
Preface

B*ilingual teacher.* If these words describe you (or your professional aspiration), you probably already know that just one word, *bilingual*, makes a huge difference in how you teach, in how others perceive you, and in who you are. Many books are written for teachers and preservice teachers; fewer are written for their bilingual counterparts. Here, then, is a book written especially with you, the bilingual teacher, in mind. It addresses not only specific approaches, methodologies, and strategies for teaching in bilingual classrooms, but also the social context that makes you so different—and so essential.

Today, in the United States, only a small percentage of students who need a bilingual education actually receive one. Most English language learners (ELLs), also known as *emergent bilingual students* (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2007)¹, are taught in ways that neither value nor incorporate their native language or cultural heritage. These are the children and youth from homes where Arabic, Armenian, Cantonese, French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Navajo, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, Vietnamese, and many other languages are spoken. And their numbers are growing rapidly.

As García (2005) notes, “School districts in all regions of the nation are confronting the challenge of educating bilingual students” (p. 6). Demographers project that, 35 years from now, white students will be a minority in our educational system because the population of students who are both culturally and linguistically diverse will have risen dramatically (García & Cuellar, 2006).

Yet our nation faces a severe shortage of teachers who are prepared to teach such students by making modifications to the English-language curriculum. Even fewer are able to teach using the native languages of their students. On the national level, only 2.5% of teachers who are working with ELLs are professionally prepared to teach them (Ruíz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000).

Even when ELLs have teachers who speak their native language, such teachers may not have been adequately prepared to teach bilingually. Although they are able to communicate with their students, they may flounder as they try to give their students access to the academic curriculum. Furthermore, bilingual teachers may feel isolated among their peers (Arce, 2004). To complicate this situation, while many educational resources exist for teachers who seek guidance in English as a second language (ESL) curriculum and pedagogy, the same is less true of resources in the realm of bilingual education in general and native language instruction in particular.

This book seeks to provide information and strategies that can assist in K–12 bilingual educational contexts. It can also be used as a much-needed resource for future bilingual teachers, as well as for current teachers placed in bilingual classrooms without adequate advance preparation. Although theoretically grounded, it is designed to focus on the everyday instructional issues faced by bilingual teachers as they negotiate the linguistic, academic, and cultural considerations of their classrooms. The purpose of this book is to provide a hands-on practitioner’s guide to the challenges of teaching in two languages to the ever-growing population of emergent bilingual students in our schools.

We have organized this book to easily provide you with the information needed to best serve your students. Each chapter begins with an overarching essential question—one that bilingual educators often ask. Thematically related subsections follow and are made more accessible through both vignettes that illustrate instructional dilemmas and solutions and through explicit ideas for instruction. The vignettes have been selected because of their power to engage the reader in thinking about critical instructional issues. The explicit instructional strategies are highlighted in sections titled “Try This!” Although they can be applied directly, they are meant for teachers to modify based on their individual context.

For ease in usage, Try This! activities are labeled with appropriate grade levels. Because the term *elementary* can designate different grade levels in different locales, for the purpose of uniformity we will use *lower elementary* to designate kindergarten through third grade and the term *upper elementary* to designate fourth through eighth grade. We have chosen to begin the upper elementary designation with the fourth grade because it is at Grade 4 that “learning to read” is generally recognized to segue into “reading to learn.” In addition, we have provided for English as a second language/second language (ESL/L2) categories for each Try This! activity in Chapter 6, the chapter that focuses on second language instruction.

Although this book is meant to be a hands-on guide for practicing bilingual teachers, it may also be used as a supplemental text at the university

level. For preservice teachers, we suggest that the Essential Question be used for weekly investigations within clinical settings. After researching an assigned question, preservice teachers can read the related chapter and compare what they have discovered to the corresponding content of the book.

Some commonly occurring questions of bilingual teachers are italicized in the paragraphs that follow; they are embedded in the corresponding chapters that address each one.

Chapter 1 focuses on language use in the bilingual classroom by posing the following essential question: *How do I use two languages in the bilingual classroom?* This is perhaps the most pressing question faced by bilingual teachers. While the use of two languages is implicit in bilingual education, educators are often unsure of how best to use them to the educational advantage of students. This chapter proposes that language use is best determined by program model as well as instructional goals and objectives, and that, even within this context, bilingual educators may choose from many appropriate instructional strategies.

Chapter 2 addresses culture, a topic that goes hand in hand with language. It asks, *Why does culture matter so much in the bilingual classroom?* Language and culture are intertwined. Thus, just as careful consideration must be given to the use of two languages, so too must consideration be given to the use of two or more cultures within the educational context. Even though bilingual programs are often labeled as *bilingual-bicultural*, in practice this is not always the case. In the over-crowded school curriculum, cultural considerations are often overlooked. This chapter emphasizes that bi- or multicultural classrooms can provide important supports for the academic success of bilingual students—supports that should not be disregarded.

Chapter 3 explicitly discusses curriculum and instruction in the native language. It asks, *Is teaching in a minority language really any different from teaching in English in a mainstream classroom?* If the answer to the question above were a simple “yes,” there would be no need for this book. What, then, is the difference? We suggest that in addition to the linguistic and cultural considerations addressed in Chapters 1 and 2, providing a quality education to language-minority students demands moving away from the traditional transmission model of education and moving toward a constructivist stance.

Chapter 4 discusses bilingual curriculum and pedagogy specifically for content area instruction. It asks, *What approaches should teachers consider for teaching content to English language learners in bilingual classrooms?* In this examination of content area instruction, contributing author Irma M. Olmedo discusses teaching strategies for use in mathematics, science, and

social studies, including techniques for emphasizing content vocabulary with emergent bilingual students.

Chapter 5 explores the following question: *How can I effectively develop vocabulary in the bilingual classroom?* Content area vocabulary is essential because it is the key to unlock the content itself. Unfortunately, many bilingual educators lack the technical vocabulary in the native language (L1) of their students that is necessary to effectively teach in the content areas of mathematics, science, and social studies. For these teachers, contributing author Jaime J. Gelabert-Desnoyer addresses content vocabulary and pedagogical vocabulary, including discussion of the impact of regional lexical variations. He describes the process of creating semantic maps, and he provides some as examples.

Chapter 6 discusses second language (L2) instruction, asking the question, *Do I need to have a separate time slot for teaching English as a second language?* Traditionally, ESL has been considered a separate subject that is often taught by ESL specialists in a pull-out program model. However, as more emphasis is placed on the integration of language and content learning, this practice is being called into question. This chapter addresses contemporary methods and strategies for teaching a second language.

Chapter 7 takes on the controversial role of assessment, asking, *How is assessment different in the bilingual classroom?* In this era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), many educators are questioning a national overreliance on tests and asking if standardized tests are fair for ELLs. Assessment has come to be synonymous with standardized testing in the minds of many educators. Yet there are many other issues embedded in the topic of assessment for emergent bilingual students. This chapter not only discusses implications of NCLB for the instruction of ELLs, but also illuminates the multifaceted nature of assessment with bilingual students and provides examples of appropriate uses of assessment with ELLs that educators need not fear.

Chapter 8 expands the bilingual context by asking, *How can bilingual curriculum and instruction be applied to multiple learning contexts?* Bilingual education is adapting to a different political context and to the growing demand for opportunities for bilingual enrichment programs. While the primary audience for this book is teachers of ELLs in transitional and developmental programs of bilingual instruction, it contains implications for educators in a multitude of educational contexts that seek to provide educational opportunities for students to learn in two languages. In this chapter, we highlight the insights and suggestions of practicing bilingual educators as they offer guidance to teachers practicing in multiple language contexts, including private, religious, heritage, ESL, foreign language, and various immersion models. In an attempt to illuminate each teacher's

authentic voice, we have not mandated conformity in terms of contribution length. Rather, the strength of each voice is reflected in the quality, not the quantity, of each educator's words.

Chapter 9, with its focus on equity and advocacy, goes to the heart of being a bilingual teacher: *How does being a bilingual teacher make me different?* It emphasizes collaboration with families for the benefit of students as essential to being a bilingual teacher, as well as discusses critical approaches to standardized testing.

Becoming a bilingual teacher requires additional professional preparation, not just in terms of language, but also in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. Bilingual teachers should be able to teach in multiple contexts, from mainstream to multilingual classrooms. Yet bilingual teachers are often marginalized within public education just as bilingual education is often marginalized in the public eye. Contrary to such misperceptions, bilingual education is a multifaceted, multidisciplinary field, and bilingual teachers play a pivotal role in the quest for educational equity in this nation. Rather than being marginalized, they should be valued. This chapter highlights how being a bilingual teacher not only makes educators different, but also makes them important in ways that go beyond the world of the classroom.

Finally, **Chapter 10** summarizes the content of the book through vignettes that highlight stories of bilingual instruction. Through the words of both students and educators, we can see both the challenge and the promise of second language education.

Araceli, a practicing Spanish bilingual teacher, reflects on an instructional modification created for her bilingual learners.

Before I do a mini-lesson, I do a mini-mini-lesson using visuals, building up their vocabulary, getting to see what experiences they had so that I can connect it to their writing and reading, and it has to be something they enjoy, too. So you have to look at where they come from, what are their experiences.

The purpose of this book is to empower you, the bilingual teacher, with knowledge that will assist you in doing just what Araceli has done—creating culturally and linguistically affirming educational environments in which students can grow developmentally and academically in two languages.

NOTE

1. In this book, we use both terms to refer to students who are adding the English language to their linguistic repertoire.

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