

MARIA PILAR SAFONT JORDÀ*
Universitat Jaume I

Cenoz, J. 2009. *Towards Multilingual Education. Basque Educational Research from an International Perspective*. Multilingual Matters. Pp: 271.

As the title suggests, this book deals with multilingual education from an international perspective whereby a particular focus on the Basque educational system and on research conducted in this setting is presented. The author applies recent research findings in multilingualism, multilingual education and third language acquisition to current problems and hot issues in education. The focus on the Basque Country enables the reader to ascertain both the importance and the need of Third Language Acquisition research since results presented here may also be transferred to other bilingual communities where a minority and a third language are involved in education.

The volume is structured in eleven chapters that address timely and up-to-date topics in applied linguistics research. Each chapter includes a theoretical framework, latest research findings and an application to current educational practices in the Basque country. The first two chapters present the global theoretical framework of the volume and introduce a general overview of those topics that are particularly dealt with in subsequent chapters. Hence, Chapter 1, *Why multilingualism?* discusses the issue of multilingualism and multilingual education and tackles the spread of English and revival of minority languages. It also presents the sociolinguistic situation in the Basque Country while focusing on its educational system. In the second chapter, *Towards a typology of multilingual education*, the author deals with educational, sociolinguistic and linguistic variables affecting education, and most interestingly, she provides the researcher and educational practitioner with a tool for analysing educational centres and current curricula. Taking into account May's (2007) typology of bilingual programs, Hornberger's (2003) continua of biliteracy and Baetens Beardsmore's (1993) identification of educational variables, Cenoz's *Continua of Multilingual Education* "is a tool that can describe as many situations of multilingual education as possible" (p. 34). In fact, the chapter describes a number of multilingual programs currently taking place in the world on the basis of the *Continua*. Some examples are multilingual programs in India, Trilingual schools in

Tajikistan, School of Tomorrow in Paraguay, Educational programs in Luxembourg, European Gymnasiums, European schools, International Schools and Hebrew schools. In the last section of this second chapter the Basque educational system is analysed on the basis of the *Continua of Multilingual Education*. In this system, the use of a third language, a majority and a minority language is involved, both as a means and as an end.

A particular focus on the use of minority languages in education is presented in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 *Using the Minority Language as the Language of Instruction* deals with teaching through a minority language. The learning processes and outcomes that derive from such teaching are provided in chapter 4. As stated by the author, there is an increase in the use of minority languages as vehicles for instruction. In Spain we have the case of the Galician, Catalanian and Valencian educational systems. Yet the author does not restrict her description to this context but she introduces many other examples in the world both within and outside Europe (e.g. Wales, Scotland, New Zealand, Canada, among others). An in-depth description of the Basque educational system, the sociolinguistic situation and results from investigation on the use of Basque and on language attitudes (Lasagabaster, 2003, 2007) are also included in this chapter.

Language attitudes may illustrate parents and teachers' concern for the use of a minority language as vehicle for instruction in education (Lasagabaster and Huguet 2007; Safont 2007). Such concern, even at times reluctance, is faced in the fourth chapter of the volume as academic outcomes are cleverly introduced. In addition to research results that raise the benefits of the use minority languages for the linguistic and educational development of children (Cummins 2003), Cenoz presents facts that corroborate such benefits. Results from various assessment programmes, namely those of the PISA (i.e. Programme for International Student Assessment), TIMMSS (i.e. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), or those provided by ISEI-IVEI (i.e. Basque Institute for Evaluation and Research) are discussed and contrasted with results from other monolingual educational models. Instruction through Basque appears to be most beneficial in all analyses conducted from both a national and an international perspective.

Common to most international programmes and educational models is the introduction of a third language both as subject and as a vehicle for instruction. Chapters 5 and 6 analyse different possibilities for incorporating a third language in the school context. In chapter 5, *Third Language Learning and Instruction through the Third Language*, the author raises the need to move from bilingual to multilingual education and third language instruction may facilitate such change. Teaching through the third language in many cases implies the fact that instruction is provided in English. This leads to two interesting topics, those of English learning and CLIL (Content and Language-Integrated Learning) approaches and methodology.

Research conducted with a focus on English language learning and on the adoption of CLIL methodology in the classroom is discussed in chapter 6. Findings reported suggest that CLIL approaches are most beneficial. As the author states, "using English as an additional language of instruction can provide the opportunity for more exposure to English in a context in which contact with English outside the classroom is very limited" (p. 145).

Nevertheless, further research would probably be needed as studies on the adoption of CLIL approaches in the Basque Autonomous Community are still quite reduced. It would also be interesting to draw a comparison between monolingual communities adopting CLIL and bilingual settings in which CLIL is done through a third language.

The role of bilingualism in third language acquisition and learning is presented in Chapter 7. In general, findings reported point to the advantages of bilingualism in using and learning an additional language. These results are also present in the Basque Country. Yet, as Cenoz suggests, we cannot ignore the fact that many factors affect language acquisition process and bilingualism is an important but not exclusive influence. In fact, complexity inherent to multilingualism (Aronin and Hufeisen 2009) forces us to consider the interplay of various individual variables from a holistic perspective (Hufeisen and Marx 2007). One first step is to identify the role of other factors in the acquisition process.

In this sense, Chapters 8 and 9 tackle language attitudes and the learners' age as variables that are also present in language learning and acquisition processes. Since language acquisition takes place in particular settings and under specific conditions, the peculiar characteristics of these contexts and their influence in terms of learning outcomes need to be considered. Research on identity and language attitudes takes this reality into account. As acknowledged by the author, most studies conducted have adopted a socio-psychological approach and results show that multilingual speakers present favourable attitudes towards languages in general (Lasagabaster and Huguet 2007), and that the language chosen as regular vehicle for communication in bilingual communities is an indicator of identity. Research on attitudes has traditionally focused on young or adult groups, it would be interesting to analyse language attitudes of monolingual and bilingual children in their early stages of exposure to a third language. Children acquisition of a foreign language has been taken into account in studies on the age variable.

The age factor has received much attention in SLA, and it is still a controversial issue. While some findings point to the benefits of an early start (De Keyser 2000), others do not confirm such advantage (Cenoz 2003; García Mayo 2003; Ruiz de Zarobe 2005). The author deals here with the influence of the learning environment. According to Cenoz, studies conducted in natural settings where learners are regularly exposed to the target language confirm the idea that 'the sooner the better'. Besides, research in communities and instructional settings that allow for a limited exposure to the target language present very different results. Investigation conducted in Catalonia, under the supervision of Muñoz (2006, 2008) and in the Basque Country (García Mayo and García Lecumberri 2003), supervised by Cenoz herself, provide us with findings that corroborate the importance of the interplay between the learning context and age. To this respect, the author points to the need for further research on educational approaches, as the ones reported in Chapter 6, that allow for further exposure to the third language. These approaches involved the use of English as a vehicle for instruction. This perspective is now also considered in higher education.

Chapter 10 addresses the way in which multilingual education takes place in the university setting. The promotion of minority languages and English is common to many European Universities. This chapter describes the spread of English as vehicle of instruction and the challenge that the use of Basque represents. As in other bilingual communities (e.g. Valencian Community), the minority language has a weaker role compared to the interest displayed towards English.

Parallel to third language acquisition processes (Jessner 2008), the introduction of English as a third language in already existing bilingual programmes has not just added one more language, but it has restructured the whole educational system. The idea that it is not a quantitative but a qualitative change is present all through this volume, and summarised in Chapter 11. In this final section, the author also provides us with future challenges to be addressed in line with recent interest claiming for a shift *Towards Multilingual Education*.

The book is not only a timely, outstanding and relevant contribution to multilingualism and applied linguistics research, but it is also a guide for those who are now interested in multilingual education, especially after the implementation of the English language as language of instruction (CLIL). Educational authorities in many communities around the world will benefit most from reading this book and amending their educational programmes and curricula accordingly.

The volume illustrates the comprehensiveness and importance of Cenoz's own research for the scientific community, for the field of applied linguistics in general and for studies on second and third language acquisition. The author's worthiest contribution to research on language teaching and learning is illustrated and summarised by the topics included in the volume. Furthermore, *Towards Multilingual Education* is only the tip of the iceberg when considering the effect of Cenoz's investigation on the study of multilingualism and multilingual education.

NOTE

* Correspondence to: Maria Pilar Safont Jordà. Universitat Jaume I. Departament Estudis Anglesos. Facultat de Ciències Humanes i Socials. 12071 Castelló. E-mail: safontj@ang.uji.es.

REFERENCES

- Aronin, L. and B. Hufeisen. 2009. *The Exploration of Multilingualism*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Baetens Beardsmore, H. 1993. "The European school model". *European Models of Bilingual Education*. Ed. H. Baetens Beardsmore. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 30-45.
- Cummins, J. 2003. "Bilingual education: Basic principles". *Bilingualism: Beyond Basic Principles*. Eds. J. M. Dewaele, A. Housen and L. Wei. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 56-66.