

Language and Bilingualism

Practices

In this chapter, we will:

- Identify three inequitable practices with regard to language use in education:
 - » Insufficient support and development of home language practices,
 - » Isolation of English, and
 - » Compartmentalization of English and languages other than English in instruction.
- Consider four alternative practices:
 - » Heteroglossic bilingual instructional practices,
 - » Translanguaging pedagogy,
 - » Critical multilingual raciolinguistic awareness, and
 - » Complex dynamic language/literacy use.

Our task in this chapter is twofold: We first identify some of the inequitable language education practices that educators should avoid. We focus on these because they are the most commonly found in schools, and also because some of them are advocated in professional guides for policymakers and educators of emergent bilingual students. We then describe in detail four alternative language education practices that we advocate.

INEQUITABLE LANGUAGE/LITERACY PRACTICES

Having established that educational policy and practice does not reflect current research on emergent bilinguals and their education, we examine here three inequitable school practices—insufficient support and inadequate development of home language practices in instruction, the isolation of English and other languages of instruction into a monolingual learning space, and the compartmentalization of languages in ways that devalue students' own fluid bilingual community practices, that is, their translanguaging. In the second part of this chapter, we propose alternatives that we believe could address some of the problems in the present practices.

Insufficient Support and Inadequate Development of Home Language Practices

The NCLB and ESSA laws, described in Chapter 3, as well as the greater multilingualism in the U.S. population, have generated some attention by scholars and the public to the education of emergent bilinguals. Yet, as we will see in this section, there has been a decrease in the number of students receiving an adequate education, and support is insufficient. We will also see that the participation of emergent bilingual students in educational programs that meet their needs remains inadequate both because of the types of programs offered and the length and level of service rendered.

Decrease in numbers receiving adequate services. As reported in Chapter 3, emergent bilingual students are increasingly educated in English-only programs despite the growth of the emergent bilingual student population. According to the Office for Civil Rights, in 2011, approximately 9% of students who had been identified as English learners (420,826) were not enrolled in any targeted language instructional programs.

New York City, as we said in Chapter 3, exemplifies the decline in the use of students' home language practices in education. In 1974, the Aspira Consent Decree mandated transitional bilingual education programs for the city's Latine students (Reyes, 2006); today, however, fewer than ever emergent bilingual students are in New York City bilingual classrooms. In the school year 2002–2003, 53% of emergent bilinguals in New York City were in ESL programs (now called ENL); by the school year 2007–2008, 69% were instructed in ESL programs, and this number increased to 79.2% by 2013–2014, and made up 78.94% of students in 2022–2023. Likewise, whereas 37% of emergent bilinguals were in transitional bilingual education in 2002, only 21% participated in such programs in 2007–2008 and 15.4% in 2013–2014. By 2022–2023 only 10% of emergent bilinguals were in transitional bilingual education programs. In 2002, 2% of emergent bilinguals were in two-way dual-language bilingual programs, 3.6% were in such programs in 2007–2008, 4.5% in 2013–2014, and 8.73% in 2022–2023. Although the number of emergent bilinguals is increasing in dual-language bilingual programs, in 2022–2023, less than 20% of the emergent bilingual student population in New York City participated in any type of bilingual program (NYC Public Schools, 2022–2023).

Inadequate educational programs: Program types. English as a second language/new language programs have been reshaped in the past 20 years, with more attention paid to students' funds of knowledge, including home language practices (García, 2023; Paulsrud, Tian, & Toth, 2021; Tian et al., 2020). But pull-out ESL/ENL, where the focus is on English as an isolated subject of study, continues to be the most commonly used type, although research has shown that the use of English in content-area instruction, as in push-in programs or in structured English immersion programs, is associated with higher long-term educational attainment (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Even with the growth of dual-language bilingual programs, most bilingual programs in the United States are still early-exit transitional bilingual programs, which

math, science, and history using language features considered nonstandard, their knowledge is invalidated because only standard English is accepted. This further restricts emergent bilinguals' opportunities to become the mathematicians, scientists, and historians that we so desperately need.

Compartmentalization of English and Languages Other Than English in Instruction

Bilingual education programs have also fallen prey to a monoglossic ideology that treats bilinguals' languages as one autonomous language added to another instead of understanding these students' dynamic, fluid linguistic practices (García, 2009a). Thus, bilingual schools usually strictly separate the languages. It was Wallace Lambert (1984) who perhaps best expressed this ideology of language separation in his discussion about French immersion programs in Canada in the 1980s:

No bilingual skills are required of the teacher, who plays the role of a monolingual in the target language . . . and who never switches languages, reviews materials in the other language, or otherwise uses the child's native language in teacher-pupil interactions. In immersion programs, therefore, bilingualism is developed through two separate monolingual instructional routes. (p. 13)

This practice of strict language separation and sheltering of languages has prevailed in many bilingual education programs. Jacobson and Faltis (1990) explain the reasons for this practice: "By strictly separating the languages, the teacher avoids, it is argued, cross contamination, thus making it easier for the child to acquire a new linguistic system as he/she internalizes a given lesson" (p. 4).

There are four language allocation strategies traditionally used to separate languages in bilingual education:

- Time-determined, with one language exclusively used half the day, on alternate days, or even alternate weeks;
- Teacher-determined, with two teachers who speak one language exclusively;
- Place-determined, with one room or an entire building used for one language exclusively; and
- Subject-determined, with one language being used exclusively to teach one subject (García, 2009a).

In bilingual education, language-allocation policies are important. But those policies that adhere to complete language separation—what Cummins (2008) called "the two solitudes"—should be reexamined. Rigid adherence to one language or another without regard to students' own practices and how they make meaning contradicts research findings. Unless these strict language allocation policies become more flexible, they will keep language-minoritized students within a closed circle from which they cannot access opportunities and knowledge.

Bilingual education programs understandably must maintain instructional spaces for one language or another so that students receive adequate input and have opportunities to use the language of instruction. This is especially important for the development of a minoritized or threatened language. But language development (whether in English or in the additional language) cannot occur in isolation from the world and the complex language practices of its speakers. *Minoritized languages need to be protected, but they cannot be isolated as if they were pieces in a museum because bilinguals use these languages in interaction with speakers who use other languages.* Students develop new linguistic practices when they learn to use language for meaningful purposes, particularly when they learn something of interest and want to use language to show that understanding.

Sánchez, García, and Solorza (2017) point out that even though instructional spaces where one language is used are important, it is equally important for teachers to understand how to open *translanguaging spaces* (Li Wei, 2011) where students are free to use their different language practices. They point to three reasons for doing so: (1) *scaffolding* for students who need additional assistance to understand; (2) *assessment/evaluation* to differentiate between what students understand and know how to do, and being able to perform these actions with specific standardized language features; and (3) *transformation* so as to ensure that bilingual students' subjectivities of deficiency are transformed into potentialities.

Heller (1999) has made us aware of the dangers of valuing only what she calls "parallel monolingualisms," practices in which "every variety must conform to certain prescriptive norms" (p. 271). Because languages other than English are not validated publicly in powerful spheres (even when they are spoken in local communities), they are often valued only when they are used according to standardized monolingual conventions and norms, what Guadalupe Valdés (2018) has called "the curricularization of language." And thus, unless language allocation policies are adhered to judiciously and flexibly, there is the potential that bilingual education would further alienate language-minoritized bilingual students from what is assigned to them by schools as their "first language," "L1," "mother tongue," or even "home language." Language-minoritized students' own bilingual practices often have little relationship to what is taught in school as "their" language.

ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE/LITERACY PRACTICES

Whether teaching exclusively in English or teaching bilingually, effective educators make room in the classroom for emergent bilinguals' leveraging the existing features of their repertoire in order to acquire new ones. How do teachers manage this, given policies that many times run counter to these practices? They can do so, as we will demonstrate here, by negotiating educational policies for the benefit of their students, thus becoming policymakers themselves (Menken & García, 2010). In what follows, we describe educational practices that work for emergent bilinguals given the dynamic nature of bilingualism that we have laid out previously. We

to write fully bilingual texts, similar to the bilingual children's books that Celic uses as read-alouds (C. Celic, personal communication, October 31, 2009). Celic also helps emergent bilinguals develop their understanding of new vocabulary in English by making explicit connections between languages. To do that, she asks her students if they know what the word means in their language and, whenever possible, has them add the translation to the "word wall" in their classroom.

In middle schools studied by Danling Fu (2003, 2009), the students use Chinese writing as a stepping-stone to English writing. Teachers allow beginning ESL students to write in Chinese while incorporating the few words they know in English. Gradually, more English writing emerges. Fu (2009) says:

Learning to write in English for ELLs who are literate in their native language is actually a process of becoming bilingual writers, rather than merely replacing one language or writing ability with another or mastering two separate language systems. . . . If writing reflects who and what the writers are, then ELLs' native language (voice and expressions) will either visibly appear or be blended with English. (p. 120)

The work of Cummins and other researchers in Canadian classrooms also clearly demonstrates how teachers can use bilingual instructional strategies in English-only classrooms. Cummins (2006) calls for the use of *identity texts*, as students use both languages to write about their own immigration and education experiences. Elsewhere, he quotes Madiha, one of the girls involved in a project of producing bilingual identity texts:

I think it helps my learning to be able to write in both languages because if I'm writing English and Ms. Leoni says you can write Urdu too it helps me think of what the word means because I always think in Urdu. That helps me write better in English. (Cummins, 2009, p. x)

In some classrooms, teachers encourage students to write *double-entry journals* (see García & Traugh, 2002). In this assignment, students copy fragments of academic texts they are reading in one column, then react to the texts from their own personal perspectives in the second column, contributing both their experiences and their cultural and linguistic understandings to make sense of the texts. The reactions or reflections are written using the students' own complex language practices. These double-entry journals are then shared with fellow classmates as a way to build multicultural and multilingual understandings of the same text and to generate different understandings from multiple perspectives.

Lucas and Katz (1994) document more bilingual instructional practices that do not require teachers to be bilingual, such as:

- Teachers devising a writing assignment in which students use their home languages;
- Students reading or telling stories to one another using their home languages and then translating them into English to tell other students;

- Students from same language backgrounds being paired together so that students who are more fluent in English can help those less fluent;
- Students being encouraged to use bilingual dictionaries;
- Students being encouraged to get help at home in their home languages;
- Books being provided in students' home languages; and
- Awards being given for excellence in languages not commonly studied.

A useful resource with examples is the video series called "Teaching Bilinguals Even If You're Not One." This can be found on the website of a project conducted by scholars from City University of New York and funded by the New York State Department of Education (CUNY-NYSIEB), www.cuny-nysieb.org (see subsequent discussion). Two other important websites with resources for teachers of emergent bilinguals are ¡Colorín, Colorado! (<http://www.colorincolorado.org/new-teaching-ells>) and Edutopia (<https://www.edutopia.org/article/resources-for-teaching-english-language-learners-ashley-cronin>).

Strengthening the relationship between languages is also the approach taken in Beeman and Urrow (2013) in what they identify as "the Bridge," an important strategy in bilingual instruction. Beeman and Urrow explain: "The Bridge is the instructional moment when teachers purposefully bring the two languages together, guiding students to transfer the academic content they have learned in one language to the other language, engage in contrastive analysis of the two languages, and strengthen their knowledge of both languages" (p. v).

The practices described previously are ways in which bilingualism is used in all types of educational programs for emergent bilinguals. These heteroglossic bilingual practices are consonant with theoretical and empirical evidence for how home language practices support students' development of language for academic purposes. These bilingual instructional practices serve as important instructional scaffolds.

Translanguaging Pedagogy

A pedagogical approach based on translanguaging theoretical perspectives that we considered in Chapter 4 supports and *extends* the heteroglossic bilingual instructional practices described previously. Traditionally, the teaching of English to emergent bilinguals in the United States has been perceived as simply adding an autonomous box of a separate language that could be completely ignored and left behind. To discuss bilingual development, García has often provided teachers with the alternative image of a thread of pearls instead of a separate box. Teachers who base their understandings of language development on translanguaging theory perceive their task as adding new language features and practices, new pearls, to the students' existing rich linguistic repertoire, and not simply a separate autonomous language. By adding new features to the bilingual students' thread of pearls, these teachers understand that emergent bilinguals will always have access to their own pearls and use them agentively in different interactions. Instruction would then focus on providing interactional affordances to emergent bilinguals so that they could use and select features and practices from their repertoire depending on different

norms. With the help of translanguaging pedagogy, the language practices of minoritized speakers cease to be an excuse to deny access to rich educational experiences and instead are leveraged to educate deeply and justly (García, Seltzer, & Witt 2018).

García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) identify three interrelated strands that define a translanguaging pedagogy:

1. The translanguaging stance,
2. The translanguaging design, and
3. The translanguaging shift.

Teachers of minoritized bilingual students must have a *translanguaging stance*—the philosophical, ideological, or belief system that students' various and wide-ranging language practices work together and are a resource for learning. Educators with this stance believe that the classroom space must promote collaboration across language and complex multimodal practices, content understandings, students, peoples, home, and school. A translanguaging stance also includes the belief that to truly assess what bilingual students know and can do, both in language and content, students must be allowed to access all the features of their language repertoire, as is the privilege of monolingual students, instead of having to work with less than half of their repertoire (for work on translanguaging assessment, see Azcenzi-Moreno & Seltzer, 2021; Schissel, 2020. See also Chapter 8, this volume).

The *translanguaging design* involves the careful planning of (1) the multilingual resources needed in the classroom and their use, (2) the grouping of students, (3) the unit/lesson planning that includes not only content and language objectives but also translanguaging objectives, (4) pedagogical strategies that open up translanguaging spaces where students can engage with their full repertoire of resources, and (5) translanguaging assessments.

Finally, the term *translanguaging shifts* refers to the many moment-by-moment decisions that teachers make all the time. It indicates a teacher's flexibility and willingness to change the course of the lesson and assessment, as well as the language use, in response to the students' *translanguaging corriente*, the dynamic flow of emotions, thoughts, understandings, and language practices with which students always engage in classrooms.

U.S. scholars increasingly have been providing evidence of how translanguaging enhances understanding of content considered academic and extends the emergent bilinguals' linguistic and semiotic repertoire to incorporate features also considered standard in U.S. schools, as it gives them space to be and express themselves fully. This is evident in ESL/ENL classrooms (see Ebe, 2016; Woodley, 2016), in transitional bilingual education classrooms (Collins & Cioè-Peña, 2016; Kleyn, 2016; Sayer, 2013; Seltzer & Collins, 2016), or in dual-language bilingual education classrooms (Espinosa & Herrera, 2016; Gort & Sembiente, 2015; Palmer et al., 2014).

Developing translanguaging pedagogical strategies that support the education of emergent bilinguals has been the focus of the aforementioned project, CUNY-NYSIEB (2021), which has worked with all types of schools and teachers with large

numbers of emergent bilinguals to improve their education. Its vision rests on the development of bilingual students' understandings of their practices as translanguaging, and of teachers able to leverage them in instruction.²

Educators who understand the power of translanguaging encourage emergent bilinguals to use their home language practices actively to think, reflect, feel, and extend their meaning-making repertoire. They also encourage students to explore other meaning-making cues that accompany speech: embodied modes such as intonation and other vocal phenomena, gesture, facial expressions, bodily-emotional reactions, and so on. And educators work with emergent bilinguals to ensure that the new language features become appropriated into a repertoire that students perceive and feel as *their own*. English cannot be their "second" language. Instead, the new linguistic features of what schools call "English" must become part of bilingual students' own complex language system. Students cannot simply perceive and use these new features as if they were part of a new, alien, "second language" system. A translanguaging pedagogical approach ensures that students become *agentive* users of the linguistic and other communicative sign systems that they have available to make meaning and learn. By immersing students in opportunities to practice language for authentic and complex operations, students become agentive in *using language for their own purposes, and not always that of others*.

In understanding translanguaging as part of the unitary system of bilingual speakers, educators *transform* ESL/ENL and bilingual education. Adopting translanguaging in ESL/ENL classrooms means that the language practices of *all* students can be used as a resource for learning at all times, even if the teacher's language practices do not overlap with those of students. In bilingual education, it means that *all* the students' language practices, beyond those that reflect the two standardized versions used as a medium of instruction, can be leveraged. It also means that educators judiciously open up translanguaging spaces even when following strict language allocation policies in their bilingual programs (see Sánchez et al., 2017).

García and Li Wei (2014) acknowledge that in today's dynamic world of interaction, "students need practice and engagement in translanguaging, as much as they need practice of standard features used for academic purposes" (pp. 71–72). Emergent bilingual students must be given agency to be creative and critical, "able to co-construct their language expertise, recognize each other as resources, and act on their knowing and doing" (p. 75).

Discussing language practices in a digital age, Cope, Kalantzis, and Tzirides (2024) have proposed the idea of *transposition* to build on the concept of translanguaging. As used by Cope and colleagues, transposition highlights the fluid nature of multimodal meaning-making and underscores the need to rethink theoretical discussions and pedagogical practices in the digital age. We revisit this expanded view in Chapter 9.

Critical Multilingual Raciolinguistic Awareness

Emergent bilingual students foreground language practices that differ significantly from the ways in which language is used in school. These different language

Students looking beyond the United States can be engaged in questions such as: What is the sociolinguistic profile of different nation-states? Whose language practices are represented as official or national? Why? How did this come about? Students can make links between socioeconomic characteristics, race and other sociodemographic attributes, and the status of named languages within different countries. They also can search the internet as they become aware of the variation in scripts used to write different languages and explore the relationship, in some cases, between scripts and cultural history.

Complex Dynamic Language/Literacy Use

Educators who understand theories and empirical evidence about bilingualism in education are aware that language and literacy growth is linked to authentic and rich use of language. For this to happen, educators must trust that emergent bilinguals already have a “language architecture” (Flores, 2020), that is, a rich and complex foundation for a solid education. Often, educators worry that there is not sufficient time in the school day to engage in the kind of analyses previously described while covering the state-required academic standards. This concern stems, again, from the dichotomous framing of school language and literacy tasks as academic and students’ authentic language practices as nonacademic. To challenge this, and to make evident the transformative possibilities of shifting perspectives about emergent bilinguals’ language practices, Flores (2020) notes that, like architects, language users adhere to broad parameters but also make unique decisions that reflect their voice to effectively communicate messages. Standards should encourage students to be “language architects” by doing close readings of texts and discourses, critically analyzing an author’s and speaker’s language choices, and applying this knowledge as they use language for specific purposes. Viewing academic language through this lens, educators can recognize that students, especially those from racialized backgrounds, already engage in critical analyses of language and understand language choice and meaning through their cultural practices. Flores points to Latine students discussing language variations and pragmatics, such as the differences between “habichuelas” and “frijoles,” debating the appropriateness of “farted” versus “passed gas,” or questioning the gendered nature of Spanish. These experiences highlight that bilingual students already possess and practice valuable language architecture skills relevant to academic tasks required by state standards that teachers can build upon (Martínez & Morales, 2014).

Kibler, Valdés, and Walqui (2021) point to the importance of critical dialogue in the classroom to promote equity. Teachers present complex ideas that develop the students’ existing metacognitive skills—that is, curricular plans that enable learners to successfully approach academic tasks and help them monitor their thinking, thereby creating greater metalinguistic awareness (Walqui, 2006). Effective teachers do not oversimplify the English language or offer remedial instruction. Instead, they offer intensive support while providing challenging instruction (see Walqui & van Lier, 2010). This is consonant with Cummins’s (2000) view that “language and content will be acquired most successfully when students are challenged cognitively

but provided with the contextual and linguistic supports or scaffolds required for successful task completion” (p. 71).

These supports or scaffolds can also include:

- Contextualization through translanguaging support that includes the full linguistic repertoire consisting not only of what is understood as “the linguistic,” but also through body language, gestures, manipulatives, realia, technology, word walls, and graphic organizers;
- Modeling thorough think-alouds and verbalization of actions and processes of lessons;
- Bridging and schema building by weaving new information into preexisting structures of meaning;
- Thematic planning by which vocabulary and concepts are repeated naturally;
- Multiple entry points, by which some children might use their home language practices, whereas others might be able to conform to the English language of the lesson. Still others might use gestures or drawings; and
- Routines in which language is used consistently and predictably. (García, 2009a, p. 331)

Emergent bilinguals also may need some overt instruction in which the use of certain meaning-making strategies is made explicit. Genesee and his colleagues (2006) summarize their findings from a major meta-analysis by saying: “The best recommendation to emerge from our review favors instruction that combines interactive and direct approaches” (p. 140). Swinney and Velasco (2011) provide guidance to teachers of emergent bilinguals on how to implement what they call “a curriculum of talk” in order to build language use. They also include structures of balanced literacy that support emergent bilinguals. Espinosa and Ascenzi-Moreno (2021) propose that, to root literacy work in the strength of children, the educators’ gaze must be turned toward the student and not simply outward toward external standards.

Vocabulary is a central area in teaching emergent bilinguals (Pollard-Durodola, 2020). The consensus among scholars is that vocabulary instruction is important, but that despite the importance of helping students break down words to build meaning (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007), word study cannot be isolated from its use in narratives, discussions, explanations, and other forms of extended discourse. Words identified in the extended discourse of texts can be identified, studied, posted on word walls, and reused in oral discussion and writing (Carlo et al., 2004). Snow (2017) summarizes:

Everything we know about vocabulary acquisition suggests strongly that children acquire large vocabularies in the context of responsive interactions about topics of interest to them . . . most reliably when those topics are shared with adults, in discussions and negotiations about content. (n.p.)