



education review // reseñas educativas

editors: gene v glass gustavo e. fischman melissa cast-brede

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

November 9, 2010

ISSN 1094-5296

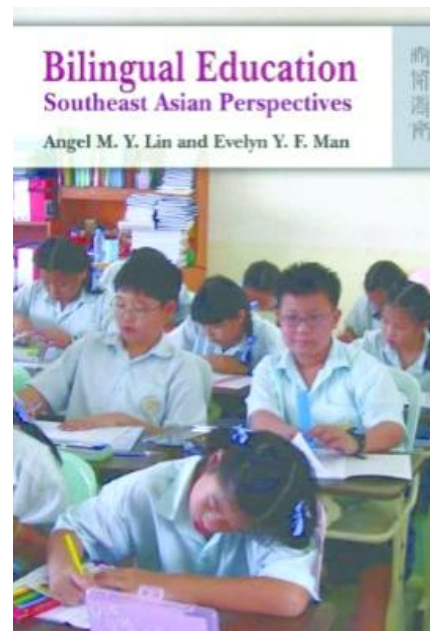
Lin, Angel M. Y. & Man, Evelyn Y. F. (2009) *Bilingual Education: Southeast Asian Perspectives*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Pp. xii + 162 ISBN 978-962-209-959-3

Reviewed by Hui Zou
Arizona State University

In *Bilingual Education: Southeast Asian Perspectives*, Angel M. Y. Lin and Evelyn Y. F. Man present an overview of bilingual education in multilingual Hong Kong and selected Southeast Asian countries. Historical and comparative perspectives are employed in this book to demonstrate how bilingual education policy has developed in the past 170 years (including the colonial and postcolonial eras) and how to improve the current bilingual education system in Hong Kong.

The book is made up of seven chapters that can be divided into four parts. The first part, Chapters One and Two, provides an overview of language policy and planning in Southeast Asian society. The



Citation: Zou, Hui. (2010 November 9) Review of *Bilingual Education: Southeast Asian Perspectives* by Angel M. Y. Lin and Evelyn Y. F. Man. *Education Review*, 13. Retrieved [Date] from <http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev992.pdf>

second part, Chapters Three, Four and Five, focuses on bilingual education in the Hong Kong context. The implications of immersion education from other parts of world, and the history of bilingual education and research on language in education in Hong Kong are also discussed in this section. The third part, Chapter Six, turns to the Singapore and Malaysia contexts, describing divergent paths of bilingual education policy in these two countries. Implications for bilingual education in Hong Kong are implicitly suggested. In the final part, Chapter Seven, Lin and Man trace the history of language policy and planning in Southeast Asian contexts and call for innovative approaches to language policy and planning (LPP) in Southeast Asian societies.

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the book and argues that Southeast Asian people should “develop their own LPP frameworks” (p. 1). Lin and Man begin their discussion by posing two questions: (a) Is English a cultural imperialistic tool, and (b) Does the current LPP create or increase inequalities in Southeast Asian contexts? To answer these questions, Lin and Man examine debates around four aspects in Southeast Asia: (1) the global spread of English, (2) linguistic imperialism, (3) “World Englishes” and postcolonial performativity, and (4) a brief examination of language policy and English status in Hong Kong and Singapore. At the end of this chapter, they advocate for more studies on linguistic diversity in Southeast Asian contexts and suggest that Southeast Asian postcolonial societies have to “explore practical alternatives in LPP policy and practice” (p. 6).

Chapter Two, “Bilingual Education in Different Contexts: Principles and Practice,” provides an overview of “theoretical and empirical literature of bilingual education,” (p. 11) to better understand how a second language can be used as a medium of instruction (MOI) in schools. In this chapter, Lin and Man introduce three main types of bilingual education program: maintenance, transition and enrichment (Fishman, 1976, cited in Lin and Man, 2009). The first two programs are designed for linguistic minority students, whereas the last program, enrichment, aims to meet the needs of linguistic majority students and is strongly advocated by Lin and Man as a form of “additive bilingualism” applied in Hong Kong. Three successful immersion programs—the Canadian



Angel M.Y. Lin is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, City University of Hong Kong.



Evelyn Y. F. Man is an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

French Immersion, European Schools and Two Way Language Programs—are described in the following sections of this chapter and conditions (or factors) contributing to the success of these programs and implications for Hong Kong are also carefully analyzed. Lin and Man maintain that, from a sociolinguistic perspective, “English immersion education should be introduced after a solid foundation in Chinese literacy skills has been built in school,” (p. 37) because of the lack of literacy (Standard Modern Chinese literacy) support at home and by the larger sociolinguistic environment¹. They also suggest that the professional preparation of English immersion teachers plays a significant role in the success of immersion programs, especially for schools situated in low socio-economic areas.

The next chapter explores the implications of key issues in immersion education for Hong Kong society. This chapter is organized around four questions beginning with “Is immersion suitable for all?” Lin and Man express their doubts about the likelihood of success of immersion education in Hong Kong, maintaining that the prerequisites for success are absent owing to the lack of professional teachers, different social statuses of English and Chinese, as well as public beliefs about English immersion schools. Second, they address the question of how to make bridging and immersion-servicing programs effective in Hong Kong. After reviewing the Molteno Project in South Africa and late, late partial immersion and bridging programs at the University of Ottawa in Canada, Lin and Man suggest “equal attention to L1 and L2 literacy development at primary level” (p. 55) and second language immersion adopted at the university level. Third, they ask whether some L1 should be used in immersion classrooms. They posit that L1 should not be excluded from classroom teaching and that L1 use can improve classroom efficiency if it is used appropriately and systematically. Finally, Lin and Man broach the question of whether the late partial immersion for bilingual education in Hong Kong needs to combine with some conditions such as the improvement of teaching quality

¹ Cantonese rather than Putonghua is the mother-tongue of the majority of students in Hong Kong, which is different from Standard Modern Chinese in terms of oral and written skills.

and solid foundations in “Chinese cognitive, academic skills” (p. 68). The chapter concludes with the suggestion that schools and programs should significantly change their practices to improve immersion or English-as-a-subject efficiency.

Chapters Four and Five provide a review of the history of and research on the development of bilingual education in Hong Kong. During the nearly 180 years as a British colony to a Special Administration Region (SAR) of China, Hong Kong has successively experienced British Laissez-faire education policy, 1998 linguistic streaming policy, and a new set of medium-of-instruction (MOI) policies in the 21st Century². The linguistic streaming policy brought about many negative responses among stakeholders such as school principals, teachers, and students because of its mandatory division of English-medium instruction (EMI) and Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) schools and the accompanying labeling effect (English is labeled higher social status in Hong Kong society while Chinese is labeled the opposite). Lin and Man critique the Hong Kong SAR government’s postcolonial MOI policy, which relies heavily on “bureaucratic problem-solving instrumental rationality” (Chong, 1998, cited in Lin and Man, 2009, p. 83), and the discontinuities and structural contradictions within the Hong Kong education system. There were mainly four phases in bilingual education research in Hong Kong from the 1970s to the 2000s. Researchers in the 1970s and the early 1980s devoted most of their studies to proving the superiority of mother-tongue education over English-medium education. Johnson (1983, cited in Lin and Man, 2009) advocated developing bilingual strategies in MOI schools in Hong Kong rather than purely English-medium education whereas Swain (1986, cited in Lin and Man, 2009) argued against bilingual medium practices. The themes of research in the 1990s and in the 2000s revolved

² Under a laissez-faire policy, the British colonial government chose non-invention in the MOI of schools in Hong Kong. Schools have autonomy to determine their own MOI. The 1998 linguistic streaming policy mandated the division of secondary schools in Hong Kong into English-medium and Chinese-medium schools based on their Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) results.

around the implementation of the dual-stream, pure-medium policy and its modifications. Based on this research, Lin and Man illustrate the serious consequences of continuing the current school immersion strategies at the end of the fifth chapter, and call for more studies focusing on areas such as classroom research and teacher education.

The next chapter, “Negotiating between Nationalist and Globalization Agendas: Lessons from the Divergent Paths of Singapore and Malaysia,” provides an overview of the historical development of bilingual education policy in Singapore and LIE policy in Malaysia. Lin and Man describe Singapore’s weak form of bilingual education as “English-dominant” bilingual education, which serves the nation’s socio-political and long-term economic development goals. In the process of shifting from local languages to language of wider communication (LWC), Singapore has realized its linguistic “unification” through the enforcement of an English-medium education policy at the cost of losing many heritage languages (e.g., Hokkien and Bazaar Malay). Malaysia is very different from Singapore because it has experienced two opposing changes since its independence from British. One is changing from English to Bahasa Malaysia (which is the national language of the country rather than mother-tongue of all the people in this country) in all public education sectors. The second involves the reintroduction of English as the instruction medium into universities, especially private universities. Lin and Man conclude that the return of English to the linguistic stage in both countries reflects their motivation to actively participate in globalization, politically and economically.

Chapter Seven concludes the book with a discussion of current approaches to LLP, and the authors propose several new approaches to LPP in the Southeast Asian context. The chapter begins with explanations of why new a LPP framework is important to maintain national and cultural identity (and cohesion) for Southeast Asian societies in the globalizing world in which English is the global language. Lin and Man, in the following sections of this chapter, provide us with a new LPP framework for Southeast Asian. There are three basic dimensions underling language education planning and three prototypical LPP models in Southeast Asian contexts. For

each prototypical LPP model (the universal mother-tongue education model, the universal total immersion model, and the universal partial immersion education model), Lin and Man evaluate both advantages and disadvantages. They contend that non-specific goals, labeling effect and mismatch of available resources and chosen program models are areas which resulted in the current difficulties and dilemmas LPP has encountered.

At the end of this chapter, Lin and Man suggest three directions that could promote new approaches to LPP: developing content-based L2 instruction, breaking away from the “immersion” mode of thinking, and providing limited-English-proficiency students with access to the English science discourses via bilingual pedagogies. They conclude that only doing their “own pioneering research” (p. 140), and developing their own approaches can help Southeast Asian societies out of the dilemmas and difficulties of bilingual education in the postcolonial era.

Bilingual Education: Southeast Asian Perspectives contributes to the field of bilingual education in contemporary society, particularly through its focus on Southeast Asian postcolonial societies. Contextually grounded, this book carefully examines the current bilingual education policies in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, providing us with insights into new language policy and planning framework for Southeast Asian societies. First, the book narrates and analyzes many (successful or unsuccessful) bilingual education cases all over the world and gives implications for Hong Kong.

The comparative perspective in this book opens a door for examination of similarities and differences in bilingual education policies among different countries. Second, it offers a pragmatic approach because it not only reviews the historical development of bilingual education and points out the contradictions in LIE policy in Hong Kong, but it also provides suggestions (or solutions) for improving current bilingual education system.

For these reasons, practitioners and researchers alike will benefit from this book. Third, some positions and opinions in this book implicitly or explicitly respond to (or echo) other research findings. The discussion on Singapore’s and Malaysia’s negotiation between nationalist and globalization in particular confirms Spring’s (2007) contention that English is a form of social

capital that enables upward mobility in the global economy for countries such as Singapore. Since English functions as the global language, Southeast Asian countries are dedicated to promoting English learning to actively participate in the global economy. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that Lin and Man are researchers who are committed to promoting bilingual education in Hong Kong for the benefit of the potentially marginalized Cantonese-speaking majority. They are enthusiastic about improving current bilingual education policy to help more students make progress in literacy in Hong Kong.

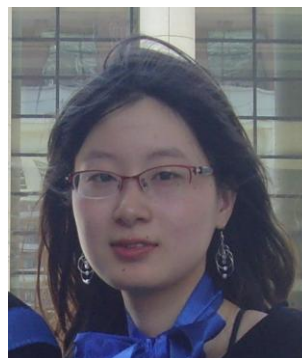
In summary, Lin and Man successfully achieve their goal “to critically integrate and review the international research literature with a view to informing public debates and policymaking regarding the medium of instruction in Hong Kong schools,” (p. xi) as claimed in its introduction. This book merits serious consideration by policy makers, researchers and students, who are interested in bilingual education policy in Southeast Asian contexts. It is also recommended for practitioners (school principals and teachers) and educators from Hong Kong and other postcolonial societies, who are devoted to improving students’ language proficiency and literacy.

Reference

Spring, J. (2007). The triumph of the industrial-consumer paradigm and English as the global language. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 1 (2), 61-78.

About the Reviewer

Hui Zou is a PhD student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program at Arizona State University. Her research interests focus on English education and English teacher quality; improvement of public schools; home advantage in education; and school and family partnerships.



Copyright is retained by the first or sole author, who grants right of first publication to the *Education Review*. *Education Review/Reseñas Educativas* is a project of the National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu>



Editors

Gene V Glass

glass@edrev.info

Gustavo Fischman

fischman@edrev.info

Melissa Cast-Brede

cast-brede@edrev.info
