

BOOK REVIEW

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Kathleen Heugh. (2012). *Multilingual Education and Sustainable Diversity Work: From Periphery to Center*. New York, NY, and London, England: Routledge, 300 pp.

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Cry your heart out—the world cannot hear because it doesn't know your voice
Speak, the world won't mind because it doesn't understand your language
Sleep, the world won't notice because it can't feel your heart beat
Close your mind, because that is what the world wants you to do and

Close your heart, because that's what the world NEEDS you to do BUT, I say
Let me speak, let me breath
Let me live. (Dainess Maganda, in Skutnabb-Kangas and Heugh, p. xii)

As classrooms the world over become more diverse, the need to effectively educate children in multilingual settings has gained tremendous attention. While a substantial body of research demonstrates benefits to instruction in students' mother tongue (MT, a term the authors recognize as problematic but for present purposes refers to students' first language, or L1, and as such is used interchangeably with the term "L1" in the present work), such a proposition is often resisted when this first language lacks status in official and international circles. Opponents of multilingual education (MLE) argue that implementation is too costly, that it would only serve to further marginalize members of linguistic minorities by denying them access to the language(s) of higher currency, and that it is internally divisive within the nation-state. By first and foremost clarifying what is meant by MLE and then considering numerous cases in countries often considered the "periphery" in discussions of expertise and educational policy advancement, this work, suited principally for policymakers and researchers, confirms the effectiveness and promise of well- implemented mother-tongue-medium (MTM) instructional models. Moreover, it draws attention to the challenges such programs face on social, institutional, and local levels. In looking primarily at the case of Ethiopia and then offering several cases for comparison, the authors of each respective chapter confirm the importance of MTM education in contemporary linguistically diverse communities, validate the indigenous knowledge and contributions of said communities, and offer valuable insights that nations so often in the business of exporting "solutions" could themselves look to in their attempts to build equitable schools in which all children succeed academically, and in the context of the poem by Dainess Maganda included in the work's introduction, speak, breathe, and live.

As the work examines MLE and MTM education across international contexts, it may serve to briefly familiarize the reader with these terms as they occur in the text and how they relate to bilingual education in the U.S. The authors use the term *multilingual education*, or MLE, to refer to educational programs aiming primarily to strongly develop the mother tongue while incorporating at least one other language, using all languages in deliberate sequence in teaching certain subjects with the goal of high levels of multilingualism and multiliteracy (Skutnabb-Kangas and Heugh, p. xv). Meanwhile, MTM education refers to programs in which the mother tongue is not only taught as a subject but is also used as a medium for instruction of other academic content. While many bilingual programs in the U.S. indeed strive to develop students' L1 alongside instruction in English, and many use the L1 as a medium of instruction, especially in the early grades, many American bilingual programs teach English alongside a second language that is not necessarily that of the community or students. Moreover, many U.S. bilingual programs opt for the dual-immersion model in which half the class speaks English as an L1 while the other half speaks the target language of the program (most often Spanish in U.S. programs). In the MTM schools referred to in the text, very few if any of the students speak the national dominant language or prestigious foreign language in the community prior to schooling, as the focal case of Ethiopian MLE illustrates.

The case of Ethiopia proves most instructive and as such features prominently throughout the volume. Carol Benson, Kathleen Heugh, Berhanu Bogale, and Mekonnen Alemu Gebre Yohannes present the initial case in the text: a mixed-methods, longitudinal investigation of diverse MTM models implemented across the nine regions of Ethiopia. The study combines quantitative analysis of student test scores, primary school completion rates, and grade retention rates with qualitative data in the form of interviews with school staff and policymakers, archival research into policy documents, and classroom observations. To this end, the chapter presents findings from a 2006 inquiry by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education into implementation of its MLE programs and finds that decentralized decision making allows for adaptation of instruction to local linguistic needs or educational priorities.

The Ethiopian case is valuable for numerous reasons. First of all, the country's schools must address the linguistic needs of many students who speak indigenous or tribal languages as a mother tongue but must also acquire Amharic, the nation's official language, and English as its international currency increases. This illustrates the phenomenon of the "double divide" (Skutnabb-Kangas and Heugh, p. 139) existing in these systems between, on the one hand, a powerful foreign language and the national dominant language, and on the other hand, dominant national or regional languages and indigenous or minority languages. Within the nine regions of Ethiopia, school systems implement programs of different durations of MTM instruction and concordantly different points of introduction of Amharic as a second language (L2, although in some regions it is a common L1), and English as a foreign language (FL). Secondly, the report highlights the comparatively greater achievement of students receiving eight years of MTM instruction compared to those receiving four or six. In addition, the report draws attention to the relative ineffectiveness of introducing English earlier in the curriculum. Finally, the report including the interviews and observations elucidates the challenges that can hamstring MLE, such as insufficient teacher training in the target languages, the difficulty of developing curricular materials in certain minority languages, and unfavorable language attitudes. Indeed, a later follow-up study (described in the book's final chapter), finds that as schools hasten to implement English as both a subject and medium of instruction without proper resources and teacher training or MT foundations, learning across the curriculum suffers.

While the case of Ethiopia offers the largest and most systematic implementation of MTM education, the other school systems considered in the text reinforce the positive association between MTE and student achievement as well. A number of the book's chapters address contexts in other African nations and offer insightful comparison to the central case study. Norbert Nikiama and Paul Taryam Ilboudo explore MTM education in Burkina Faso, in which the Multilingual Education Model began with eight national languages in primary schools for a period of five years but has since expanded to include formal and informal schooling settings as well as some MLE in secondary schools. Comparison between the promotion and school completion rates across schools shows, as with Ethiopia, that thoughtful MLE implementation improves school outcomes but that traditional obstacles must be overcome, including the acceptance of nondominant MT's in schools, adequate teacher training, and resisting the pressure to introduce French early on and having it predominate instruction. In Morocco, meanwhile, the tensions between Arabic and Amazigh or Berber as well as French in society and, by extension, in schools are described by Ahmed Kabel. Beyond the "double divide" conundrum, Kabel also draws attention to the challenge posed by variation within these languages, taking to task efforts at standardization for their inevitable consequences of marginalizing those left with "nonstandard" varieties. More than other chapters, this piece offers insight into the highly ideological and politically contested field that is language planning and how such ideologies can interfere with successful implementation of MLE.

The linguistic and infrastructural contexts in Asian countries differ markedly from those in Ethiopia, yet the benefits of MTM education and obstacles to its effective implementation persist. Carol Benson and Kimmo Kosonen compare MLE policies and practices in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam with those in Ethiopia. The authors note that in the case of mainland Southeast Asia, one of the foremost challenges is that of recognizing and appropriately distinguishing ethnic and linguistic minorities, as the two are not always aligned, and historical systems of classification have often oversimplified the task. Indeed, implementing effective MLE programs requires knowledge of the minority languages in any given region or community, and centralized ethnicity-based classification often obscures these differences within a population. Alongside this challenge, the authors recognize the difficulty of drawing on nondominant languages in school systems because of their reliance on different scripts, as well as the now-familiar challenge of overcoming language attitudes that wish to prioritize dominant languages in schooling at the expense of the L1. In the face of these challenges and

given the relative novelty of MLE in the policymaking discourse, the authors note that the Southeast Asian countries studied offer little or no explicit policy enabling MTM instruction in formal settings, and even in the cases where there is some policy in place (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand), there is little or no practical implementation in classrooms, in large part due to strong centralization that inhibits responsiveness to local contexts.

Nepal, meanwhile, is a country direly poor in material terms but extremely rich from cultural and linguistic perspectives. Iina Nurmela, Lava Deo Awashthi, and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas consider Nepal's international commitments to MTM and its domestic efforts in language planning, looking particularly at the implementation of the Multilingual Education Programme from 2006–2009. The authors find a shift from instruction solely in Nepali with some teaching of English as a FL in private schools to a valuation and inclusion of MTM instruction in the early grades as a result of Nepal's language-planning efforts. Notable among such efforts is the Multilingual Education Programme aided by Finland, which included small-scale MTM implementation to establish sound MLE models. Ultimately, observation in the four selected pilot systems reveals qualitative benefits such as greater enjoyment of schooling and wider involvement of community members in children's schooling. Nevertheless, it also reveals familiar obstacles, including an unmet need for decentralized resource management and decision making, adequate MT resources and effectively trained teachers, and unfavorable attitudes toward MTM and the indigenous languages themselves on the part of many in the middle class and the teaching profession. Shelley K. Taylor also investigates schooling in Nepal, exploring one particular MLE program implemented from 2007–2009. Relying on educators' oral reports and documentary evidence, Taylor presents the promise and challenges that the program encounters in attempting to reach extremely linguistically heterogeneous communities. The author conveys the challenges of preparing teachers, teacher trainers, and materials developers to understand concepts of MLE and how they differ from simply teaching in classrooms where students have numerous MTs. This latter misconception in implementation results in a great deal of wasted instructional time and disciplinary issues as much of the teaching is carried out in languages incomprehensible to students. The author cautions that such logistical difficulties must be addressed before dispersing MLE models nationwide, but that even this current program shows improvement over previous monolingual models.

Ajit Mohanty notes that India offers perhaps the closest comparison to Ethiopia, given its own struggles with the "double divide." In contrast to Ethiopia, however, India lacks policy that endorses MTM education uniformly, and it is only select pilot programs and interventions that incorporate L1 as well as culturally responsive pedagogy in their practice. Drawing on three years of achievement data in mathematics, environmental science, and language for students in MLE programs and their counterparts in linguistically subtractive schooling models, the study finds relative benefits through the use of MTM. The study demonstrates higher achievement for students learning in their MT and a positive trend over time as opposed to lower initial and subsequently decreasing achievement for students in L2 submersion schools.

The benefits and challenges of MLE are evident in the Americas as well. The Peruvian case explored by Susanne Pérez Jabosen and Lucy Trapnell Forero provides an example of the intricacies of the "Mother Tongue" label as many Amazonian indigenous languages find themselves in danger of extinction in the face of Spanish, and thus MLE in this context must account for the linguistic heterogeneity in such communities. A look at Perú also highlights the need for more than language as both subject and medium of instruction, but rather as an important element of *intercultural* bilingual education (Skutnabb-Kangas and Heugh, p. 90). That is, rather than simply teaching and translating Western knowledge into indigenous languages, instruction must incorporate indigenous ways of being and thinking into classroom practice. The authors note that this policy element stems from the connectedness in Perú between the push for bilingual education and the larger movement for indigenous recognition, rights, and autonomy, a unity certainly not unique to that country. With thorough policy analysis and school observations, the authors note the promise of implementing MLE policies while acknowledging the challenges in overcoming educators' and community members' thinking as well as the lack of technical and pedagogical language of Peruvian bilingual teachers in many of the students' MTs.

Expanding the definition of "periphery" to include marginalized communities within a nation certainly regarded as "center" in geopolitical terms, Teresa McCarty compares the experience and findings from

Ethiopia to those of Native American communities in the United States. McCarty presents schools that introduce indigenous languages as either principal medium of instruction or as an L2 (largely in revitalization efforts). In both cases, the incorporation of the mother tongue in combination with cultural education that draws on community knowledge and participation yields educational benefits comparable in character to those found in Ethiopia. While the chapter gives little indication as to whether the case studies presented are exceptional even among schools offering MLE, and not just in comparison to their monolingual counterpart schools, it nevertheless indicates the promise of such programs, if well implemented.

In brief, *Multilingual Education and Sustainable Diversity Work* is an invaluable resource for anyone interested or involved in MLE. The text offers comprehensive description and analysis of school systems in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, demonstrating the variety of policies and practices implemented around the world. The depth of policy research and analysis in most of the book's chapters and its general reliance on the region and nation-state as units of analysis makes it particularly suitable to policymakers and researchers more so than educators, however. Indeed, if anything is missing in this volume, it is that only the pieces relying on classroom observation mention the translanguaging (García, 2009) in which multilinguals engage, and none elaborates on how these hybrid language practices (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejada, 1999) can be used to support content and language learning. Nevertheless, the numerous cases presented attest to the cultural and linguistic wealth of nations commonly excluded from discussions of policy paradigms and, furthermore, many of the systems implemented in these nations offer valuable models from which the West can learn in order to support academic achievement as well as the preservation of culture, language, and linguistic human rights among linguistic and ethnic minorities.

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