

**Towards Multilingual Education.** Basque Educational Research from an International Perspective, by Jasone Cenoz. *Multilingual Matters*, 2009, 271 pp. (978-1-84769-193-4 (hbk £ 59.95 / \$89.95) / 978-1-84769-192-7 (pbk £ 24.95 / \$39.95)

In this volume, Jasone Cenoz (University of the Basque Country in Donostia/San Sebastian) presents and discusses a great number of international research studies, with a particular focus on the Basque language in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC). She provides the reader with detailed but accessible information on a wide range of research, along with a careful interpretation and evaluation of the evidence on each topic, locating all this within the ongoing debate on the Basque language in education. The book can be considered an in-depth study of this specific language situation, carefully related to the general overview of bilingual education provided by Ofelia Garcia (2009).

Each of the ten chapters contains a concise account of the international literature and research related to a specific aspect of the Basque language in education. Having explained the system of educational models in the BAC (A - Basque as a subject only; B - both Basque and Spanish as medium of instruction; and D - immersion), the author discusses each one, examining the results of research relating to matters such as academic outcomes, students' achievements, proficiency in English and the influence of bilingualism on third language acquisition. Other chapters concern identities and attitudes and the so-called 'age factor', including the benefits and limits of the early introduction of English (in some schools beginning at age four).

The information is presented in a well written, balanced account of both practice and research. It will be a valuable resource for educational authorities and individuals who are aiming for a balanced multilingual curriculum from pre-school to university. The author never avoids difficult questions nor shows bias in matters related, for example, to the CLIL method or the achievements of bilingual education in the various models. The central point of the book is that there has been a gradual transition from a strict formal distinction between educational models towards the development of a range of more flexible and tailor-made methods for multilingual education.

The book is not only a valuable source for scholars, teachers and language planners within the BAC and other regions of Spain, but also for a wider international audience. As far as the Basque audience is concerned, the book is a well-scaffolded contribution to the debate on the future of the various models of Basque in education. The educational system is facing new challenges with the arrival of immigrants (both from elsewhere in Spain or Spanish-speaking countries and from non-Spanish countries), and the increasing need to learn English. Cenoz clearly shows that, irrespective of which model is followed in the formal curriculum, methods adapted to the local situation are critical for the achievement of favourable academic outcomes. The overall message from the research, however, is that as far as the achievement of a balanced bilingualism in Basque and Spanish is concerned, as well as good results for English, students in model D are most successful.

The international audience for the book will mainly consists of fellow scholars, language planners, and policy makers in Europe who will view the developments within Basque multilingual education as a possible model for other mixed-language

situations, including the establishment of common goals and standards for multilingual education. The international language policy perspective is defined in terms both of the EU and the Council of Europe. EU language policy aims for the acquisition of the mother tongue plus two other European languages, and the early introduction of a second or third language in primary education, which in most EU member states is English as the global lingua franca. To that extent, the educational policy of the BAC authorities can be considered a good example of the implementation of European language policy. The Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is also relevant. The CEFR was originally developed to measure foreign language acquisition and cannot be applied to minority language education without some adaptation. For most students in bilingual contexts, the weaker language has a stronger position as an oral language but a somewhat weaker position in written form. This means that the 'can-do' statements related to the six levels of the CEFR, for example, must be defined differently for first and second language learners of minority languages. An adaptation of the CEFR tailored for minority languages would be very welcome.

Several times the book presents a comparison with other languages such as Irish which have official status but are minority languages in terms of use. This limited comparative analysis, however, could be taken as the starting point for the further study of multilingual settings involving other strong unique minority languages, such as German in South-Tyrol (Italy), Welsh in Wales (UK) and Nynorsk in Norway. Cross-border languages seeking a balanced cross-border multilingualism in combination with English as the global lingua franca - for example German and French on either side of the Elzas border, German and Danish in Slesvig/Schleswig, Hungarian in Slovakia and Slovenia, and Slovenian in Italy - could also profit from this kind of study.

Further comparative analyses based on the insights and approaches of this study might also be of great use for weaker minority languages, such as Basque in France, Sorbian (Germany), Ladinian and Franco-Provençal (Italy), and Kashubian (Poland). The lack of detailed information on the position of these languages in education and on the outcomes associated with their use, compared to the wealth of information on Basque in Spain, means that we are deprived of a crucial instrument to put pressure on the educational authorities in the respective countries to strengthen provision for them. A detailed comparative description could also contribute to the determination of common minimum standards for education in regional and minority languages as suggested in the report on nine such languages that was drafted for the Council of Europe (De Jager en Van der Meer 2007). In that sense, the Cenoz book can be seen not only as a scientific report, but also as providing a strong recommendation to authorities and institutions on the need for action, as well as providing a focus for debate among all individuals with responsibility for language planning processes.

The major success story concerning the growing use of Basque in education, both as a subject and a medium of instruction, and in particular the increasing employment of the D model in primary schooling, must be attributed to the strong language policy of the BAC and the huge financial investment which has been made in the in-service training of teachers. In the relatively short period since the passing of the Law of Normalization of Basque (1982), the number of teachers in public schools with a certificate of proficiency in Basque has increased from 20 to 80 percent.

By means of this investment the Basque educational authorities could provide “(...) sufficient qualified subject-matter teachers capable of teaching through another language” (...) and overcome “the major problem confronting many bilingual programs (...) the lack of pre-service and in-service education for teachers operating within the system” (Garcia 2009: 150). From an international perspective, these results are wonderful. However, the usefulness of the discussion of teacher training would have been enhanced if information on pre-service teacher training had also been provided. In particular, information on required study time, students’ credit points for certification, the enrolment of students in Basque-medium teacher training institutes, and the outcomes in terms of the achievement of a balanced multilingual proficiency in Basque, Spanish, and English would be of considerable interest to language planners and teacher trainers in other regions. Some relevant information, however, can be obtained from the Regional Dossier compiled by Gardner (2005). One thing that is very clear, however, is that both pre-service and in-service training are needed for sustainable multilingual education.

In sum, the great value of this book by Jasone Cenoz is, firstly, the synthesis of the international research and theory on multilingualism, analysed here with a specific focus on Basque in education and informed by a deep insider knowledge of the Basque language-education context. Second, through its comparative analysis, the book provides essential guidance for other educational researchers and language planners concerned with the promotion of a balanced multilingualism.

#### References

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