

Book Reviews

Clyne, Michael and Sandra Kipp
Pluricentric Languages in an Immigrant Context: Spanish, Arabic and Chinese, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999, pp xxi + 338 + 5 (notes) + 11 (references) + 4 (indexes)

This is a very impressive and sorely-needed book, produced in partnership by Michael Clyne and Sandra Kipp, two of the most active and successful researchers in the Department of Linguistics at Monash. It reports the results of a careful, thorough and meticulously described investigation into the maintenance and use, in contemporary Melbourne, of the three named community languages; and it relates these findings, with the utmost clarity, to all the main theoretical and practical issues associated with language acquisition and attrition, languages in education, language policy and planning, etc. Indeed, one might wish for similar treatments of other community languages and hope that such treatments emerge in the future - perhaps, again, from these authors or from their associates.

All three languages are pluricentric but in very different ways. Spanish manifests the diversity of rival sets of norms typically associated with the languages of former colonising powers: here, the main issue involves the norms which prevail in Spain on the one hand and in Chile - or Latin America more generally - on the other. Arabic is dialectally even more diverse at the 'colloquial' level and in addition 'diglossic with a twist' (the twist being the use of the H variety, Classical Arabic, as a lingua franca - which itself is further complicated by newer developments specific to the Lebanon and the Lebanese diaspora). Chinese is not so much a language as a family of related languages (the *fangyan*), which are structurally rather similar (cf p 333) but are nevertheless largely mutually unintelligible and are united chiefly by the shared logographic script, and which include the standard variety known in English as *Mandarin*, with its special status and its own internal variation across the Chinese world. (Incidentally, one of the very few points in the book where a genuine error might be identified involves the statement on p 5 that the Chinese writing system is not based on morphemes. This, if true, would suggest that we are dealing here with an ideographic rather than a logographic system, but it is in fact false - though the view is common enough among non-Sinologists and non-linguists of Chinese background).

The three languages are also linked in very different ways with other aspects of their users' cultures, and the

patterns of attitude and emphasis thus differ considerably between - and even within - the relevant communities. For some groups or sub-groups - but not all - language is itself a 'core value' (see pp 42, 327-330), perceived as crucial to the preservation of a separate ethnic identity. In some cases, languages are very closely associated with other core values, most notably (Classical) Arabic with the Muslim religion (see pp 49, 154-155, 175, 329-330, etc). The communities also differ in respect of how markedly their cultural norms and indeed the typical appearance of their members contrast with what prevails in the wider Australian community. Of the three broadly-defined groups studied here, Spanish-speakers are clearly the least 'divergent' or recognisable in an Australian context, and hence may find the strategy of closer integration a more feasible option than might, say, Chinese-speakers.

The book commences (pp 1-50) with background information on the pluricentric character of the three languages, the multilingual/multicultural Australian context, the history of Australian language policy (including policies concerning languages in education), the demography of the three languages in Australia (including patterns of shift and maintenance), and the various theoretical proposals which have been made by linguists in their efforts to explain - or even predict - the diverse patterns of change which emerge. There follows (pp 51-61) an account of the research methodology, which predominantly involved the surveying of over 300 members of the relevant communities and extended meetings with 'focus groups' who represented the communities and provided ideas and information. The core of the book (pp 63-295) is broken into three chapters which deal in turn with the detailed background to each of the three broad language communities and go on to present the results of the investigation for each community and the authors' discussion of each set of results. In the final chapter (pp 299-338) the findings are drawn together and the communities are compared. The book does not undertake (see p 1) to cover microlinguistic matters (code-switching, sociolinguistic variation, etc). Further work on these latter areas may emerge later, perhaps (again) from a related source.

It is impossible to summarise even the general findings of the study in a brief review; but the most interesting results include some striking differences of viewpoint between the sub-groups using each language: Spanish-speakers from Spain and Chile, Arabic-speakers from Egypt and the Lebanon (some of them Christian and some Muslim);

the latter were under-sampled through lower response rates, but enough data were obtained to permit comparison), and, among the Chinese, Mandarin-oriented Taiwanese and Cantonese-oriented Hong Kong people. Some intra-linguistic sub-groups interact with each other much less than outside observers might imagine, and some members of some sub-groups evinced a degree of suspicion or even hostility in respect of other sub-groups (eg, some Chileans resent and dispute claims for the alleged superiority of Castilian Spanish; see pp 122-124). A number of informants (see, eg, pp 114-119, 196-202, 279-284, 292-293) feel that languages and communities other than their own receive unfairly preferential treatment from officialdom (these complaints are by no means always really justified), and some have inaccurate ideas about other languages (see, eg, p 152). Some Arabic speakers, especially, are concerned about negative images of Arabic and Arabs which are salient in Australia and which some feel are fostered by the media (pp 200-202). There is also widespread dissatisfaction with the Australian LOTE media offerings, which many regard as ineffective in encouraging language maintenance and more especially as unappealing to the young. More positively, enormous amounts of work and good-will, sometimes in trying circumstances, have clearly gone into the maintenance and fostering of community languages in Melbourne, in some cases to remarkably good effect. There have, of course, been some inter-generation shifts in certain domains towards English and towards 'Australian' values (more marked in some groups than in others), and in consequence there is often some tension between the ideas and aspirations of the older and the younger members of communities. Even first-generation migrants speaking essentially the same language but arriving at different times, in different circumstances and from different backgrounds have clearly differed widely in respect of how they have perceived their migration and their eventual fate. Readers interested in the details of these matters and in the veritable plethora of other findings should consult the book itself without delay.

The authors are obviously especially familiar with the religious domain, and language use in that domain receives particularly extended treatment. It would be interesting to see similarly detailed work on other key domains of community languages, such as sport, which receives relatively limited coverage here, no doubt in part because of the interests of the informants as well as those of the researchers. It would also be interesting to learn more about the views of community members of different ages with respect to real or perceived clashes between

traditional values and those values which prevail in Australia and may be increasingly embraced by younger community members. The occasional references to this issue (eg, p 243; see also p 234, on Confucianism) are provocative and language predictably seems to be regarded by some as of central importance here. The Muslim Arabic-speaking groups might be especially interesting in this respect.

There are a few further very minor omissions, errors and infelicities in the book, but these hardly detract at all from its value. It is to be strongly recommended to anyone with an interest of any kind in this important and fascinating area.

Mark Newbrook

Mark Newbrook was born near Liverpool in 1956 and is Senior Lecturer in Linguistics at Monash University, having previously taught in Singapore, Hong Kong and Western Australia. He has published three books and also numerous articles, on English grammar/dialectology/sociolinguistics (especially Southeast Asian Englishes) and latterly on skeptical linguistics.

A Tribute to Michael

I have known Michael Clyne for nine years, and his work for rather longer; we have worked together extensively, notably on the teaching of 2nd/3rd Year Sociolinguistics, on the University Language Policy (1994 and after) and on the ongoing Australian English project. Michael's qualities as a scholar, teacher and administrator have been well rehearsed by many others, and I need do no more than add my warm appreciation and praise of the many contributions he has made to academia, to the community and to the lives of those who have been his students and/or colleagues. He is also one of the few senior academics I have known who are unafraid to say what they really think and feel in the faces of bureaucrats with their own narrow non-intellectual agendas and more generally of those who would, for whatever reason, subvert the academic enterprise. We have not always agreed on matters of analysis or policy, but even someone who disagreed with Michael on many such matters could never doubt his devotion to scholarship, his honesty or his commitment to his fellows. I have learned much from him. And, as he reaches an age when many are eagerly planning for retirement, he shows no sign of winding down his intense level of activity. He has also been extremely supportive to me personally, both when he was the Head of the Linguistics Department and at other times. It has been an absolute pleasure knowing him and working with him.