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#### **At War with Diversity: U.S. Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety**

by James Crawford.

*Clevedon, Eng.: Multilingual Matters, 2000. 143 pp. \$49.95, \$15.95 (paper).*

In *At War with Diversity: U.S. Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety*, James Crawford tackles a complex question regarding the numerous challenges associated with U.S. language policy: “How should Americans respond to language diversity?” (p. 2). The six essays in this book provide a provocative perspective on this question, enabling readers to develop a rich, historically grounded, and nuanced understanding of language diversity and language policy in the United States.

The book begins with a comprehensive overview of the history of the English-Only Movement in the United States. Included in this first chapter, “Anatomy of the English-Only Movement,” are historical sketches that Crawford uses to examine the influence of English-Only campaigns on Pennsylvanian Germans, Louisianans, Californios, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Native Hawaiians, and European immigrants. These examples from U.S. history, Crawford argues, illustrate how language restrictionism has never occurred “independently of the material forces that govern U.S. history” (p. 10). Crawford further contends that “for the privileged and powerful, and for those who share their worldview” (p. 28), language conflicts are often triggered by a fear of change in the “structures of power, class, and ethnicity” (p. 27), and not by concerns regarding language use per se.

Chapter two, “Boom to Bust: Official English in the 1990s,” examines more recent trends in the push for English-Only legislation. Crawford outlines the progression of the movement from “fringe-group status to mainstream acceptance to political marginality” (p. 32). He examines the role of US English, an organization whose stated goals included the promotion of ethnic harmony and national unity, in fostering the marginalization of U.S. immigrants. Crawford also critiques the use of the “empowerment argument” (p. 39) to support English-only legislation, referring to the idea that the elimination of federally funded bilingual services would enable or *empower* immigrants to improve their English skills and make them more “productive members of society” (p. 39), which, for some legislative proponents, reflected a vision of economic advancement and civic participation for immigrants in the United States. Although a national English-only law was never successfully passed, Crawford observes that the legislative push brought to light strong ideological differences between supporters and proponents of the bill regarding the need for a “common language” and the value of linguistic diversity and cultural tolerance.

Chapter three, “Endangered Native American Languages: What Is to Be Done, and Why?” directs the reader’s attention to the situation of language extinction in the United States, specifically referring to the disappearance of Native American languages. This chapter is a particularly important one for readers with little background in language shift, referring to permanent changes in language use that result in the survival of some languages and the disappearance of others. Crawford advocates for the preservation of Native American languages, asserting that “we should care about preventing the extinction of languages because of the human costs to those most

directly affected. . . . Along with the accompanying loss of culture, language loss can destroy a sense of self-worth” (p. 63).

Crawford expands his discussion of the struggles associated with language maintenance and loss in chapter four, “Seven Hypotheses on Language Loss,” examining the language maintenance struggles facing four Native American communities in particular: Navajo, Hualapai, Pasqua Yaqui, and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw. The author discusses his own hypotheses about the causes of language shift and possible efforts to achieve language preservation. These hypotheses highlight both factors within language communities (e.g., in- and out-migration) and broader societal factors (e.g., technological changes that bring language communities in contact with each other) that influence language choice and, ultimately, the maintenance or loss of a language.

In chapters five and six, Crawford turns to the anti-bilingual movement and its negative impact on the education of linguistic-minority students. Chapter five, “The Political Paradox of Bilingual Education,” provides a penetrating examination of the debate surrounding the provision of bilingual services to limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. Crawford examines the legislative history of the Bilingual Education Act (also known as Title VII) and addresses the ongoing debate around the intentions of the act, centering on the following questions: “Was it intended primarily to assimilate limited-English-proficient (LEP) children more efficiently? To teach them English as rapidly as possible? To encourage bilingualism and biliteracy? To remedy academic underachievement and high dropout rates? To raise the self-esteem of minority students? To promote social equality? Or to pursue these goals simultaneously?” (p. 84). According to Crawford, the enforcement of bilingual regulations by federal and state governments triggered intense conflicts about the effectiveness of Title VII programs. Citing poor academic performance and achievement of LEP children (particularly of Latino students), critics of bilingual education attacked the ability of the programs to promote academic success among minority students. Crawford illustrates how government regulation of bilingual education services led to a drop in the program’s “political viability” (p. 97), ultimately “[branding Title VII] as a failure in the public mind” (p. 102). This, Crawford observes, is the political paradox of bilingual education.

Chapter six, “The Proposition 227 Campaign: A Post Mortem,” focuses on the recent bilingual education controversy in California, or, more specifically, the passage of Proposition 227, which eliminated the provision of bilingual educational services in public schools. Crawford outlines the events leading up to the proposition’s passage in June 1998, then turns to an analysis of the various players and forces at work: the misleading representation of the issues by the media; the “brilliant” (p. 106) campaigning strategies employed by Ron Unz, the “Yes on 227” campaign leader; and the lack of empirical data supporting the effectiveness of the Title VII programs. Crawford criticizes those educators and researchers who did not engage in the political debate, concluding that their “failure to respond to legitimate concerns about bilingual instruction . . . contributed to an image of bureaucratic arrogance and intransigence — an easy target for Ron Unz” (p. 108). The author cautions researchers and practitioners that “if they neglect to publish data on program effectiveness, the political climate will only worsen” (p. 124) and calls for their mobilization.

A resounding message in this book is that the work of language-minority education professionals *is* political work, a reality that Crawford admits many “would prefer to avoid” (p. 124). Educators in this field need to be able to understand language policy and learn to effectively respond to criticism of bilingual education. To this end, *At War with Diversity* is a valuable book for any language-minority education professional who yearns for a better understanding of the political nature and the ongoing debates surrounding language policy in the United States.

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