

Teacher Education for Multilingual Education

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If, as García (2009, p. 5) states, “bilingual education is *the only way* to educate children in the twenty-first century,” then *all* teachers must be prepared both to advance the plurilingual competencies of students, as well as teach students with different home language practices and bilingual abilities. With the increased movement of people, goods, and information brought about through globalization, the world’s classrooms are becoming more diverse in every way. It is difficult today to find a teacher in any part of the world who is not faced with a multilingual classroom. Some classrooms are multilingual because the children have home language practices that differ from those of school. Other classrooms are multilingual in that the purpose of instruction is precisely to make children bilingual or plurilingual. Thus, all teacher education programs in the 21st century must prepare teachers for multilingual education. No longer can a specialist, such as a second language teacher or bilingual educator, be solely responsible for the education of bilingual students who either speak multiple languages or who are learning an additional language in school.

Throughout the world most teachers are initially educated at tertiary institutions, either teacher training colleges or universities. Often these teacher education programs follow traditional disciplinary divisions whereby teachers are trained as specialists in a particular field. Although each area may have its own body of literature, professional organizations, and teacher certification areas, few opportunities exist for prospective teachers to learn across specializations. Usually issues related to educating *emergent bilingual students*, whether language minorities learning a dominant language or language majorities learning additional languages (García & Kleifgen, 2010), are relegated to those specializing in language or bilingual teaching. And yet, it is increasingly important for all teacher educators to become knowledgeable about issues surrounding the education of emergent bilinguals, that is, those who are acquiring an additional language, and bilingual students, those who are already speakers of more than one language. This requires increased collaboration between teacher educators in different content areas and specialists in bilingualism in education. However, this does not mean that teacher education should cease to prepare teachers for particular subjects, for specialized teachers will always be needed. What this means is that in many ways all teachers in the 21st century need to be prepared to be bilingual teachers (Adelman Reyes & Kleyn, 2010); that is, they need to see themselves as building on and developing the students’ additional languages whilst educating them.

Of course, teacher education is not limited to tertiary education, for professional development throughout a teacher’s career is never-ending. This is because of the dynamism of life itself, changes in sociopolitical contexts, variations in conceptions of knowledge, as well as teaching and learning, technological and instructional material innovations, and the constant transformation of students themselves. All teacher education programs, whether at tertiary institutions or those that take place in local teacher unions and centers or local schools, must have a curriculum that develops three strands of competencies: (a) understanding about bilingual students and their families, especially students from language minority backgrounds; (b) knowledge of language and bilingualism/multilingualism;

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2 TEACHER EDUCATION FOR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

and (c) awareness of how to deliver a pedagogy for multilingualism. But in order to develop understanding of these strands, which we elaborate upon below, these topics cannot be simply taught in a traditional manner. Instead, teacher education programs must find ways to have prospective teachers interact directly with emergent bilingual students, their families, communities, and classrooms to construct their own insights and ways of teaching. Here we review three ways of delivering this situated-teacher education preparation previously identified in García (2008): (1) descriptive reviews, (2) micro-ethnographies, and (3) direct experience in schools.

Descriptive reviews develop teachers' abilities to pay close attention to, as Carini (2000, p. 11) says, "the child in motion," that is, the bilingual child engaged in learning activities that are meaningful. Furthermore, descriptive reviews develop teachers' abilities to use language descriptively through cases and examples, while avoiding judgmental or evaluative language. These descriptive reviews are an important foundation for multilingual education, as close attention is paid to children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and learning characteristics, while noticing the child's language practices, as well as those of the teacher. Thus, the review combines the holistic education of the child with language and bilingual development. Because bilingual students live in communities that are often different from those of teachers and the school, descriptive reviews of students are not sufficient to develop the capacity needed for multilingual education. Instead, the observational and descriptive language use skills developed through descriptive reviews have to be applied to *micro-ethnographies* of communities and families in which all teachers partake—that is, teachers have to become ethnographers, as they learn to broaden their observational skills from the child to the community. Participating in the larger community allows all teachers, but especially those who may be outsiders to the communities where their students live, to have a better sense of the community's funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992) and to understand cultural and linguistic contexts to inform their curriculum and pedagogy. Finally, there is no coursework or workshop for teacher preparation that can substitute for *direct experience* with multilingual students and their families in schools. All prospective teachers need to be immersed in school life early, to observe teaching, and to eventually participate in assisted teaching and assisted assessment of student learning with an experienced mentor (Hawkins, 2004). One way of making direct experience an integral part of teacher education is to build collaborations between teacher education programs and local schools with strong bilingual/multilingual programs and a large multilingual population. Professional Development Bilingual Schools (PDBS) provide a setting in which prospective teachers can experience good practices with regard to developing bilingualism and paying attention to the different home language practices of students under the tutelage of experienced teachers.

The first strand of a teacher education curriculum for multilingual education must be to develop *understandings of bilingual students and their families*. All teachers need to be able to observe bilingual children closely and describe them engaged in meaningful learning activities. Teachers also need to be able to understand what sets the child in motion, an understanding which spans beyond the learning activities of the school to the child's home and community life. Teachers need to become knowledgeable of the many home language and cultural practices of the children, and be able to build on that knowledge not only to engage with individual children, but also to share it with all the children in the multilingual classroom. To build this knowledge, collaboration with families is key. For example, the *language awareness programs* established by Hélot and Young in Alsace (2006) brought multilingual families into classrooms where all the children were exposed to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their peers.

Beyond linguistic and cultural information, teachers need to develop a sociopolitical consciousness about the nature of the linguistic diversity of the children and the languages

they are trying to promote. They should be able to answer the following questions: Are the children immigrants themselves? Children of immigrants? Autochthonous minorities? Indigenous peoples? Autochthonous majorities? If immigrants, were their parents voluntary or involuntary minorities? What is the group's sociohistorical association with the society? What are the children's individual sociolinguistic profiles, as well as that of the ethnolinguistic group to which they belong? How does the group fare with regard to social class structure? Is the group structurally incorporated in the economy? How does the group's language rank in terms of linguistic hierarchies? Has the ethnolinguistic group experienced language loss or language shift? What has been their success in language maintenance or language acquisition? Has the ethnolinguistic group experienced racism or linguisticism? In the past or in the present? Teachers then need to act on all this information by constructing curricula and pedagogies (see below) that build on the sociopolitical and sociolinguistic profiles of the children in question.

A second strand of a teacher education curriculum for multilingual education has to do with *knowledge about language, bilingualism, and language acquisition*. Teachers need to be cognizant of basic sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic essentials (Hawkins, 2004; Bartels, 2009). They should understand that academic language is a product of standardization and has little to do with the languaging, that is, language practices, at home. And they should understand that all languages have been socially constructed and are products of valuing based on their social and political power. Literacy, as Street (2005) has shown, is not a monolithic construct made up of a discrete set of skills, but involves *social practices* that are embedded in a web of social relations that maintain asymmetries of power. Thus, learning academic language is not a neutral activity.

With regard to bilingualism, prospective teachers need to recognize it not as a "problem," but rather as a "resource" (Ruiz, 1984) for individual learning, group learning, and society at large. It is important for teachers to understand the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy—the analytic orientation to language known as greater *metalinguistic awareness* (Bialystok, 2007), the flexible perceptions and interpretations of heightened *divergent or creative thinking*, and the greater practice in gauging communicative situations, giving bilinguals increased *communicative sensitivity* (Ben-Zeev, 1977).

All teachers should also be familiar with Jim Cummins's work on the relationship of a student's home language and the development of an additional language. Cummins's concept of *linguistic interdependence* and his related theoretical construct of *common underlying proficiency* posit that both languages bolster each other in the student's acquisition of language, literacy, and knowledge (Cummins, 1981). Teachers of multilingual classrooms need to be especially sensitive to the difference between what Cummins calls *basic interpersonal communication skills*—surface fluency in conversational language or in writing supported by cues that have little to do with language itself (gestures, repeating, providing examples)—and more abstract decontextualized language, or, in Cummins's terms, *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP), which is needed for most school tasks. Teachers should also be aware that research throughout the world has shown that although emergent bilinguals can usually acquire the language of everyday communication in one to three years, it takes *five to seven years*, if not longer, to develop more abstract language abilities in an additional language.

The major social, linguistic, political, and psychological issues that surround the development of biliteracy should be explored in teacher education programs using Hornberger's *continua of biliteracy* (2002), while developing understanding that positive transfer across literacies is maximized when students are allowed to draw from all their existing languaging.

Teachers in the multilingual classrooms of the 21st century must also be familiar with the concept of *dynamic bilingualism* (García, 2009) which goes beyond the notion of two autonomous languages and of the additive or subtractive bilingualism models of the 20th

4 TEACHER EDUCATION FOR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

century, and instead suggests that the language practices of *all* bilinguals are complex and interrelated, rather than linear. Dynamic bilingualism refers not to languages that students *have*, but to the development of different language practices to varying degrees that students and teachers *use* in order to interact with increasingly multilingual classrooms and communities. Thus, *translanguaging* (García, 2009), the process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices in order to make sense and communicate in multilingual classrooms, should be understood by the teacher. Translanguaging includes code switching—the shift between two languages in context—but differs from it in significant ways, for it includes other bilingual practices that go beyond a simple switch of code, such as the translanguaging pedagogy introduced by Cen Williams (cited in Baker, 2001), where bilingual students read in one language and then take notes, write, or discuss in another.

In the 21st century understandings about how to teach all children should be centered on the concept of multilingualism and dynamic bilingualism, as opposed to monolingualism or monoglossic conceptions of bilingualism (García, 2009). Teachers need to be made aware of the fallacy of traditional second language acquisition concepts such as first and second language, native language, mother tongue, ultimate language attainment, and fossilization. Thus, children must be viewed not just as second language learners, but as emergent bilinguals who contribute to the formation of a multilingual world.

The third strand of a teacher education curriculum for multilingual education has to do with enabling teachers to construct a *pedagogy for multilingualism*. García (2009, pp. 318–29) proposes two basic principles of a multilingual pedagogy: (1) *social justice*, including advocating for equity, promoting language affirmation, upholding rigor, having high expectations, and advocating for fair assessment; and (2) *social practice*, including quality interactions, collaborative learning, authentic situated practices, connection to students' worlds and identities, and a focus on language practices.

Teacher education programs must instill an awareness that multilingual education is one way of acting on social justice by exposing the linguistic hierarchies that determine which languages and speakers are privileged. But beyond exposure and acknowledgment, teacher education programs must develop the teachers' courage to advocate for individual students, groups, programs, and policies that favor multilingualism. Teacher advocacy can take on many forms—from educating colleagues and administrators about multilingual issues, to speaking out about inequities, to teaching students to advocate for their own linguistic, educational, and human rights.

An advocacy stance is critical when it comes to the assessment of multilingual students. The current context requires the use of monolingual tests, which lack validity for this population (Shohamy, 2005). Furthermore, any assessment, regardless of the content area, is first and foremost an assessment of the language in which it is given (García & Menken, 2006). Thus, teacher education programs need to make all teachers aware of the potentially dangerous ways that high-stakes assessments in students' nondominant languages unfairly and inaccurately portray emergent bilinguals as deficient, and to encourage them to advocate on behalf of their multilingual students.

When social justice drives teacher education for multilingual education, programs strive to support teachers in constructing a pedagogy of inclusion so that all children's home language practices are acknowledged, included, and developed. Thus, a multilingual pedagogy includes the notion of *critical care* (Rolón-Dow, 2005), encompassing authentic relationships of care and trust, while at the same time addressing the more difficult questions of otherness, difference, and power (Valenzuela, 1999). Through a critical care stance toward all students, educators can construct a pedagogy that differs from the curriculum, standards, and assessments which generally stem from mainstream values of monolingualism and monoculturalism.

Under the second principle, *social practice*, teacher education for multilingual education needs to develop teachers' abilities to collaborate. In order to support multilingualism, partnerships between content teachers and language teachers are required to ensure students are both learning content and developing additional languages. A collaborative team teaching (CTT) model can expand the ability of all educators to teach for multilingualism. The collaborative disposition of teachers for multilingualism needs to extend beyond schools by building connections with families, community-based organizations, and governmental organizations that support the use of different languages.

All teachers also need to be able to identify and create resources across languages and cultures that are authentic and representative of students in their classroom (and beyond). This includes trade books, textbooks, videos, and Web sites. The availability and visibility of such resources sends a direct message to students about the worth of their languages, and subsequently themselves.

Twenty-first-century teacher education programs for multilingual education must not only provide a curriculum for all teachers that includes these three strands of knowing about bilingual/multilingual students, bilingualism/multilingualism, and multilingual pedagogies. They must also break out of the traditional mode of delivering instruction, through the incorporation of a multilingual/heteroglossic and experiential pedagogy that allows for differences in descriptions, observations, and experiences.

SEE ALSO: Bilingual Education and Immigration; Bilingualism and Bilinguality; Bilingual and Multilingual Education: Overview; Empowerment and Bilingual Education; Materials Development for Multilingual Education

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6 TEACHER EDUCATION FOR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

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