, dissolved the library board after the latter accepted a large gift of Chinese-language books from the Lions Club International of Taiwan (see Betancourt, 1992, for details). Similarly, after passage of Proposition 227, a ballot initiative that severely restricted bilingual education in California, a Californian principal removed all Spanish library books from his school's library (see Cline and Necochea, 2001).

Richard Ruiz's original "orientations" to language planning (language-as-problem, language-as-right, and language-as-resource) have been generative for many years. In these increasingly conservative times, Ruiz's original defense of language-as-resource has raised concerns over its seeming embeddedness in neoliberal, instrumentalist discourse. In Chapter 7, Ruiz "reorients" language-as-resource, addressing these concerns, as he puts it in the chapter, "not so much as a defense of an entrenched position but as a way to understand how intellectual colleagues can frame arguments that will have positive influences on policies we can support."

In Chapter 8, Jeff MacSwan and Kellie Rolstad argue that prescriptivism and the related construct of semilingualism wield powerful, political force and lead to wrongheaded ideas about children's language and subsequent explanations of academic underperformance. For these authors, neither the practices of prescriptivism nor the construct of semilingualism is supported by linguistic evidence. In this project, MacSwan and Rolstad provide an important critique of some of the theoretical constructs employed by Jim Cummins. Although Cummins's work is widely cited—and, I believe, has certainly advanced the field—MacSwan and Rolstad (among others they cite) argue that it supports a deficit model, showing how it is related to the almost universally dismissed construct of semilingualism.

In Chapter 9, Christopher Stroud provides a critique of "linguistic human rights." Linguistic human rights presents a particular way of viewing the relationship between language(s) and society and is thus a political philosophy of language, making normative claims about the demands that language communities can make of the state and vice versa. The construct simultaneously operates discursively, calling into being certain views of language itself. This, in turn, defines minority language speakers in particular ways, especially as *citizens*. Drawing on specific examples from South Africa, Stroud argues that this particular discourse is inadequate "for understanding the semiotic practice of citizenship in contemporary late modern society." His alternative is to frame multilingualism within a postliberal (linguistic human rights being liberal) ideal of citizenship. Stroud highlights some of the implications for language policy and practice in education that come from his new frame.

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