

Irene Jagla
University of Arizona

REVIEW ESSAY:
**PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTIONS
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Bilingual Community Education and Multilingualism:
Beyond Heritage Languages in a Global City*
Edited by Ofelia Garcia, Zeena Zakharia, and Bahar Otcu
Multilingual Matters, 2012. 360 pages.

Editioned by Ofelia Garcia, Zeena Zakharia, and Bahar Otcu, *Bilingual Community Education and Multilingualism* compiles critical studies of bilingual education programs in New York City and argues that public schools should join the efforts of community language programs to nurture the next generation of global citizens with a critical awareness of language practices. Each chapter, written by experts in the field of bilingual education with backgrounds in the languages being profiled, represents the educational practices within a distinct community, profiling the successes and obstacles of developing language education as a space for exploring multicultural identity formations. The authors include group and individual interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and statistics regarding immigration and settlement patterns, to formulate in-depth portraits of how each community experiences language education.

The editors outline key terms, such as “translanguaging” and “diasporic plural networks” to problematize previous models of heritage language initiatives that impose a one-dimensional cultural identity. The programs that this book

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explores demonstrate innovative education practices that blend English and LOTE instruction to give students a broader understanding of how language can be used to cross cultural boundaries and how it can establish the transnational connections necessary for global citizenship.

The editors set out to present a variety of scholarly perspectives that show the complexities and exigencies of community bilingual programs moving beyond simply teaching a heritage language and into encouraging students to interact through two languages. One such exigency is generational shifts in language learning, which are influenced by changing immigration and settlement patterns and result in redefining educational goals according to the needs of growing heterogenous linguistic communities. The editors include a critical look forward from Maureen T. Matarese as they problematize the concept of community and recommend that language educators move beyond static notions of community to modify “the epistemology and methodology of language maintenance and the sociology of language research” through spatial, post-structuralist paradigms that account for the spaces in which languages circulate (292).

The contributors offer compelling evidence in their studies of community language programs. One example is “Building Communities: Asociación Tepeyac,” where Mexican-American students practice Spanish while using technology to connect with students in Mexico, which keeps Mexican-American students attuned to Mexican events in transnational communication practices. Mexican-American students also work alongside indigenous Mixteco students, who never had opportunities to interact in Mexico due to intense segregation. They learn each other’s languages and confront damaging stereotypes to create new ethnolinguistic communities.

Overall, *Bilingual Community Education* forwards a compelling argument for examining how public schools and community language education programs can foster effective relationships that nurture global citizens with a critical awareness of the power of language. Through offering a range of studies in widely spoken languages—Spanish, Yiddish, Japanese, Russian, Bengali, Hindi, Sikh, Persian, Arabic, French, Haitian Creole, Hebrew and Korean—the editors demonstrate how language education is beginning to incorporate heteroglossic frameworks for acknowledging transcultural identities. However, some chapters could have added more substantial evidence to support the editors’ argument. The examination of Sikh, Hindi and Urdu language programs avoids confronting

the sociopolitical implications of language education. “New York’s French Bilingual Revolution” presents interesting concepts—such as Richard Ruiz’s language orientation frameworks of language as a problem, language as a right, and language diversity as a resource—but misses the opportunity to interweave them into a more complex framework for investigating French bilingual education.

The majority of the chapters cohere in their sensitive explorations of how community language programs contribute to nurturing transcultural global citizens. “Community-based Initiatives and Sub-Saharan African Languages” destabilizes unitary terms, like “African,” to expose disjunctions among performances of African identities in community education. The Turkish language school study is incredibly detailed and thoughtful, offering descriptions of grammatical structures, Turkish history and culture, and an illuminating inclusion of James Paul Gee’s discourse analysis model to explain student and teacher translanguaging practices in the classroom.

In comparison with other studies on the subject of language education, *Bilingual Community Education* offers a wider spectrum of analysis for a particular geographic region and attends to the differing motivations for communities in establishing language education programs. This book is a fine companion to the ethnographic focus of *Building on Community Bilingualism* (Freeman and Cummins, 2004) and Norman Fairclough’s *Language and Power* (2001). While offering grander overviews of New York City community language education, this text reflects developing scholarship in poststructural analyses of language practices. The editors’ compilation argues effectively because it covers wide linguistic, pedagogical, and philosophical fields to present new, yet accessible, perspectives on community language education. As strands of the argument unfold in each chapter, non-experts will be able to better understand the exigencies of community language practices and scholars will be able to approach this subject with a more developed, critical mindset geared toward conceptualizing language education as a unifying force between schools and communities.