Spring 2010

Volume 1: Critical Issues in Multilingual Education: Reviewing the Past To Create the Future

New York State Association for Bilingual Education

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EDITORIAL:
Aida A. Nevárez-La Torre: The Importance of Disseminating Knowledge: An Issue of Mission, Voice, and Passion

EXPLORATIONS:
Ofelia García: Bilingualism in Education in the Multilingual Apple: The Future of the Past

Manuela Wagner & Terry Osborn: Depositioning the “Foreign”: Considering the Challenges and Opportunities of a Postmodern Foreign Language Education

Chun Zhang & Su-Je Cho: The Development of the Bilingual Special Education Field: Major Issues, Accomplishments, Future Directions, and Recommendations

PRACTITIONER’S EXPLORATIONS:
Dianne Maysonet: Transient ELLs: A Teacher’s Inquiry Into Literacy Instruction

BOOK REVIEW:
Evangeline Harris Stefanakis: Testing English Language Learners: Another Special Case of Bias
The *Journal of Multilingual Education Research (JMER)* is a publication of the New York State Association for Bilingual Education. Its distinct orientation reflects what is most important to researchers, specialists, and educators in the field of multilingual education. *JMER* is a vehicle to respond to the changes and growth of knowledge in a variety of national language education issues that have local and regional relevance. It responds to the emerging needs and interests of teachers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers, counselors, psychologists, advocates, and community leaders whose work focuses on the successful education of multilingual students.

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Views expressed in *JMER* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editors, the Editorial Advisory Board, the New York State Association for Bilingual Education, or Fordham University. NYSABE does not sanction or validate this information, thus it should not be construed as having the endorsement of the Association. NYSABE supports the publication of this journal to encourage reflection, dialogue, study, and research among educators. Authors who contribute to *JMER* are invited to express their insights and judgment openly and professionally with supporting references in addressing educational questions. The reader must evaluate the uniqueness of the published information and its applicability to other educational contexts.

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## Publication Description & Guidelines for Submission

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March 11, 2010

Dear NYSABE Members and Friends,

It is with immense professional pride that I join NYSABE’s president, Margarita Reyes, in presenting to you the Journal of Multilingual Education Research (JMER).

The linguistic and cultural diversity in New York State schools continues to expand while English language learners are faced with increasing educational demands. Consequently, educators must strive to develop and sustain quality educational settings where optimum research-based pedagogical practices can prepare all ELLs to meet the new demands of the 21st century.

In this regard, NYSABE aims at supporting its members’ efforts by offering them the inaugural issue of JMER. Through its outstanding research articles, JMER reaffirms NYSABE’s mission to foster the awareness and appreciation of bilingualism and biculturalism as an integral part of cultural pluralism in our society. Further, JMER reaffirms NYSABE’s commitment to its goals:

1. To promote the establishment, maintenance, and expansion of quality bilingual education programs as a means to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students.

2. To promote bilingual education as an educational process by which academic success of students is ensured through instruction in the students’ native language and English. For students who are native speakers of English, instruction is provided in English and a second language.

3. To foster the recognition by the entire community of the importance of bilingualism and its contributions toward a better understanding of the cultural and linguistic differences among people.

As I reiterate my commitment to NYSABE’s goals, I wish to congratulate and thank Dr. Aida Nevárez-La Torre for her professional leadership, scholarship, and commitment to the development of JMER. I also wish to acknowledge the diligent work of JMER’s Editorial Advisory Board and researchers in ensuring for all NYSABE members a research journal of the highest scholarly level.

Sincerely,

Nancy Villarreal de Adler
Executive Director
March 11, 2010

Dear NYSABE Members and Colleagues,

The New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE) is proud to introduce the Journal of Multilingual Education Research (JMER). This inaugural issue of JMER, which marks the beginning of a new era in the history of NYSABE, presents to you current research related to the education of English language learners (ELLs).

As classroom practitioners, support personnel, administrators, parents, and community members strive to ensure high academic achievement levels for all ELLs, JMER seeks to support these efforts by establishing a solid foundation for optimum research-based school practices. We hope that JMER reaches out to classrooms, schools, institutions of higher education, professional organizations, as well as legislators nation wide.

Our profound congratulations and appreciation go to Dr. Aida Nevárez-La Torre, founding editor of JMER. Thanks to her leadership, vision, and fine work, JMER will constitute a most valuable tool for all practitioners. We also wish to recognize the contributions of the Editorial Advisory Board and the researchers, whose beliefs and commitment to Bilingual Education have turned our dream into a reality.

On behalf of NYSABE members and leadership, I would like to express our most heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Wilda Ramos, NYSABE Past President 2007–08. Thanks to her vision, dedication, and unfailing efforts, Ms. Ramos was able to initiate the long process of developing NYSABE’s JMER.

In closing, I would like to reiterate NYSABE’s commitment to sustain the highest professional standard for JMER as a vehicle for researchers and practitioners to develop research-based pedagogical practices in Bilingual Education.

Respectfully,

Margarita Reyes
NYSABE President

33rd Annual Conference
“Bilingual Education: A Pathway to Multicultural and Multilingual Learning Communities”
March 11 – March 14, 2010
Huntington Hilton Hotel, Melville, New York
Editorial
The Importance of Disseminating Knowledge: An Issue of Mission, Voice, and Passion

Aida A. Nevárez-La Torre
Editor

The main focus of an academic and professional journal is to disseminate knowledge. In the inaugural issue of the Journal of Multilingual Education Research (JMER) it is appropriate then to discuss the importance of this main focus. The common intent of the many educational journals published today is to communicate different ways of interpreting reality, new discoveries, advanced understandings, novel concepts, and best practices for the advancement of education. Since educational change and transformation are critical to the evolution of teaching and the promotion of learning, the knowledge propagation function of academic and professional journals is of the utmost significance to achieve this goal.

As the editor of JMER, I understand this function is a very serious responsibility. In my view the dissemination of knowledge for the purpose of transforming and improving multilingual education across New York State is an issue that has three vital dimensions. Those are, mission, voice, and passion. The mission of JMER is to serve as a vehicle that responds to the changes and growth of knowledge in a variety of national language education concerns that have local and regional relevance. The journal proposes to respond to the emerging needs and interests of teachers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers, counselors, psychologists, advocates, and community leaders whose work focuses on the successful education of multilingual students.

Our mission interlaces with two key goals of the work done by the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE). First, NYSABE aspires to communicate relevant information on the current research related to bilingual education. JMER, as one of the publications of this organization, serves as an essential tool in actualizing this goal. Second, NYSABE actively advocates on the sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and sociocultural issues that affect the education of English language learners. In that same vein, JMER embraces a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, to reach a broader scholarship and readership and to encourage reflective transformation of any structural and ideological oppression in education.

The dimension of voice alludes to the act of validating and communicating knowledge constructed from insightful practice and inquiry (Freire & Macedo, 1987). JMER recognizes the crucial matter of whose voice is given authority to speak and write about teaching and learning. Our pages will reflect an inclusive voice, giving credence to quality and rigorous explorations done by expert academicians and expert practitioners who are invested in the education of

*Passion* serves as a unifying foundation to the dimensions of mission and voice. Its significance, which penetrates the personal and professional realms, can be better explained through the real-life experience of an educator. My mother dedicated over 40 years to the public school system in Puerto Rico. She started as a teacher and over the years ascended to the position of undersecretary of education in the island. Within three months of retirement she was invited to become the director of Fundación Modesto Gotay (Modesto Gotay Foundation), an institution for severely disabled children and adults. She has productively held this position for the past 20 years. Recently, I asked her what kept her going and, among several reasons, without hesitation she answered “a passion to educate and a passion to serve others.” The idea of passion that she referred to is not an ephemeral emotion or superficial enthusiasm. It, rather, underscores a longstanding commitment to share knowledge and help others become the best that they can be with ardor and zeal.

JMER’s objective to disseminate knowledge embodies this same quality of passion. This dimension of what we are about calls for enduring dedication, clarity of purpose, and a willingness to own the task of communicating knowledge. Consequently, our work is for the purpose of altering minds and practices to advance multilingual education inside and outside our work spaces.

We begin our trajectory of enacting JMER’s function of knowledge dissemination with this inaugural volume. The theme that guides this publication, *Critical Issues in Multilingual Education: Reviewing the Past to Create the Future*, sets the stage for this journey. Our first step is to acknowledge and reflect upon the history of bilingual education, to learn from it and construct new educational possibilities that will broaden the value of language diversity for decades to come. The format of JMER includes three main sections: Articles, Practitioner’s Explorations, and Scholarly Book/Multimedia Reviews. The topics included within the main sections represent issues that have sparked debates and investigations in the past, and today still continue to be relevant and critical to the field of language diversity.

The Articles section discusses empirical research and analyzes original data that authors obtain using sound research methods, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies. Articles may also review current knowledge in an important area of multilingual education and discuss new directions for research.

The first volume opens with Dr. Ofelia Garcia’s in-depth examination of the ways in which New York City schools have responded to the multilingualism of its children in the last 40 years. She challenges the readership to envision novel understandings of bilingualism in education that are appropriate for the 21st century.

Drs. Manuela Wagner and Terry A. Osborn’s article focuses on how attitudes toward heritage language learning have changed, both with regard to program development and
learning and teaching. Their work bridges language teaching beyond the fields of bilingualism and foreign language.

Drs. Chun Zhang and Su-je Cho write a comprehensive review of various challenges in regard to educating children with and without disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. Based on the scholarly literature reviewed they make insightful recommendations for effective practices and research to aid in producing positive outcomes for CLD children both with and without disabilities.

The Practitioners’ Explorations section of JMER focuses on best practices including innovative instructional interventions, practitioner inquiry, and collaborative projects leading to meaningful changes in educational policy and practice. As an ESL practitioner Dianne Maysonet reflects on her transformation from a teacher to a teacher-researcher. Using the findings of her first classroom inquiry she proposes some practical suggestions for teachers who teach ELLs with transient backgrounds.

Dr. Giselle B. Esquivel is the associate editor of the Scholarly Book/Multimedia Reviews section. Reviews provide a scholarly evaluative discussion of the significance of the work in the context of current theory and practice. Addressing the issue of assessment in the education of ELLs, Dr. Evangeline Harris Stefanakis does a provocative review of Dr. Kate Menken’s *English Learners Left Behind: Standardized Testing as Language Policy*.

Through developing and publishing the first volume of JMER one aspect of our mission has been met, that is, to communicate academic and professional knowledge. However the dissemination task is not completed. I invite our readership to take ownership of the mission of this journal by reading, analyzing, and discussing its contents with school colleagues, preservice teachers, teacher educators, researchers, administrators, community educators, parents, and students and others whose work impacts the education of ELLs. It will not be until all the NYSABE family commits to disseminating knowledge that our ultimate goal of achieving excellence in multilingual education will materialize.

**References**


**Bilingualism in Education in the Multilingual Apple:**
**The Future of the Past**

Ofelia García
Graduate Center of the City University of New York

This article traces the ways in which New York City schools have responded to the multilingualism of its children in the last forty years. I review here the past to construct the future—the future of the past. I argue that in the predominantly Puerto Rican community of the 1960s and 1970s a simple approach toward languages and bilingualism in education was an appropriate response to meet the needs of language minority children. Thus, subtractive and additive bilingual education programs might have been sufficient. However, in the 21st century, with the demographic shifts and the technological advances of a globalized world, other understandings of bilingualism in education need to be constructed. I advance here another two models of bilingualism—recursive and dynamic—that are more appropriate for the 21st century and discuss how this might be accomplished in schools in New York City.

**Introduction**

New York City has always been multilingual (García, 1997). In fact, Father Jogues remarked on the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Manhattan in 1646:

> On the island of Manhate, and its environs, there may well be four or five hundred men of different sects and nations: The Director General [of the Society of Jesus] told me that there were men of eighteen different languages. (Father Jogues, quoted in Federal Writers’ Project 1983, p. 81)

I have argued elsewhere (García, 1997) that Standard English has never been, and cannot be considered today, New York’s vernacular. Even 30 years ago, and before the complex linguistic landscape created by globalization, a Nigerian immigrant interviewed by a reporter for *The New York Times* said, “I came to New York so that I could learn English. What I got in my life is something else. Do not know where I am. Spain? China?” (Kleinman, 1982). Further, when multilingualism in the workings of the European Union was being considered, European sociolinguists were sent to New York. Twenty years ago, one of them, Gross (1990), described New York:

> In linguistic terms it is arguably the most sophisticated area on the face of the world. . . . Thirty-six TV channels plus a hundred or more radio stations offer me an assortment of languages and cultures quite beyond the imagination of most Europeans. (p. 7)
New York City is not only highly multilingual, but, as we will see, offers a linguistic profile that is unlike that of any other U.S. city, because the majority of its Spanish speakers are Puerto Ricans, U.S. citizens by birth. How then does the Multilingual Apple educate its children?

This article traces the ways in which New York City schools have responded to the multilingualism of its children in the last forty years. I review here the past to construct the future—the future of the past. I argue that in the predominantly Puerto Rican community of the 1960s and 1970s, a simple approach towards languages and bilingualism in education was an appropriate response to meet the needs of language minority children. However, in the 21st century, with the demographic shifts and the technological advances of a globalized world, other understandings of bilingualism in education need to be constructed. To construct the future of the past, I draw not only on existing scholarship but also on my experiences as a bilingual teacher in the 1970s, an educator of bilingual teachers in the 1980s and 1990s, a Dean of a School of Education in the late 1990s, and an educator of scholars and researchers working in the field of bilingualism and the education of language minorities in the last decade.

**Action and Rage: 1968 in the United States**

When the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) was passed in 1968 (PL 90-247), the country was in turmoil. The struggle for civil rights waged on. In 1964, President Johnson had signed the Civil Rights Act which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin. But the race riots that followed reminded us that the struggle continued—Watts in Los Angeles in 1965 and the Detroit riots in 1967.

To try to find a peaceful solution to the rioting, President Johnson formed the National Advisory on Civil Disorders. New York’s Mayor, John Lindsay, acted as vice-chairperson. The year of the Bilingual Education Act, 1968, was also when the national advisory issued the Kerner Report, warning that the United States “was moving toward two societies, one Black, one White—separate but unequal” (Report of the National Advisory on Civil Disorders, as quoted in Podair, 2004). This was also the year when the pillar of civil rights—the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.—was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Also during this era, the Vietnam War was in full swing. The My Lai massacre, in which hundreds of unarmed civilians in South Vietnam were killed, occurred in March of 1968. Robert Kennedy, a favored presidential candidate and leader of the antiwar movement, was assassinated this same year.

The year of 1968 was a volatile time. In August of 1968, demonstrators, upset at the political decisions of many government leaders, clashed with police at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The police used extreme force in silencing the demonstrators, and the violent images of gunfire and abuse were captured in the media. During that same year, the women’s liberation movement gathered strength, as they protested the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City.
The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 has to be understood within this climate of intense dissatisfaction with the injustices of war and the inequities of racial and gender discrimination (Crawford, 2004; García & Kleifgen, 2010). In some ways, the Bilingual Education Act was a response to the poem that became the rallying cry of Latino youth during this time—“Yo soy Joaquín,” written in 1966 by the Mexican American political activist, Rodolfo “Corky” González, considered the founder of the Chicano movement:

_Yo soy Joaquín,
perdido en un mundo de confusión:
I am Joaquín, lost in a world of confusion,
captured in the whirl of a gringo society,
confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes,
suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society._

The Chicano Civil Rights movement and the struggles of César Chávez to organize migrant farm workers had also been consolidated during this time. In 1968, Chávez conducted a 25-day hunger strike and called for a national boycott of grapes in order to draw attention to the plight of the grape pickers. Partly in response, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) was founded in 1968.

Thus, the passage of the Bilingual Education Act stems from the efforts of many to dissipate the growing anger of the nation about injustices and inequities. The Bilingual Education Act was one way of funneling money into Spanish-speaking communities as part of the social reform programs instituted by President Johnson that became known as the Great Society (San Miguel, 2004). These were spending programs that addressed education, among other areas, as a means to eliminate poverty and racial injustice. Although the emphasis of the Bilingual Education Act was clearly on teaching English literacy to poor children of “limited English-speaking ability,” it was the improvement of the education of these children that became the focus.

It is important to underscore that the Bilingual Education Act was passed to bring educational resources and relief to U.S. language minority communities, indigenous peoples—Mexican Americans in the West and Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast—that were marginalized and segregated. This was a period of very low immigration; the rigid quotas imposed by the National Origins Act of 1924 were not lifted until 1965 when the Immigration and Naturalization Services Act of 1965 (also known as Hart Celler) was passed. Thus, the Bilingual Education Act’s support of “financial assistance to local educational agencies to develop and carry out new and imaginative elementary and secondary school programs designed to meet these special educational needs of the large numbers of children of limited English-speaking ability in the United States” (PL90-247) targeted U.S students, and not specifically immigrants.
The Bilingual Apple in the 20th Century: 1968 and Beyond

In New York City, second- and third-generation Jewish and Irish children had mostly shifted to English by the 1960s (Fishman, 1966; García, 1997). It was mostly the Spanish of Puerto Ricans, U.S. citizens since 1917 as a result of the Jones Act, that was the foreign language then heard in the city. Puerto Ricans and African American migrants who moved to the north following the mechanization of agriculture in the south, made up the city’s minorities.

In the 1960s, the Puerto Rican great migration was at its peak. Although in 1940 the city counted 61,463 people of Puerto Rican descent, there were 254,880 in the city by 1950. The number of Puerto Ricans reached 612,574 by 1960. As a matter of fact, by 1964 Puerto Ricans made up 9.3% of the total New York City population (Colón, 1982; Colón López, 2001; Matos-Rodriguez & Hernández, 2001; Sánchez-Korrol, 1994).

New York City schools were poorly prepared to educate Puerto Rican students. Whereas in 1947 there were approximately 25,000 Puerto Rican students, by 1972 there were 245,000, with an additional 38,000 non–Puerto Rican Spanish-speaking students. That is, 85% of all Hispanic students in New York City schools in 1972 were Puerto Rican, and 40% of Puerto Rican students spoke Spanish only (Del Valle, 1998). In 1966, Puerto Ricans constituted 21% of all students enrolled in New York City public schools (Castellanos, 1983).

Although Brown vs. Board of Education, mandating school desegregation, had been decided in 1954, in the 1960s New York City schools remained mostly segregated. In 1966, of all Puerto Ricans 25 years of age and older in the United States, 87% dropped out without graduating from high school, and the dropout rate in eighth grade was 53% (García, 2009a, p. 169). The high school graduation rate improved only slightly in 1970, from 13% in 1966 to 20% in 1970, as opposed to the 51% graduation rate of non-Hispanic white students in the same year. In 1970, only 1% of Puerto Ricans were college graduates (Wagenheim, 1975, cited in Del Valle, 1998).

In the 1950s, the New York City Board of Education commissioned a study—The Puerto Rican Study 1953–1957—that recommended the use of the native language, and even native-language retention, as a way to address the high Puerto Rican dropout rate (Board of Education of the City of New York, 1958). By the mid-1960s, groups like Aspira, United Bronx Parents, and the Puerto Rican Educators Association were promoting bilingualism and multiculturalism as goals for the system’s bilingual education programs (Baez, 1995, cited in Del Valle, 1998).

Antonia Pantoja had founded Aspira in 1961 as an organization committed to preparing leaders and encouraging Puerto Rican youth to stay and succeed in school. In 1966, Aspira commissioned a report on the status quo of Puerto Ricans in the public schools. The writer, Richard Margolis, titled his report The Losers. Aspira decided to press for bilingual education as a means of addressing the miseducation of Puerto Rican children, but also as an organizing tool and a means of preserving community identity (Del Valle, 1998).
In 1966, to further press for changes in the educational status quo, Latino and African American parents, furious over the poor education that their children were receiving, staged a three-day takeover of the Great Hall of the New York City Board of Education. As a result, in 1968 Aspira produced another report, *Hemos trabajado bien* [*We’ve worked well*] (Castellanos, 1983, p. 77).

Due in part to the efforts of concerned parents, and based on the needs of students; in the late 1960s educators in New York City began to make adjustments to their teaching policies for Latino students. P.S. 25, New York City’s first bilingual elementary school, opened in 1968 at 149th Street in the South Bronx, led by principal Hernán La Fontaine, who would go on to became the first director of the Office of Bilingual Education of New York City in 1972 (Pousada, 1984). Hostos Community College, New York City’s first bilingual college, was also founded in 1968 to meet the needs of Latinos of the South Bronx.

While P.S. 25 and Hostos Community College were met with approval, other changes to the status quo were not as widely accepted. One such change, made in May of 1968, was the dismissal of 18 White teachers and administrators from a new community-controlled, experimental school district, Ocean Hill-Brownsville, by the black superintendent. This led to a series of citywide teacher strikes. It was also in 1968 when then Mayor Lindsay relinquished mayoral control of schools and transformed the top-heavy New York City Board of Education, which housed 4,000 administrators and hired and assigned teachers, determined budgets, and mandated school curricula (Podair, 2004). Each community was then able to elect members of 32 community school boards, which controlled the elementary and middle schools. The newly formed New York City Central Board of Education, a seven-member group appointed by the borough president and the mayor, then chose the school chancellor, and continued to control the high schools, lunches, construction, budget, and maintenance (Podair, 2004).

Regardless, the poor education of Puerto Rican students was slow to change. In 1969, Latino and African American parents once again marched in the streets, charging the Board of Education with educational genocide. *La lucha* [the struggle] was hard and strenuous, fueled by Puerto Rican educators with a commitment to bilingual education as a way to improve the education of their children. Bilingual education programs grew slowly but steadily. In 1970, the Puerto Rican Forum declared that only 27% of the more than 100,000 children needing bilingual education were getting it (Pousada, 1984, 1987). A year later, in 1971, only 37 schools had bilingual education programs and instruction was not consistent (Pousada, 1984, 1987). By late 1972, Aspira had filed a suit with the Community Agency for Legal Services and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (Santiago Santiago, 1986; Reyes, 2006). In August of 1974, and after Lau vs. Nichols had been decided, the New York City Board of Education signed a consent decree. The decree stated:

All children whose English language deficiency prevents them from effectively participating in the learning process and who can more effectively participate in Spanish shall receive: a) planned and systematic program designed to develop the
child’s ability to speak, understand, read and write the English language . . . b) instruction in substantive courses in Spanish (e.g. courses in mathematics, science, and social studies) . . . [and] c) a planned and systematic program designed to reinforce and develop the child’s use of Spanish; . . . [I]n addition to the foregoing elements, an important element of the above Program will be that the students receiving instruction will spend maximum time with other children so as to avoid isolation and segregation from their peers. (Aspira v. Board, 1974a, para. 2, cited in Santiago Santiago, 1986, p. 160)

As a result, 60,000 Spanish-speaking children who did not speak English were placed in bilingual education programs (Pousada, 1984, 1987). Nevertheless, as Santiago Santiago observes: “This meant that equal educational opportunity for approximately 60 percent of the population [those who were bilingual], remained virtually unaddressed” (p. 161).

New York State educational authorities, including the Board of Regents and then Chancellor Irving Anker, supported bilingual education at that time, leading to the passage of a permissive Bilingual Education Act for the State of New York in 1968 (Santiago Santiago, 1986). Bilingual programs in New York City were expanded under this Act, and in 1973, the new Title VII funded two experimental bilingual education programs in New York City that went beyond the Aspira consent decree. Pousada (1987) explains that the programs’ mission was to “utilize a maintenance approach to educate the children through their school careers to be bilingual and bicultural, as well as economically, socially and politically able to function in U.S. society” (p. 20).

These new programs embodied the kind of bilingual education that Puerto Rican parents had in mind for their children, which had little to do with the transitional nature of the Aspira consent decree or the definition given in the first reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act in 1974: “It is instruction given in, and study of, English and (to the extent necessary to allow a child to progress effectively through the education system) the native language of the children of limited English speaking ability” (quoted in Castellanos, 1983, p. 120). This transitional philosophy was clearly oppositional to that espoused by the Puerto Rican community. Del Valle (1998,) says: “Mainland Puerto Ricans see bilingual education not only as a method to educate language-minority students, but also as a means to realize the promise of equal citizenship in the educational arena”(p. 194). In addition, Pousada (1986) reminds us of the sociopolitical objectives of bilingual education for the Puerto Rican community: “Bilingual education was on the agenda of every Puerto Rican school board candidate or politician. It was evident that besides a pedagogical reform, it was a source of ethnic cohesion and a source of community control”(p. 19).

Puerto Rican parents and the community were deeply involved in the bilingual education movement during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In 1982, for example, Parent Advocates for Bilingual Education (PABE) organized a demonstration in response to the moves of then-Chancellor Macchiariola to undermine bilingual education (Pousada, 1987). There were many other efforts to organize the Puerto Rican community on the local level, leading to the
foundation of the Coalition to Defend Bilingual Education, the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, the Puerto Rican Educators Association, and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund. The growing Dominican population in the city, especially in the early 1980s, joined the efforts of Puerto Ricans in supporting bilingual education. The Community Association of Progressive Dominicans played an important role in this regard. At the state level, the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE) came into being.

To serve the increasing number of Asian and other language minority students who started to arrive in the city in the 1970s, the New York City Board of Education developed a separate Lau plan with the U.S. Justice Department of the Office of Civil Rights in 1977 (Del Valle, 1998). The city and the country were increasingly feeling the impact of the growing immigrant population. The schools had to adapt to meet their needs.

However, even with all the efforts to provide appropriate services for immigrant and non–English-speaking school populations, the educational system continued to fail these students. In 1984, ten years after the Aspira consent decree, the Educational Priorities Panel issued a report entitled *Ten Years of Neglect: The Failure to Serve Language Minority Children in the New York City Public Schools* (Willner, 1986). The report charged that 40% of eligible language minority children were not receiving any services (Del Valle, 1998; Reyes, 2006).

In 1988, as a response to the continued academic failure of language minority students—including the very few students who qualified for bilingual education—the New York State Regents raised the cutoff score of students who were entitled to Bilingual/ESL programs from the 20th percentile to the 40th percentile on the Language Assessment Battery (Reyes, 2006).

### The Multilingual Apple in the 21st Century

In the decade of the 1990s, New York City experienced a great transformation and went from being mostly a bilingual Puerto Rican city to one that was highly multilingual, although predominantly English/Spanish speaking. This trend continued into the 2000s, and by 2007, 37% of New Yorkers were foreign born, a level that had not been seen since the influx of immigrants in 1910. In fact, Table 1 demonstrates that New York City’s foreign-born population has been increasing since the 1970s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,437,058</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,670,199</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2,082,931</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,871,032</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3,047,676</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Ofelia García

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By 2006, 47.6% of New Yorkers spoke a language other than English at home. Coupled with the fact that the city’s population is 26% Black, many of whom speak African-American English varieties, it is clear that Standard English is not New York City’s vernacular. One of the things that makes New York City unique is its great linguistic diversity, with languages other than English (LOTEs) spoken not only by immigrants, but also by the many temporary foreign residents who do business in New York. Spanish is the primary language spoken by New York City residents who speak a LOTE, but as Table 2 also makes clear, Spanish is not its sole LOTE. Chinese appears in Table 2 as New York’s second LOTE. There are perhaps more Chinese languages’ spoken in New York City than anywhere else in the world, given that Chinese New Yorkers come from many regions in mainland China, as well as from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia.

Table 2
Languages Other Than English Spoken in New York City Homes, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOTE at home</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of LOTEs spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1,865,922</td>
<td>51.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>375,375</td>
<td>10.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>198,556</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>113,416</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Creole</td>
<td>95,754</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiddish</td>
<td>86,615</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>86,355</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>78,213</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>62,708</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African languages</td>
<td>57,391</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>53,884</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>53,648</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>52,376</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>48,985</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>39,599</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>26,041</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>23,101</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbo-Croatian</td>
<td>21,147</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>20,704</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>16,162</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>11,865</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>10,535</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarathi</td>
<td>9,568</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>9,220</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>5,097</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>4,120</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon-Khmer,</td>
<td>2,024</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>3,584</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>languages</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The New York City school population also reflects this complex multilingualism. In 2007, 46.4% of all 5- to 17-year-olds residing in New York City spoke a language other than English at home; 25.9% of these children spoke Spanish (see Table 3). Even if Spanish were removed from the equation, a higher proportion of New York City school children speak LOTEs at home than in many other school systems in the nation.

At the same time that the city was experiencing this greater linguistic diversity, the Puerto Rican community itself was changing. Some Puerto Ricans became middle class and professionals, mostly through their own advocacy efforts during the 1960s, while others remained trapped in poverty. Further, with New York City changing from a manufacturing to a service economy, fewer Puerto Ricans were coming to New York, moving instead to places like Orlando. The proportion of Puerto Ricans, as compared to the total Latino population of New York City, decreased. The absolute number of Puerto Ricans in the city also decreased.
began decreasing, although they remain today the number one Latino group in New York City, as shown in Table 4.

The Latino population of New York City was also changing during this time and becoming more diverse. The growing Dominican population was now joined by Mexicans and by other Latinos from South and Central America, many undocumented. The Latino Spanish/English bilingual landscape of the city was now made more complex, because not only were non-Caribbean varieties of Spanish coming to the fore, but many Latinos were now speakers of indigenous languages, such as the Mixteco and Zapoteco of many Mexicans, the Quichua of Ecuadorians, and the Garifuna of many Hondurans settling in the city. The diversity and changing nature of the national origin of Latinos in New York City is captured by the U.S. census (see Table 5).

The national origins of the Asian population in New York City are equally complex today, as shown in Table 6. This greater linguistic heterogeneity was a response to the geopolitical changes that accompanied the growing globalization and technological advances of the 21st century. Although Puerto Ricans had always distinguished themselves because of their circular migration (Zentella, 1996, 1997), all New Yorkers were now involved in a dynamic cycle of traveling and communicating at a speed unheard of during the time when the Aspira Consent Decree was being negotiated. The world was changing, and as new sociopolitical organizations and new socioeconomic trading blocs emerged, movement of people, with their languages and cultures increased. The inequities in the school system, however, remained. Language minorities were, more than ever, left out of equal educational opportunity.

### Bilingual Education Under Attack

The increase in linguistic heterogeneity in the Multilingual Apple occurred at a time of increased attacks toward the use of bilingualism in the education of language minorities around the country. Bilingual education in New York City, as elsewhere, was always fraught with opponents (for an incisive history of this, see Reyes, 2006). By the 1990s, Ronald Unz, the Silicon Valley software millionaire, had unleashed his campaign against bilingual education. Due to his
efforts, Proposition 227 was passed in California in 1998, prohibiting the use of native language instruction in the teaching of language minority children, and mandating the use with this population of sheltered English immersion for a period not to exceed a year (García, 2009a). In 2000, Arizona passed Proposition 203, banning bilingual education. In 2002, voters in Massachusetts replaced transitional bilingual education with structured English immersion programs.

The word bilingual, what Crawford (2004, p. 35) has called “the B-Word,” has been progressively silenced (Hornberger, 2006; Wiley and Wright, 2004, García, 2008). Every federal office with the word bilingual in its name has been renamed, substituting English language acquisition for bilingual (see García, 2009a, p. 184). In 2001, the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) was repealed. In its place, Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act, (PL 107-110) was now entitled “Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students.” In New York City, similar changes were taking place. In 2002, as the city school system was reorganized under Mayor Bloomberg’s control, the Office of Bilingual Education of the NYC Board of Education was renamed the Office of English Language Learners of the NYC Department of Education.

There were other discursive changes at the same time. The Bilingual Education Act first referred to students whose native language was not English as limited English speaking (LES), but in the 1978 reauthorization the designation was changed to limited English proficient (LEP),

### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>861,122</td>
<td>813,539</td>
<td>788,560</td>
<td>34.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
<td>332,713</td>
<td>532,412</td>
<td>549,051</td>
<td>24.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>55,698</td>
<td>192,642</td>
<td>288,629</td>
<td>12.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuadorian</td>
<td>78,844</td>
<td>132,191</td>
<td>176,889</td>
<td>7.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>84,454</td>
<td>100,976</td>
<td>96,402</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>57,019</td>
<td>42,393</td>
<td>43,529</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduran</td>
<td>22,167</td>
<td>33,504</td>
<td>39,917</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvadoran</td>
<td>23,926</td>
<td>32,086</td>
<td>35,509</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peruvian</td>
<td>23,257</td>
<td>30,844</td>
<td>33,566</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemalan</td>
<td>15,873</td>
<td>10,909</td>
<td>23,855</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panamanian</td>
<td>22,707</td>
<td>22,049</td>
<td>21,763</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spaniard</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>10,909</td>
<td>23,855</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentinean</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>12,535</td>
<td>13,627</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>9,372</td>
<td>8,443</td>
<td>8,093</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuelan</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>8,786</td>
<td>8,765</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilean</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6,562</td>
<td>6,662</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rican</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6,464</td>
<td>6,603</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivian</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2,170</td>
<td>5,134</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguayan</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3,927</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2,496</td>
<td>2,699</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other South</td>
<td>33,354</td>
<td>8,947</td>
<td>5,812</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3,522</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Central</td>
<td>7,177</td>
<td>7,243</td>
<td>3,522</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>42,018</td>
<td>13,290</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish American</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4,270</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Other</td>
<td>110,644</td>
<td>30,598</td>
<td>77,939</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2,269,972</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Missing data in columns have to do with the fact that in that year the specific national origin was not accounted for. Those numbers appear in the “Other” category. The categories Spanish and Spanish American were given by informants. Data is from the U.S. Census Bureau. The 1990 and 2000 data is from the Decennial census. The 2007 data is from the 2007 American Community Survey.
expanding eligibility to speakers of English who might have limited English literacy. Educators, however, usually referred to these students as either bilingual or language minority students. The federal designation, limited English proficient, endured in Title III of No Child Left Behind. However, educators and scholars increasingly abandoned the term bilingual or language minority, and referred to these students as English language learners or ELLs.

Referring to these students in this way focuses exclusively on their English learning, which although extremely important, does not constitute a full education for these students. In choosing not to speak about language minorities, the discourse creates the illusion that these children are completely equal, and that schools can, by focusing on their English language and literacy development, close the achievement gap, ignoring the social inequities, the poverty, the racism and linguistic bias to which most of these children are subjected daily.

I have argued for the use of the term emergent bilingual in referring to these children, as a way to remind all of us that the effective teaching of English will make them bilingual, not merely teach them English (García, 2009b; García, Kleifgen & Falchi, 2008; García & Kleifgen, 2010). Bilingualism is not a narrow topic of interest only to bilingual educators, but rather is important for all educators, including those who teach children in English only.

The focus of attention on the education of those I have called “the tail of the elephant” (García, 2006a)—those children who are not proficient in English—ignores that the proverbial “elephant in the room” of NYC public schools is the fact that most NYC students speak languages other than English at home and are at different points on the bilingual continuum. Today, as when the Aspira Consent Decree was passed in NYC, most language minority students are bilingual. Although many speak English well, they continue to fail in schools. This is the case of the Latino students in NYC who constitute 40% of the school population. Bilingualism is a continuum, with different abilities—understanding, speaking, reading, writing, and signing—in interrelationship.

Bilingual education is the only way to meaningfully teach all children around the world in the 21st century (García, 2009a), and especially in multilingual New York. In order to do that successfully, both for language minorities and language majorities, our 20th-century...
understandings of bilingualism need to be shed. I turn now to examining how concepts about bilingualism that were developed in the 20th century have to be reshaped to fit today’s more complex sociolinguistic situation.

**Bilingualism in the 21st Century**

Our present conceptions of bilingualism in education have been mostly shaped by the work of Wallace Lambert and his associates in Canada who proposed that bilingualism could be either subtractive or additive. According to Lambert (1974), language minorities usually experience subtractive bilingualism as a result of schooling. Their home language (L1) is subtracted, as the school language (L2) is learned. On the other hand, language majorities usually experience additive bilingualism, as the school language is added to their home language.

These models of bilingualism can be rendered as in Figure 1.

Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtractive Bilingualism</th>
<th>Additive Bilingualism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1 + L2 − L1 → L1</td>
<td>L1 + L2 = L1 + L2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responding to the greater bilingual complexity of the 21st century, as well as the increased understanding of the multilingualism of the “developing” world, García (2009a) has proposed that bilingualism could also be seen as being recursive or dynamic. These two models of bilingualism go beyond the conception of two separate autonomous languages of additive or subtractive bilingualism, suggesting instead that the language practices of bilinguals are complex and interrelated, and are not always simply linear.

Language minority communities who have experienced language loss and then attend bilingual schools in hopes of reacquiring this language undergo a process of recursive bilingualism. They do not start as simple monolinguals (as in the subtractive or additive models). Instead, they recover bits and pieces of their existing ancestral language practices as they develop a bilingualism that continuously reaches back in order to move forward.

Dynamic bilingualism, on the other hand, refers to the development of different language practices to varying degrees in order to interact with increasingly multilingual communities. In some ways, dynamic bilingualism is related to the concept of plurilingualism proposed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. The difference is that within a dynamic bilingual perspective, languages are not seen as autonomous systems. Thus, educating for dynamic bilingualism builds on the complex and multiple linguistic interactions of students in
multilingual classrooms in order to develop new and different language practices. These models can be rendered as in Figure 2.

Figure 2

| Recursive Bilingualism | Dynamic Bilingualism |

It is obvious that all students today, whether speakers of majority or minority languages, and especially in a city like New York, need the opportunity to develop a dynamic bilingualism, a plurilingualism, to ensure that they would be able to interact in the multilingual contexts of urban classrooms and extracurricular settings (García, 2009a). For some, such as second- and third-generation Americans who have experienced different degrees of shift to English and away from their heritage language, education programs must build on a recursive bilingual model, able to build on their linguistic past to bring them to a dynamic bilingualism in the present.

In New York City, very few students start out school being monolingual in English or monolingual in a LOTE. Most students come into school with some familiarity with different discursive practices at home. Sometimes, each parent has a different language background, and most have family members with different language practices. The Internet and cable television have brought into all our living rooms different sounds, colors, smells, and landscapes; as a result, we have become increasingly aware of the linguistic diversity in the world, as well as the growing importance of English. The time is now for schools, and especially schools in New York City, to think of ways to use their linguistic resources, their built-in multilingualism, to educate all their children as emergent bilinguals. To do so would require shedding the belief that bilingualism is a linear construct, and schools would need to move away from curricular arrangements that separate languages as well as from strict definitions of program types that may no longer be relevant today. Schools would need to develop new models, curricula, and techniques that support bilingualism and recognize linguistic interdependence (for more on linguistic interdependence, see Cummins, 1979).
New Yorkers and Bilingualism in Education in the Present

The past tension between programs that use the students’ home languages to educate them only until they learn English (transitional bilingual education) and those that support students’ English language learning without using their home languages (ESL programs) continues today. While the organization and advocacy of Puerto Ricans in New York City during the second half of the 20th century clearly tipped the balance in favor of transitional bilingual education programs, today the ESL camp has won the day.

In the past decade, we have witnessed the slow dismantling of transitional bilingual education in New York City, which follows a nation-wide trend. The argument has been that in a more highly diverse city, transitional bilingual education programs that serve only one language group are no longer relevant. Transitional bilingual education programs are also criticized for segregating emergent bilingual students. In school year 2002-2003, 34% of the NYC programs that served emergent bilinguals were transitional bilingual education programs. By school year 2007-2008, that figure had been reduced to 22%.

Despite the greater linguistic heterogeneity of the city, New York is more segregated today than ever (Center for Social Inclusion, 2005; Logan, Stults, & Farley, 2004), and Latinos and Asians are more segregated in New York schools than in any other system in the country (Logan, Stowell, & Oakley, 2002). The increased segregation of New York City neighborhoods means that large numbers of speakers of one language (especially Spanish, but also Chinese) continue to make transitional bilingual education programs important in some communities, and especially at the high school level (see, Bartlett & García, forthcoming; and García & Bartlett, 2007, for an example of a bilingual secondary school for Latino newcomers). Although transitional bilingual education programs do not go far enough in providing emergent bilinguals the support they need throughout their education, they at least provided “safe houses,” which Mary Louise Pratt (1991) defines as

social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, temporary protection from legacies of oppression. This is why, as we realized, multicultural curricula should not seek to replace ethnic or women’s studies, for example. Where there are legacies of subordination, groups need places for healing and mutual recognition, safe houses in which to construct shared understandings, knowledges, and claims on the world that they can then bring into the contact zone. (p. 39)

We cannot destroy the transitional bilingual education “safe houses” without regard to when students might need them, temporarily, before they come into the “contact zone” of the mainstream classroom.

Even so, the opposite seems to be taking place in New York City. In school year 2002-2003, 53% of NYC emergent bilinguals were in ESL classes; by school year 2007-2008, 69% were instructed in English as a second language programs. Thus, more than two-thirds of all
eligible children are in ESL classes that increasingly “shelter” English and make no use of students’ home language practices.

In New York City, both bilingual education programs and ESL programs have been much improved as a result of the Mayor’s Children First reforms. With regard to bilingual education, advocacy for transitional bilingual education has been substituted by support for so-called “dual-language” programs (named this way to avoid the word bilingual and its association with transitional bilingual education programs). Most of these programs exist at the elementary school level, where it easier to get students of different language proficiencies and backgrounds to be educated together. The advantage of these dual-language bilingual education programs is that emergent bilinguals (both language minority and language majority students) are schooled throughout their elementary years bilingually (Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, & Rogers, 2007; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Despite their promise, few dual-language bilingual education programs have been implemented, since their success depends upon the support of both language minority and language majority communities, along with a belief in bilingualism as an important educational goal. There are other risks inherent in these programs because there is the danger that less attention is paid to language minority students (see García, 2006b and Valdés, 1997). As we will see in this article, these dual-language programs also suffer from some of the assumptions of bilingualism that we had in the 20th century.

Traditional ESL pull-out programs have also been reformed. In the last decade, ESL professionals, supported by a favorable political climate and the growing importance of teaching English throughout the world (Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992), have appropriated bilingual methodologies. For example, structured English immersion or sheltered English is based on the concept of structured immersion, originally used in immersion bilingual education programs in Canada. It uses language that is slow and simplified, with guarded vocabulary and short sentences, while the grade-level curriculum is used. In time, however, structured English immersion became the antithesis of bilingual education, instead of being recognized as one of the components of bilingual education; thus, as bilingual education fell into disfavor, structured English immersion became the most commonly utilized strategy in the education of emergent bilinguals. The result has been a growing rift between bilingual and ESL scholars and educators, when in reality much stands to be gained from having an integrated field.

If dual-language bilingual education programs hold a promise that is in no way being fulfilled, it might be said that these reformed ESL programs have gone beyond the promise they held, for they have, at times, been used to annihilate any educational practices that build on students’ multilingualism, silencing decades of bilingual research all over the world.

Speaking about “dual language” bilingual education programs in New York City, in García (2006b), I evoked the moving image of cruise ships entering New York City ports that were once abandoned, and the hybrid smells and tastes of fusion restaurants and ethnic restaurants that now appeal to all, to remind us that New York has changed, but also to warn us that life in the flux can be an illusion. This is a fact that came to bear upon us all when the epitome of modern
technology, the airplane, was turned into a weapon that made time stop in New York City on September 11, 2001.

Despite their promise, the transformed bilingual and ESL programs of the 21st century could be the reforms-turned-weapon that in subtle ways might destroy a bilingual future for New York children. The issue, then, lies in how we ensure that these programs work for all children, especially those who are developing English, for they are the most vulnerable. Do we improve these reforms to ensure that they remain attentive to the bilingual needs of language minorities for the future? The answer to this question lies in a recommittal to bilingualism in education, while we recognize that dynamic understandings of bilingualism and bilingual acquisition are needed. The boundaries between bilingual education and ESL need to be brought down, and more hybrid programs must be developed in order to respond to the dynamic bilingualism of the 21st century.

The Future of the Past: Bilingualism in NYC Education in the 21st Century

Both ESL and bilingual education programs in the United States, and certainly in New York City, grew out of what I have called (García, 2009a) a monoglossic vision that considered each language as autonomous. That is, whether teaching monolingually or bilingually, English has been “sheltered” from the students’ other language. This is based on principles of second language acquisition (SLA) that look at the individual performance of bilingual students in light of what may be considered “native-like proficiency,” as if a static and complete set of grammar rules were available for acquisition (Selinker, 1972; Selinker & Han, 2000). The emphasis on “ultimate attainment” in second-language acquisition studies has impacted the ways in which second-language educators view their learners as incomplete.

For these “incomplete” learners to develop native-like proficiency, it is thought that bilingual education should carefully separate the two languages, provide ESL instruction in English only, and stamp out the bilingual discursive practices that characterize bilingual communities (Zentella, 1997). Thus, either additive bilingualism or subtractive bilingualism is currently accepted in the education of emergent bilinguals, while dynamic bilingualism, responding to a more complex view of bilingual acquisition, has hardly entered the conversation.

Since the end of the 20th century, the idea of a “native speaker” has been questioned by many (Canagarajah, 1999; García, 2009a; Kramsch, 1997; Valdés, 2005). Cook (2002), by proposing the concept of multi-competence, argues that second-language users are different from monolingual speakers because their lives and minds are also different. Bilinguals are not simply two monolinguals in one (Grosjean, 1982; García, 2009a; Valdés, 2005). For Larsen-Freeman & Cameron (2008), working within complexity theory, bilingual acquisition is not the taking in of linguistic forms by learners, but the constant adaptation of their linguistic resources in the service of meaning-making in response to the
affordances that emerge in the communicative situation, which is, in turn, affected by learners’ adaptability. (p. 135)

Thus, what is needed for the future is not a strict language education policy that specifies when and how one language or the other is to be used, but ways of helping teachers, and children, adapt their linguistic resources to make sense of the concepts being taught.

Duverger (2005, p. 93) has pointed out that both macro-alternation (allocating languages to periods of the day, teacher, or subject matter) and micro-alternation (the use of hybrid language and instructional practices by both teachers and students) are important in schools that educate linguistically diverse children: “Macro-alternation is programmed, institutionalized, demanding; micro-alternation adds suppleness, flexibility, and efficiency. The combination of the two is subtle.” New York City has come a long way towards mandating a language education policy for all programs that serve emergent bilinguals. However, whereas all programs have clear language allocation policies, and bilingual education programs have clear curricular arrangements for macro-alternation of languages, little thought has been given to the micro-alternation of languages, both in bilingual and ESL programs.

Until very recently, these complex interrelated discursive practices, what García (2009a) has called translanguaging, have not been seen as appropriate in teaching emergent bilingual students or, in fact, any students. For García, translanguaging is an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages, but on the observable communicative practices of bilinguals. Although translanguaging may include code-switching, it also comprises other forms of hybrid language use that are systematically engaged in sense-making. There is now emerging evidence that keeping the two languages separate in schools at all times and following only monolingual instructional strategies is not always appropriate (Cummins, 2007; García, 2006b; García, 2009a). Thus, translanguaging, if properly understood and suitably applied in schools, can enhance cognitive, language and literacy abilities (Gajo, 2007; Lewis, 2008; Li Wei, 2009; Martin-Jones & Saxena, 1996; Serra, 2007).

Any language education approach—be it monolingual or bilingual—that does not acknowledge and build upon the hybrid language practices and the translanguaging in bilingual communities is more concerned with controlling language behavior than in educating (Cummins, 2007; García, 2009a; García, Flores, & Chu, in press; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Language education policies must involve educators in negotiating these sense-making, moment-by-moment, instructional decisions (for educators as language policy makers, see Menken & García, 2010).

Bilingualism in education must emerge from the meaningful interaction of students with different linguistic profiles and their educators—be they bilingual or monolingual educators—instead of solely being handed down to educators as language policy (García, Flores & Chu, in press). Emergent bilingual students in interaction with educators must build hybrid school language practices that will be inclusive of all children and, in so doing, build the multilingual tolerance and the dynamic bilingualism that is required in the 21st century. As I’ve said before
(García, 2009a), the most coveted language ability in the 21st century will not be to speak English “natively,” since English is spoken by more bilinguals than ever (Grin, 2003). It will also not simply be bilingualism and biliteracy in two languages, since two whole languages are no longer sufficient. The most coveted language ability will be to be comfortable translanguaging in order to make sense of multilingual encounters, an ability that schools in multilingual New York would be well poised to develop for all their children. To do that would require us to understand the complexities of dynamic bilingualism for the 21st century.

**Conclusion**

In the past decade, ESL programs have unfortunately become, more than ever, separate from bilingual instruction. As the diminishing number of bilingual educators pale in comparison to the growing number of ESL teachers, the professions have become two solitudes. Bilingual teachers are in charge of both the development of English and of a LOTE, and generally teach language minority children of the same language group. On the other hand, ESL teachers are focused solely on the development of English for language minority children, often with different linguistic backgrounds. However, the way in which both ESL and bilingual educators understand bilingualism and build on the home language practices of their students must be the same. We need to “stretch” ESL classrooms (García & Celic, 2006) so as to have teachers build on all the language practices of their students, regardless of their own language abilities or practices (for more on how this can be done, see García, Flores & Chu, in press).

What I have argued in this paper is that to construct a future of the past, building on our experiences with bilingualism in education and bilingual education while recognizing the increased linguistic diversity and greater language fluidity of the 21st century, we must not cede all the educational spaces to the types of English-only or bilingual instruction that keep the students’ other language (or languages) apart. On the contrary, we must allow students in all educational programs to use their full range of discursive abilities, including their translanguaging practices. This would not only be of help in educating emergent bilinguals, but also in building linguistic awareness, linguistic tolerance, and the dynamic bilingualism ability that we will need in the future. To do this, it would require teachers to give up rigid control of “standard language,” whether in English-only or in more than one language. The locus of control for the use of languages must rest with students on a moment-to-moment basis, and not solely with teachers that respond to rigid curricular arrangements. Teachers must be mindful of encouraging students to use languages other than English in the classroom to search the web or research individually, or to discuss with classmates. Instead of the usual macro-linguistic curricular arrangements where a language is used at certain times or for certain subjects with certain teachers, schools must build on micro-linguistic adaptations that respond to students’ complex bilingualism. That is, instead of bilingualism being enacted top-down by administrators and teachers, bilingualism must be enacted from the students and teachers’ own bilingual language practices. Although some may see this as a loss for bilingual education, if properly
carried out, this dynamic bilingualism could extend and expand bilingualism in the education of
language minorities, whether emergent bilinguals or not, and of all language majorities. A future
of the past in New York City and beyond needs to build more flexible uses of bilingualism in
education than those we have developed in the past, while extending them beyond bilingual
classrooms to all classrooms in the Multilingual Apple.

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Notes

1 I want to thank Kathryn Fangsrud, Nelson Flores, Laura Kaplan, and Heather Woodley for their careful reading of the manuscript.

2 The National Origins Act of 1924 limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2% of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890, thus significantly restricting immigration of Latin Americans, Africans, Asians, and Southern and Eastern Europeans.

3 In Lau v. Nichols, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Chinese plaintiffs in San Francisco and ordered that something additional be done for language minority students.

4 The Chinese refer to these languages as dialects, arguing that Chinese has one written language with many oral dialects. Linguistically, however, they are all different languages.


6 Sometimes these programs clearly include more than one language group, as in two-way bilingual education programs. However, sometimes they include one language minority group with varying degrees of proficiency in English and the LOTE. These programs, in the past, were known as developmental bilingual education programs.
Depositioning the “Foreign”: Considering the Challenges and Opportunities of a Postmodern Foreign Language Education

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This article focuses on how attitudes toward HLLs have changed, both with regard to program development and in learning and teaching. First, the ambiguity towards heritage language preservation is illustrated by examining historical aspects of heritage languages in the United States. Secondly, a closer look at two examples of heritage language learning, namely Korean and Spanish, reveals the complexity of language policies and funding decisions regarding HLL. Finally, research in language teaching and linguistics confirms that a shift in attitude toward the HLL is underway. Rather than considering HLL as a pedagogical challenge or problem, researchers and practitioners start investigating and reporting the opportunities of HLL for the classroom as well as for second language acquisition research.

Non-English language education has been a source of controversy for over 170 years, since Germans entering the United States wanted to hold onto their religious and linguistic heritage, saw saving the faith as synonymous with saving the language (Edwards, 2006). In Ohio, in 1840, German-speaking citizens lobbied for and won the passage of a law requiring the teaching of German in the local school system if the number of requests reached 75. At least seven other states followed suit. In St. Louis, as well, persuaded by a threat of public school boycott, the board initiated German-language classes at the elementary level. Enrollment consisted not only of students of German descent, but also Anglo-American pupils as well (Tyack, 1974).

Tyack (1974) describes this process as “immigrant groups seeking symbolic affirmation of their worth” (p. 108). But, this affirmation often includes attempting to block the introduction of other languages. Tyack (1974) reports of a German-American leader who decried the potential introduction of the languages of Hungarian, Polish, and Italian peoples, and documents other language curricula that were introduced into the common school, including Polish, Italian, Czech, Norwegian, French, Spanish, and Dutch, among others.

However, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Dicker (1996) reports, the English-speaking population became increasingly concerned with the increase of linguistic diversity in
the United States. The Edwards law in Illinois (1889) and the Bennett bill in Wisconsin (1889) attempted to prohibit instruction in languages other than English in both public and private schools. One state made teaching German illegal, one made speaking German in public a punishable offense (Dicker, 1996). In 1917, as the United States entered the conflict of World War I, and thus German became the “enemy’s language,” the anti-German sentiment escalated to the level of hysteria. In 1923, the Supreme Court finally overturned the laws that made teaching non-English languages illegal.

Language education, and specifically foreign-language education, continues to be seen in modern times through two lenses simultaneously, both as a necessity to protect a nation’s interests and, paradoxically, as a threat to a nation. For example, in referring to the study of Arabic in Israel, Brosh (1993) notes: “Arabic is perceived as inherently connected to an ill-esteemed, dangerous, and hostile collective. As a result, the language is perceived as a marker of inferiority, and possessing it could be a source of negative gratification” (p. 355).

As we work our way through 2010, we note that projections indicate that by the year 2040 the number of non–English speakers in the United States will have climbed to 98.7 million, or 28% of the population (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1995). Foreign language educators have rediscovered our connections to the historical patterns of immigration as we have increased attention of late to the language learning of first-, second-, and subsequent generation non-English speakers:

For those of us committed to the goal of preserving our nation’s rich linguistic heritage, the times are at once troubling and hopeful. At the same time that a well-organized and highly publicized English-only movement has rolled back bilingual education in California and Arizona, grassroots efforts are quietly underway in ethnic communities, schools, and colleges to preserve what language educators call heritage languages—the non-English languages spoken by newcomers and indigenous peoples. (Kreeft Peyton, Ranard & McGinnis, 2001, p. 3)

In foreign language classrooms, it is not uncommon to hear the term “heritage language learner” (HLL) in conversations connected to pedagogical challenges. In much the same way that citizens saw Germans as a challenge to “American” society a century ago, foreign language instructors at all levels have asked themselves how to integrate students of a “foreign” language, who already have some knowledge of the language. A rather neatly organized curriculum based on a homogenous group of students is threatened by a diverse group of students with various levels of skills in the language in question. These challenges mainly are practical in nature and are concerned with pedagogical aspects.

Lately, however, more often than not, we are also discussing the opportunities that HLLs offer. Government agencies hope to produce foreign-language speakers of critical languages faster and more efficiently by recruiting HLLs (e.g., Halam Sweley, 2006 ) to bolster efforts at national defense and expanding global markets. Almost three decades ago for example, The President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies suggested that “the
nation was in serious trouble in terms of the second language competence of its citizenry” (Omaggio, 1986, p. 10). In *Strength Through Wisdom* (1979), the commission concluded that “American’s incompetence in foreign languages is nothing short of scandalous” (p. 12). These concerns have been tied specifically to defense and economic needs:

> The president’s commission believes that our lack of foreign language competence diminishes our capabilities in diplomacy, in foreign trade, and in citizen comprehension of the world in which we live and compete. . . . Nothing less is at issue than the nation’s security. At a time when the resurgent forces of nationalism and of ethnic and linguistic consciousness so directly affect global realities, the United States requires far more reliable capacities to communicate with its allies, analyze the behavior of potential adversaries, and earn the trust and sympathies of the uncommitted. Yet, there is a widening gap between these trends and the American competence to understand and deal successfully with other peoples in a world of flux. (*Strength Through Wisdom*, 1979, p. 11)

Many are looking to HLLs to address this major deficiency in our nation’s language assets, and all the more so since the tragedies of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent military action. Applied linguists and educators as well point to the importance of addressing the HLL as a field in research (e.g., Lynch, 2003; 2008; Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003). Administrators of world language programs at all levels try to respond to the increasing demand for languages traditionally considered “less commonly taught” (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007; Welles, 2002). This demand for a greater variety of languages is often initiated by HLLs.

The focus of this article is to explore how attitudes toward HLLs have changed, both with regard to program development and in learning and teaching. We will use two examples of heritage language learning to point to the importance of the specific context of each language when it comes to language policies. Finally, we will report from research in language teaching and linguistics that indicates that the attitude toward heritage language learning has also changed in these areas. Rather than providing a comprehensive review of existing literature, we chose to use few select examples to show this shift in attitude toward the HLL.

There are numerous discussions around the nomenclature and definition of HLL. As Baker and Jones (1998) point out, the term *heritage* itself is problematic, as it can be considered to refer to something not contemporary (see Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003 for a discussion of the definition of HLL). Considering “English only” movements and thereby a suppression of languages other than English, any heritage other than English can also be seen in a negative light. Lynch (2003) discusses another problem that is linked to terminology used with HLLs, namely the difficulty of linking proficiency with the term heritage speaker, which has implications for the context of teaching HLLs and foreign language learners. In the context of Spanish, Lynch (2003) describes this common problem:

> A heritage learner (HL) of Spanish is generally considered to be someone born and educated entirely in the United States, whose family members use Spanish
restrictedly. The term “heritage” learner should not invoke lesser or greater
degree of bilingual competence through classifications such as “second,” “third,” or
“fourth” generation. (p. 30)

Attempts at easy classification of HLLs often fail and discourage either HLLs, second-language
learners (SLLs) or both. Lee (2005) shows that even a differentiation between heritage and non-
heritage speakers is not as simple as it would seem. In the current article, we include the variety
of HLLs and call for an approach that takes into consideration each specific case in its own
context. Therefore, we also adopt Van Deusen-Scholl’s (2003) inclusion of heritage learners and
learners with a heritage motivation.

Heritage learners are students who have been exposed to another language in the
home and have either attained some degree of bilingual proficiency or have been
raised with a strong cultural connection to a particular language through family
interaction. Learners with a heritage motivation—sometimes labeled pejoratively
as heritage seekers—may perceive a cultural connection that is more distant than
that of, for example, first- or second-generation immigrants. (Van Deusen-Scholl,
2003, p. 222)

Researchers have also emphasized the multifaceted nature of heritage language
acquisition (HLA) (e.g., Lynch, 2008; Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003). Questions of importance include
but are not restricted to: What is the (historical) background of the speakers of the language and
their relationship to the USA? When did the immigration occur? How was/is the immigrant
group perceived by the dominant group in the USA? What was/is the current political trend with
regard to “foreign policy”? What was/is the current trend in language policy? What were/are the
theories and methodologies available in second language acquisition (SLA)? What were/are the
financial and political realities of educational institutions with regard to language instruction?
How can foreign-language education incorporate the political and social realities of the United
States into the curriculum at different levels of instruction and in the various educational
contexts?

A brief overview of heritage language learning in the United States helps illustrate how
attitudes to the HLL have been influenced by some of the factors mentioned above but also other
factors specific to a particular HL. We will then take a closer look at two examples of heritage
languages and their development in the United States.

Fishman (2001) divides the over-three-century-long history of heritage language
teaching in the United States in three main categories, (a) indigenous heritage languages, (b)
colonial heritage languages, and (c) immigrant heritage languages. According to Fishman (2001),
the number of Amerindians studying their respective indigenous languages is now higher than
ever:

The combination of Indian primum mobile (they were here first) and mainstream
guilt feelings over past injustices to Indians have finally resulted in much greater
language consciousness among Amerindians themselves and more sympathy
among mainstream authorities and foundations for Amerindian heritage education. It is unfortunate that we often wait until matters become extreme before paying attention to them and taking ameliorative steps that are in everyone’s best interest. (p. 83)

The ambiguity towards HL preservation becomes especially clear in the case of Amerindian heritage. Fishman (p. 83) elaborates further that there is a lack of “mainstream conviction that Amerindian societies that preserve their own languages are better off—richer, healthier, less dislocated, less alienated and hopeless, and therefore, less problem-prone.” Rather, he credits the Amerindian efforts for the revival of Amerindian HL education. Even though the case of Amerindian struggles to preserve their heritage is unique in the history of the United States, other language groups faced problems as well.

Fishman (2001, p. 84) reports that among the colonial heritage languages, languages such as Swedish, Finish, and Welsh have not been transmitted as a mother tongue and their only reminders are place names. Speakers of French, German, and Spanish have not been more successful in the transmission of their heritage languages. German is the exception in its “Pennsylvanian German incarnation . . . [that] holds the distinction of being the only colonial language with an uninterrupted, though not completely unaltered, tradition of heritage language community life and, therefore, of heritage schooling in the United States” (Fishman, 2001, p. 84). Fishman emphasizes that this was only possible due to the immense efforts of the community to preserve their heritage rather than as a result of mainstream support.

Immigrant heritage languages, the third and last group of heritage languages mentioned by Fishman (2001), face an even more problematic situation because they do not have the two characteristics of indigenous languages (prima mobile and sympathies due to guilt) and are often not major languages with regard to number of speakers. An important factor for whether a language is adopted in the educational system is the social/political/instrumental value of the heritage language. For example, similar to Russian in the Sputnik era, after 9/11 Arabic was considered a “critical language” for the safety of the United States. As such, speaking the language was considered a plus. State agencies posted ads in search of heritage speakers of critical languages, considering heritage speakers of critical languages as opportunity to gain higher proficiency in the foreign language faster, and also because of the value of cultural competencies.

Meanwhile, DoD is reaching out to the nation’s heritage communities and informing them of opportunities to serve. On the civilian side of this effort, National Language Flagship Program initiatives allow students to progress from elementary school through high school with more advanced levels of language proficiency in strategic languages such as Arabic, Hindi and Urdu.

On the military side, the Army last month activated its first company of native linguists-turned-soldiers, which represent the service’s newest job: 09L, referred to as “09 Limas.” This new military occupation employs heritage speakers as
interpreters and translators, representing a new phase in the service’s reinvigorated approach to foreign language. (Kruzel, 2008; ¶ 7, 8)

On the other hand, any person with an “Arabic heritage” appearance was potentially considered a threat to national security, as reports of discrimination against Muslims showed (e.g., Elias, 2006). Even though Arabic-language programs boomed all over the country, the motivation to study Arabic was often closely linked to instrumental reasons, again an example of ambiguity with regard to HL education.

We now share a couple of examples of HL, namely Korean and Spanish, in order to examine the role different contexts play. In both languages, interest in learning the HL has grown in the past years. However, additional factors, such as an increased participation of the government of the origin of the heritage language, are also important factors that can influence whether a language experiences increased interest and funding, which in turn determines whether HLLs have an opportunity to learn their HL or not.

In the first example, Byon (2008) examines the reasons that the development of Korean started slowly in the 1940s, but since the late 1970s had a “period of rapid growth” and strong Korean-language programs at all levels of education.

Recent growth is attributed to three main factors: the increasing visibility of South Korea on the international stage, greater number of Korean immigrants in the USA, and increasing involvement of the Korean government in the teaching of Korean internationally. (p. 244)

The increasing visibility of South Korea certainly is related to the enormous economic growth the country has experienced since the mid-1960s. Massive Korean immigration waves since the 1960s have further created need for Korean heritage language programs. Finally, Byon notes, the Korean government engaged in efforts to teach Korean, resulting in a number of organizations fostering Korean-language instruction internationally. In addition, U.S. foreign-language policies and the status of Korean as a critical language has provided opportunities for institutions to build Korean programs.

However, the growth of Korean language programs needs to be regarded in context. More institutions teaching the language may do so (and often do) only at the beginning levels (the first two years). Another noteworthy feature of Korean as an example, is that according to Byon’s (2008) research, due to the high heritage speaker proportion of Korean language students most of the postsecondary Korean-language programs cater to heritage language students rather than students who have no prior knowledge of the language. However, Byon also found an increasing number of non-heritage students in Korean courses in his research and points to the necessity of addressing pedagogical issues and problems arising from heritage and non-heritage learners attending the same classes.

In the case of Spanish, Lynch (2003) attributes changes in heritage language acquisition (HLA) to changes on the “internal, professional level” and the “external, social level” (p. 26). This
researcher explains that the external changes were the massive immigration waves of Spanish speakers from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. What followed were increased efforts by lobbyists in the 1990s that eventually led to a very strong English-only movement, resulting in California and Massachusetts abolishing bilingual education. Despite these movements, enrollments in Spanish-language programs by heritage and non-heritage language speakers have experienced a steady growth (e.g., Brod & Welles, 2000; Lynch, 2003 Welles, 2002). Again, this growth of Spanish language programs does not come without problems. Lynch (2003) summarizes one aspect:

> At a time in U.S. education when general interest in humanities is waning, one might think that the extraordinary growth experienced by Spanish language programs would be welcomed. But at many postsecondary institutions, the increasing popularity of Spanish among undergraduate students has not been met with open arms by some colleagues and administrators in humanities units. (p. 27)

This may be in part due to the lack of positions provided for Spanish departments to meet the growing need, which puts more burden on instructors in such programs because they cannot spend as much time on their research and professional development. Moreover, one could conceivably imagine tensions that could result from much higher numbers in one language program compared to other language programs in the same unit.

The examples of Korean and Spanish provide a glimpse into the many different situations heritage language programs face. In these examples, we only considered a few of the factors that play an important role, including, (a) the level of the heritage language without consideration of these languages in each specific context, such as the geographical region, language policies in the state and at local level, (b) the attitude towards the heritage language and the speakers of the heritage language in the specific community of the program, and (c) the financial situation of language programs.

Let us now take a look at some of the challenges and opportunities of heritage language education at the programmatic level as well as at the practical level of teaching HLLs in the classroom. The first challenge is to provide opportunities for HLLs to indeed be able to learn their language. Success of putting language programs in place that can serve HLLs depends on the many factors mentioned above, such as attitudes of the stakeholders involved in making foreign language policy and program decisions, the status of the HL in a certain community, the instrumental value of the language, and, currently, the omnipresent budget crisis that has proven to be especially detrimental to language programs. Once language programs are in place, another obvious challenge is the question of how to place and teach heritage language learners. This is a question that influences heritage language learning both at the programmatic as well as the teaching level. Many world language programs responded to the large numbers of HLLs by creating classes especially for “natives” or “bilinguals.” As Lynch (2003) indicates, HLLs might actually shy away from enrolling in classes with bilingual or native in their titles because they do not feel that they know enough of the language to be considered bilingual or native. Lee (2005) provides a compelling argument for further investigation of learners in a classroom.
Pedagogically, instructors need to be aware that the categories of heritage and non-heritage language learners are not mutually exclusive and be prepared to recognize and address the “heritage-like” needs and goals of their non-heritage language learner group and the “non-heritage-like” needs of their heritage language learner group. The study points towards the need to broaden our understanding of the division between the two categories of heritage and non-heritage learners as a crucial first step in reconfiguring the development of student-centered pedagogical strategies by recognizing the range of individual variations that learners bring. (p 562)

Resulting questions/challenges include: How can we best make use of what HLLs already know? How can we address their specific needs, which might vary significantly from one HL student to the next, especially when they are in the same course with foreign-language students? Lynch (2008, p. 270), who conducted a study in which he compared low-proficiency Spanish-heritage students with SL students, found striking similarities between the two groups, concluding, “It seems, in sum, that there is no compelling reason to assume a priori that the outcome of acquisition of specific linguistic features by Spanish heritage learners is—or somehow must be—very distinct from the outcome of second language learners who reach more advanced stages of Spanish L2 learning.”

The challenge of classifying HLLs leads to opportunities within SLA research and education. Whereas in the past heritage language learning was generally considered a challenge, the field is now starting to address the opportunities that an exploration of heritage language learning offers not only to itself but generally to furthering our knowledge of how we learn languages. Valdés (2005) argues for a reconceptualization of SLA, specifically, the inclusion of research in heritage language learning rather than merely investigating the study of a second or foreign language:

Expanding SLA to engage in the study of the possible results of L1 instruction for students who have already acquired some competence in this language bridges the distance between language education and a research field. Experience in attempting to teach the L1 to speakers who use the language in their everyday lives raises key questions that directly complement interests in L2 acquisition that have shaped the field. These questions include variability in learner language, the significance of learner error, the impact of input and interaction, language transfer, the characteristics of learner systems at different points in the acquisition/reacquisition/development process and, perhaps most important, the impact of formal instruction on the reacquisition/development of language. (p. 423)

In other words, Valdés points to the fact that we can apply what we learn from studying heritage language learning to research in second language acquisition. Similarly, we know from experience that HLLs can indeed have advantages learning a language and can also be extremely helpful if they are integrated in a community of language learners in which they can benefit from...
their strengths and share these positive aspects with their peers while at the same time being made aware of their individual challenges.

**Conclusion**

In this article we have provided a glimpse into the complexity of issues involved in heritage language learning. We see it as our task as educators, administrators, and learners of languages to consider all aspects involved in shaping the specific context of each HLL before we make curricular, programmatic, or language policy decisions. We call for the inclusion of an open discourse between all parties involved, such as the community in the specific areas in which the question of learning a heritage language is posed, the HLL community, policy makers, administrators, and educators. An important aspect in this discussion is an awareness of the ambiguity that has always been connected to heritage language programs. HLLs have often been considered a “problem” in the classroom rather than a challenge that also presents opportunities. Moreover, even when languages clearly have an instrumental value, they still suffer from a negative image, as for example a threat to the nation (Brosh, 1993). Disregarding these ambiguities constitutes a disservice to HLLs as well as foreign-language learners since we neither can benefit from the resources for language and culture learning and teaching already available in our communities nor make sure that HLLs do not lose their heritage altogether out of fear and ignorance of the parties involved. In an era in which bi- and multilingualism and bi- and multiculturalism become desirable again, we do well celebrating diversity and gaining from its resources through developing research and outreach programs.

**References**


**Notes**

1 We have chosen to use the term “foreign language” in recognition of the problems with that term. Non-English languages are no more foreign to the United States or to citizens in the United States than English. “Foreign,” however, is more readily recognized as a descriptor of the field and serves as a reminder of the work to be done.

2 DoD stands for “Department of Defense,” which has played an important role in the development of foreign language policies.
The Development of the Bilingual Special Education Field:
Major Issues, Accomplishments, Future Directions, and Recommendations

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In this paper, we review various challenges in regard to educating children with and without disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. The challenges discussed include (1) biased assessment that results in mis- or overrepresenting CLD students in special education, (2) difficulty distinguishing between disability and differences, and (3) lack of competent bilingual special educators. As recommended practices, we propose to use the response to intervention model in identifying and instructing CLD children with and without disabilities. We point out that future research should examine how collaborative service delivery models contribute to referrals of CLD children into special education and the instruction of these children. Future research should also focus on how to expand teachers' knowledge about both the sociocultural and learning contexts to aid in producing positive outcomes for CLD children both with and without disabilities.

The field of bilingual special education is a relatively young field that began in the early 1970s. The significant catalysts in the emergence of bilingual special education were two federal legislations: P. L. 94-142 and P. L. 90-247 along with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Lau v. Nichols. As categorized by Baca and Cervantes (1989), the development of this field can be divided into three periods: (1) The awareness phase from 1970 to 1975, (2) the program development phase from 1975 to 1985, and (3) the program refinement and institutionalization phase from 1985 to 1989. The first phase seemed to focus on raising the awareness and issues and on calling attention to the need for the field. The second period witnessed the development of initial research programs with an emphasis on nonbiased assessment. During the latter part of the second period, the provision of appropriate bilingual services to students with limited English proficiency and with disabilities began. During the third period, bilingual special education teacher training received considerable attention.

In this paper, we focus on the needs of English language learners (ELLs) who are learning English as a second language. They are a part of a student population from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. The initial purpose of the development of bilingual special education was aimed to address the needs of ELLs with disabilities. However, this
program inadvertently may have been used as a dumping ground for many ELLs. Professionals were not familiar with or did not know how to work with the ELL students. This also happened to many other children who were misplaced in special education. Although bilingual special education seems to be the interface between bilingual education and special education, simply combining these two fields is not adequate and cannot address the complexity of this field (Collier, 1989). Many issues cut across different disciplines such as English as a second language (ESL), psychology, special education, bilingual education, literacy education, etc. As this field continues to evolve, many old and new controversial issues and challenges still confront educators, related service professionals, researchers, and policy makers.

In this review, we will discuss several challenges and accomplishments regarding the education of ELLs. To forge further development of the field, we propose future endeavors and directions for practice, professional development, and research. The major issues discussed about the education of ELLs include the achievement gap, the underachievement of certain CLD students in schools and school failure, and the overrepresentation of certain CLD students in special education, especially in high-incidence disabilities. While most of the literature focuses on overrepresentation, a small portion of the literature sheds light on underrepresentation of CLD students in gifted education. In addition, the current literature seems to focus on an elementary student population with little attention to young children and secondary students from CLD backgrounds and their families.

In the final section we propose some suggestions for the improvement of services to CLD students in the areas of assessment, disability versus difference, and teacher competencies. In addition, we highlight innovative efforts in the field including culturally and linguistically responsive instruction, service delivery models, such as response to intervention, early intervention and prevention, and research.

### Issues and Challenges

#### Assessment

Assessment, in education, refers to collecting data on students through formal and informal tests, interviews, and observations. Assessment serves various purposes, including screening, diagnosis, progress monitoring, and outcome measuring. That is, assessment is used to identify students who may have academic and social/behavioral issues, to determine educational placements, and to monitor progress towards behavior and academic goals. To accomplish these purposes, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 stipulates that assessment instruments and methods used with CLD students must be nonbiased and nondiscriminatory. Schools that have received federal, state, and local funding must provide and administer assessments in the student’s native language as well as assess for cultural and linguistic backgrounds that could impact the performance of students (López, 2003). Federal
regulations further require that schools gather evidence on and monitor the progress of these students.

Assessment has been an essential educational practice; however, there have been numerous issues regarding assessing students that are often complex with no simple solutions (Thurlow, Nelson, Teelucksingh, & Draper, 2001). School professionals have frequently been blamed for being biased. Such bias results in misidentification and overrepresentation of CLD students in special education. Using data from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Kindergarten, Cohort, Samson and Lesaux (2009) offered a revealing finding on the issue of teacher bias. CLD students were underrepresented in special education in kindergarten and first grade, but they began to be overrepresented in third grade across all disability categories. They further reported regression analysis that indicated that teacher ratings of language and literacy skills, and reading proficiency were the two significant predictors of placement in special education. This finding illustrates the prominence of language-based skills in the identification process. It also suggests how teachers might contribute to the identification process of special education for CLD students.

It is common knowledge among researchers and practitioners that African-American students have been disproportionally diagnosed with intellectual disability or emotional/behavior disorder as have Native Americans with learning disabilities. Although it is unclear exactly what shapes the overrepresentation of certain racial groups and specific placement patterns, the use of inappropriate assessment in special education eligibility determination is largely responsible for it. For example, the majority of the standardized testing materials are developed in English based on White Anglo cultural practices without taking into consideration various cultural and linguistic differences. When these tests are given to students whose primary language is other than English, the results of those tests will create significant biases against ELLs. García and Pearson (1994) described at least three potential biases that standardized tests can have for ELLs in the following paragraph:

[1] a norming bias (small numbers of particular minorities included in probability samples, increasing the likelihood their minority group samples are unrepresentative), [2] content bias (test content and procedures reflecting the dominant culture’s standards of language function and shared knowledge and behavior), and [3] linguistic and cultural biases (factors that adversely affect the formal test performance of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including timed testing, difficulty with English vocabulary, and the near impossibility of determining what bilingual students know in their two languages) (p. 343–349).

The Diana versus State of Board of Education (1970) case in California was one in which the use of formal tests to place students in special education was challenged. Diana, a Spanish-speaking student was diagnosed with mental retardation due to her low score on an IQ test given to her in English and consequently placed in a class for students with mental retardation. The
court ruled that Spanish-speaking children should be given a test in their native language and schools are required to use nonverbal tests and other extensive data necessary to justify special education placement. This was the first court case that admitted that formal tests can be biased against ELLs. For approximately four decades since the Diana versus State of Board of Education case, the use of inappropriate assessment materials has continued. This issue has been well acknowledged in several recent nation-wide surveys in that speech and language pathologists reported the needs for nonbiased assessment methods and materials for use with CLD students (Kritikos, 2003; Roseberry-McKibbin & O’Hanlon, 2005).

The way that tests are administered can also contribute to overrepresentation of CLD students in special education. Schools, particularly those in urban settings, are often understaffed and lack qualified professionals to conduct assessments. Consequently, they handle more assessments than they are supposed to and make placement decisions without sufficient information gathering (Harry & Klingner, 2007). When a student speaks a primary language other than English or is from a diverse cultural background, the assessment procedures become more complex and require more time. Although interviews or observations are excellent ways to obtain culturally specific insights about the student being assessed, urban professionals do not fully take advantage of these data collection methods because of lack of resources such as time and trained professionals. Furthermore, the majority of testing in schools is administered by monolingual English-speaking professionals. Roseberry-McKibbin and Eicholtz (1994) stated that the number of CLD students has significantly increased, but the number of bilingual/bicultural professionals has not appreciably increased over the last several decades. For example, New York State Intensive Teacher Institute reported that the state’s personnel shortage in bilingual special education for the 2006-2007 academic year was approximately 20% (Intensive Teacher Institute, 2009). Furthermore, a recent nation-wide survey found that only 37% of special educators had any formal training in second-language acquisition (Mueller, Singer, & Carranza, 2006). No study thus far examines the extent to which general educators and other related professionals had formal training of this kind. Providing intense training to more English-speaking professionals in second-language acquisition and cultural differences of ELLs may be one effective way to decrease overrepresentation of CLD students in special education. The more understanding of linguistic and cultural differences professionals develop, the more they will practice culturally and linguistically responsive assessments.

Compared to low-incidence disabilities, overidentification of CLD students occurs more in high-incidence disabilities. Researchers in the field strongly agree that identifying high-incidence disabilities is a subjective and ambiguous process because definitions of these disabilities are vague and controversial (MacSwan, Rolstad, & Glass, 2002; Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). This subjective disability identification process, with the historical devaluation of CLD groups in the U.S. educational system has strongly influenced special education placements (Harry & Klingner, 2007).
In reducing biases from standardized assessments, many alternative assessments have been proposed to either replace or supplement standardized assessments. The response to intervention (RTI) model is an alternative assessment and instructional/intervention approach to be used with ELLs, which will be described in depth later in this article. Throughout the RTI process, ongoing screening and assessment is provided to identify and prevent risk factors and learning and behavioral problems. Although RTI has been perceived as a promising approach, little is known about whether or not RTI can positively reduce the disproportional representation of CLD students in special education. In using RTI model, it is worth keeping in mind a wise caution provided by Klingner, Artiles, and Barletta (2006) that CLD students’ opportunities to learn may be compromised and they may still be overrepresented in special education, unless evidence-based interventions that take into consideration appropriate assessments and interventions specifically for CLD students are employed.

Disability and differences

Historically, a common disability with which CLD students have been diagnosed is a language-related disorder (Roseberry-McKibbin & O’Hanlon, 2005). The fact that a student does not use Standard English in school does not mean that he or she has a language disorder. Therefore, a student who can effectively communicate in his or her primary language should not be considered as having a language disorder. Professionals, including bilingual speech and language pathologists, often report difficulty distinguishing language differences from language disorders in ELLs (Roseberry-McKibbin & O’Hanlon, 2005). In the last two decades, attention was given to refining the understanding of professionals about language differences and disorders. For example, a useful principle for the distinction between the two is to assess the extent to which the student can communicate with his or her peers in either the primary language or English. While care must be taken not to mistake a cultural and language difference for a disorder, disorders that exist in the context of a language and cultural difference must not be overlooked (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2009). In the 1990s, some guidelines were drafted to determine whether or not a CLD student may have a language-related disability (Roseberry-McKibbin, 1995, p. 14):

- Can not express basic needs.
- Can give appropriate responses during conversation or to questions.
- Does not stay on task.
- Has a word-find problem (skills differ from peers who are ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages]).
- Has difficulty taking turns during conversations or class discussions, such as interrupting or failing to contribute.
- Inappropriately continues on a topic after conversation or discussion has moved on.
- Does not ask or answer questions appropriately (skills differ from peers who are ESOL).
- Avoids verbal exchanges with peers and teachers.
• Responds nonverbally (or uses gestures) when a spoken response is appropriate.
• Is not understood by peers.
• Requires many repetitions of conversations, questions, or directions.
• Frequently repeats what is heard.

When a CLD student exhibits many of these behaviors, the student can be suspected of having a language-related disability, thus he or she should be referred for further evaluation using informal and formal assessments (Roseberry-McKibbin, 1995).

Bilingual special education teacher competencies

Scholarly literature has indicated that having a highly qualified teacher can greatly contribute to a student’s success. In many instances, we have anecdotal records reporting the teacher’s contribution to the success of ELLs. However, there is minimal or no empirical research documenting and validating this. More evidence-based research is greatly needed in documenting teacher competencies and effectiveness with ELLs. Currently, the teaching force does not appear to reflect the diversity of the demographics, nor are teachers well prepared to work with ELLs with and without disabilities (García & Guerra, 2004; García & Ortiz, 2006).

Since the early 1980s, the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education has funded personnel training programs for preparing bilingual special education teachers, and a few researchers began to outline competencies required of bilingual special education teachers (Baca & Cervantes, 1989; Collier, 1989). Collier pointed out that the interface approach of bilingual- and special education fields was not sufficient. Training for bilingual special educators requires carefully articulated and planned integration of these two and other related fields in order to result in an innovative and unique knowledge base for bilingual special education. Baca and Amato (1989) described these competencies as follows:

1. The desire to work with the culturally and linguistically different exceptional child.
2. The ability to work effectively with parents of these students.
3. The ability to develop appropriate individual educational plans (IEPs) for these students.
4. Knowledge and sensitivity toward the language and the culture of the group to be served.
5. The ability to teach English as a second language to the students.
6. The ability to conduct nonbiased assessment with culturally and linguistically different exceptional students.
7. The ability to use appropriate methods and materials when working with these students (p. 169).

After three decades, it seems that the field is still short-staffed of bilingual special educators both at the pre-service and in-service levels (Artiles & Klingner, 2006; Ortiz, 2002). In addition, professional development of in-service bilingual special educators alone will not contribute to system-wide change to respond to the needs of ELLs with and without special
needs (García & Guerra, 2004; García & Ortiz, 2006). Several researchers pointed out that effective training for educators working with ELLs requires cultural self-awareness, attitudes/expectations, beliefs, knowledge, and skills, including an increased understanding of sociocultural influences on teaching and learning, as well as the sociopolitical contexts of education (García & Guerra, 2004; García & Ortiz, 2006; Lynch & Hanson, 1998). Given the emphasis on shared responsibility for all students, school-wide professional development should strive for culturally and linguistically responsive and competent practice. Building upon the previous literature, García and Ortiz (2006) have suggested that the following topics and competencies be emphasized in professional development for educators:

- Cultural influences on children’s socialization at home and at school.
- First and second language acquisition and dialectal differences.
- Instructional strategies that promote proficiency in first and second languages/dialects.
- Characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy.
- Culturally responsive curricula for literacy development, academic content, and social skills.
- Culturally-responsive classroom and behavior management strategies.
- Informal assessment strategies to monitor student progress.
- Building positive relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse families and communities. (p. 66)

The competencies outlined above do not include competencies required for educators to work with ELLs with special needs. What must be included are topics and competencies such as (a) the view of diversity and disability, (b) interplay between disability and poverty, (c) instructional and assessment practices for CLD students with special needs, and (d) the ability to interpret various assessment data for making instructional, interventional, and eligibility decisions (Artiles & Klingner, 2006; Ortiz, 2002). These competencies are important for educators to support ELLs with academic difficulties or disabilities. The convergence of findings indicates that in order to serve ELLs with academic difficulties and/or with disabilities, they all need culturally and linguistically responsive instruction, response to intervention, and effective early intervention strategies.

Service delivery models

As mentioned elsewhere, culturally and linguistically responsive practice, the newly proposed service-delivery model called response to intervention (RTI), and effective early prevention and intervention have the potential to address the challenges facing the education of ELLs with and without disabilities. However, this could only take place if these models/approaches are implemented effectively, collaboratively, and systematically. ESL teachers, bilingual teachers, school psychologists, and special education teachers need to collaboratively implement these models to the best interests of ELLs.
Culturally and linguistically responsive instruction. Researchers have identified the importance of cultural and linguistic responsiveness in the teaching and learning process (Cummins, 1986; Ortiz, 2002; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). In other words, educators must ensure that students’ sociocultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and other relevant backgrounds are addressed when identifying reasons for academic difficulty or failure, designing interventions, monitoring student performance, and interpreting assessment results. They also pointed out that these elements need to be in place when designing culturally and linguistically responsive service delivery models.

First, educators and other related service personnel believe in and create a positive school culture in which all students can learn and be successful. This means that they need to have high expectations for all students. For ELLs with and without disabilities, an additive view of culture and language, and a focus on designing and providing inclusive learning environments that help them develop bilingual/bicultural competence is critical (Cummins, 1986). Second, curricula and instruction need to consider and build on students’ prior sociocultural and linguistic knowledge and experiences (i.e., their strengths and available resources). Classroom instruction should be comprehensible for the sociocultural relevance and language and content through the use of thematic instruction, guided participation (Rogoff, 1990), and instructional mediation using a variety of scaffolding techniques (García & Ortiz, 2006; Santamaria, Fletcher, & Bos, 2002). Third, these programs are academically rich and challenging (i.e., focus on higher order thinking and problem-solving in addition to basic skills). Students are provided with high-quality instruction by highly qualified educators and related service personnel (García & Ortiz, 2006). Lastly, parents/family members are seen as valuable resources instead of problems or barriers, and as partners in supporting and promoting academic progress (García, Wilkinson, & Ortiz, 1995). Teachers work closely with parents and other family members to form a posture of cultural reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). These messages and efforts can help to develop mutual trust and respect, in which CLD families are more likely to actively participate and contribute to the success of their children (García & Ortiz, 2006).

Response to Intervention. RTI emerged originally from the mainstream educational field. It is a multi-tier comprehensive approach, including screening to identify academic difficulties at an early stage and providing high-quality instruction to all students in the general education setting (Tier 1), providing those identified students with double-dose interventions (Tier 2), and providing more intensive individualized intervention (Tier 3 and/or Tier 4).

RTI requires screening all children early in order to identify those with academic difficulties and those who do not respond to high quality classroom instruction. Then those identified will be provided with different levels of support via the use of research- or evidence-based instruction or intervention and the student progress monitoring (Batsche et al., 2005). RTI has the potential to support ELLs, many of whom are at risk for academic difficulties or failure (Brown & Doolittle, 2008). All ELLs need to be provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate instruction regardless of their educational setting. When applying the multi-tier RTI
system, Brown and Dolittle suggested that all students including ELLs be provided with high-quality and evidence-based instruction in the general education classroom, which is also referred to as Tier 1 instruction or intervention.

At Tier 1 of the RTI model, ELLs need to receive effective evidence-based literacy instruction in mainstream, bilingual, and ESL classrooms. A growing body of research on effective reading and literacy instruction for ELLs with and without disabilities has been developed (Artiles & Klingner, 2006), however not all ELLs have received appropriate reading and literacy instruction. One of the major reasons is that most mainstream teachers lack the training and expertise in teaching reading, literacy, and content areas to ELLs. In addition, many professionals (mainstream, bilingual, and ESL teachers) have great difficulty differentiating between a language difference and learning disability as indicated earlier (Collier, 2001; Klingner et al. 2006; Ortiz, 1997). There is a great need for all educators to have knowledge in first and second language acquisition and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, and they need to work with specialists with expertise to differentiate language differences from disabilities (Brown & Doolittle, 2008). They also need to know the levels of language development and proficiency in their first and second language and they need to provide culturally responsive curricula and pedagogy that consider ELLs’ backgrounds and experiences.

The progress of ELLs needs to be closely monitored for professionals to make decisions about whether or not they are meeting predetermined benchmarks or goals. Teachers, at the same time, need to modify their instruction and use different instructional strategies including re-teaching, small-group instruction, and peer tutoring to help those who are not making the targeted gains. If some of the ELLs continue to struggle after using evidence-based instruction and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, they may need Tier 2 supplemental support.

ELLs who are not making targeted gains need to be referred for Tier 2 support, meaning that they will receive Tier 2 instruction or intervention from specialists (i.e., reading specialist, ESL reading recovery teacher, special education teacher) in a small-group setting besides general education curriculum. It is a “double-dose” intervention approach geared toward helping ELLs reach the goals identified by Tier 1 screening (Brown & Doolittle, 2008, p. 68).

If those students do not make adequate progress or fail to respond to the double-dose interventions provided at Tier 2, they will be referred for more intensive interventions delivered in small-groups or individually for Tier 3 interventions. This stage can be either considered as a special education service-delivery stage (Tier 3) or as a stage for making eligibility decisions for special education services and then moving toward special education service delivery (Tier 4) (Brown & Dolittle, 2008).

It is critical that assessment, instruction, and progress monitoring are interconnected, and professionals collaborate closely to support and address the individual needs of the students including ELLs with and without disabilities. It is the hope that through RTI, students who
struggle can be identified early and supported before falling through the cracks (Brown & Dolittle, 2008).

*Early Intervention for ELLs with and without Disabilities.* Cummins (1989) stated that educators need to challenge and refine their roles if they want to successfully prevent academic difficulties, underachievement, and failure of CLD students. He suggested that professionals and schools stop viewing CLD students from a deficit perspective and they need to use an empowerment and advocacy approach by integrating the following:

1. Minority students’ language and culture are incorporated into the school program.
2. Minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children’s education.
3. The pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of students to use language actively to generate their own knowledge.
4. Professionals involved in assessment become advocates for minority students by focusing primarily on the ways in which students’ academic difficulty is a function of interactions within the school context rather than legitimizing the location of the “problem” within students. (p.113–114)

Educators who value and reinforce students’ first language and add a second language and cultural affiliation to their repertoires (i.e., cultural assets, or funds of knowledge) in the process of preparing and assimilating them to the new culture and language will find more success in working with the ELLs. Cummins (1989) suggested that the major goal of early intervention is to prevent academic failure, dropout rates, and misdiagnosis and misplacement. He argued that traditional ways of using a deficit approach by identifying the students’ cognitive deficits, using drilling for lower-level skills, and passive transmission pedagogy led to only failure. Instead, using a transactional approach by empowering students through an emphasis on first language (L1) promotion and on developing students’ sense of cultural pride, and involving CLD families and communities requires a considerable change in professionals’ role redefinition and change. Special suggestions include:

- Genuine dialogue between student and teacher in both oral and written modalities.
- Guidance and facilitation, rather than control of student learning by the teacher.
- Encouragement of student-to-student talk in a collaborative learning context.
- Encouragement of meaningful language use by students, rather than correctness of surface forms.
- Conscious integration of language use and development with all curricular content, rather than teaching language and other content as isolated subjects.
- A focus on developing higher level cognitive skills, rather than factual recall.
- Task presentation that generates intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, motivation. (Cummins, 1989, p. 115)
Prevention, pre-referral intervention, and early intervention have been interchangeably used in many situations. Fletcher, Barnes, and Francis (2002) and Ortiz (2002) pointed out that pre-referral intervention was used from 1970s because of concern about inappropriate identification and labeling of children for special education. These researchers argued that schools must be focused on preventing different types of academic and behavioral difficulties when providing pre-referral intervention. They further suggested that four key elements of culturally and linguistically responsive pre-referral intervention exist for CLD students. These elements are “(1) preventing school underachievement and failure, (2) early intervention for struggling learners, (3) diagnostic and prescriptive teaching, and (4) availability of general education problem-solving support systems” (García & Ortiz, 2006, p. 64).

The pre-referral process is often activated too late for struggling learners to be successful (García & Ortiz, 2006; Slavin & Madden, 1989). This claim is supported by the findings, referred to earlier, of a recent longitudinal study demonstrating that CLD students are underrepresented in special education in kindergarten and first grade, but they begin to be overrepresented in special education in later grades (Samson & Lesaux, 2009). We should make efforts to understand why this gap occurs and how to eliminate this gap by implementing early intervention strategies as soon as CLD students begin showing academic or behavior problems. Slavin and Madden (1989) suggest that the term early intervention be used rather than pre-referral intervention because pre-referral intervention may imply that it is a step before placement of students in special education. Timely general-education support systems (i.e., early intervention strategies or services provided in the general education classroom setting) for struggling learners are important for improving academic performance and reducing inappropriate special education referrals.

Early intervention should happen at both the classroom and school levels. At the classroom level, teachers use diagnostic and clinical teaching approaches to identify and respond to the students' learning difficulties. Diagnostic approaches can help identify students' strengths and needs. Once students' academic or behavior difficulties are identified, they need to be provided with clinical teaching. Clinical teaching is carefully sequenced instruction. Teachers (a) teach skills, subjects, or concepts; (b) re-teach students who fail to meet expected performance levels through modifications; (c) use informal assessment strategies (i.e., observation, curriculum-based assessments, etc.) to monitor students' progress (Ortiz, 2002); and (d) use these evaluation data to plan and/or modify instruction (King-Sears, Burgess, & Lawson, 1999). Assessment data, along with documentation of efforts to improve student performance and the results of these efforts, are invaluable for decisions for remedial support programs or referral to special education programs (García & Ortiz, 2006; Ortiz, 2002).

Teachers also need to have support systems available for further problem-solving if intervention at the classroom level does not work (Ortiz, 2002). They need to work with school-wide support systems, such as peer and expert consultation, general education problem-solving teams (i.e., teacher assistance teams or child study or child support teams), and alternative
programs such as those that offer tutorial or remedial instruction in the context of general education (García & Ortiz, 2006; Ortiz, 2002).

Prevention and early intervention should not discourage special education referrals. Rather, they should be used as mechanisms for improving the academic achievement of CLD students and for reducing the number of students at risk of failing, inappropriately referred to remedial or special education programs, and/or misdiagnosed as having a disability (García & Ortiz, 2006).

Research

Research in bilingual special education has paid much attention to identification and assessment while less attention has been given to effective service delivery models and practices for ELLs with disabilities. McCray and García (2002) have proposed four themes that we believe should guide researchers in this field. These themes are “(1) authenticity, legitimization, and multiplicity of voices; (2) multicultural preparation of special educators; (3) validation of culturally and linguistically responsive special education models of service delivery and pedagogy; and (4) underserved populations in special education” (p. 604). Each of them will be described in depth in the following paragraphs.

Authenticity, legitimization and multiplicity of voices

Given the specific sociocultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups represented, the sociocultural experiences, beliefs, and traditions of ELLs with and without disabilities and their families must be documented as an integral part of the bilingual special education research agenda. Theoretical models need to be developed that will help determine culturally and linguistically responsive practices, and whether, and to what extent they are relevant, to whom and how best to implement them in culturally and linguistically relevant contexts.

Similarly, we need to document the voices of practitioners (i.e., teachers, assessment personnel, counselors, administrators) who are involved in the identification, development, and implementation of educational practices. Most issues discussed in current teacher education research are related to values and assumptions, complexities, and challenges of multicultural preparation of teachers for general and special education. We also need to engage in collaborative research with practitioners (i.e., action research). Questions suggested by McCray and García (2002, p. 605) below may be excellent ones for collaborative research:

• How do we address culture, race, ethnicity, language, disability, and the interaction among these factors in special education?
• How can we fulfill the intent of IDEA and design a system that is culturally and linguistically sensitive and responsive to diversity?
• Are there general principles and guidelines that apply across and within various racial/ethnic and linguistic groups?
• What are the essential and unique characteristics within and across racial/ethnic and linguistic groups that must be addressed in service delivery in special education?
• What is the role of language in service delivery to CLD students with disabilities and their families?
• What service delivery models can be developed to deliver culturally and linguistically sensitive services to CLD students with disabilities and their families?

McCray and García (2002) and Pugach (2001) pointed out two issues that have not been addressed much in multicultural education, bilingual education, and special education: (a) the interactions between disability, culture, and language; and (b) the interplay of disability with race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and language. Specific sociocultural factors include “the family’s response to the impairment; their views and expectations about normalcy, developmental milestones, intelligence, and ability; childrearing traditions; and the linguistic characteristics of the family and community” (McCray & García, 2002, p. 608). Given these sociocultural factors then, it is critical that researchers explore and develop an understanding of the sociocultural contexts of disability and the impact of bilingual special education on student learning and performance.

**Multicultural preparation of special educator**

One of the major challenges facing the service delivery to ELLs with disabilities is that, due to the severe shortage of bilingual/bicultural special educators, they are often served in English-only settings with few or no language modifications. Similarly, language instruction provided through ESL may not be adapted in response to their disability, because few ESL personnel are familiar with modifications needed for students with disabilities (Cloud, 1993; Ortiz & García, 1990). The competencies of bilingual special education teachers listed above provided some guidelines for teacher training and professional development. However, very little research exists regarding the profiles of successful teachers of ELLs with disabilities, the process of nurturing these attributes, and the development of intercultural competence for special educators and effective teacher education programs that prepare bilingual special educators.

**Responsive special education models of service delivery and pedagogy**

The importance and components of culturally and linguistically responsive services have been documented in literature. However, there is a scarce research base in this area. Investigations are needed related to program models that will be most effective in meeting the language-development needs of students with disabilities. It would be important to explore the types of co-teaching or collaborative consultation structures that will be effective in designing the necessary adaptations for students’ educational needs based on disability, culture, and language. In addition, we do not know enough about the collaborative service-delivery models (i.e., RTI for ELLs with and without disabilities) that are developed to meet the unique needs of ELLs, especially those with disabilities.
Underserved populations in special education

Patterns of underrepresentation and underserved populations from CLD backgrounds exist. The following three groups seem to have been ignored: The first group has disability-related educational needs, but has neither been identified nor served in special education for various reasons. The reluctance of teachers and other school personnel to refer them for special education assessment and identification may be due to fear of litigation, lack of understanding of the legal guidelines related to appropriate identification and placement procedures (i.e., IDEA, 2004), lack of awareness of the students’ cultural and/or linguistic characteristics, and the complexities involved in distinguishing differences from disability. The underrepresentation of Asian-American and Latino students are at greater risk of being ignored because educators cannot distinguish characteristics of second-language acquisition from their disability-related symptoms. The second group is those in secondary education who will transition to work, community, and rehabilitation agencies. Within this group, the high dropout rate for Hispanic youth may be due to lack of appropriate educational and related services to these students. The third group includes young children with disabilities from CLD backgrounds. It is almost unknown to what extent these young children are served in early intervention and if their language and other needs are supported by educational and other related services.

Major Accomplishments and Future Directions

The last three decades have witnessed much progress as well as many challenges in the bilingual special education field. Still, much needs to be done to improve the understanding of many issues facing the field and the outcomes of the students this field serves. Legislative regulations (i.e., IDEA, No Child Left Behind) as well as the development of educational models (i.e., culturally and linguistically responsive instruction, and response to intervention) have advanced this field in comparison to other fields. These laws, policies, and initiatives have created hope that professionals will be brought together across disciplines and services to address the multilayered needs of CLD students with disabilities (i.e., language development, disability, academic and behavioral development, etc.). Even though fields (i.e., English as a Second Language, regular education, special education, school psychology) still function separately, collaborative service-delivery models have been developed (i.e., co-teaching, child study teams, etc.). In order to address the needs of CLD students with disabilities in a holistic manner, the following elements proposed by García and Ortiz (2006) need to be in place:

1. shared responsibility among educators for educating all students,
2. availability of a range of general education services and programs,
3. collaborative relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse families, and
4. ongoing professional development focused on effective practices for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. (p. 64)
Another promising area in research is the use of eco-behavioral analysis approach with ELLs with and without disabilities. An eco-behavioral analysis approach includes “(a) analyzing a broad range of environmental variables that are temporarily and spatially removed from the behavior of individuals, including those variables that are within environmental, social, and cultural contexts; and (b) evaluating the effectiveness of instruction and interventions in classroom settings as a means of addressing classroom contextual factors that affect the outcomes of students with and without disabilities” (Arreaga-Mayer, Utley, Perdono-Rivera, & Greenwood, 2003, p. 29). This type of research has been used to examine why children living in impoverished urban communities are academically behind as early as kindergarten and first grade. Greenwood, Carta, and Atwater (1991) remarked that “eco-behavioral analysis offers education a powerful, expanded process measure for the study of the delivery of teaching and its effects on students, including the causes of academic success and failure” (p. 63). The use of ecological models of assessment can examine and document the learning problems “in light of contextual variables affecting the teaching–learning process, including the interaction of teachers, students, curriculum, instructional variables, and so forth” (Gersten & Baker, 2000, p. 125). Earlier studies using the ecobehavioral analysis approach revealed important differences between the practices and school achievement levels of at-risk students in low-SES schools and students in middle- to high-SES schools (Greenwood, Delquadri, Stanley, Terry, & Hall, 1986).

Considering the limited research on instructional contextual variables, there is a compelling need to assess aspects of the classroom environment using observational measurement and to evaluate bilingual special education programs in terms of essential features of effective intervention programs on the academic outcomes of ELLs (Gersten & Baker, 2000). The field of special education must address the following critical questions:

1. How do bilingual special education programs for ELLs with disabilities work?
2. What interventions tend to produce positive outcomes for ELLs with disabilities?
3. How can educators promote long-term gains cognitively, linguistically, and educationally through these interventions?

Answers to these questions require the use of observational assessment procedures that are responsive to the complexities of individual ELLs and instructional contexts in bilingual special education programs (Arreaga-Mayer et al., 2003). Classroom process variables (i.e., the assessment of teacher behavior, student behavior, contextual variables), students’ interactions with the environment (or ecological factors) can be studied to determine if instruction is optimizing or limiting the performance of ELLs. Thus, eco-behavioral analysis is an approach for evaluating instructional interventions in relation to program aspects (e.g., instructional environment components, teacher behaviors, student behaviors) and identifying instructional variables that reliably influence academic and linguistic performance (Arreaga-Mayer, Carta, & Tapia, 1994; Arreaga-Mayer et al., 2003). Gersten and Baker suggested that well-designed and well-executed studies are needed to reveal the causal links between features of instruction and learning outcomes. Classroom-based research on ELLs at risk for developmental disabilities...
must incorporate the use of effective instructional practices that facilitate academic engagement and student performance (Arreaga-Mayer et al., 2003).

An eco-behavioral analysis approach to understand the teaching–learning process for ELLs with disabilities holds promise. Future research needs to be focused on understanding sociocultural contexts for teacher preparation, service delivery, family-professional collaboration, and teaching-learning that will produce positive outcomes for ELLs with and without disabilities. The fragmented service models or systems seem to be the major reason for delaying the early intervention services that all children who struggle need badly. The response to intervention model has the potential to screen learning and behavior problems early to prevent academic difficulties and/or failure of all students including CLD students with disabilities. This model also has the potential for bringing professionals from different fields (i.e., regular education, special education, bilingual or ESL specialists) together and for crossing the boundaries created by regulations, funding, etc. Through this model, prevention, early intervention, and different levels of support need to be provided in time and with intensity in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner across professionals from different disciplines and fields.

References


Transient ELLs: 
A Teacher’s Inquiry Into Literacy Instruction

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This narrative describes my learning process in becoming a teacher-researcher as I worked with an ELL, Jayla, who experienced a transient lifestyle. As a member of a teacher-inquiry group, the Bilingual Teacher-Research Forum I collaborated with other bilingual and ESL teachers from schools in a large city in the northeastern part of the United States. I learned to systematically investigate my practice to identify instructional strategies that promoted ELL students’ literacy in English. My first inquiry was guided by one query: What instructional strategies may promote the language and literacy development of transient ELLs? In this article I describe how I investigated Jayla’s literacy growth. I reflect on my transformation from a teacher to a teacher-researcher and propose some practical suggestions for teachers who teach ESL with transient backgrounds.

In this article I discuss my trajectory in exploring effective ways to work with English language learners (ELLs) who experience a transient lifestyle. Transiency refers to the high mobility of students because of economic and political pressures on their families or what Jiménez (2003) calls the “transnational character of literacy” for many Latino students in the United States. Transient children are often behind academically due to their movement from school to school during primary and secondary grades. Lack of a consistent instruction serves to delay their language and content learning.

As a member of a teacher-inquiry group, the Bilingual Teacher-Research Forum (the Forum) I collaborated with other bilingual and ESL teachers from schools in a large city in the northeastern part of the US. I learned to systematically investigate my practice to identify instructional strategies that promoted ELL students’ literacy in English. My first inquiry was guided by one query: What instructional strategies may promote the language and literacy development of transient ELLs? To answer this question I diligently observed and took copious notes of Jayla’s \(^1\) (a transient ELL) learning process. I also collected and analyzed written work that she produced, I examined videotapes of my lessons, and reflected on the instruction I implemented to develop literacy. This narrative describes my learning process in becoming a teacher-researcher.

The article opens with a description of my teaching context, a discussion of transiency within the Latino community, and my professional background. I then portray my role as an ESL teacher and discuss the investigation of Jayla’s literacy growth. In the final section of the article I reflect on my transformation from a teacher to a teacher-researcher and suggest some practical suggestions for teachers who teach ESL with transient backgrounds.
Context for Inquiry

I work at Maxton Elementary School, located in a neighborhood that has gone through many changes in its ethnic composition during the past 30 years, from being predominately Caucasian to Latino and African American. The area is economically distressed and many families are on public assistance. On any given day the neighborhood is full of children playing and riding bicycles. Elderly citizens can be seen outside sweeping clean their porches and sidewalks. The crossing guard greets many children by name as they walk to school, while parents watch protectively from their front porch. There are a few corner grocery stores and one major grocery store that tailor to the needs of the Latino community by offering Latino produce. The nearest public library is about a mile away. A few churches and bars are places where the community also gathers to socialize. A couple of community organizations have labored for many years to revamp the area through economic and housing development projects.

The community residents must deal with neighborhood hazards such as abandoned houses and cars scattered around the block. The evidence of economic and safety struggles of the community is suggested by homes that are protected by barred windows and barking dogs.

On warm days one can hear Spanish music blaring out from a local video store and Hip-Hop music from another corner grocery store. Friendship and camaraderie are evident as people sit on steps laughing and drinking. Still others are busy under the hood of a car, trying to fix it.

The nights are filled with the sounds of booming car radios, screeching tires, and sirens. The neighborhood park, which is calm and safe during the day, becomes a busy place of drug transactions at night. Neighborhood leaders and families worry about the empty crack vials, broken glass, and trash that litters the park. It is from these surroundings that over 650 kindergarten through fourth-grade students daily walk to school.

Within the city’s school district there are schools that have bilingual programs where children receive instruction in English and in Spanish, Russian, Chinese, or Vietnamese as a native language. Other schools have only English as a second language support programs. Our school offers both programs to Spanish-speaking children.

In 1997, our school was designated as a bilingual school. This happened because the enrollment of Latino students has been increasing every year. The school’s population is approximately 57% Latino and 43% African American. The majority of the Latinos are Puerto Rican. Others are from the Dominican Republic and South America. A designation as a bilingual school requires that any vacant teaching positions are to be filled by bilingual personnel.

At the time of my inquiry project, 1999–2002, our teaching staff numbered about 38, of which 10 are considered bilingual. This means that they speak another language besides English. In our school, the second language is Spanish. In efforts to meet the needs of our Latino families, the majority of the classroom assistants are also bilingual in English and Spanish.

There are many reasons for the increase of Latinos in the neighborhood. One major reason for families moving into the area is that of better opportunity for work and living.
aspect of Latino culture is the value they place on a close-knit family unit. It is not uncommon for
one family to invite another family to come and live with them temporarily while the parents
find housing and work. While the invited family is searching for housing and work, the children
attend the neighborhood school. Then, when housing is found, the family either moves into a
house in the same neighborhood or, more commonly, to another neighborhood and a different
school. Many times things do not go as anticipated by the guest family and, within a matter of
months, they go back to their country or move in with different family members in another state.

The migration or transience, although necessary to improve the economic conditions of
families, may become a challenge for families and many schools. Families lack a sense of security
that comes from stability while the memories of home are symbolized by packing boxes and
suitcases. It is hard for children to adapt to new neighborhoods, make new friends, and to keep
up academically when they are constantly changing of schools.

Transience is a problem in many schools in the North section of the city. For example, in
one academic year, 1999-2000, we had about 54 students transfer out of our school and 66
students transfer into our school. Keep in mind that we are a K–4 school with a student
enrollment of over 700, of which 58% are Latinos. Our third-grade teachers took a survey and
discovered that only 50% of the third grade has been with us since kindergarten.

A related problem for schools with transient students is record keeping. If a child is
transferring from one school to another within the city, it can often take up to two to four weeks
for his records to arrive at the new school. It can take longer if the child transfers from another
state. Information like the child’s attendance record or reading level is not readily available for
the receiving teacher. Schools rely on the parents for the child’s school history. This situation
becomes even more challenging when dealing with culturally diverse families, because school
programs vary among states and countries. In some instances parents do not understand the
different programs that the school offers, and some do not know which support program their
child received, if any. Also, schools might not have staff who speak the language of the parent or
understand their culture. Thus, key instructional information about the transient child is not
available early enough to provide the best instructional plan for the student.

Some schools might wait passively for records to arrive. Others might rely on the
incomplete information they get to provide a “fit for all” academic program for the child. Still
other schools might have the human resources and materials to assess the child’s strengths and
weaknesses in language and content and place him/her accordingly. In any case, the role of the
ESL teacher is indispensable when transient ELLs first arrive at the school.

My teacher training was very traditional. I attended college in the United States and the
teacher education program included courses in theory and practice, methods and materials,
history of education, and classroom management techniques, all geared for instruction in
English. I never took a course in cultural or linguistic diversity while completing my
undergraduate degree. Now I have started a master’s degree program in reading and hold an ESL
teaching certificate and reading specialist certificate.
When I joined the teacher inquiry group, I had been teaching for 11 years, 9 of them in the bilingual program at Maxton Elementary School. As a teacher I followed a prescribed curriculum, had a pacing schedule to keep, and goals and objectives, which students either met or did not meet. The curriculum is very behavioristic in nature, emphasizing formal aspects of language instruction. As a former first-grade teacher, I remember how frustrated I felt when I had a student who could not meet the goals or who could not keep up with the class pace. They were the children my colleagues and I griped about in the teachers’ lounge. These were the children I thought required greater attention than I was able to give. I needed outside support. I wanted someone else to take responsibility for educating them, since they perform at a different literacy level than most students in my class.

A few years ago, the shoe was placed on the other foot. I became an outside-classroom-support teacher. In that position I worked with the teachers in the bilingual program, offering support by instructing the children who were struggling in their academic studies. I did this by reinforcing whatever the teacher was doing in her class. We did a lot of rote and drill activities.

**My Role as an ESL Teacher**

As an instructor for ESL, working with children in grades K–4, screening linguistically diverse students for English dominance and proficiency is one of my responsibilities. Depending on the screening results, linguistically diverse students are placed in one of two programs: a bilingual program or a monolingual English class with ESL support. A short description of the screening process will help the reader understand the rationale for students’ placement.

I usually begin the student screening process with an informal interview in Spanish and in English. This allows me to hear in which language the child is better able to orally express ideas. If possible, a parent interview is done in order to obtain more information on the child’s home life and academic history. Although important, meeting with parents does not always occur. From my experience I have learned that some of the obstacles that may prevent communication with parents of a different cultural and language background are that (a) the school personnel do not know the language of the home and if the parents speak English, (b) parents are not able to visit the school because of work hours, (c) teachers or counselors in the school may not know culturally appropriate ways of approaching the home, and (d) the teacher and parents do not understand cultural behaviors and lack mutual trust. For a helpful discussion of strategies to overcome these obstacles see Carrasquillo & Rodríguez (2002), Harman (1994), Kotler & Kotler (2001), Peregoy & Boyle (2005), and Pérez & Torres-Guzmán (1992).

After the informal interview, I administer a series of informal inventories and standardized tests in English and in Spanish to determine language proficiency and literacy levels. In terms of language proficiency a child who is a Beginner (preemergent or basic) may or may not have literacy in his native language and his knowledge of the English language is minimal. An Intermediate student is able to communicate in English, though grammatical errors
are still made. This student begins to focus more on English reading and writing. An advanced student (proficient) is a child who is performing close to his/her academic grade level but may still need some help with various aspects of the English language, for example idioms.

In our school the children who are classified as Beginners are usually placed in the bilingual program. Our bilingual program is set up for children in Grades K–4 who are Spanish dominant. The program follows a transitional model to bilingual education. This model provides instruction in the home language for 1 to 3 years to “build a foundation in literacy and academic content that will facilitate English language and academic development as students acquire the new language. After the transition to English instruction no further instruction in the home language is offered” (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005, pp. 24–25). At Maxton the bilingual teacher is responsible for ESL instruction in these classrooms. In kindergarten, 90% of the instruction is in Spanish and 10% is in English. In first grade it is 80% Spanish and 20% English. In second grade it is 70% Spanish and 30% English. In third grade it is 60% Spanish and 40% English. Finally, in fourth grade it is 50% Spanish and 50% English. It is expected that as soon as the children reach the advanced level in ESL, they are transitioned into an all-English mainstream classroom.

I provide ESL instruction for the Intermediate and Advanced students who are in the regular monolingual English classroom. This program is geared toward children who have never been instructed in their native language, have a history of transience, or whose parents prefer English-only instruction for their child. I usually meet with them once or twice a day, either first period in the morning or in the afternoons, so that the child does not miss much of his/her Reading, English, and Language Arts (RELA) instruction. However, they will miss one of the content classes (i.e., social studies, science) or special classes (i.e., music, computers) offered in the curriculum. I prepare lessons that cover listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. The goal of the English as a second language program is to help the child attain mastery of the English language as a native speaker as soon as possible. In elementary school this ESL program model focuses on learning language at the expense of learning content (Baker, 2006).

The educational context I described above presented me with many challenges and questions that I did not know how to resolve or answer. The next section explains how I became a teacher-researcher to confront some of the issues engrained in this contested setting.

**Becoming a Teacher-Researcher**

In the summer of 1996, I was a mentor teacher in an institute on Bilingual Education for beginning teachers offered by the school district. It was there that I first heard the words, “teacher researcher.” I had the opportunity to sit in on a few lectures and hear new teachers talk about their own research projects. My curiosity was peaked. What did these new teachers know that I did not know, even when I had many more years of experience?

A year later, I joined the Forum to find out more about teacher research. There I also learned about the latest research on quality bilingual programs and some effective strategies to
promote biliteracy in English and Spanish at an early age. At first I attended the monthly Forum meetings to share with other teachers who work in bilingual schools and learn more about what they were researching, but I was not planning on doing “research.” However, the more we talked about and shared our school experiences, I realized that here was a place where colleagues could help me investigate and reflect on some of the school issues that I felt were frustrating and, thus, important.

The school year I became involved in the Forum was also my first year providing ESL instruction for the Spanish-speaking children in the monolingual English classrooms at Maxton elementary. It was here at the Forum monthly meetings that I got to share my questions, observations, and reflections with other bilingual and ESL colleagues and receive feedback that provided me with greater insight into my inquiry and practice. Being that this was to be my first teacher inquiry, I decided to focus on one child, Jayla. One of the challenges I encounter is teaching children with a transient school history.

In the scholarly literature discussed with my Forum colleagues I found helpful explanations about the nature of transiency and its implication for educating ELLs. For example, Grinberg & Saavedra (2000) explain that the transient nature of some students’ existence reflects the political relationship between their country and the United States. This is the case of the neocolonial relationship between United States and Puerto Rico. Moll and Ruiz (2005) argue that “This is not a new phenomenon, especially with Mexicans living in the borderlands, or among Puerto Ricans [and Dominicans] and their ‘circular’ migration to and from the island” (p. 315). They understand this phenomenon as a necessary response to strengthen and build social networks across geographical spaces and create economic opportunities to survive in a new land.

Jiménez (2003) argues that because of this reality, educators, in particular those who work with Latino ELLs, should learn about the “transnational nature of students’ lives and why knowledge of the Spanish language and literacy are still important, even necessary,” for their survival and academic success in the United States and their home country. “Studies of reverse migration are revealing how success or failure to become orally proficient and literate in both English and Spanish influences students’ lives in their country of origin” (Jiménez, 2003, p. 124; see also Martinez-León and Smith, 2003; Nieto, 2000).

In my experience economic instability and lack of job security are some reasons for many Latino families to move frequently. Some of the children who I instruct were born in the United States, moved to Puerto Rico for some period of time, then returned back to the United States. Many times this movement deprives a child of a continuous education, especially in the early years when the foundation for literacy is being built. As a result, many children reenter our school system with gaps in their academic foundation. The children need to work harder to catch up to their peers. The greater the gap the more likely the child will demonstrate frustration or a lack of motivation. Many times they try to hide their lack of academic skills and literacy
strategies. Some children act out their frustration through inappropriate behavior like classroom disturbance or fighting.

I have observed that these are the children that teachers at my school dread the most because they are some of the most challenging to teach. “I don’t know what to do with him/her. This child can barely read or write. Are you sure this child doesn’t belong in the bilingual class?” These are some statements I usually hear when a linguistically diverse child with a transient background is placed in a monolingual English class.

I used to get angry when I heard such statements because I felt that by rejecting these children, my own Puerto Rican ethnicity was being attacked and devalued. I was aware of the negative attitudes of some of my colleagues. They did not know enough about the different ethnic groups in the city and held misconceptions about their cognitive ability, attitudes toward schooling, and family values. They expected Latino children to learn the English language before they entered their classroom, and a few of them wished not to bother with teaching them at all.

They saw Latino children as a problem they did not want in their classroom. I heard derogatory comments during school meetings and in the teachers’ lounge. Although I did not care about their prejudicial nature, I kept quiet when I heard them. Part of me felt unprepared to respond objectively, without emotion. I had conflicting feelings and did not know how best to make them confront their own ignorance. But, I have to confess, I also kept quiet because deep down I, too, wanted them to know English before entering my classroom. This, I believe, would have made instruction somehow easier. These children required a different way of teaching and after years in the classroom using the same methods and curriculum, some teachers resisted any change to their instructional routines.

I believe that if a person is skilled in the art of teaching, then s/he could teach any child, regardless of the challenges the child presents. However, the more I thought about this issue, I came to realize that the teachers who made these statements were expressing not only ignorance and prejudice but concern that they were not able to provide an appropriate education for these children, because they did not know how. It can be frustrating and stressful to teach children with age-appropriate ability, two languages, but who are behind academically, and as a teacher have no control over the socioeconomic forces impinging on the family stability. Other teachers perhaps did not care or did not know any better. However, there were a few who did care, but, like me, were lost as to how to teach these children. Their comments were more a cry for help than a demeaning statement against ELLs.

Inquiry Into Teaching a Transient ELL

Determined to help myself and these teachers, I began to investigate the issue of teaching a linguistically diverse child with a transient history. If I could identify instructional strategies that would help such a child succeed in school, then I would have something valuable to share with my coworkers and be able to help them provide quality education in the all-English classes.
If I were to teach these children effectively, I would need a greater understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

I focused my inquiry on one transient child, Jayla, who I felt exemplified many other students. I had two interrelated goals in mind. First, I wanted to find effective instructional strategies to help this ELL child in her literacy development. Second, I wanted to share these effective strategies with mainstream classroom teachers who taught ELLs hoping that they would take ownership for their growth. I hoped that we could collaborate to benefit ELLs in the school.

The first thing I noticed when I met Jayla was her pretty smile. She was only 10-years-old, but she seemed older because of her height and of the way she carried herself in behavior and conversation. Jayla did not appear shy or nervous. She spoke freely in English about her teacher and classmates. Even though this was her first year at our school, she seemed to be adjusting well to her new environment. Her friendly nature served as a survival skill to deal with a transient school history. Jayla exemplified many of the students I teach.

Upon interviewing Jayla's mother, I found out more about the child's history. She was born and raised in the city, but had spent her early school years moving around from school to school. Her mother was from Puerto Rico and spoke both Spanish and English in the home. Jayla did not attend kindergarten. She did attend a pre-first class at one school where she received instruction in English. Then she attended another school for first and second grades. However, she was placed in a bilingual program that approached literacy in English and Spanish at the same time. Her mother noticed that by second grade her daughter could not read or write in either language. Wanting the best for her child, Jayla's mother decided to send her to Puerto Rico for third grade, where she was instructed in Spanish. It was there, with after school tutorial help, that Jayla began to read and write simple words in Spanish. The following school year, Jayla came back to the United States and was enrolled into fourth grade at Maxton, where she was placed into a traditional English class pending the outcome of language assessments. This child was behind in her literacy development both in English and in Spanish. Jayla's transient history and the lack of interest in working with her demonstrated by her mainstream teacher motivated me to choose this child for my first inquiry.

I began my research by screening the child, wondering how best I could help her. Looking for effective instructional strategies, I began data collection with the language assessments that I administer to all ELL students. I met with Jayla every day during first period and conducted interviews weekly to monitor her growth. Interviewing her mother shed more light into the child's school history. I documented daily observations and collected writing samples once a month.

The first assessment that was done was an informal interview. I asked Jayla various questions about herself, her family, hobbies, friends, and school. She was able to communicate orally with fluency in both languages. When I asked her about language preference for learning, she had mixed feelings. She would not have minded going to the bilingual class where instruction
in Spanish was dominant; however, she did not want to leave her friends in the monolingual class. When asked about academic ability, Jayla was aware that reading and writing proved more difficult for her than math. Nevertheless, she expressed a willingness and desire to learn.

The assessment of oral language proficiency demonstrated that her understanding and ability to use both languages orally was fairly equal. In addition, she scored high on the listening and speaking portions of the exam but did poorly on the reading and writing portions. Usually, this is all the screening I do when assessing a linguistically diverse child. However, in Jayla’s case, I needed more information because I could not tell from these tests results which instructional program would be best for her, a bilingual class or a monolingual English one.

Unlike other children who use the dominant language in most settings, Jayla’s dominance changed according to the setting. When we discussed school issues, her English was strong. When we switched to her home life, Jayla preferred to speak in Spanish. She was what I considered “on the fence.” She could go in either language direction; orally she could function in both languages.

I completed the battery of assessments with a few academic screenings in both languages. Her English reading level was at a pre-primer level. She did not write any sentences, but was able to write simple words like mom and cat. She knew all but four alphabet letters by name, she did not know over half of the alphabet letters by sound. In Spanish, Jayla was reading on a first-grade level. She was able to write a simple sentence of three words, Amo mi mama. (I love my mom.).

Upon examining this assessment data and taking her age, grade, and school history into consideration, I recommended that Jayla's instruction should occur in a monolingual English setting. Although orally she was fluent in both Spanish and English, she was behind in literacy in both languages. However, at the school there was more instructional support available for her if her instruction was conducted in English. Support services could include remedial English reading classes, one-on-one tutoring with the Parent Support Group and the English as a second language program.

In my professional opinion, for program-placement decisions there is really no single best answer that can apply to all cases. It really depends on the situation and the factors at play. The availability of resources was a key factor that I considered in placing her (see Baker, 2006; for discussion of other factors that need to be considered, see Carrasquillo & Rodríguez, 2001; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). In our school there were no curricular resources to offer in Spanish that could help Jayla develop that language consistently, since our bilingual program was designed to mainstream students by third grade. Thus, the best for a child her age and skills was to offer the curricular program with the most resources available, at our school that was the mainstream English program.

Another important factor that I addressed was to gradually build rapport with the parents and offer information, as requested, about the community and neighborhood. Although I was not naive in thinking that Jayla’s schooling was the only or most important issue for her
parents, who were struggling economically, I wanted them to see that their child's education should at least be considered by them before making a decision to relocate. I was also willing to help them identify local community resources that could assist the family. By doing this some people might think that I went beyond my role as a teacher. Nonetheless, in my experience, many urban issues, like transiency, poverty, and violence, impose on practitioners the challenge to “go the extra mile for their students.” Personally I see it as part of my responsibility in teaching, rather than as a role that somehow is outside of what is expected and necessary, in such contested conditions, to promote success among ELLs. Some literature discusses and supports this perspective on education, see, e.g., Hamayan & Freeman (2006), Lazar (2004), Reyes & Halcón (2001), and Steinberg & Kincheloe (2004).

Unfortunately, although there was an ESL program in the school, it did not have many current resources that I could use with Jayla, or other ELLs. When I looked into the ESL instructional closet, I was disappointed with what I found. There were some commercial games and made-up cardboard games with missing pieces, old filmstrips from the 1960s with missing cassette tapes and dusty yellow posters hidden under a pile of ESL books. Even though we had a collection of ESL books, probably dating back to the time this program began in our school in the 1970s, I did not want to use them, because they did not match my ESL group’s needs. They were meant for ESL beginners, those students with no or very little fluency in oral English.

Jayla was one of nine ESL intermediate students I was working with. All of these students know how to speak fluently in English. However, their reading and writing in English lagged behind. The research literature suggests that practitioners many times see this as a problem they cannot understand. They think “if these students are able to speak to me and others using good English, then why can’t they read it and write it?” or “How come they can speak it but fail any written assessment?” The literature that I discussed with other colleagues in the Forum meetings suggests that the answer to these questions lies within the differences between social and academic languages. Essentially I learned that social language is acquired in less time (1–3 years) than academic language (5–7 years). Also, we need to consider a multitude of factors to really understand oracy and literacy development in one or more languages (Baker, 2006; Peregoy and Boyle, 2005).

Everyone in the intermediate ELL group, which consisted of two fourth graders, three third graders and four second graders, was one to three years behind grade level in reading and writing. I knew that these children needed to make a year’s growth in reading and writing, but I did not know how to help them get there.

Fortunately, I recalled reading an article that dealt with literacy in an educational magazine back in college. It was about a little boy who had trouble learning how to read. This little boy could not read his basal reader no matter how many flashcards were practiced by drill. Then one of his teachers put aside that basal and told the child that he could read his own stories, since the basal stories proved too difficult. As the child wrote his own stories, with the teacher’s help, he finally began learning how to read. His teacher concluded that because they
were his stories, he learned to read. I do not remember how the article ended but I was left with the thought that if a child can write then he can read. The thought of learning to read through writing became the basis for the type of ESL instruction I wanted to incorporate in my class. I could use the children’s oral fluency in Spanish with that of English (since their oral English was stronger than their English literacy), then their talk (in Spanish and English) could be used to promote their literacy in English.

Now I understood that the course I took back in college was built around a sociolinguistic view of reading and writing. One of the elements of this perspective is that language use in real situations is needed to create and communicate thought (Vygotsky, in Tompkins, 2006). Therefore, in the ESL as well as mainstream classes, ELLs need to listen native speakers and talk in order to develop their thinking (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002). This perspective could certainly help ELLs develop their language skills more. In my classroom children needed to talk before they wrote. This was my first instructional epiphany of many to come. I became excited about teaching ELLs.

When I shared this revelation with my Forum colleagues, it prompted us to rethink the curriculum that was given to us to teach. Behaviorism was at the heart of the drills we did with ELLs. Were these drills really helping our students to think, to communicate ideas orally and in writing? The fact that so many ELLs were behind academically prompted me to search for other instructional avenues.

I also remembered the positive effects that writing had for my first-grade children in years past and a course on literacy that I took that emphasized the importance of conversation integrated with writing. After discussing the idea with a teacher colleague, she told me about a writing program that another teacher was implementing in her class called “The Writing Workshop” (Atwell, 1998). The only materials needed were blank paper, a pencil and crayons or markers. The children were divided into small groups of about four to six students. Each day or whenever Writing Workshop was done, one group would conference with the teacher, working on revising and editing, while another group would be given the opportunity to read their published stories before the class. Everyone else would be working on their stories, using inventive spelling and peers for help. I liked the way the children were engaged in their writing and the way the teacher was able to meet individual needs. After observing this teacher’s class, I decided to try the Writing Workshop with my ELLs.

Each child in Jayla’s group was given a manila folder with a word list of high frequency words stapled inside the cover. This list served as a reference guide whenever someone asked, “How do you spell ______?” I would take a highlighter and highlight the word or write it below, if it was not on the list. I wanted the child to write for various purposes, so each month I planned a specific kind of writing project. They wrote letters, stories, a newspaper article, instructions to daily activities, poems, and personal expressions. We began each project with a demonstration as I modeled the writing and did think alouds in English, verbalizing my thinking as I wrote. We did a lot of talking and set up word walls on the chalkboard for spelling assistance. I used
sentence starters and questions as writing aids. I provided them with colored markers for illustrating and made a manual typewriter and the computer available for publishing the finished product. Once they were done with the writing project, we would have a share circle where each student would read his/her piece. Classmates were encouraged to either ask questions or make positive statements.

At first I did not know how Jayla would react when she learned that the ESL program would focus on writing. Would she get easily frustrated and give up? Would she find excuses or busy herself with other activities in efforts to avoid writing? Would she rely of her oral vocabulary in both languages or just in one to express her ideas? It was important to me that I make her first writing experience a positive one.

I decided to start the year with a writing piece about one's favorite season. This first piece would give me a baseline on what the child can do and how she does it. Knowing that Jayla had limited writing skills, I tried to structure the activity so that she would not feel frustrated. We began our project with many prewriting activities. I read books about the seasons to the children. We did a lot of talking in English about the seasons discussing clothes, food, holidays, and activities. We made a word wall on the chalkboard. She contributed much to our discussion and suggested numerous words for the word wall. This signaled to me that she had a strong background on this topic, and that she could communicate her ideas in English. However, when distributed the blank piece of paper for writing, Jayla just stared. It was like she was either afraid to write or did not know what to write. Then I put a sentence starter on the board: My favorite season is ______ because _______. She copied the sentence as it was on the board, choosing summer as her favorite season.

Jayla waited until I called her up to my desk. When we started talking in English about why she chose summer, she gave me some good reasons, such as there was no school and she could go swimming with her friends. It was then that I suggested that she should first draw some pictures about summer and then try to write about them. I noticed that Jayla's pictures kept to the topic and that they were small and detailed. Once she finished her pictures, she waited for my assistance. I tried to help her by showing her how to use the word list that was stapled into her folder. However, if one does not know what sounds the letters make, this writing aid would not be useful. It was not useful to Jayla. I then asked her what she wanted to write and drew the lines for each word in the sentence. This was not helpful because by the time she reached her seat, she had forgotten what exactly she had told me and wrote something similar but worded it differently, so that the line did not match up with her sentence.

We finally got through this project with me writing out almost every word. This Writing Workshop idea was not going the way I had expected. I thought the students would be more independent, but they were not. Jayla made no attempts to use any inventive spelling. Perhaps she thought she would be a failure or feared others would laugh at her if she wrote with too many errors. She needed more confidence to take risks in writing her ideas. Her writing was small, as if she did not want anyone to see her mistakes. Yet, she worked really hard and waited
patiently until I was available to help. When it came time to share our written work, Jayla was one of the first ones to volunteer to read her book. I could tell she was proud of her accomplishment by the way she read and smiled. Yet, I knew I had to work on her confidence as “Jayla the writer” if I was to make any progress.

Over the next few weeks I was becoming frustrated, because Jayla was verbalizing good ideas and thoughts but was not attempting to write them on paper. She did not have any trouble making up a fairy tale. Jayla was one of the few students that actually had a problem and a solution in her story plan. Once again, she dictated her story to me and I wrote it down for her. However, she was still not confident to take ownership of her writing. She would need more time to observe me writing her ideas, to take risks in writing her ideas, and to make connections between her oral and written language in English.

It was not until late November that I began to see signs of Jayla becoming a more confident writer. We were working on a thank-you letter to someone special in our lives. Jayla asked if she could write a letter to her grandmother in Puerto Rico. I said it was fine, but she said her grandmother could read only Spanish. Up to this moment I had never thought of the idea of Jayla writing in Spanish. I think this was because Jayla was in the monolingual English class. Her English oral literacy skills were so strong that I had not yet heard her use Spanish in my class setting.

After Jayla asked me if she could write in Spanish, I knew this was the key that I was waiting for to unlock her fear of writing. I was hoping this could be the beginning of Jayla becoming a risk taker. I told her to write it in Spanish. In the Forum I read some of the research that shows how children can transfer skills learned in one language to another when the learning context is conducive to help them do so (Baker, 2006; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

Two things stood out for me about this project, her awareness of audience and use of invented spelling. She started the greeting, “Querida Abuelita” (Dear Granny), then, she stopped. Instead she decided to write to our school principal. I thought it interesting that even though our principal does not read Spanish, Jayla wrote the letter in Spanish to her. Although Jayla did not provide me with any explanation for the sudden change of audience, I was encouraged to see her work more independently. She still requested some spelling assistance but this was the first time I had seen Jayla take ownership of her writing.

Her writing in Spanish was hard to read because of her immature spelling. However she used invented spelling to communicate her thoughts. This was great to see happening. Jayla was writing fluently and demonstrating use of invented spelling. I realized that she finally wanted to write, and she chose to do it in the language she felt more comfortable with. Although she felt at ease communicating orally in English, with writing, Spanish was the language she chose to use.

When I allowed Jayla to write in her comfort language, I believe she finally saw herself as a writer. I saw this confidence demonstrated in the next writing project I did. The children were asked to pick a picture and write about it as a newspaper reporter. Jayla chose one of a little boy
and an old man. I was surprised to see how much she wrote about it in Spanish, mostly all by herself, though I needed her to read it to me because I had difficulty understanding what she wrote using invented spelling in Spanish. Then I had her translate it to me and I wrote in English. There was definitely a difference. Since Spanish is a phonetic language, it was easier for her to write the way she spoke. In English she was not writing the way she talked as an intermediate ELL, rather, she wrote very simple sentences like a beginner. Her English writing seemed to be based on simple words she had memorized from various word lists and sentence starters. She was not transferring the skill of writing phonetically that she used to write Spanish to writing in English.

Over the next few months I witnessed how Jayla had changed in her attitude about writing in English. Her last piece, done in May, definitely demonstrated her growth. Her handwriting was bigger. Her sentences were longer. I believed she had finally overcome her fear of writing. By the end of the year, she was no longer dictating to me what to write. She had taken ownership and was writing independently in English, seeking assistance from other sources besides me. But what exactly caused this transformation? To answer this question I had to retrace my steps in instructing her, as the following discussion describes.

Initially, I expected to see dramatic end results in the student’s academic achievement, but that did not happen. Following a suggestion given by a Forum member, gradually I started keeping a daily journal recording the happenings of the day and my thoughts and feelings. As I read my notes I observed a change in the child’s attitude. I noticed that as I worked with her more closely she became more motivated to learn and use language in my classroom. Also, I noticed that she as well as the other children came to me less frequently for direct assistance, as I modeled ways to use writing tools like the word wall, sounding out words, and using their personal word list and invented spelling. I noticed her handwriting got bigger as opposed to the tiny script she began with. By observing how this child looked around the room seeking words she recognized in order to write, I noticed she was a visual learner and was able to prepare visual pictures of the short vowel sounds that were giving her some trouble.

As a former first-grade teacher, I was used to a role in which I provided a lot of assistance to my students. However, by reflecting on this practice I realized that as much as I wanted Jayla to be an independent writer, I feared that I was encouraging her dependent behavior by writing down her dictated sentences. My job as an educator is to teach children to become independent lifetime learners. This dependence went against my goal of creating independent learners.

A colleague from the Forum videotaped me teaching one class period to assist me in my inquiry and reflection of my teaching practice. When I watched the video, I liked the way I asked the children questions. However, I did not like the way I took a child’s pencil away from her in order to write down a word that she needed help spelling. I believe my actions taught the children that they did not have to think about how to spell a word. They knew, just as Jayla knew, to come to me and I would tell them. This exercise provided another epiphany for me as a teacher. I was promoting the children’s dependency on me for spelling words.
At one of the Forum meetings, I expressed my concerns about encouraging that teacher dependency. We talked about the writing process. Jayla did need a lot of support. However, I was challenged by my colleagues to find other avenues of support (besides me) for Jayla. I did this by assigning her a partner that was a good speller (buddy writer) and teaching her to use the word wall, picture dictionaries, and personal word lists. This strategy seemed to work, because, over time, Jayla came to me less often for help.

I think the major breakthrough was when she wrote in Spanish. She was so determined to express her ideas that spelling was not an obstacle. There was a difference in the way Jayla wrote in Spanish and in the way she wrote in English. In Spanish, she wrote phonetically, using inventive spelling. In English, she depended on copying and word recognition. If Jayla did not know how to spell a word and it was not on a list or in a book that she had memorized, then she would ask a friend for the spelling. Although she use invented spelling in Spanish, she would not use it when writing in English.

However, I remembered one piece my students did in which she surprised me. We were writing a snow story. Jayla had asked me for a picture dictionary. Instead of asking her friend how to spell her story words, she used a picture dictionary. I was thrilled to see her become more resourceful. Nevertheless, I still wanted her to move beyond word recognition and memorization and begin to use inventive spelling in English. For a visual learner like Jayla, an auditory task like inventive spelling was difficult. I implemented some instructional strategies to build on the strengths she was developing and expand her use of inventive spelling across languages.

1. Use of cognates and similar sounds across languages; whenever we had a conference, I tried to point out the similarities of Spanish sounds and English sounds. For example, if Jayla wanted to write the word *money*, I would ask her how she would spell *mama*. She would say the words listening to the beginning sound (which was the same in both languages).

2. Writing by making sound analogies; after viewing the tape of myself teaching, I decided to use the word list differently. Instead of pointing to the needed word, I would give clues. I would ask her to listen carefully to the sounds and gave examples of other words with similar sounds. For example, if Jayla wanted to know how to spell the word *that*, I would say the word *the*, which she knew also began with the same sound. Eventually, she would find the word herself by making connections with what she knew.

3. Word sort; I tried to increase her word recognition by playing games with the given word list. The children began each class period with flashcards and drilled each other. Occasionally, I would ask them to group words according to beginning sounds, vowel sounds, or according to word families and rhymes. Sometimes we grouped them by alphabetical order or by syllables.

By the end of the year, I finally began to see the fruits of our labor. Jayla wrote her last piece independently, using her own resources in English. I could tell she was writing the way she
spoke, with the word with spelled “if” and the word the spelled “de” (as in Spanish). Even when she wrote fruit when she wanted to write flowers showed me that she was beginning to listen to beginning letter sounds.

Jayla was becoming an independent writer in English, learning to use resources besides the teacher. I saw many changes in her attitude, work process, and in her writing projects. When I compare her first writing to her last, I am amazed at the difference. At the time I anticipated that as she continued to use these strategies, her writing and reading in English would improve and it did.

In her first piece she had numerous misspelled words. The b was substituted by d in words like because. This reversal was common in other pieces of writing. Letters were omitted and/or added in words like summer spelled “smmmer.” Her sentences were short and choppy. In her last piece Jayla independently wrote a paragraph about a secret garden. Only two words were misspelled. Her sentences were slightly longer and more coherent. There had definitely been an improvement in the written work she was now producing.

**Transformation**

As I participated in the Forum and conducted my inquiry, the way I perceived my teaching also began to change. I wanted the child to feel successful in everything, so I would just tell them what I thought they needed to know. This was especially true when it came to writing. When I watched a video of myself teaching, I saw myself taking a pencil away from the child in order to write a word in her story. I realized that this was not going to teach the children to become independent learners. As a result, I stopped telling them how to spell the words. Instead, we would sound out the word. Even the word list was used differently. Before, I would point to the word they wanted to spell. Now, I gave them clues like “It rhymes with ______.” In this way, the child has to think about it and I guide them to the word.

Through the research process I was learning to become a kid watcher instead of implementing in rote fashion the tasks dictated by the curriculum for an instructional support teacher. The work of the Forum helped me to see the little steps of progress the child was making and challenged me to reflect on my teaching and the impact it was having on the child. I found myself watching what a child was doing or not doing. My plans became more student-driven as opposed to curriculum-driven. Even the questions I ask myself were more inquisitive: “Why is this happening?”, “How can I get this child to . . .?”, “How is learning happening in my class?” Reflective questioning is helping me to see beyond the rights and wrongs in the work of children, to see instead their learning process.

I cannot fully explain why Jayla had so much difficulty with writing and reading. I do know that not being stable in one school or in one language may weaken the foundation needed in order to achieve literacy in any language. It is also possible that Jayla is facing more than just language and transience issues. However, in the year of my inquiry she attended my class
consistently and the strategies I implemented in my classroom worked for her. Although she is still not performing at grade level, her performance suggests that she is on the road towards literacy.

Working individually with children like Jayla can be very challenging, especially in a classroom of 30 students. Through my inquiry I developed some general principles and instructional strategies that guided my practice and proved to be fruitful. These could be useful to practitioners who work with students similar to Jayla: (1) Validate the child’s culture and wealth of knowledge by allowing the child to write in his/her comfort language; (2) tape the stories the class is reading. This benefited the ELLs in my class by providing many opportunities for them to hear English and connect to the printed page. If possible, let the child dictate his paraphrase of the story. It allows them to express ideas orally, their stronger form of English. This, then, can be his/her reading book; (3) do a lot of prewriting activities like talking, drawing, and creating word walls and personal word lists to be used when writing. All of these allow for extra reinforcement of language that ELLs can use; (4) provide visual aids like picture dictionaries and word lists of high frequency words; (5) allow students to write with a partner (buddy writer). The buddy writer can provide an excellent model of the English language, can reinforce understanding of classroom routines and rules, and provide for emotional support; (6) make comparisons between sounds in Spanish and in English, highlighting similarities; (7) whenever possible, give clues about words instead of pointing to words directly; and (8) introduce word play to promote students familiarity with the written word.

Teaching a linguistically diverse child with a transient background is a challenge, but not impossible. Doing inquiry in my classroom helped me realize that learning is always occurring. I believe that had it not been for my participation in the teacher’s inquiry group, I would have missed seeing the improvements and growth Jayla achieved over the year. This teacher-research process helped me reflect on my teaching as well as opened my eyes to see the whole child and the way the child works. I have learned that not everything goes exactly as one anticipates, but each situation is an opportunity to learn more about your own practice.

References


**Notes**

1 To respect the anonymity of participants and schools, their names have been changed.
Testing English Language Learners:  
Another Special Case of Bias

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Book Reviewed:


At a critical time in U.S. history, when a new Obama administration seeks political change, Menken’s book, *English Learners Left Behind: Standardized Testing as Language Policy,* provides salient research and recommendations to address the outcomes of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Her discussion exposes discriminatory testing practices that need to cease if U.S schools are to attain the mission to “teach every child.” As Menken’s introduction so clearly states: “An immediate effect of NCLB test policy is that English language learners are overwhelmingly failing the tests, labeled as deficient and low performing, and barred from educational advancement.” (p. 35).

National policy makers, state administrators, school leaders, and teachers would benefit from this book to understand their role in what Menken proposes is a not so “hidden agenda” that neglects the educational attainment of English language learners (ELLs). Menken’s research provides solid evidence that U.S. policies and resultant school practices have serious consequences for ELLs because they cannot pass state tests designed for English native speakers, and so fail grades or end up in remedial programs, and, as a result, drop-out in alarming numbers.

Menken’s shows that the problem affects a critical mass of children. For example, using data from the New York City Department of Education she reports that in 2005 annual enrollment of 1,055,986 students, with 42% speaking a language other than English, yet:

- Only 33.2% of ELLs passed the English regent exams, as compared to 77.9% of all students passing.
- For Math Regents, the ELL citywide pass rate is 55.5% as compared to an overall pass rate of 81.5%.
- From 1999–2005 the dropout rate for ELLs increased from 16.5% to 30.5%, whereas the dropout rate for English speakers is 16%, and has not changed in 6 years. (Menken, 2008p. 44)

Federal and state policy makers who are involved in revisions of NCLB would benefit from the information provided by this book as a basis for recrafting legislation pertaining to ELL
students. Special attention should be given to the limitations of tests and translated tests for showing evidence of student learning and growth (Abedi & Dietel, as cited by Menken, 2008). In chapter 2, Menken provides a historic reminder that, as new waves of immigrants arrive in the United States, standardized tests become gate keepers in spite of their “known” bias against racial, ethnic, and language minorities (Harris Stefanakis, 1998). During WWII, when intelligence tests determined educational placements, linguistic minorities were often placed in classes for the mentally retarded (Valdez & Figueroa, 1994): “In this way, testing is repeating its historic use as a sorting mechanism, using the rhetoric of science and neutrality to systematically discriminate against immigrant students who are ELL and promote the status of native English speakers as superior” (p. 34).

Chapters 3 and 4 summarize Menken’s interview research in 10 New York City schools and chronicle the impact of No Child Left Behind on ELLs. In her analysis, she provides alarming facts that: (a) bilingual programs have decreased and English-only programs have increased, so NCLB is a “de facto English-only language education policy”; (b) ELLs are required to pass five regents exams to graduate from high school. Typically, ELLs have low scores, often do not pass, thus increasing the numbers that drop out of school or seek alternative degree programs (p. 59).

Why are ELLs failing tests and being pushed out of U.S. educational opportunities? Chapter 5 exposes the “discriminatory” effects of state tests that require language proficiency, content area learning, and cognitive academic vocabulary that few ELLs can acquire in a few years of ESL classes. In chapter 6, Menken, meticulously analyzes test items in English, Spanish, and Chinese for English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies from state tests in New York, California, and Texas. She shows that the complexity of language usage and vocabulary exemplify that an ELL may know the content for a test item required but cannot “decode the vocabulary” of the question so cannot produce the information known. As Menken summarizes:

The linguistic complexity of standardized tests and the lack of sufficient accommodations explain why ELLs do not perform as well as native speakers....
The validity of their scores is questionable. As a result, standardized tests administered to ELLs are not a valid basis for high stakes decision-making. (p. 96)

How are standardized tests affecting the lives of English language learners? Menken offers teacher and student accounts of how ELLs are left behind on a daily basis:

- Given the language difficulty of the tests, ELLs retake and fail the test, thus prolonging the time they are in high school.
- Students who have completed high school requirements and just attend regents preparation classes in hopes of passing standardized exams lose time and opportunities.
- ELLs who have been admitted to college, but fail the regents, and therefore cannot get a diploma, drop out or seek an alternative diploma. (Menken, p. 117)

Similarly, teachers who work with ELLs are pressured to “teach to the test.” They use old tests as practice and focus their teaching on how to read and answer test questions, whether in
English, Spanish, Chinese, Math or other subjects. Teachers in Menken’s study readily admitted that they realigned their curriculum to prepare their students for the tests and rarely present any other materials.

This book is a vital contribution to research on U.S. language policies as well as research on assessment. More important, it offers key recommendations (Chapter 9) to expand language policies to promote success for “a wider range of students including ELLs.” The recommendations that Menken suggests for policy makers to follow and educators to enact are to

- Support schools in the development of a language policy, which may include native language instruction. Match the testing policy to the language policy, so bilingual students have bilingual testing options and multiple measures for assessing their abilities.
- Shift the paradigm for ELLs on opportunities to learn, which means getting resources for schools to support superb instruction that offers support for English and native language development, as well as high quality materials, faculty, and technology.
- Move away from an over-reliance on tests, and toward the use of multiple measures of student achievement (portfolios, grades, classroom performance assessments) when assessing a student.
- Redesign the accountability system to include district, school, and classroom assessments so that portfolios and performance assessments, more accurate pictures of growth over time, yield accurate results for ELLs.
- Include ELLs in the accountability system in ways that are valid, which suggests showing results of testing in both languages, or in content areas and in language proficiency. Assessment information should help students and teachers see what is known and what needs to be learned. (pp. 185–186)

Menken has developed a strong argument and blueprint for the new administration to address the significant challenge of a linguistic minority “achievement gap” in U.S. schools with measures focused on better assessment and language policies. It is critical that Obama administration leaders take political action to truly address the inequities through new policies and practices at a national and state level.

This book is a first step in compiling critical research in the assessment and education of ELL students, but the content and focus are designed primarily for researchers. A more practical approach to disseminating this message would provide greater clarity and reach more audiences, including practitioners. Perhaps two new resources could be created—a handbook for educators and another for policy makers. In general, this work needs to become accessible to a broader audience of educators and politicians in order to promote the critical message that “current testing policies harm English Language Learners and more effective educational and assessment approaches are needed.”
References


Notes on Contributors to This Issue

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Evangeline Harris Stefanakis is an Associate Professor at Boston University in Educational Leadership and Development. She holds a BS from Tufts University in Psychology and Child Development, an MS in Learning Disabilities and Behavioral Disorders from Lesley University; A CAS in International Education, Administration, Planning and Social Policy and an ED.D. in Teaching Curriculum and Learning Environments from Harvard University. As a researcher, frequent speaker, and writer, her work focuses on understanding how best to assess and teach children from diverse language, learning, and cultural backgrounds. Her current curriculum and assessment research projects are based in New York and in Athens, Greece.

Dianne Maysonet is an elementary teacher in a school district in Pennsylvania. She received her Bachelor’s in Education from Philadelphia College of Bible and her ESL certification from LaSalle University. More recently, she obtained her certification as a Bilingual Reading Recovery Teacher. She began her teaching career as a first-grade teacher. Other positions she has fulfilled were Bilingual Basic Skills teacher, Instructional Support Team member, and ESL instructor. Over the past twenty years Ms. Maysonet has participated in various initiatives such as co-facilitator with the English Language Learner Institute sponsored by the Writing Project and mentor for new bilingual teachers and Teaching Fellows. Her teaching experience has centered on the Latino population. As a Latina educator, Ms. Maysonet understands the challenges of today’s inner-city English language learners and is motivated to make a difference.

Terry A. Osborn, Ph.D., is Professor and Chair of the Division of Curriculum and Teaching in the Graduate School of Education, Fordham University. Dr. Osborn taught public school German for six years at the high school and middle school levels. He is the founding coeditor of Critical Inquiry in Language Studies: An International Journal (published by Routledge). His work received the 2001 American Educational Studies Association Critics’ Choice Award for Critical Reflection and the Foreign Language Classroom and the Stephen Freeman Award for the best published article on foreign language teaching techniques.

Manuela Wagner is Assistant Professor of Foreign Language Education and Director of Linkage Through Language and Critical Languages at the University of Connecticut. Her research interests include pragmatic and communicative development in first- and second-language acquisition and in special circumstances, foreign language teacher education, intercultural communication, humor in the world language classroom, technology in the foreign language classroom, and teaching methodology and program development of less commonly taught languages.

Chun Zhang is a professor in the Division of Curriculum and Teaching at Fordham University. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2000. She worked for the OSEP-funded Early Childhood Research Institute on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) and has had strong interest in promoting culturally and linguistically sensitive and responsive services in the field of Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education. Currently, she has been directing several research and training projects related to working with young children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. She has published widely in this area.
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Topics for special issues will be considered. Topics are approved by JMER Editorial Advisory Board. Those wishing to suggest topics or serve as guest editors should contact the editor for special issue guidelines. Issues will generally contain both invited articles designed to provide state-of-the-art reviews of the literature and directions of future research and practice as well as articles solicited through a call for papers. On occasion, the issue may include invited papers from conferences or series of mini-symposia.
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Persons interested in publishing an article or book review in this peer refereed journal may submit manuscripts for consideration. *JMER* prefers that all submissions be written in a style that is accessible to a broad readership, including those individuals who may not be familiar with the subject matter. The manuscript should be prepared according to the following guidelines:

The manuscript must

- Be no longer than 8,500 words (excluding references, notes, and tables) typed, double-spaced for manuscripts.
- If a review, should comprise between 750 to 1,500 words (excluding references) for a review of a single book.
- Have an abstract no longer than 200 words on a separate sheet, typed/word processed, one-inch margins all around, and double-spaced in each copy.
- Have a title page, without the author’s name, address, or institutional affiliation.
- Be accompanied by a cover letter that includes the name of author(s), a full mailing address, and e-mail address, both a day and evening phone number, and fax number.
- Include the author’s name on the cover letter only.
- Include no more than two half-page size illustrations, tables, or figures or one full-page size illustration, table, or figure.

Papers accepted for publication will need to incorporate the reviewers’ feedback. They must be submitted and reviewed in Microsoft Word format, preferably in .docx or .doc format.

For more information contact:
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Submission Process

*JMER* will be published twice a year. For the Spring publication the deadline is August 31st and for the Fall publication the deadline is March 31st.

Manuscripts of articles and book reviews and abstracts should be sent electronically to the respective editor at: jmer@fordham.edu. Authors should send a cover letter with their submission. The name(s) of the author(s) should appear only in the cover letter, not on the title page or manuscript. This letter should also specify the mailing address, daytime and evening telephone, and an electronic mail address and fax number of the author(s).

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When we receive a manuscript or book review the author will be sent a letter acknowledging its receipt. All manuscripts and book reviews will be given careful consideration. Every effort will be made to inform the author(s) of our decision within 3 to 4 months. Types of decisions are: accept, accept with minor changes, revise and resubmit, and do not accept. The editor’s decisions are final.

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