

# *The Handbook of* **Bilingual and Multilingual Education**



*Edited by*

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and Ofelia García**

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# 1

## Introduction

### ***Key Concepts and Issues in Bilingual and Multilingual Education***

Wayne E. Wright, Sovicheth Boun, and Ofelia García

What is bilingual and multilingual education? In the simplest definition, bilingual education is the use of two languages for learning and teaching in an instructional setting and, by extension, multilingual education would be the use of three languages or more. In a narrower definition, literacy is developed and/or specific content areas are taught through the medium of two or more languages in an organized and planned education program. In most cases, one of these is the “home,” “native,” or “mother-tongue” language, and one is the “dominant” societal language or a “powerful” international language. In multilingual education settings, the other languages may be dominant regional languages. However, as will be shown throughout this handbook, even these basic concepts such as language, home language, dominant language, native speaker, bilingual, multilingual, and bilingual and multilingual education are highly complex and contested constructs; thus considerations about which languages or varieties of languages to use as media of instruction are not always straightforward. Because education is most often the responsibility of nation states with artificial (and contested) geographical boundaries encompassing many—and oftentimes dividing—linguistic groups, decisions about bilingual and multilingual education are highly political, and influenced by a variety of historical, economic, and sociocultural factors.

For example, in 1998 a formal debate over bilingual education was held at California State University Long Beach, in the context of the Proposition 227 Campaign to pass a law restricting the state's bilingual programs through mandates for English-medium instruction. The first author (Wright) was present during the heated exchanges, and listened incredulously as the local chairperson for the Proposition 227 Campaign—an elementary school teacher in Orange County—claimed that bilingual education was a “failed experiment,” that “we only do bilingual programs for Spanish speakers,” and that “other countries don’t do bilingual education, only the United States!”

At the time of this debate, Wright was teaching in a Cambodian (Khmer) bilingual education program at an elementary school just a few miles away. The second author (Boun) was a senior in high school in Cambodia learning both English and Khmer, and later studied at a multilingual university—the Royal University of Phnom Penh. The third author (García) was a former Spanish-English bilingual teacher in New York City, a professor conducting research on bilingualism and bilingual education in New York City and internationally, that year along the Uruguay-Brazil border as a Fulbright Scholar.

As our personal experiences illustrate, political attacks, misinformation, and outright falsehoods often permeate debates over bilingual and multilingual education. Ironically, during this period of renewed attacks on bilingual education in the United States, other countries around the world were turning to bilingual and multilingual education to address linguistic realities and student needs. UNESCO and UNICEF, for example, promote mother-tongue-based multilingual education as a key component of education reform assistance to developing nations struggling to provide universal access to a basic education. Other nations with historically homogeneous populations

are also beginning to turn to bilingual and multilingual education to address the realities of demographic change.

In the United States between 1998 and 2002, three states (California, Arizona, and Massachusetts) passed anti-bilingual education laws (G. McField, 2014), and federal education policy—the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—removed all mention, encouragement, and direct financial support of bilingual education (Menken, 2008). However, the tides are beginning to change. After 15 years of anti-bilingual legislation in these three states, bilingual programs have been *restricted*, but *not eliminated*. Waiver provisions, loopholes, and differing interpretations of the laws by various policy makers provided space for many schools to continue or even expand bilingual education programs. In California, legislative efforts are now underway to reverse Proposition 227 and undo the harm caused by the ill-informed law (McGreevy, 2014). Even with Proposition 227 still in place, California became the first state in the United States to recognize the valuable linguistic skills of graduating bilingual students by awarding a “Seal of Biliteracy” on their high school diplomas—a model now being replicated in other states, including New York and Texas (see <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/>).

Thus, bilingual and multilingual education is alive and well and expanding. Indeed, in a world with only 196 “nation states” but over 7,000 named spoken languages (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2013), bilingual and multilingual education is essential. As García (2009) has argued, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century “bilingual education, in all its complexities and forms, seems to be the only way to educate as the world moves forward” (p. 6).

Nonetheless, there are a wide variety of often conflicting ideologies, theories, policies, and practices surrounding

bilingual and multilingual education throughout the world. In some cases, bilingual education may even be misused to limit access and opportunities for linguistic minority students. This speaks to the great need for a comprehensive *Handbook of Bilingual and Multilingual Education* to: (1) discuss the theoretical foundations and present bilingual and multilingual education as a current, strong, and cutting-edge field; (2) provide a broad overview of the historical development and current status of the field; (3) provide vivid critical examples of policy and practice in action; and (4) move the field forward by rethinking older constructs and introducing fresh ideas that better reflect and address the reality of our multilingual, multicultural, and increasingly globalized world.

The only attempt at a comprehensive internationally focused handbook on bilingual education was in 1988 in an edited volume by Christina Bratt Paulston containing 27 chapters each focused on a different country or region of the world. While this collection of individual case studies was highly informative, it did not lay out the theoretical foundations of the field. Important textbooks in the late 1980s and early 1990s helped solidify the field of bilingual education by providing educators with theory, research, and practical suggestions, including, for example, Ovando and Collier (1985), Crawford (1989), and Baker (1993). These key early textbooks have all subsequently been updated to 5<sup>th</sup> editions (Baker, 2011; Crawford, 2004; Ovando & Combs, 2011). The *Encyclopedia of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* edited by Baker and Jones (1999), and the more recent *Encyclopedia of Bilingual Education* edited by González (2008), in addition to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the ten-volume *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (May & Hornberger, 2008) with Volume 5 focused on Bilingual Education (edited by Jim Cummins and

Nancy Hornberger) cover a wide range of topics, and have further established bilingual and multilingual education as an important academic field. Recent books and scholarship, including García's (2009) *Bilingual Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, have helped challenge some of our cherished constructs and underlying theoretical foundations, and have introduced new terms and ways of conceptualizing key issues as we move forward in our rapidly changing world.

## **Overview and organization**

This Handbook builds on the excellent prior work described above by providing both depth and breadth across three major sections: (1) Foundations for Bilingual and Multilingual Education, (2) Pedagogical Issues and Practices in Bilingual and Multilingual Education, and (3) Global Dimensions of Bilingual and Multilingual Education. The 41 chapters in this Handbook are authored by 78 distinguished, well-known, and rising scholars from around the world. Collectively their chapters provide case studies of, or draw examples from, specific countries and regions from all continents of the earth except Antarctica.

Authors in Sections 1 and 2 were asked to provide an historical overview of their topic, discuss the current state of knowledge with a focus on methodological and theoretical issues and problem areas, and discuss future directions. Authors of the country/region-specific chapters in Section 3 were asked to provide a brief historical overview, a brief summary of the current state of bilingual/multilingual education, and then discuss a specific case or provide a focus on one or more of the specific issues in their region/country. These chapters in Section 3 provide vivid examples of the issues raised and discussed in Sections 1 and 2.

## ***Foundations for bilingual and multilingual education***

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field of bilingual and multilingual education, the 10 chapters in Section 1 bring in a wide variety of theoretical foundations informed by diverse academic fields. The authors in this section challenge some long-held notions and push us to consider new ways of conceptualizing and understanding our multilingual world. In [Chapter 2](#) Angel Lin argues that, while sociolinguistics has focused on sociopolitical and sociocultural aspects of bi/multilingualism, there is a need for a better understanding of bi/multilingualism and bilingual education as a response to the human condition in a contemporary world marked by global crises, oppression, resistance, and increasing fragmentation. She introduces the term “grassroots trans-semiotizing” to highlight the varied ways local and trans-local actors make creative use of multiple kinds of semiotics (not just written and spoken language) to make meaning and build trans-local internetworks and communities. Lin gives specific examples of trans-semiotizing practices of a Hong Kong-based hip-hop artist who meshes local vernaculars and musical styles in a manner that has global (trans-local) currency.

At one low point in academic reasoning about bilingualism, some scholars in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century conjectured that bilingualism was negatively correlated with attempted measures of “intelligence” (see Hakuta, 1986 for a review). In [Chapter 3](#) Anatoliy Kharkhurin provides evidence that bilingual practices not only lead to cognitive advantages in some areas, but also that these strengthened cognitive mechanisms may also increase the creative potential of bilinguals. Based on these findings, Kharkhurin proposes

an educational model that incorporates bilingual and creative aspects of human development.

Bilingual and multilingual education, along with other language education fields, has been strongly influenced by theories from the field of second language acquisition (SLA). In [Chapter 4](#), Guadalupe Valdés, Luis Poza, and Maneka Brooks challenge longstanding cognitivist orientations of SLA that focus on language as an individual process with the goal of linear progress in acquiring a grammatical system and language proficiency equivalent to that of a “native speaker.” Valdés, Poza, and Brooks identify and discuss two important shifts that have resulted from the “social turn” in SLA research: changing perspectives on language, and changing theoretical positions in SLA. These socially oriented shifts move away from unrealistic deficit-oriented expectations for students such as “native-like proficiency,” error-free production, or becoming balanced bilinguals (i.e., two fully proficient monolinguals in one). Instead, the authors argue for a sociocultural view of SLA as a process “leading to repertoires or linguistic resources termed multi-competence or plurilingualism.” This in turn has the “potential of informing and enriching the design of classroom environments in which students would be able to experience multiple ways of using both their home language and English for a variety of academic purposes in both their written and oral forms.”

Literacy instruction is typically the most contested and ideologically driven content area in the school curriculum (Edelsky, 2006). Viv Edwards in [Chapter 5](#) notes that teachers in bilingual and multilingual classrooms must often resort to reinventing “pedagogical practices devised with monolingual, more culturally homogenous populations in mind.” However, she argues that, with our broader and deeper understanding of the extent, nature, and complexity developed over recent decades, we “now have a much

clearer idea of the pedagogies that more closely meet the needs of multilingual learning communities in relation to both learning in general and literacy learning in particular.” Despite this clearer picture of *what* needs to be included in teacher education, and *why* it needs to be included, the real challenge, Edwards asserts, is “*how* teachers can best be supported to make the necessary changes.”

In [Chapter 6](#), Laura Valdiviezo and Sonia Nieto acknowledge cultural diversity as foundational in bilingual/multilingual education; culture is learned, thus biculturalism is one of the goals of bilingual education. However, Valdiviezo and Nieto argue that culture has been misunderstood theoretically and misapplied in practice. Given that culture is “dynamic, multifaceted, embedded in context, influenced by social, economic, and political factors, created and socially constructed, learned, and dialectal,” becoming bicultural is a complex process. Valdiviezo and Nieto note that, when internalizing at least two cultural systems, “sometimes their inherent values can be contradictory or even diametrically opposed.” To challenge assumptions about cultural diversity, they argue for more critically based research examining local cultural practices to understand the complex relationships of language and culture in bilingual and multicultural classrooms.

Conducting research in bilingual and multicultural classrooms and contexts, however, is not a simple straightforward task, as detailed in [Chapters 7](#) and [8](#). While there is strong research evidence of the effectiveness and benefits of bilingual education over education provided solely through a dominant societal language (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; G. P. McField & McField, 2014; Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey, Pasta, & Billings, 1991; Rolstad, Mahoney, &

Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005), Colin Baker and Gwyn Lewis warn in [Chapter 7](#) that “the search for the Holy Grail of a perfect piece of research on bilingual education is not elusive. It is unattainable.” While noting many specific examples of research findings favorable to bilingual education, they also note the boundaries and limitations of these studies, argue that research findings need to be treated critically and cautiously, and warn against our cravings for simple conclusions. They do not dismiss such research, however, because, without it, “our understandings and actions will be unrefined, conformist, naïve, even mindless.” They conclude that “such research illuminates and challenges, makes our thinking more sophisticated and structured, celebrates as well as contradicts, ensuring informed debates as well as doubts, even leading to more coherent and rational decisions ... for the sake of children.” While Baker and Lewis focus on the methodologies and findings of academic research, in [Chapter 8](#) Angela Creese and Adrian Blackledge, with seven of their research colleagues, focus on issues related to the process of conducting research “multilingually.” They note that language and linguistic varieties make up an essential dimension of researcher identities, which, in turn, can shape research designs and arguments made in interpretive research. Given the overlap of method and theory, the authors argue for linguistic ethnographies to “explore this overlap” and understand the ways in which “individual trajectories feed into interpretive practices.” To illustrate the power of linguistic ethnography, the authors share vignettes of researcher narratives written by members of their research team as they undertook a large study in bilingual classroom contexts.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, decisions about bilingual and multilingual education are often driven by ideologies and politics. In [Chapter 9](#), Mirose Paia, Jim

Cummins, Isabelle Nocus, Marie Salaün, and Jacques Vernaudon explore the intersections of language ideologies, power, and identity in the context of efforts in French Polynesia related to bilingual education and indigenous language revitalization. The authors first examine how societal power relations in this colonial context “transformed the population from one of the most literate in the world in the early 1800s to being only minimally literate in their mother tongues by the 1960s.” They then describe the Polynesian Languages and Cultures Project designed to reverse low literacy rates by promoting “students’ total linguistic and cognitive potential at school focusing particularly on early bilingual education.” In studying this program, Paia and colleagues found that the key to academic success was not simply a matter of incorporating the first language into instruction, but rather “the extent to which the interactions between teachers and students generate a sense of empowerment among the students.” They conclude “students will learn the target language (both L1 and L2) if they are given opportunities to use it for powerful purposes.” We wish to acknowledge another empowering feature in connection with this important chapter. The study highlighted in this chapter is part of a larger research collaboration between Jim Cummins from the University of Toronto in Canada, local researchers from the University of French Polynesia (Paia & Vernaudon), and colleagues from France at the University of Nantes (Nocus & Salaün). We wish to acknowledge Jim’s efforts to work with and help translate his colleagues’ work—which was conducted and written in first draft in French. This is in keeping with Angel Lin’s call in [Chapter 2](#) to develop “trans-local mechanisms to translate and/or make available diverse local research work.”

[Chapter 10](#), by Terrence Wiley, considers the political contexts of bilingual and multilingual education programs through the framework of language policy and planning. He notes that in institutional contexts “policies and practices related to prescribing and governing behaviors are instruments of social control.” Traditionally, language planning has been viewed as institutional policymaking to “prescribe or influence language(s) ... that will be used and the purposes for which they will be used.” However, Wiley raises a number of important questions about this process: “Who gets to define what language problems are? How, why, and for whom, have they become problems? And does the process of language planning itself cause language and communication problems? In other words, why should we assume that the process is only for benevolent purposes?” To address these questions, Wiley, extending Kloss (1998), provides a useful framework for classifying and analyzing language policies as promotion-oriented, expediency-oriented, tolerance-oriented, restriction-oriented, or repression-oriented; in addition there may be policies of erasure and null policies (i.e., the absence of policy). He argues that teachers must be aware of the negative consequences of harmful language policies, and also must become familiar with positive examples of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning. With such awareness and knowledge, teachers can “play a significant role in advocating for students and mitigating the effects of poorly conceived or inappropriate educational language policies.”

The case for bilingual and multilingual education may also be made from a framework of language rights, as addressed by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas in [Chapter 11](#). She argues that the core of education-related linguistic human rights “are the right to learn one’s own language thoroughly, at the highest possible level, and likewise to