

Book Review of Developing Multilingual Education Policies: Theory, Research and Practice Edited by Michal Tannenbaum, and Elana Shohamy, London & New York: Routledge, 2023, PP.208, \$135. ISBN: 978-0-367-61989-3 (hbk)*

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In the book review, the author introduced the latest theoretical and practical endeavors by Israeli scholars to tackle challenges posed by multilingualism. Michal Tannenbaum and Elena Shohamy conducted a comprehensive examination of the Israeli social and educational context, setting the stage for their proposal of a new multilingual policy. The new multilingual education policy has been formulated on the basis of extensive domestic and overseas research and empirical investigation, it is expected to offer some insights into promoting multilingualism and social justice in both Israel and the world.

Keywords: multilingual education policy, social justice, multilingualism

Increasing studies on multilingualism and maintenance of minority languages, as well as new waves of immigration have drawn the attention of language teachers and triggered bottom-up reflection upon current language policies, which in turn prompted call for top-down reform of new language policies to meet the new developments and challenges. Michal Tannenbaum and Elana Shohamy, in active response to the call issued by the Israeli Ministry of Education, reported in the book their theoretical and practical endeavours to develop a new multilingual education policy in Israel, aspiring to better suit individuals to the current multilingual era and promote social justice.

The book unfolds itself in three distinct parts of eleven chapters. In the first part which consists of three chapters, the notion of a multilingual education policy has come under close scrutiny with reference to the Israeli context.

Specifically, the authors begin Chapter 1 with a discussion of current developments in language policy. Although theoretically perceived as an economic good, language policy has been widely implemented in top-down national regulations. While language education is tuned to turn the ideology of a nation into practice,

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the recent multilingual turn from monolingual ideology has been proved to be cognitively, emotionally and economically beneficial, setting the stage for the change towards a multilingual education policy.

In Chapter 2, a panoramic view of the current complex sociolinguistic realities in Israel is introduced in the light of its historical and sociopolitical developments. Multilingual country as Israel now is, monolingualism prevails in national education system and monolingual Hebrew-only ideology predominates, though in some communities, there do exist several parallel education systems.

Chapter 3 traces and explains an array of events and advocacy acts that took place over a span of two decades from 1996 to 2016, which ultimately led the Israeli Ministry of Education to call for proposals for a multilingual educational policy. On the one hand, engaged scholars actively researched and advocated multilingual education and disseminated their views at academic conferences, and finally created the language policy consortium. On the other hand, the academia established close connections with key policymakers at the Ministry of Education, and productive dialogues were held to advance the comprehensive change towards a new multilingual education policy.

In part II, the authors delineate how they worked out the proposal for a new multilingual education policy in Israel on the basis of theoretical and empirical explorations.

To set a baseline for the design and implementation of the new multilingual policy, the authors report in Chapter 4 a mixed-method design study on attitudes and beliefs of teachers and students regarding multilingualism and multilingual education policy in Israel. Though results demonstrated overall support for a multilingual policy and general readiness to implement it, some differences were exposed between Jews and Arabs concerning languages and national identity (Tannenbaum, Michalovich, & Shohamy, 2020, pp. 581-600).

Chapter 5 addresses the incongruence between multilingual education and monolingual assessments. In an experiment which compared the effects of presenting a bilingual and a monolingual version of test content to participants, the authors found that the bilingual test turned out to be a fairer method of assessing L2 learners' academic knowledge, thus recommending their inclusion in the new multilingual policy.

Chapter 6 targets English teachers in Jewish and Arabic schools in Israel, and investigates their beliefs about the incorporation of learners' L1 and their actual use of multilingual pedagogies. There appeared to be a difference of beliefs between the Jewish and Arabic teachers, with Arabic teachers embracing the monolingual paradigm and Jewish teachers cherishing learners' L1 as a valuable resource in facilitating English learning. Despite the differences in beliefs, their teaching practices converge in reliance on learners' L1, pointing to the necessity of allowing for and promoting multilingual communication in teaching practice in the new model.

In Chapter 7, the "Shared Education" model which was developed in Northern Ireland was introduced and promoted as an alternative to bring Jewish and Arabic students studying English together and as a promising way to enhance tolerance and inclusion among different groups in the Israeli society, since empirical study showed that rich interaction did occur during the class sessions, which provided opportunities for the students to translanguage among English and their respective mother tongue.

In the following chapter, heritage languages and their position in the Israeli educational context are examined. With the potential significance of integrating heritage and immigrant languages into the education system globally acknowledged, bottom-up initiatives to promote immigrant languages have inspired the educational efforts to broaden learners' linguistic repertoire beyond Hebrew, Arabic and English in Israel. Yet

interviews with heritage language teachers revealed that both the quality and quantity of Israeli heritage-language programs needed a radical shake-up, as there was a general lack of training programs and awareness of the importance of heritage languages. The authors hold the view that heritage languages have a significant role to play in any multilingual education policy.

Chapter 9 addresses the issue of multilingual awareness. The authors firstly review the theoretical development and expansion of language awareness into multilingual awareness, as well as its potential contribution to multilingual policies. Then they report an action research which tried to increase students multilingual awareness by inviting them to make modifications to discriminatory and exclusive linguistic landscape signs. It is shown that linguistic landscape can not only enhance multilingual awareness but also raise students' awareness of social equality and inclusion issues, thus deserving to be considered in the multilingual policy.

Part III winds up the book by crystalizing previous theoretical discussions and empirical findings. In Chapter 10, eight core principles of the new multilingual education policy are formulated and explained. The authors also illustrate step by step how such a policy can be carried out in schools interested in trying it out. Chapter 11 presents a framework for developing a multilingual education policy which allows for flexibility in different contexts, and highlights challenges in its actual implementation, particularly the prejudices and biases against multilingual education programs.

Conclusion

The book unveils the pioneering project which attempts to promote multilingualism and social justice in culturally and linguistically diverse Israel. It is worth commendment in the following aspects. First, the book incorporated dimensions of multilingual education that have not yet been fully explored and puts forward a universal framework for the development of multilingual education policy. Further, showcasing Israel, the book illustrates step by step how a multilingual education policy can be conceptualized, operationalized and triangulated in its development as well as implementation, which can be used as a useful guidebook for policymakers and language teachers. Finally, the eight core principles generalized from the theoretical and empirical explorations of the project offer a flexible model for policymakers to accomodate to their specific contexts and needs. In a nutshell, the book provides new insights into multilingualism and social justice, and is a must-read for both researchers and policymakers interested in fostering multilingual education and humanistic development of individuals.

References

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