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Trilingualism in Education in China: Models and Challenges. Anwei Feng and Bob Adamson (Eds.). Heidelberg: Germany: Springer, 2015. 258 pp., (hardcover). 99.99€, ISBN: 978-94-017-9351-3.

While bilingualism is a familiar topic in both the scholarly and popular literature, the situations faced by communities and schools in many parts of the world actually involve three or more languages rather than only two. This is particularly the case in many parts of China where children speak a minority language or dialect of Chinese at home, learn Mandarin (*Putonghua*) in school, and then go on to study English.

Trilingualism in Education in China: Models and Challenges performs a valuable service by focusing our attention on this under-discussed and important topic, and giving us an excellent overview of the status of trilingual education in China. The chapters in this book report on nine case studies conducted by scholars in various parts of China, each one examining multilingualism in a minority language or dialect-speaking area of China, and investigating how schools in that area deal with the challenges of trilingual education. The cases presented have been carefully chosen to represent both areas where the minority language is vital and widely used and also areas where the minority language is threatened or in decline. The explicit goal of the book is to find ways to make trilingual education in China more effective.

One strength of this book is that it effectively depicts the wide range of multilingual situations in China, the varied trilingual education strategies that educators employ, and the many factors that need to be taken into consideration when selecting strategies. Such an overview is useful because when discussing strategies for trilingual education it is important to recognize that one size most definitely will not fit all. A school in a Uyghur (维吾尔), community does indeed have important things in common with a school in an Yi (彝) village in Sichuan or in a Cantonese-speaking neighborhood in Guangzhou, but the differences are also quite significant. The sheer diversity of these nine case studies helps us identify common problems and potential strategies, yet also see where different approaches may be called for.

A second important contribution of the book is its clear call to action. As Feng and Adamson note, scholarly research should do more than describe, it should also “redress inequality and promote good practice...” (p. 7). The goal is not only to find ways to minimize problems, but also to develop strategies for leveraging the potential benefits of trilingual education. Several of the case studies in the book are quite instructive in this regard; for example, the chapter on trilingual education in Korean-speaking parts of northeast China gives useful insight into one relatively successful model; another chapter describes a promising research project in a Dong (侗) village in Guizhou. As Adamson and Feng point out “... additive trilingualism possesses the potential to lift ethnic minorities from a marginalized and disadvantaged status in society to a position of strength” (p. 256), and one of the most important things this book does is firmly call our attention to the question of how we might maximize this potential.

In my opinion, one question worth exploring more deeply in future studies has to do with the impact the experience of learning Mandarin (L2) has on learners’ language learning strategies, beliefs, and motivation, and how these might impact on later study of English (L3). Could schools design the L2 learning process so that it has a more positive effect on students’ later efforts to learn L3? Another question has to do with how best to design the trilingual education process so that learners more clearly see the value of mastering three languages and better know how to maximize any competitive advantages that the command of three languages gives them.

Trilingualism in Education in China: Models and Challenges directs our attention toward such questions and lays a solid foundation for further research into them.

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