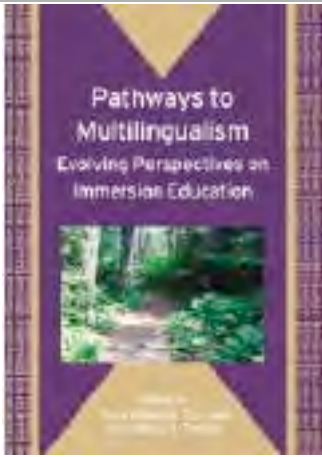


<i>Pathways to Multilingualism: Evolving Perspectives on Immersion Education</i>			
Author:	Tara Williams Fortune & Diane J. Tedick (2008)		
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A very strong tendency of much research is to gradually focus on more and more narrow elements to study; such has been the case for research in language immersion and in Applied Linguistics more generally. However, as Tara Fortune, the Immersion Projects Coordinator, and Diane Tedick, both at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota, indicate, "to function as more or less isolated entities and limit our knowledge and understanding to research and practice in but one variety of immersion education is to remain uninformed about potentially enlightening findings emerging from another" (pp. 14). This edited volume thus seeks to represent a wide range of research for furthering knowledge in the field. The articles draw on a spectrum of ethnographic methods and primarily focus on school-based programs serving K-12 students in a variety of immersion contexts. What sets this book apart is the editors' assiduous framing of the articles with an informative Introduction and a Conclusion, the latter of which allows readers to assimilate what they have learned to achieve a holistic view of immersion education. Those interested in immersion education, bi/multilingualism, language pedagogy, and language and education more generally would benefit from reading this book. It is divided into three parts: (1) pedagogical practices, (2) the development of language, and (3) the societal backgrounds of immersion education.

In the Introduction (pp. 3-21) Fortune and Tedick assert that the multiplicity of terms for immersion education (e.g., two-way, one-way) arose from the genesis of such programs in different places at different times and with different goals. The editors demystify the sometimes confusing plethora of terms by providing a brief history of two of the most prominent immersion programs illustrating two types of immersion

schooling: French immersion in Quebec and Spanish immersion in Florida. The immersion program in Quebec began as a way of providing a homogeneous group of native English speaking students the opportunity to become fluent in French; hence it is termed one-way. In contrast, the immersion program in Florida began with a heterogeneous group of Spanish and English speaking students and had the goal of producing bilingual Spanish and English speakers. These two models, one-way and two-way, have proved successful and have shaped the way that immersion education is theorized and implemented.

Part 1 examines both the theory and the practice of pedagogy in immersion education. The first article (pp. 49-70), by Myriam Met, is theoretical and addresses vocabulary instruction. By explicitly addressing academic texts and the specialized vocabulary that students must master to be successful, Met looks at the role of vocabulary in the immersion context. Explicit and incidental vocabulary learning are distinguished and methods of vocabulary instruction are discussed and evaluated. Though this is an informative article, one flaw inherent in it, and perhaps with the book as a whole, is the disregard for an essential element of language learning, that is, pragmatic competence. Though Met convinces us that vocabulary learning for academic achievement is essential, she presents it without considering how pragmatic use of the vocabulary could be integrated into the lesson.

Another article (pp. 97-118), contributed by Deborah K. Palmer, tackles the question of academic identities in two-way immersion programs and how teachers can provide alternate discourses to students. Observing six students in a second-grade Spanish immersion classroom, half Spanish and half English speaking, Palmer evaluates the success or lack thereof of two instructors in how they value their students' primary languages. This article contributes valuable insight into the practices most beneficial for increasing the linguistic capital of all students in the context of two-way immersion programs.

Part 2 addresses how language growth is fostered in immersion programs. In a macro-level study Roy Lyster and Hirohide Mori (pp. 133-151) examine reactive form-focused instruction in three Japanese immersion classes in the U.S. and four French immersion classes in Canada at the fourth or fifth grade level. This study discusses approaches to form-focused teaching and advocates for "instructional counterbalance," what the authors define as providing another angle from which to draw a student's attention to language development: If pedagogical focus is usually on form, then counterbalancing switches focus to meaning, or vice versa. The article then proceeds to give a comparative analysis of five studies dealing with proactive form-focused instruction. Synthesizing the results of the reactive and proactive approaches the researchers test the counterbalance hypothesis, paraphrased as follows: Tasks and feedback should counterbalance the normative communicative environment in order to provide interlanguage reorganization (p. 140).

Part 3 concentrates on the larger social context of immersion programs and includes the most diverse research. One contribution, by Richards and Burnaby (pp. 221-241),

focuses on Canadian Aboriginal languages. An excellent overview of the history of First Nation immersion education in Canada is given. In addition to the problems which face all immersion education, there are problems specific to indigenous languages, such as language loss and lack of qualified and fluent teachers. Drawing on survey data from the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Education Association the researchers provide an outline of Aboriginal language immersion programs. Though school-based immersion programs are discussed, adult immersion programs dominate. And even though this article adds a unique perspective on immersion education, it does not mesh well with the other articles since it focuses on adult immersion programs to a greater extent than on K-12 programs. Also exceptionally, teaching culture is overtly discussed in this article, but is ignored in the rest of Part 3 and throughout the collection.

G. Richard Tucker and Deborah Dubiner (pp. 267-277) are the last contributors. They synthesize the previous articles based on thematic similarities and pose the question: Can immersion lead to multilingualism? An excellent and timely question, one which leads me to bring up again a point that this book fails to address, pragmatic competence: an essential element of being fluent in another language. According to Margaret A. DuFon, "the classroom context is limited compared to naturalistic contexts in terms of the learners' opportunities to genuinely take on different conversational roles in a wide range of situations and engage with a range of fluent competent speakers of the language" (p. 39). Arguably, one could consider pragmatics to be outside the scope of this volume since the collection is focused on classrooms; but this issue might have been addressed very fruitfully, as it is a difficulty faced by immersion educators.

Despite this oversight the volume covers a wide range of scholarship in a very accessible format. As such, I highly recommend it both as an introduction to immersion education and as an overview of current research.

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