

Extra G., and Kutlay, Y. (Eds.) (2004)
Urban Multilingualism in Europe: Immigrant Minority Languages at Home and School. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. [Pbk ISBN 1-85359-778-3 £19.95 or £15.96 from the publishers]

This book doesn't have much to say directly about multilingualism in the UK but that's not to say that it is irrelevant to our context. On the contrary, it's a fascinating account of the current situation in other parts of Europe and an examination of how things are done elsewhere is clearly very helpful in considering how we might do things differently here. Or not.

The book examines multilingualism in Europe as a consequence of processes of minorisation and migration – looking at regional minority (RM) languages, such as Basque and Frisian, and immigrant minority languages (IM) such as Arabic and Turkish. The book provides detailed 'multidisciplinary, crossnational and crosslinguistic perspectives on immigrant minority languages at home and in school' in Goteborg, Hamburg, The Hague, Brussels, Lyon and Madrid as well as broader discussions of other perspectives - phenomenology, demography, language rights and education.

It is divided into three parts.

Part 1: *Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, with chapters on, for example, ethnic identity and identification; the European discourse on foreigners and integration; the demographic perspective in Australia, Canada, the USA, South Africa, GB and Sweden; multilingualism as social reality; perspectives on language rights; mother tongue education in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany and LOTE in Victoria State, Australia.

Part 2: *Multilingual Cities Project: national and local perspectives*. This part deals with the situation in the six cities mentioned above with chapters on such aspects language profiles and vitality, home language instruction, demography, parental needs for language instruction in primary schools, the politicisation of language, and immigrant minority groups.

Part 3: *Multilingual Cities Project: crossnational and crosslinguistic perspectives*. This part presents and discusses data on various language groups, discusses community language teaching in primary and secondary education and on dealing with multilingualism at school. It is, then, very broad ranging and not limited to the European context.

Whilst much of the book is fairly heavy going (there are only so many closely drawn line graphs on the vitality of Polish I can take in at one sitting) there are many insights and fresh perspectives that make it a worthwhile borrow-and-browse sort of a book, if not a buy-and-devour. For example, they make the point that the definition of most Regional Minority languages as *minority* languages occurred in the 19th century with the emergence of nation states in Europe when the national language became the only official language and all others were excluded from education. These centralising tendencies are still at work today, of course and continue to threaten the survival of such languages. They also point out, 'how little contact there still is between researchers and practitioners working in bilingual areas and school systems, even between England and Wales. Many of the newer minorities could benefit from the Welsh experience and expertise.' (p. 18). There is also a fascinating discussion of census questions relating to language and ethnicity in various countries. I found it interesting to discover that there has been a question on race in the US since the very first census in 1790 and one on languages spoken at home since 1890 whereas the first time a question on ethnicity appeared in the UK census was in 1991 and no questions on home language use have ever appeared at all. In the South African context, it emerges from the census data that multilingualism is a characteristic of the black and coloured population but not the white. 'According to the 2001 census outcomes, there are almost 4,300,000 white residents in South Africa but less than 21,000 of them (0.005%) reported speaking an African language.' By the same token, the Russian census data of 1989 indicates that of the 120 million Russians only 0.64% people reported knowing another language of the former USSR. It would appear that sometimes ignorance is power.

The book also contains extracts from various UN and UNESCO Declarations, such as the UNESCO led *Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights*, agreed in Barcelona in 1996, which contains such stirring Articles as:

Article 4.1

This Declaration considers that persons who move to and settle in the territory of another language community have the right and the duty to maintain an attitude of integration towards this community. This term is understood to mean an additional socialisation of such persons in such a way that they may preserve their original cultural characteristics while sharing with the society in which they have settled sufficient references, values and forms of

behaviour to enable them to function socially without greater difficulties than those experienced by members of the host community.

Or this from UNESCO's Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity, last updated in 2002:

Article 2 – From cultural diversity to cultural pluralism

In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life.

It is interesting to consider Home Secretary David Blunkett's comments on the use of English in this context and to contrast those with the comments of the German Education Minister, Gabriele Behler, who in a meeting for Turkish teachers and community organisations in June 2000, 'called upon Turkish parents to speak with their children in the language they speak best and also emphasised that speaking Turkish at home would not harm the development of their children.' She went on to urge parents, amongst other things, to send their children to interculturally oriented kindergartens, support the schools in teaching German as a second language and to enrol their children in mother tongue classes and emphasised that bilingualism in German and Turkish would be a permanent gain for both the children and society as a whole.

North Rhine-Westphalia has one of the most progressive approaches in Europe to community language teaching in schools. In 2000 a new policy was decreed according to which schools must offer mother tongue classes as an elective course for grades 1 to 10. 19 languages have been identified for instruction and schools can offer up to 5 hours per week 'provided that there are at least 15 primary school children or 18 secondary school children for a certain language group from one or more schools'. Pupils who attend mother tongue classes on a regular basis can take a language test and the results are reported in their school report and, in some cases, the grades can be taken as substitutes for traditional MFL results. Of course, this doesn't go as far as the truly radical program in

Victoria Australia where multilingualism is not just an option for children who speak a language other than English but is a requirement for all because that is the kind of society they wish to build.

There have been some encouraging sound-bites and initiatives on the position of community languages in education emerging from the dark halls of the DfES over the last year or so. It remains to be seen whether these murmurs will be articulated as a policy that NALDIC can welcome. This book helps us see what is happening elsewhere, what might be done here, and what is at stake if it is not.

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