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Educating Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Learners (2nd edition)

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BOOK REVIEW

Educating Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Learners (2nd edition), by Ofelia Garcia and Jo Anne Kleifgen, New York, NY, Teachers College Press, 2018, xiv + 242 pp., \$32.95 (paperback), ISBN: 99780807758854

There is a growing dissonance between what the research on emergent bilinguals has taught us and the policies and practices that are used to teach them. We know that emergent bilinguals are linguistically and culturally diverse. However, schools continue to educate this growing student population as if their different linguistic and cultural practices did not exist.

In the 10 chapters of the 2nd edition of the book *Educating Emergent Bilinguals: Policies, Programs and Practices for English Learners*, Ofelia Garcia and Jo Anne Kleifgen depict the importance of using the linguistic repertoire and culture of emergent bilinguals to educate them. Each chapter of the book provides a concise introduction of the chapter's contents and ends with questions intended to entice reflective discourse among the readers.

In Chapter 1, the authors explain the motives of the book and recognize the limitations of the labels used for students who are still not considered proficient in English. The authors discuss the limitations of labels such as 'English Language Learner' and 'Limited English Proficient' have on learners of English. The authors thus introduce the term 'emergent bilinguals,' which is a term that steers away from the students' limitations and focuses on seeing the potential of their linguistic abilities. Chapter 2 focuses on characterizing those emergent bilinguals. The authors address the issues of how emergent bilinguals are currently identified, counted, and designated as English learners. The chapter brings awareness to the mismatch between policy and the reality of the students. Chapter 3 shares considerations for programs and policies for the education of emergent bilinguals. The chapter reviews educational policies for emergent bilinguals and places these policies in a historical context. The authors show that although present policies seem to be embracing bilingualism and biliteracy, educational policies have historically shifted the focus of home language towards English-only instruction and assessment. Thus, the authors argue that these programs can only be seen as successful if they work against the present minoritization of emergent bilinguals in the United States. These first three chapters lay the foundation for the following six chapters. Chapters 1-3 are beneficial for new teachers or advanced graduate students who seek to understand the history of emergent bilinguals and the programs and policies that continue to impact current educational practices.

The following six chapters explore the fallacies of programs, policies, and practices for emergent bilinguals and alternative practices to benefit this student population. Chapter 4 reviews theoretical constructs and empirical findings that support the students' home language to stimulate the developmental process of acquiring new languages instead of politically charged notions that promote English-only educational policies. Then, in chapter 5, the authors identify inequalities regarding language use in education and identify three educational practices that should be avoided while advocating for alternative language educational practices that leverage the student's linguistic repertoire. Overall, these two chapters describe transformative pedagogies that support the complexities of the students' linguistic diversity. In this 2nd edition, the authors added the contents included in chapter 6, which focus on the affordances that multimodal resources and technology provide to emergent bilinguals. Chapter 6 discusses the multimodalities of language and the rising technology while laying out the evidence of the importance of adequately resourcing schools, classrooms, and communities with technology. It is important to denote that this chapter was written before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the issues of unequal access to basic technology have been largely magnified in recent years.

Chapter 7 delves into curricular inequalities and alternative practices for emergent bilinguals. The authors expose issues with inadequate access to early childhood programs, resources such as instructional materials and school facilities, funding, and high-quality teachers. The authors advocate for social justice wherein emergent bilinguals are provided with a ‘challenging inclusive and culturally relevant curriculum that empowers them to counteract linguistic and social oppression’ (p. 127). In Chapter 8, the authors examine theoretical constructs and empirical evidence to address the roles of families and communities in the education of emergent bilinguals. The authors explain that the education of this student population is a partnership with parents and the community. Chapter 9 exposes one of the key issues surrounding teaching emergent bilinguals, the data-driven frenzy of accountability. The authors discuss the importance of the fair assessment of emergent bilinguals, identify the inadequacies in assessment practices, and provide alternative approaches for assessing emergent bilinguals. In the final chapter, the authors summarize what has been learned through the book, how current policies contradict what theories and research have concluded and offer policy recommendations.

Overall, this book showcases how educational policy toward emergent bilinguals has become more rigid, embodying these students solely from a deficit perspective and increasingly demanding that English alone be used in their education. Researchers have long exposed the importance of turning our gaze inward regarding developing a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris 2012). This book will be relevant to understanding how to break the perpetuation of monoglot power relations (Paris 2012). Garcia and Kleifgen provide a valuable resource that could aid in the battle against social injustice and inequitable access to educational opportunities for emergent bilinguals. Thus, this book will be of value to those teachers who want to ideate a plan to empower emergent bilinguals by inciting for a socially just curriculum. This book will also be relevant to district leaders and policymakers who seek to change the static curricular transgressions toward marginalized student populations and also for advocates and researchers as they continue to shine a light on social inequalities and effect change in current practices for emergent bilinguals and other minoritized students.

As a researcher and advocate for emergent bilingual and marginalized students of color, I sincerely hope that after reading Garcia and Kleifgen’s book, readers will be inspired by its content and engage in advocacy for change. The dissonance between policies and practice is ever-present in educational systems across the United States. Thus, this book will offer insight into those seeking to transform the current status quo for emergent bilinguals and marginalized student populations. Despite restrictive educational policies and research that indicates that teachers don’t appear to have the confidence to advocate for change (Fielding 2020), those educators closer to the ground, who are often caught up in the middle of the conflict between research and policy, should not be left alone. With the exacerbated technological and academic gaps caused by social inequalities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to change current policy is undoubtedly critical to eliminate pervasive monoglossic views from educational programs, policy and practice.

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