
Foreword

Ofelia García

More bilingual students than ever are crowding the nation's schools, and yet, fewer bilingual teachers are being prepared to teach them. One of the greatest challenges in U.S. education today is the teaching of *emergent bilinguals*—students who speak another language at home and are also learning English and, in so doing, are becoming bilingual.

With the number of emergent bilingual students rising and accountability measures taking center stage in American education, it has become clear that specialized understandings are needed in order to ensure emergent bilinguals' English development, as well as their academic success. But a myopic view that sees these students *only* as limited English proficient (LEPs) or English language learners (ELLs) is shutting down visions of how to build on bilingual theoretical frameworks and use new bilingual strategies in order to meaningfully educate them.

Many institutions of higher education have developed new teacher education programs in an effort to meet the mounting needs of this emergent bilingual school population. But with the narrow focus on the teaching of English to ELLs and LEPs, many institutions have opted for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programs that have shed all associations with bilingualism. At the same time, many programs to prepare bilingual teachers have shut down. The thinking is that the focus of teacher education has to be on English only, and that traditional bilingual education programs are outdated in an era of globalization and when classroom linguistic heterogeneity is rampant. But if we appropriate a more generous and broad focus for educating emergent bilinguals, rather than a narrow one of just teaching them English, it is obvious that bilingualism and bilingual strategies have to be part of the understandings of ALL teachers in the twenty-first century, including those who think of themselves as

teaching in English only. In successfully teaching learners of English, all teachers develop the students' bilingualism.

That the teaching of English is frequently the only focus of education programs for emergent bilinguals is also evident in the publication of books for teachers. In the last decade, many good books on the topic of teaching ELLs have been published. As far as I'm aware, however, none has specifically focused on the use of bilingual strategies in classrooms. And not one book has been written specifically for bilingual teachers. Thus, this book by Reyes and Kleyn is in a league of its own, adopting a broader stance of what it means to educate emergent bilinguals for the twenty-first century.

That understanding is also reflected in the book's attention to content area instruction. Emergent bilinguals need to be educated meaningfully, and chapters on teaching mathematics, science, and social studies are included.

Although bilingual educators have been good advocates for children and have advanced important theoretical frameworks, the bilingual education field has suffered from unsystematic curricular innovations and few important pedagogical advances. We have paid attention to English language acquisition and English literacy pedagogy, but bilingual acquisition remains undertheorized, and pedagogies and strategies for the development of the additional language, and especially for the interaction of the two languages, have been poorly elaborated. Bilingual pedagogical practices that build on what I have called the *translanguaging* of bilingual communities (García, 2009) have also received little scholarly attention. Again, in this respect, Reyes and Kleyn make a unique contribution to teacher education, as well as to bilingual education scholarship. They focus on bilingual methodology and strategies that have received little attention in the past.

What makes this book so interesting for educators is the authors' ability to direct teachers and to awaken their imagination and nudge them to try new things. And yet, the book allows teachers freedom to choose and select different options that best serve their children, their classrooms, and their communities. At the core of each chapter are the sections titled Try This! These are a cry to break out of the mold, to take risks, to be bold and brave, to think beyond what is given, and to go beyond conventional wisdom and understanding. Reyes and Kleyn's years of experience as teachers and teacher educators, as well as their rich imagination and clear writing style, enable them to offer different options, to imagine different scenarios, and to show the different roads that may be taken. The teacher is empowered, but not coerced.

Another reason teachers will want to "Try This!" is precisely that they are the true protagonists of the book. This is a teachers' book—from

teachers, for teachers, about teachers, with teachers. Reyes and Kleyn not only blend their own teaching expertise around the education of emergent bilinguals, but also incorporate the practices and voices of other teachers. Thus, while based in theoretical scholarly literature, the book starts and ends with the teachers' experience as the grounding force. The teachers' practice is not subservient to scholarship; instead, the theory flows from the teachers' experience.

In fact, it is the teacher who is the expert in this book. Reyes and Kleyn have chosen well the nine essential questions that frame and begin Chapters 1–9. But they shy away from becoming the authority who answers these questions according to their own ideologies and experience. Instead, the authors end each chapter with a teacher's response to the essential question. It is the work of the teacher that is honored, respected, and made essential in this book. The last word is that of the teacher.

The bilingual teacher this book supports is not the educator of the past, but the educator of the future. He or she is not necessarily a Spanish/English teacher, but may speak Hebrew, French, Russian, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Turkish, or another language. This teacher works not only in public schools, but also in private religious or secular schools, charter schools, or after-school programs. He or she is not concerned with the maintenance of a language other than English as in the past, or with a "heritage" language,¹ but with the development of the students' bilingualism for a future when bilingual discursive practices and translanguaging will be at the center of all interactions in the United States, as well as in the world.

Sometimes this teacher works in a bilingual classroom in a bilingual education program, teaching in both languages or in one or the other language, while thinking of the bilingual development of the students and of the interdependence of all their language practices. At other times he or she is working in an English-only program with a multilingual student body, and wants to know what can be done to build on the students' home language and bilingual practices. He or she mostly serves language minority students, but sometimes language majority students are also in the mix. For all students, the teacher's bilingual strategies are most important, as cross-cultural and multilingual understandings are constructed for a better future not only for the children, but also for our country. This teacher, with bilingual understandings and a commitment to deepen his or her knowledge and expertise, is the protagonist in this book.

I have felt honored to be asked to write the foreword for this book, for one because it is a great book that will be of great help to bilingual teachers, but more important because it extends and reshapes the work that I,

along with many colleagues, did in the bilingual education program at The City College of New York in the 1980s and 1990s, where Kleyn now teaches. Throughout the years I have learned much from the work of Sharon Adelman Reyes as well as that of Tatyana Kleyn, who was a doctoral student at Teachers College when I was there. The work of teacher and student blends and merges, in much the same way that the work of Reyes and Kleyn, as scholars and teacher educators, come together with that of the teachers in this book. It is the multigenerational, multifaceted, multicultural, and multilingual efforts of many that will eventually bring equity and expertise to bear on the education of emergent bilinguals in the United States. I am convinced that this book makes an important contribution toward that important endeavor.

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NOTE

1. I have argued against the use of the term “heritage language speaker” because of its focus on the past in García, Ofelia. 2005. Positioning heritage languages in the United States. *Modern Language Journal* 89(4), 601–605.

REFERENCE

García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Malden, MA: Wiley/Blackwell.