EDUCATING EMERGENT BILINGUALS

Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Learners

Second Edition

Ofelia García and Jo Anne Kleifgen

Foreword by Jim Cummins

Teachers College Press
Teachers College | Columbia University
New York and London

Published by Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027

Cover design by Patricia Palao. Cover photo by timsa / Getty Images.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available at loc.gov

Names: García, Ofelia, author. | Kleifgen, Jo Anne, author.
Title: Educating emergent bilinguals : policies, programs, and practices for English learners / Ofelia Garcia, Jo Anne Kleifgen ; foreword by Jim Cummins.
Description: Second edition. | New York : Teachers College Press, [2018] | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Description based on print version record and CIP data provided by publisher; resource not viewed.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017061242 (print) | LCCN 2018000019 (ebook) | ISBN 9780807776766 (ebook) | ISBN 9780807758854 (pbk. : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Education, Bilingual. | English language—Study and teaching—Foreign speakers. | English language—Acquisition. | Second language acquisition.
Classification: LCC LC3715 (ebook) | LCC LC3715 .G37 2018 (print) | DDC 370.117/5—dc23

LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017061242

ISBN 978-0-8077-5885-4 (paper)
ISBN 978-0-8077-7676-6 (ebook)

CHAPTER 2

Who Are the Emergent Bilinguals?

This chapter provides background information on emergent bilinguals. Specifically, the chapter asks the following key questions:

- How do we know who they are?
- How many are there?
- How are they designated?
- How are they reclassified?
- Where do they live and go to school?
- What languages do they speak?
- What are their demographic characteristics with respect to:
  - Ethnicity/race and socioeconomic status,
  - Age distribution and access to pre-K programs, and
  - Nativity?
- How do they use language?
- Who are the Latinx students?
- What do all emergent bilinguals have in common?

In this chapter, we address the issue of how students are identified, counted, and designated as English learners, as we elucidate their sociolinguistic characteristics. The chapter also brings to the forefront the mismatch between the policy that dictates how data on their characteristics are collected and considered, the reality of the students themselves, and what research tells us about how best to educate emergent bilingual students. In other words, the dissonance between the research and the policies and practices enacted, which is the central theme of this book, begins with descriptive data that have shaped the way these students are defined. As we consider the data, we will point out these contradictions.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHO THEY ARE?

Part of the difficulty in understanding the characteristics of emergent bilinguals results from the great inconsistency in the data that purport to describe them. Primary data on students needing services are collected using a variety of measures across different states. As we will see, states use different assessments for the identification of emergent bilinguals, sometimes measuring different abilities. The federal government, in its most recent legislation (ESSA, 2015), has not resolved the inconsistencies in the data.

HOW MANY EMERGENT BILINGUALS ARE THERE?

However inaccurately these students are counted, we do know that the numbers of emergent bilinguals are increasing and growing much more rapidly than is the English-speaking student population. Between 1995 and 2005, the enrollment of emergent bilinguals in public schools nationwide grew by 56%, whereas the entire student population grew by only 2.6% (Batalova et al., 2007). Although the total enrollment of students has remained flat, the number of emergent bilinguals continues to increase (Batalova & McHugh, 2010).

Table 2.1 shows the growth of this population between 2008 and 2014, according to data gathered by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2015e). One out of 10 students in the United States is an emergent bilingual, accounting for 4,929,989 students.

The large number of emergent bilinguals is consistent despite the different methods used to identify these students. For instance, the U.S. census provides information about the number of students between the ages of 5 and 17 who speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home. The census also asks families who report that they speak a LOTE at home to indicate their ability to speak English as either "very well," "well," "not well," or "not at all." Students who live in households where English is spoken less than "very well" are considered eligible for English language support. Table 2.2 indicates the number of 5- to 17-year-olds who speak languages other than English at home, as well as the number who live in families that speak English less than "very well."

Table 2.1. Emergent bilingual students (EBLs in table) enrolled in public and elementary U.S. schools

Year	# of EBL students	% of EBL students as % of total enrollment
2008–2009	4,685,746	9.7%
2009–2010	4,647,016	9.7%
2011–2012	4,635,185	9.6%
2012–2013	4,850,293	10.0%
2013–2014	4,929,989	10.1%

Source: U.S. Department of Education. NCES. 2015e, Table 204.27.

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), there were 2.4 million 5- to 17-year-old emergent bilinguals in 2014; in contrast, the states reported a total of 4,929,989 million ELLs for the same year. This discrepancy has to do with the fact that the Census Bureau relies on self-reports and asks only whether or not students speak English, but not whether they can read and write English. In addition, the census undercounts the undocumented population, which the states are more likely to count because they collect their data through the schools themselves.

But Table 2.2 tells an even more interesting story. It is important to note that, although the percentage of youths who speak languages other than English at home is increasing (21.9% in 2014 compared to 20.5% in 2008 and 8.5% in 1979), the percentage of LOTE speakers who are also emergent bilinguals is decreasing (17.7% in 2014 compared to 24.7% in 2008 and 34.2% in 1979). That is, there is a rise in the number of *bilingual* students who are both speakers of other languages and also fluent speakers of English.

Table 2.2. Speakers of LOTEs and emergent bilinguals (EBLs in table), 5 to 17 years old

Year	Total 5–17 yrs*	No. Speakers of LOTEs*	% Total Speakers of LOTEs	No. EBLs**	% Total who are EBLs***	% Speakers of LOTEs who are identified as EBLs
1979	44.7	3.8	8.5%	1.3	2.8%	34.2%
1989	42.3	5.2	12.3%	1.8	4.3%	34.6%
1995	47.5	6.7	14.1%	2.4	5.2%	35.8%
2000	52.5	9.5	18.1%	2.9	5.5%	30.5%
2004	52.9	9.9	18.8%	2.8	5.3%	27.9%
2008	53.0	10.9	20.5%	2.7	5.1%	24.7%
2014	53.8	11.8	21.9%	2.4	3.9%	17.7%

* Numbers are given in the millions.

** Emergent bilinguals here are those designated by the federal government as English learners. They are those who speak languages other than English at home, and speak English less than very well.

*** This number represents the number of English learners in the entire population.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1979, 1989, 1995, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau (ACS, 2008); U.S. Census Bureau (ACS, 2014).

In fact, as Table 2.3 shows, the increase in the number of bilingual students who are proficient in both English and another language in the U.S. school population has been considerable. From 1979 to 2008, while the number of LOTE students who spoke English less than very well increased by 107% (from 1.3 million to 2.7 million), the number who were proficient in English, and thus considered fluent bilinguals, increased by 220% (from 2.5 million to 8.1 million). The increase in the number of emergent bilingual students from 1979 to 2014 was 85%. But during the same period, the number of fluent bilingual students increased by 292%.

Certainly, the growth in the number of bilingual English proficient students is greater than that of emergent bilinguals, making bilingualism a central educational topic for teachers of *all* U.S. students, not just those who are learning English, since nearly one out of every four students in the U.S. speaks a language other than English at home.

Although the growing bilingual student population is an important resource in a

globalized world, our focus in this book is on minoritized emergent bilinguals because they are the students who need the most support from the educational system. We warn, however, as García (2006b) noted, that English learners are "only the tail of the elephant"—2.4 million of the 11.8 million bilingual and multilingual U.S. students in 2014. When educators and policymakers use the term *bilingual students* to refer only to the elephant's tail, or those students who are not yet proficient in English, they lose sight of the incredible potential of the millions of multilingual students in this country. Focusing narrowly on the beginning points of the bilingual continuum blinds them to the strength and potential of bilingualism. This makes all bilingualism suspect for policy and practice, when, instead, being bilingual/multilingual is becoming the norm for students in an increasingly multilingual United States.

Table 2.3. Speakers of LOTEs, both emergent bilinguals and fluent bilinguals, 5 to 17 years old

LOTE Speakers	1979	2008	2014	% Change 1979 to 2014
Emergent bilinguals	1.3*	2.7	2.4	85%
Fluent bilinguals	2.5	8.1	9.4	292%
Total speakers of LOTE	3.8	10.8	11.8	

*Numbers are given in the millions.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (1979); U.S. Census Bureau (ACS, 2008, 2014).

HOW ARE THEY DESIGNATED?

The question of how many emergent bilinguals there are has to do with the ways in which they are designated and then reclassified as a specific category of student. Unlike other categories of identification such as ethnicity, race, and gender, the English learner (EL) classification is fluid—that is, students move in and out of being classified according to their progress. And we emphasize that being classified as an English learner or reclassified as a "fluent English speaker" is based on a cutoff score that sometimes has little relationship to the actual academic performances of these students in school tasks.

Since the 1970s, based on federal civil rights legislation and federal case law, states have

had to identify emergent bilinguals and ensure that their schools serve them (Linquanti, 2001). Guidance from the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice in January 2015 reminded schools of their obligation to "identify English learner students in a timely, valid and reliable manner" (U.S. Department of Education, 2015b). ESSA requires that emergent bilinguals be identified 30 days after the beginning of a school year, or 2 weeks after enrollment if students enter during the school year. But the criteria used to identify emergent bilinguals continue to vary by state and sometimes even by districts within a state (Linquanti & Cook, 2013; Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendizick, & Sapru, 2003).

Because so many studies have pointed to the variations across states in ways of identifying those classified as English learners, the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2015b) published a set of guidelines to ensure the adequacy of identification and classification. In addition, also in 2015, the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) published an "English Learner Toolkit," providing guidance on how to identify English learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2015a).

An initial step in identifying students as ELs usually takes place when students first register for a new school: They are given a *home language survey*, which contains questions for students' parents or guardians about the language used at home by students and others. But as Bailey and Kelly (2013) have demonstrated, states vary in what is asked in the home language survey. Almost half the states have a single form and mandate its use in schools statewide; other states, however, allow school districts to create their own surveys.

Home language surveys tend to view bilingualism through a monolingual lens and ignore the complexity of linguistic practices of multilingual populations. For example, many states' and schools' home language surveys ask which was the first language the student learned, ignoring the fact that many students are simultaneous bilinguals, growing up in homes with complex language practices where members of families use their multilingual repertoire flexibly. The surveys also often ask which language is spoken to the child in the home, overlooking the bilingual/multilingual practices of parents and caregivers when interacting with one another and their children.

Moreover, because of the monolingual bias in many states' home language surveys and the stigmatization that often follows a student's designation as an English learner, many bilingual parents hide their bilingualism, refusing to acknowledge their home bilingual practices. The construction of inferiority that accompanies being categorized as an emergent bilingual in many schools means that some parents prefer to say that the child only speaks

English. Only by changing the negative perception in which speakers of languages other than English are held will schools be able to offer beneficial instruction by building on students' bilingual capacities.

Students identified by the home language survey as potentially needing services are then referred for an English language proficiency assessment (Linquanti & Bailey, 2014). According to a report by the National Research Council (NRC, 2011), more than half the states use a screener/placement test for identification as English learner. Of these, the majority use the screener test for designation called the Access Placement Test (W-APT). Some states, however, use their own screening assessment. At the time of this writing, California, for example, uses the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). New York has developed the New York State Identification Test for English language learners (NYSITELL). Still other states provide their school districts with a list of tests from which the districts can select (Linquanti & Cook, 2013). The NRC's (2011) report concludes the section on the identification of English learners by saying:

> Because of the differing state policies, practices, and criteria for initially identifying students as linguistic minority and for classifying them as an English language learner (ELL), individuals who are classified as ELL students in one state may not be classified as ELL students in another. In states that permit local control, students classified as ELL in one district may not be classified as ELL in another district in that state. (p. 86)

School districts classify students as English learners through a combination of information on the home language survey and formal assessment/screening.

HOW ARE THEY RECLASSIFIED?

Equally important to the question of how many students are designated as emergent bilinguals in U.S. public schools is the question of how these students get reclassified as English proficient. Even though *language proficiency* should be the focus for designation as English learner, *academic achievement in English* is key to students' reclassification as English proficient (Linquanti, 2001). This means that the assessment used for the reclassification process should be much more complex because multiple dimensions of communicative competence have to be considered (Bachman, 2001; Canale & Swain, 1980). In other words, to be reclassified, students must not only be able to comprehend and communicate effectively, but also do cognitively demanding work in the content areas at the appropriate grade level in English (Bachman, 2002; Linquanti, 2001).

One of the advances toward the educational equity of emergent bilinguals made since No

Child Left Behind (more in Chapter 3) has been the requirement that states develop English language proficiency standards for emergent bilinguals, as well as an assessment instrument aligned to these standards that measure listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension. In addition, grants have been made available to develop, validate, and implement such assessments. As a result, the states' English language proficiency tests used in reclassification of students have improved dramatically.

Furthermore, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics released in 2010 (more on this in Chapter 3) have led to efforts to develop standards for English learners, as well as assessment systems. The states that make up the largest consortium, called WIDA (no longer an acronym),[1] use WIDA's standards-based, criterion-referenced English language proficiency test for reclassification (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State, ACCESS for ELLs 2.0). WIDA is in the process of building a comprehensive and balanced technology-based assessment system for English language learners. The other smaller consortium of states is ELPA21[2] (English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century). ELPA21's assessment system consists of a screener to assess baseline English language proficiency, as well as a summative assessment.

Some states have not joined consortia as of 2017 and use other English proficiency tests. In 2016, some of the "big states" with large numbers of emergent bilinguals used their own assessments for English language proficiency: California—California English Language Development Test (CELDT); Texas—Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment (TELPAS); New York—New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT); and Arizona—Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA).

Not all tests focus on the same skill domains or weigh each skill domain equally. For example, California's CELDT assigns equal weights to listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, ACCESS for ELLs weighs its overall composite in favor of literacy. As a result, students reclassified in one state would not be considered reclassified in another state.

On average, emergent bilinguals are reclassified 3 years after school entry, in 2nd grade (Slama, 2014). Reclassification rates are lowest in kindergarten through 2nd grade as well as in grade 9, when many emergent bilinguals first enter the school system.

An important finding is that Spanish-speaking emergent bilinguals are reclassified at half the rate of those who speak other languages, even after controlling for income (Slama, 2014). That is, emergent bilinguals who speak Spanish are twice as likely as those who speak other languages to remain categorized as English learners. There may be many reasons why

this is so, but it might be important to consider causes that have to do with what some scholars call *raciolinguistic ideologies* (see Alim, Rickford, & Ball, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015). The field of raciolinguistic ideologies explores how language and race have been mutually constitutive, with language used to construct race, and ideas about race being shaped by language. In the United States, Spanish-speaking students have traditionally been considered non-White. The Spanish language has been used often as a proxy for race, a way to segregate and exclude the minoritized Spanish-speaking students from rich educational opportunities.

Reclassification of English learners is as problematic as identification. On the whole, reclassification criteria are left up to states and school districts, although they must be based on test scores. But as we have seen, assessment systems differ widely.

WHERE DO THEY LIVE AND GO TO SCHOOL?

Eight states accounted for more than two-thirds of the emergent bilingual population in the United States in 2012–2013: California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Colorado, Washington, and North Carolina. Table 2.4 gives the number of public school emergent bilinguals in 2012–2013 in these eight states, as well as the percentage of students they represent.

Emergent bilingual students make up a large proportion of the total pre-K to 12 population in several other states, even if their actual numbers are not as large as in these eight states. After California, where 24.5% of the total school enrollment is designated as English learners, schools in New Mexico (18%) and Nevada (17%) have the greatest *proportion* of students categorized as English learners. They are followed by Texas (15.1%), Colorado (13%), and Alaska (11.3%) (Kena et al., 2016; Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015a).

However, the greatest *growth* in the number of students who are developing English proficiency in the past decade has been clearly outside all these states, in a new set of southeastern and midwestern states. South Carolina experienced an 800% growth in its emergent bilingual population from the period between 1997–1998 and 2007–2008, and Indiana experienced a 400% growth during the same period. From 2004 to 2014, four states had an increase of more than 200% of emergent bilinguals—Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, and West Virginia (Gil, 2016). Other states with recent dramatic growth include Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and Virginia (Batalova & McHugh, 2010).

Table 2.4. Number of public school emergent bilinguals (EBLs in table), 2012–2013

State	Number	% of EBLs among students
California	1,571,772	24.5%
Texas	773,732	15.2%
Florida	277,802	10.3%
New York	237,499	8.8%
Illinois	190,172	9.3%
Colorado	114,415	13.3%
Washington	107,307	10.2%
No. Carolina	102,311	6.8%

Source: Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015a.

Emergent bilinguals overwhelmingly attend urban schools. In 2012– 2013, the Los Angeles Unified School District had the largest population of emergent bilinguals (152,592), closely followed by New York City (142,572) (Ruiz Soto et al., 2015a). However, percentage-wise, the Santa Ana Unified District had the highest proportion of emergent bilinguals in the nation (56.2%), and three other school districts in California had an over 30% emergent bilingual population—Garden Grove Unified (43.2%), San Bernardino City Unified (32.3%), and San Francisco Unified (30.3%). The other two school districts that had over 30% emergent bilinguals in their schools were Dallas Independent (36.0%) and School District 1 in Denver (31.4%) (Ruiz Soto et al., 2015a, 2015b).

Despite the spread of emergent bilinguals across the United States, they seem to be concentrated in fewer than half the school districts in the country. In 2005, nearly 70% of all emergent bilingual students were enrolled in 10% of elementary schools (De Cohen, Deterding, & Chu Clewell, 2005). Further, school districts that have more than 5,000 emergent bilinguals enroll 54% of all English learners in grades K to 12 (Zehler et al., 2003). This points to the high degree of racial and linguistic segregation in the United States (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). De Cohen et al. (2005) report that nearly 70% of emergent bilinguals in elementary grades are enrolled, on average, in just 10% of the public schools in a metropolitan area.

As a result of this residential segregation, the majority of emergent bilinguals—53%—go to schools where more than 30% of their peers are also emergent bilinguals (Fix & Passel,

2003). In contrast, 57% of students who are English proficient attend schools where less than 1% of all students are emergent bilinguals (Van Hook & Fix, 2000). Thus, emergent bilinguals often attend schools with others who, like them, speak little English. The level of linguistic segregation in the United States has risen steadily (Arias, 2007; Carnock & Ege, 2015).

WHAT LANGUAGES DO THEY SPEAK?

Emergent bilinguals in the United States are speakers of many different languages, although Spanish remains by far the language spoken by the highest number of them. Estimates of the percentage of emergent bilingual students who speak Spanish at home range from 70% (according to the 2014 American Community Survey) to 76.5% or 3,770,816 Spanish speakers who are emergent bilingual students (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2015d).

Table 2.5 provides the distribution of the languages other than English spoken by students in the United States, including those who are emergent bilinguals, according to calculations from the U.S. Census[3] (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS, 2014). It shows the number of youth who speak a language other than English at home, as well as those who speak English less than very well and are considered emergent bilinguals. The table also shows the percentage of emergent bilinguals speaking a given language group compared to others. In addition, the last column of the table shows the percentages within each language group who are emergent bilinguals.

Despite the fact that the greatest proportion of emergent bilinguals as shown in Table 2.5 is Spanish speaking (70%), it is important to point out that, proportionately, Spanish-speaking youth are *not* less proficient in English than Asians. In fact, the proportion of speakers of Asian/Pacific languages who are emergent bilinguals (26%) is greater than that of the Spanish-speaking group (20%).

After Spanish, and based on the 2013–2014 state reports of who their emergent bilinguals are and what their commonly reported home languages are (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2015d), the most common language spoken by emergent bilinguals in 2013–2014 was Arabic, spoken at home by 2.2% of all emergent bilinguals (109,170 students). Chinese followed as the third most spoken language by emergent bilinguals (107,825 or 2.2%), although this category includes speakers of Mandarin, Cantonese, and other Chinese languages, such as Fuzhounese, Wu, and Taiwanese Hokkien. Interestingly enough, a year later, 2014–2015, Chinese (97,117) had surpassed Arabic (96,572). This

change might reflect changes in immigration patterns, with fewer Arabic speakers entering the United States and with more leaving after September 11, 2001.

Table 2.5. Numbers and percentages of languages spoken by emergent bilinguals (EBLs in table), 5 to 17 years old

Language group	Number of LOTE speakers	Number of EBLs	% of all EBLs	% of EBLs within language group
Spanish	8,520,957	1,687,451	70.2%	20%
Indo-European[4]	1,467,490	284,297	11.8%	19%
Asian/Pacific[5]	1,270,332	324,440	13.5%	26%
Other	529,975	106,637	4.5%	20%
Total	11,788,754	2,402,825	100.00%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014, 1-year estimate, TABLE B1604.

A surprising result in the 2013–2014 data for reported home languages of English learners in schools is that English is the fourth most common reported home language of English learners (91,669 students). The U.S. Department of Education attributes this to "students who live in multilingual households and students adopted from other countries who speak English at home but also have been raised speaking another language" (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2015e, Table 204.27, Footnote 3). However, this is another indication that many emergent bilingual students increasingly are speaking English at home, as well. It also accounts for the change in immigration that has brought many bilingual English-speaking students from Africa and Asia to the United States. This points to the growing complexity of language use, including the use of English, that we describe in subsequent chapters.

After Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and English, the most common home language for emergent bilinguals is Vietnamese (89,705 in 2013–2014, and 75,529 in 2014–2015). The languages that follow, all having between 20,000 and 25,000 speakers, are Haitian Creole, Hmong, Somali, and Tagalog. (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2015d; Office of English Language Acquisition [OELA], 2017).

Spanish is the leading language of emergent bilinguals in all but five states, where other languages dominate: Alaska (Yup'ik), Hawai'i (Ilokano), Maine (Somali), Montana

(German), and Vermont (Nepali) (Ruiz Soto et al., 2015b). Maine and Vermont have large settlements of Somali and Nepali refugees. Yup'ik is a major indigenous language in Alaska. Ilokano is the language spoken among most Filipino immigrants to Hawai'i. Most surprisingly, the variety of German spoken by the Hutterites, a religious group in Montana, is the leading home language of emergent bilinguals in that state.

WHAT ARE THEIR DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS?

Ethnicity/Race and Socioeconomic Status

When we look at racial/ethnic classifications according to the categories of the U.S. Census,[6] emergent bilinguals are overwhelmingly Hispanic or Latino (78.1%). Asians account for 10.6% of the emergent bilingual population, whereas Whites account for 5.8% and Blacks for 3.5%. There are many emergent bilinguals who are categorized in the census as American Indians and Pacific Islanders, although their numbers pale in comparison with those of the other racial/ethnic categories. The growing proportion of emergent bilinguals who are of two or more races points to the greater number of racially and linguistically mixed families in the United States. Table 2.6 presents the ethnic/racial characteristics of emergent bilingual students in 2014.

Although the percentages of each racial/ethnic category have not shifted much over the past decade, there is much more racial and linguistic heterogeneity among emergent bilinguals than ever, with Brown and Black students predominating. For example, among emergent bilinguals who are counted as French speakers, we now find students from all over West Africa who are multilingual. The Africans arriving in the United States have brought their many languages (and their various multilingual practices), the most numerous being Ibo, Yoruba, Kru, Amharic, Cushite, Swahili, Bantu languages, Fulani, and Mande. And among emergent bilinguals from the Indian subcontinent, we find not only students who speak Hindi and Urdu, but also substantial numbers of speakers of Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi, Telugu, Malayalam, and Tamil, who are also multilingual. In addition, emergent bilingual students in large numbers are found among Native Americans, especially Navajos (Diné), but also Yup'ik, Keres Pueblo people, Apache, Cherokee, Choctaw, Dakota, and Ojibwa.

Table 2.6. Emergent bilinguals in public schools, by race/ethnicity

Race	Number of EBLs	% of total
Hispanic	3,648,211	78.14%
Asian	496,359	10.63%
White	270,854	5.80%
Black	163,588	3.50%
American Indian*	45,687	.098%
Pacific Islander	25,616	.055%
Two or more races	28,445	.061%

*Figures for fall 2014 (includes students from Bureau of Indian Education Schools).

Sources: Taken from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016. EDFacts file 046, Data Group 123, extracted April 24, 2016, from the EDFacts Data Warehouse (internal U.S. Department of Education source); Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education," 2009–10 through 2013–14; and National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Projection Model, 1972 through 2025. Table 204.25.

Turning now to the socioeconomic characteristics of emergent bilinguals, Zehler and colleagues suggested in 2003 that more than 75% of emergent bilinguals were poor, and they estimated that 54% of the parents of emergent bilinguals had not completed 8 years of schooling. In 2013, Grantmakers for Education noted that 60% of emergent bilinguals in every state live in families whose income falls below 185% of the federal poverty line.

As we noted above, De Cohen et al. (2005) report that nearly 70% of emergent bilinguals are enrolled in only 10% of the schools within a given metropolitan area. These schools are predominantly located in urban poor areas. Their study shows that 72% of students in what they call "high-LEP schools" (schools with a high proportion of limited English proficient students) qualify for free and/or reduced-price school lunches compared to about 40% in "low-LEP schools."[7] Forty percent of the principals at the high-LEP schools in the study by De Cohen et al. (2005) cite poverty as a serious issue and identify student health problems as "serious" or "moderate." In describing schools that have high concentrations of English learners, De Cohen et al. (2005) summarize:

> High-LEP schools are more likely to be located in urban areas and therefore have many characteristics associated with urban schools: larger enrollments; larger class sizes; greater racial and ethnic diversity; higher incidences of student poverty, student health problems, tardiness, absenteeism, and lack of preparation; greater difficulty filling teaching vacancies; greater reliance on unqualified teachers; and lower levels of parent involvement. (p. 19)

Gender, Age Distribution, and Access to Pre-K Programs

According to Office for Civil Rights data (U.S. Department of Education and Office for Civil Rights, 2016), slightly more than half of emergent bilinguals in the nation's schools are males (53%), with just less than half female (47%).

The growing population of emergent bilingual students in the United States is younger than the average K–12 student and thus clustered more in elementary schools. In 2000–2001, for instance, 44% of all emergent bilingual students were in pre-K through grade 3, and only 19% were enrolled at the high school level (Kindler, 2002). In 2001–2002, 70% of emergent bilingual students were in grades pre-K to 5, pointing to the potential of having bilingual citizens if we truly cultivated this aspect of these young students' education (Hopstock & Stephenson, 2003a). Moving higher up in the grades, we find that the number of emergent bilinguals decreases; in the same period, over a quarter (26%) were in grades 4 through 8, and only 14% were in secondary school (grades 9 through 12) (Hopstock & Stephenson, 2003a).

In 2013–2014, the same pattern emerges. In kindergarten, 17.4% of students nationwide were emergent bilinguals. That figure remains fairly constant in the first 3 years of school (17.1% in 1st grade, 16.6% in 2nd grade, 15.0% in 3rd grade). In 4th grade, it drops to 11.9%; in 5th grade to 9.8%; in 9th grade to 6.6%; and by the 12th grade, emergent bilinguals constitute only 4.6% of the graduating class (U.S. Department of Education, 2015a, 2015b).

The drop in the number of emergent bilinguals as we move up the grades reflects two important trends. On the one hand, at the elementary level, the change points to the success of educators in moving emergent bilinguals along the bilingual continuum, so that they can "test out" of the English learner classification. But the reasons for the decline in the numbers of emergent bilinguals in middle school and high school should be interrogated. The decline might reveal the high dropout rate in this age group, as well as the secondary schools' policies of "pushing out" students who might not succeed in the standardized tests and graduation tests that are required so that schools can claim "success." We return to this below.

Finally, although the total number of emergent bilinguals is increasing and more of these students are moving up in the educational pathway, we see evidence that relatively few of these students are getting the kind of head start they need prior to entering school in kindergarten. In 2000–2001, only 1.5% of all emergent bilinguals were in prekindergarten (Kindler, 2002). In 2005, 43% of Hispanic students 3 to 5 years old attended some form of center-based child care or preschool, compared to 59% of White students and 66% of Black students (Education Law Center, 2007; National Task Force on Early Childhood Education

for Hispanics, 2007). These numbers suggest that there is a dearth of public preschool programs available for these students and, thus, a disturbing gap exists in the early childhood education of most emergent bilinguals (Ackerman & Tazi, 2015; E. Garcia & Frede, 2010).

In 2011–2012, the Office for Civil Rights reported that of the total 1,390,422 students enrolled in early childhood and prekindergarten education nationwide, a growing percentage was made up of Hispanics or Latinos (29.3%), whereas 43.6% were White and 18.5% were Black. Furthermore, 11.9% of all students in early childhood were labeled English learners. Although there has been progress, young emergent bilinguals are not enrolled in quality early childhood and pre-K programs (Espinosa, 2013a, 2013b). Most are not being provided with the bilingual early childhood experiences that the growing number of very young bilingual Americans need and deserve.

More emergent bilinguals need to be enrolled in educational programs in their prekindergarten years. If there is no funding available for the types of bilingual preschool programs that are most effective at helping the youngest ones achieve an equitable education, then it is no wonder that we often see these same children falling behind as they grow older (E. Garcia & González, 2006; Kindler, 2002; Tazi, 2014).

Nativity

Despite popular perceptions, emergent bilinguals are by no means all immigrants or foreign born. Zong and Batalova (2015a) report that 77% of emergent bilinguals are *U.S. born*. In prekindergarten to 5th grade this proportion is even greater, 85% (Zong & Batalova, 2015b). The high number of American-born children who enter U.S. schools and are designated as English learners points to the greater multilingualism in the United States; American children are increasingly growing up in homes where English is not the only language spoken at home. Bilingualism is not a *foreign* phenomenon. It is an American sociolinguistic reality, chosen by many who see it as important to family and community life. The fact that U.S. schools do not understand the value of bilingualism to families points to how out of touch they are with their communities.

It is important to point out that at the middle and high school level, U.S.-born students still account for 57% of all students designated as ELs (Grantmakers for Education, 2013). This has to do with three factors— the complex nature of immigration and family settlement, the presence of individual disability, and the failure of our school system to meaningfully educate emergent bilinguals.

The complex nature of immigration and families today refers to the fact that, although in the past children born in the United States have grown up in the United States, travel across national borders is currently more frequent. And this is not happening only with migrant rural families. Urban families are increasingly moving back and forth across borders, and their U.S. children often end up being schooled in languages other than English. Additionally, many families send their U.S.-born children to live with grandparents in other countries while they work long hours in the United States. Only when the children are older and able to care for themselves do they return to live with their parents.

Many of the U.S.-born children who remain emergent bilinguals after middle school have language disabilities. Some students who are designated as emergent bilinguals when they enter school are afterward referred for evaluation to receive special education services. Because they have been designated as English learners, they then have to pass the state's exam—which assesses performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing—for reclassification as English fluent. Despite being quite fluent in English, many students with disabilities cannot be reclassified because of poor scores on exams that have been normed on students without disabilities. Therefore, their designation as English learners travels with them throughout their education.

The failure to provide an equitable, rigorous, and consistent education to emergent bilinguals results in much academic failure. Despite excellent English proficiency, many students are unable to pass English proficiency exams for reclassification because these exams rely heavily on reading and writing skills. The number of students who are designated as English learners for more than 6 years has increased over time, leading to the creation of another subgroup of emergent bilinguals—those known as long-term English learners (Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012; Olsen, 2014). They represent one in four of all emergent bilinguals. This points to the failure of the U.S. education system to provide a meaningful and equitable education to these students, often stemming from the system's refusal to see their bilingualism as a resource for learning.

The majority of emergent bilinguals who are born in the United States (77%) are the children of immigrants or have at least one immigrant parent (Zong & Batalova, 2015a, b). Although some may continue to speak languages other than English at home, this fact does not explain why so many others continue to be designated "English learners" when, in fact, they may not speak anything but English.

On the other end of the spectrum are *foreign-born emergent bilinguals.* They vary in the number of years they have been in the United States, but almost three-fourths of all foreign-

born English learners have been in the United States for less than 5 years (Zehler et al., 2003). It is difficult to determine the number of foreign-born emergent bilinguals who are children of immigrants, refugees, temporary sojourners,[8] or migrant workers.[9]

Of the 41.3 million immigrants in the United States in 2013, approximately one-fourth (11.4 million) were undocumented. Of those who were documented, approximately half were naturalized citizens and the other half were permanent residents. A total of 2.3 million were refugees or asylum seekers, the majority of whom come from Iraq, Burma, Myanmar, and Bhutan. Finally, 1.5 million had legal temporary status (mostly foreign students and temporary workers) (Zong & Batalova, 2015a). But we know little of how these figures relate to students enrolled in schools.

In 2013, there were 41.3 million immigrants in the United States, the majority of whom were from Latin American countries (46%). Sixty percent of immigrants come from the following countries of origin: Mexico, 28%; India, 5%; China, 5%; Philippines, 4%; Vietnam, 3%; El Salvador, 3%, Cuba, 3%; Korea, 3%; Dominican Republic, 2%; and Guatemala, 2%.

Some foreign-born students, mostly from the middle class, come to the United States from well-resourced schools and often have had some instruction in English. But other foreign-born students come from societies torn by war and poverty, where the educational system has declined or collapsed. Some come from poor rural communities where it has been difficult to go to school consistently. These students, often classified as students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), have minimal literacy in their home language (see Klein & Martohardjono, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). For them, achieving proficiency in the ways of using English for academic tasks is a struggle, because they have little familiarity with these tasks.

We know that approximately 1.1 million to 1.6 million students under the age of 18 are undocumented immigrants, and an additional 3 million are native-born U.S. citizens who have undocumented parents (Jensen, 2001; Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Zong & Batalova, 2015a). But again, we do not know how many of these students are emergent bilinguals. The education of undocumented students in K–12 classrooms was guaranteed by the Supreme Court in 1982, when it ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* that a K–12 education is a fundamental and protected right that needs to be provided to all students, regardless of citizenship or residency status.

From October 2013 to September 2014, 53,515 unaccompanied minors came into the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). The states into which they were released tells the story of the changing demographics of the United States.

As expected, Texas received the most unaccompanied minors (7,409) in the same period; New York, California, and Florida each received between 5,955 and 5,445; Virginia and Maryland each received almost 4,000; and New Jersey received 2,680. But states generally not characterized as having a large immigrant population—North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Tennessee—received upwards of 1,300 unaccompanied minors. Although the number of accompanied minors dropped to about half in the year that followed, from October 2015 to September 2016, more than 50,000 unaccompanied minors entered the United States.

It is important to understand that, although important, the education of emergent bilinguals is not just about immigrant or refugee education alone. Their education is, in fact, an educational issue that also concerns a large proportion of native-born U.S. citizens, who represent anywhere from half to nearly two-thirds of all emergent bilinguals.

WHAT IS THEIR USE OF LANGUAGE?

Approximately 85% of emergent bilinguals are able to communicate orally in English; however, they have difficulty using English for literacy and for completing academic tasks (Zehler et al., 2003). This is important to keep in mind as we debate whether census figures are reliable in identifying this population. The U.S. Census Bureau only asks families about spoken English, but what is at issue for educational attainment is the ability to complete academic work, which requires written, along with spoken, proficiency. Therefore, relying on census figures may be misleading and may underestimate the population of students who are emergent bilinguals.

Estimates of the percentage of emergent bilinguals who can use their home language in complex academic tasks also vary, but school coordinators think that approximately 39% of these students nationwide have lower levels of literacy in their home language compared to what might be expected of students going to school in a country where it is the language of schooling (Zehler et al., 2003). This fact should be of vital importance to those who coordinate and plan for the education of these students because it turns out that the benefits of what is known as "linguistic transfer" of literacy skills from one language to another will not be completely enjoyed by emergent bilinguals who have not learned literacy practices for academic purposes in their home language.

Linked to the issue of many emergent bilinguals' poor literacy performances with their home language practices is the group of students, most commonly found in secondary school,

referred to as students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) or students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). It has been estimated that between 11% and 20% of emergent bilinguals in middle schools and high schools have missed more than 2 years of schooling since the age of 6 (Ruiz-De-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000; Zehler et al., 2003). This group also has very high dropout rates, with estimates as high as 75% at the secondary level (Montero, Newmaster, & Ledger, 2014). Furthermore, even students who have consistently attended school in their countries of origin have often learned to use language for literacy purposes that are very different from those literacies required by U.S. schools (Menken, 2013; Yip, 2016; more on this in Chapter 4).

WHO ARE THE LATINX EMERGENT BILINGUALS?

We start by contextualizing our use of the term *Latinx* in this book, when up to now we have used the terms preferred by government agencies and much scholarship— *Latino/a* or *Hispanic*. In 1970, the U.S. census used the term *Hispanic* for the first time, although much of the population of Latin American origin in the United States preferred the term *Latino/a*. In 1997, the census expanded the category to "Hispanic or Latino origin," legitimizing the use of the word *Latino*. At the same time, a battle was brewing over who was included as Latino and whether the masculine ending "o" was gender normative. The alternatives—*Latino/a* or *Latin@*, introduced by many scholars—were not satisfactory for many because the terms reified the gender binary. In the past decade, the term *Latinx*, a gender-neutral alternative to *Latino*, *Latina*, or *Latin@*, has been increasingly used by scholars and the community to include those who are trans- or gender nonconfirming. Because, for us, the act of naming is important in offering ways of seeing beyond traditional categories of all types, we use the term *Latinx* in this book, except when referring to the work of others.

In 2016, the U.S. Latinx population numbered 58 million, and it is projected that by 2060 that figure will be 119 million. In 2011, Latinx students made up 26% of the country's prekindergarten and kindergarten pupils, 25% of elementary school students, and 21% of high school students (Fry & López, 2012). That is, in 2011, 23.9% of all U.S. students in prekindergarten through 12th grade was of Latinx origin (Fry & López, 2012). In California and Texas, the Latinx school-age population is already about one-half of all students (Gándara & Contreras, 2009), and in 2006, Latinx students in Arizona and New Mexico constituted more than 40% of all public school students. Latinx students also constituted between 20% and 40% of all public schools in five additional states in 2006—Nevada,

Colorado, Illinois, Florida, and New York (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). The U.S. Census Bureau has forecasted that Latinx students will make up a third of the nation's 3- to 17-year-old learners by 2036.

Two of the five largest school districts in the country are Los Angeles and Miami Dade County. Seventy-three percent of students in Los Angeles, and 60% of students in Miami Dade County, are of Latinx background (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007).

The Latinx population is complex. Almost two-thirds have been born in the United States (64% in 2014), and a little over one-third have been born abroad (35%). Of the Latinx students in K–12 in 2006, 16% were foreign born, and 84% native born (Fry & Gonzales, 2008).

The Latinx group also represents many national origin groups, although almost two-thirds are Mexicans (64%). Regardless of where Latinx people have settled and the sociohistorical circumstances of their settlement, U.S. schools have rarely built upon their funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; see also Chapter 8) or used pedagogy that leverages their cultural practices (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Speaking specifically about the importance of leveraging Latinx cultural and linguistic practices in their education, Pedraza and Rivera (2005) use the image of *sankofa*, a Swahili word that refers to going back to the source, and suggest that it is important for Latinx students to explore their "historical, sociocultural and familial traditions and legacies" (p. 234). The education system's lack of attention to Latinx students' sociohistorical context has resulted in these students not faring well in U.S. schools (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

In 2007, there was a total of more than 7 million Latinx students in U.S. elementary and secondary schools, of which more than 5 million were of Mexican origin. The sheer number of Mexican-origin students makes them the group with the most Spanish-speaking students, as well as the group with the most emergent bilinguals. Mexicans are, however, neither the group that speaks Spanish the most at home nor the group that has the most emergent bilinguals, comparatively speaking. The Latinx national groups with the highest percentages of students who are emergent bilinguals are the following: Honduran (17.3%), Salvadoran (17.1%), Guatemalan (16.7%), Paraguayan (16.7%), Dominican (16.6%), Venezuelan (15.6%), Mexican (13.2%), and Ecuadorean (12.6%) (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015).

Latinx students make up the overwhelming majority of all emergent bilinguals. In

Arizona, Delaware, Kansas, New Mexico, and Texas, over 81% of all emergent bilinguals are Latinx students (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015). Seventy-seven percent of Latinx emergent bilinguals have been born in the United States (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2015). Among the foreign born, 60% of Spanish-speaking emergent bilinguals were born in Mexico, followed in number by children from South America (14%), Central America (10%), Puerto Rico (8%), and Cuba (2%) (Zehler et al., 2003). These numbers exclude the 6% of Spanish-speaking emergent bilinguals who are said to be from places other than these countries. Of first-generation Mexican K–12 students, almost half, or 47%, are emergent bilinguals (Fix & Passel, 2003).

Latinx immigrant students account for more than half (58%) of all immigrant youth in the United States, and more of these students are in the upper grades than in the lower grades. Although we do not have good data on undocumented immigrant students, we know that many Latinx immigrant students are undocumented or are the children of undocumented immigrants (Capps et al., 2005), since about three-quarters (76%) of undocumented immigrants are of Latinx origin (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

One of the most alarming facts about Latinx emergent bilinguals is that more than 59% end up dropping out of high school; in comparison, only 15% of Latinx students who are proficient bilinguals drop out of high school (Fry, 2003). They mostly attend all-minority schools where over 57% are students like them. Forty-five percent of Latinx emergent bilingual students attend high-poverty schools compared to 8% of White students (Carnock & Ege, 2015). Clearly, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers must redouble their energies toward better serving Latinx students, who constitute the overwhelming proportion of the emergent bilingual population.

EDUCATING EMERGENT BILINGUALS: KNOWING WHO THEY ARE

Despite the differences among emergent bilinguals that we have identified in this chapter, a few generalizations can be gleaned from our prior discussion:

- Their numbers are increasing overall, but so is the number of fluent bilingual students.
- There are discrepancies regarding how they are identified and reclassified among state and local educational authorities.
- Most are poor, Brown, or Black.

- Most live in urban areas and attend underresourced schools that are segregated.
- Three-fourths were born in the United States.
- Although approximately half are in elementary schools, the greatest increase in the number of emergent bilinguals is in high school–age students, although many of them do not graduate.
- There is a dearth of early childhood programs for them, and few are enrolled in school prior to kindergarten.
- Most are of Latinx origin, despite the great linguistic diversity that characterizes this population.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Identify some of the contradictions in counting, classifying, and reclassifying emergent bilinguals. What are some of the inconsistencies in the data?
2. Describe the population of emergent bilinguals in the United States. What do all students have in common?
3. Find out who the emergent bilinguals are in your school district. How many are there? What are their characteristics, and what languages do they speak? How have they been counted? What method is used to identify, classify, and reclassify them?
4. Why is bilingualism a vital topic in the education of *all* children in the United States?
