

## Book Reviews

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### Teaching in 2 Languages: A Guide for K-12 Bilingual Educators

Sharon Adelman Reyes & Tatyana Kleyn

Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin/Sage, 2010

ISBN: 978-1-4129-7802-6

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In her foreword to this practical and stimulating book, Ofelia Garcia writes, 'The bilingual teacher this book supports is not the educator of the past, but the educator of the future.' Perhaps it would have been closer to the mark to say it supports 'educators of the present and educators for the future', because it both recognises the multilingual and super-diverse world we typically inhabit and how far we still have to go to reflect that and prepare our students for in our education systems. As the subtitle makes clear, the book is targeted at an American audience, but there is much for the UK reader to take from it - not least inspiration.

The authors' starting point is, '*Most English language learners ... are taught in ways that neither value nor incorporate their native language or cultural heritage*', which is something we can all probably agree with. They then go on to state that their purpose in writing the book is, '*to provide a hands-on practitioner's guide to the challenges of teaching in two languages to the ever-growing population of emergent bilingual students in our schools.*' Sadly, the UK is still woefully behind in understanding the need for bilingual programmes in our schools and so many readers of this review may think that the book is not for them, but they would be wrong. Even if you are sadly afflicted with the *disease* of monolingualism you will find much here that will help you better understand the talents and needs of the students you work with and give you ideas of how you might help them even more, as I hope the following synopsis of the 10 chapters will make clear..

#### Chapter 1: Languages in the bilingual classroom.

Each chapter begins with an 'essential question' which it returns to at the end. This chapter looks at the question of '*How do I use two languages in the bilingual classroom?*' from the viewpoint of

linguistic equity. They argue that for bilingual students this is about more than translation and interpreting, but about providing opportunities for children to develop their linguistic and cognitive abilities in both their languages as well as in '*accessing understanding and functioning in the new culture*' and '*maintenance of cultural and linguistic heritage*', i.e. that it is about the whole child and their world(s), not just the linguistic toolbox. Through a series of vignettes, reflections on research evidence and practice interspersed with pithy 'Try This!' and 'Teacher' Dilemma boxes, they work their way through such matters as: selecting education resources in two languages; the limits of translation (EMASUK beware!); the uses of code-switching; using the arts for bilingualism and biliteracy; and reading aloud in bilingual settings.

#### Chapter 2: Cultures in the Bilingual Classroom

*Essential question: Why does culture matter so much in the bilingual classroom?*

Part of the answer Adelman and Kleyn give to this question is, '*All teachers can and must find ways to show students that their languages and cultures are not just valuable tools for learners, but valuable parts of who they are. ... While making content culturally relevant takes more time and effort, it will undoubtedly lead to increased interest, connections, and learning for students.*' Deciding 'culturally relevant' is no easy thing to do, of course, and they do not take a '*saris and samosas*' stereotyping stance on this, but rather argue that beyond the surface culture we also need to consider, '*the ways in which issues or problems are approached, family structures, and the roles and intersections of age, sex, class, and gender.*' This is illustrated through an account by a teacher of her school's 'Haitian Flag Day' in which colourful costumes and songs are intermingled with recounts of the liberation of Haiti from France, the struggle against slavery, and exhortations for children of the diaspora to honour their country's past and contribute to its future.

#### Chapter 3: Curriculum and Instruction

*Essential question: Is teaching in a minority language really any different from teaching in English in a mainstream classroom?*

This chapter covers such topics as how we can deal with the fact that teaching methods and strategies are not universal and may lead to

resistance from children and parents. Adelman and Kleyn propose that we need to think through our own educational philosophies, methodologies and strategies before we ask others to adopt them. Taking a constructivist stance, they explore the impact of this for bilingual programs and argue for a model that values the students' native language and culture. They acknowledge the current climate of '*standardization and one-size-fits-all*' thinking that has infected western education, but argue that, 'in a bilingual classroom, modifications, accommodations, and supplemental resources will be necessary in order to engage and meet the academic and linguistic needs of your students.' As the English National(ist) Curriculum for history undergoes its next cultural revolution and Chairman Gove writes the foreword to Niall Ferguson's 'Little Blue Book of British Beneficence', teachers will be faced with real dilemmas of how to describe the British Empire to classes of students whose families have arrived here due to its failings as much as its benefits.

#### **Chapter 4: Teaching Bilingually Across the Content Areas**

**Essential question:** *What approaches should teachers consider for teaching content to English language learners in bilingual classrooms?*

The chapter, written by Irma Olmedo, begins with the reflections of two bilingual teachers, encapsulated in a quote from one of them, '*Just because I teach them in Spanish doesn't mean that they always get it.*' There's more than the language of instruction at stake when working with bilingual learners, the content of the curriculum must also be weighed in the balance. When working with bilingual learners it is important to plan on the basis of the given 'standards' for instruction but also to adapt these to recognise that the students may not have already covered what our system deems to be hierarchically prior concepts and equally that they may already be ahead of the game. Being aware of the '*funds of knowledge*' the student brings with them is crucial.

Olmedo goes on to cover in brief (just a page or two at a time) some of the key issues in teaching mathematics, science, and social studies to bilingual learners. She continues with some thoughts on how to integrate content and learning; adapting available materials and ends the chapter with some 'additional considerations for teaching bilingually, which she sets out as:

- Recognizing and teaching the specialized language of the content area
- Addressing the cultural or experiential and linguistic challenges of texts by reading aloud and paraphrasing passages
- Using a thematic approach to teaching content
- Providing hands-on materials for active learning
- Employing graphic organizers for teaching and assessment so as to limit the amount of written text that students have to process
- Using the native language where feasible and appropriate
- Maximizing the use of sheltered English when necessary to make the content comprehensible and insuring that content area teaching is not delayed until students have enough fluency in English.

#### **Chapter 5: Content and Professional Vocabulary Development**

**Essential question:** *How can I effectively develop vocabulary in the bilingual classroom?*

This chapter is written by Jaime J. Gelabert-Desnoyer who opens with, '*One of the most pressing issues bilingual teachers face ... is bridging the gap between their linguistic abilities in the native language of their students and the content knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is often most evident in the area of vocabulary...*' He goes on to explore how this might be helped through the use of semantic maps; vocabulary building techniques such as bilingual glossaries; a focus on the '*five 'Cs*' (communication, culture, connections with other disciplines, comparisons with students' native languages and cultures, and use of the foreign language in communities outside the classroom); assessment using concept maps; and the development of pedagogical grammar in the educator's L2. The latter suggests that teachers need to analyse how concepts are presented in textbooks aimed at native speakers and also how this is done in the students' native languages. A daunting task for monolingual teachers, but at the very least what it points to is that vocabulary development is not a lesson-by-lesson issue, but one that should be considered and planned for in relation to the conceptual framework the curriculum proposes.

#### **Chapter 6: Second Language Instruction**

**Essential question:** *Do I need a separate time slot for teaching English as a second language?*

In spite of the title of the chapter, the bulk of it is actually taken up with strategies for including bilingual learners in the mainstream classroom through the use of a variety of strategies such as:

- Project-based learning
- Literature circles
- Cooperative learning and
- The Language Experience Approach

There is a section on ‘appropriate time for second language instruction’ in which he discusses whether the focus should be on L2 or content and argues that, ‘*Sheltered English instruction is not very effective until the learner reaches an intermediate level of English language proficiency ... the lower the level of English proficiency, the more time should be devoted to ESL. Conversely, the higher the level of English proficiency, the more time should be devoted to sheltered content instruction.*’ This might be anathema to some readers (there was almost a heated debate on the EAL-Bilingual Google group about this recently!) but it certainly seems to be the new orthodoxy by dint of practice as far as I can tell.

### Chapter 7: Assessing Bilingual Students

**Essential question:** *How is assessment different in the bilingual classroom?*

Colleagues will smile knowingly at the ‘teacher’s dilemma’ box that opens up this chapter: ‘*I’ll be honest with you, like two months before the test we just rehearse them like mad and they get good results.*’ Whilst acknowledging the reality that for many teachers assessment has now become synonymous with standardised testing, and discussing the implications of this for bilingual contexts, Adelman and Kleyn go on to highlight examples of more appropriate models of assessment. They look at language dominance and proficiency issues and describe a number of tests that are available, including a free resource, *The Foreign language Assessment Directory, (FLAD)*, which is a searchable database with information on over 200 assessments in over 90 languages other than English in use in the USA provided by the Center for Applied Linguistics: [www.cal.org.org/CalWebDB/FLAD/](http://www.cal.org.org/CalWebDB/FLAD/)

They go on to consider issues relating to academic achievement in L1; assessment of acculturation; referral to ‘special services’ (SEN); the use of authentic assessments within a climate of standardised testing; negotiating standards while meeting the needs of students; and negotiating the language of standardised tests. Taking a pragmatic

approach to dealing with a testing culture that you don’t necessarily agree with, they suggest a three-point strategy: ‘*First, whenever possible, use authentic measures of assessment that are a natural part of the instructional process. Second, give our students the skills they need to do well on assessments while instilling a spirit of critique. Third, become an advocate for your students and their families.*’

### Chapter 8; Expanding the bilingual Context

**Essential question:** *How can bilingual curriculum and instruction be applied to multiple learning contexts?*

This chapter describes a number of programs, the like of which we do not have much experience of in England. These include, ‘two-way bilingual immersion’, in which the students spend 50% of their time in English and 50% in Spanish (irrespective of L1); ‘one-way developmental bilingual education’, in which students are divided into a Spanish and an English group and are taught by teachers who work in collaboration; ‘English as a second language’, a more familiar model of ‘mainstream support’ with content and EAL teachers team teaching; ‘teaching bilingual students with exceptionalities’, in which students with EAL are placed with students with special or additional needs. Given the theme of our recent conference and the impact of the cuts in education services in schools and local authorities, this may be something that we will be discussing more and more in the future; ‘heritage language programs’, in which L1 instruction is offered in the evenings and/or in summer schools; ‘before-school, after-school, or weekend foreign language programs’, sounds like complementary schools.

### Chapter 9: Equity and Advocacy

**Essential question:** *How does being a bilingual teacher make me different?*

The chapter confronts head-on the negative attitude that exists towards bilingual students and those that work with them. It looks at the politics of bilingual education, acknowledging the factors of race and class that complicate ‘*the politically vulnerable status of bilingual education*’. They argue that being part of this politically charged field makes our role different and one that requires teachers to be ‘*advocates for educational equity*’. They discuss issues related to collaborating with families, not all of whom will be enthusiastic supporters of the cause (!); the need to stress how important the first language is;

negotiating the pressure that teachers face to teach to the test; and set out an approach to advocating for bilingualism at the school, district and community level.

### **Chapter 10: Not Just One**

This chapter is a very short summation of what Adelman and Kleyn have attempted to do in the book and they acknowledge that ‘we have sometimes posed more questions than we have fully answered.’ Their hope is that their readers will go on to pursue answers to those questions in their own classrooms and generate more questions in their turn. This is entirely in keeping with the dynamic approach they have taken throughout,

The book actually then ends with a list of professional and support organizations. Naturally, these are mainly aimed at US readers but I am including some of the links to the websites mentioned here and look forward to hearing about which ones you find useful:

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)  
[www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org)

James Crawford’s Language Policy Web Site and Emporium [www.languagepolicy.net](http://www.languagepolicy.net)

Dr Cummins’ ESL and Second Language Learning Web [www.iteachilearn.com/cummins](http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins)

Institute for Language and Education Policy (ILEP) [www.elladvocates.org](http://www.elladvocates.org)

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) [www.nabe.org](http://www.nabe.org)

National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME)  
[www.nameorg.org](http://www.nameorg.org)

**Frank Monaghan**  
**The Open University**