

2014

# Introduction to Book Review: Bi-multilingual Language Knowledge as an Element of Funds of Knowledge

Patricia Velasco

Queens College, CUNY, pvelasco@qc.cuny.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://fordham.bepress.com/jmer>

Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Velasco, Patricia (2014) "Introduction to Book Review: Bi-multilingual Language Knowledge as an Element of Funds of Knowledge," *Journal of Multilingual Education Research*: Vol. 5 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://fordham.bepress.com/jmer/vol5/iss1/7>

This Book/Multimedia Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalResearch@Fordham. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Multilingual Education Research by an authorized editor of DigitalResearch@Fordham. For more information, please contact [considine@fordham.edu](mailto:considine@fordham.edu).

Footer Logo

# ***Book Review: Introduction***

## **Bi-multilingual Language Knowledge as an Element of Funds of Knowledge**

---

**Patricia Velasco**

Queens College, City University of New York

---

At specific points in history, it appears that ideas coalesce. Different researchers reach the same conclusions and insights. At this particular point in the trajectory of multilingual education, we are experiencing such a juncture. The notions of a bilingual zone of proximal development (Moll, 2013) and translanguaging (García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014) share the notion that bilinguals can use language(s) fluidly to reflect and express their thoughts and move forward in their understanding of the world. From this perspective, linguistic knowledge forms an intrinsic part of what constitutes a student's funds of knowledge; knowledge that has been accrued within a family setting and community, and that is essential for the household's well-being. Moll's funds of knowledge is deeply entrenched in Vygotsky sociocultural theory, whereby the development of mental concepts and cognitive awareness is sparked within family interactions mediated by language. From this viewpoint, in bi/multilingual families, the languages that a child brings to the task of learning are an integral part of students' funds of knowledge.

The fact that emergent bilinguals have rich linguistic knowledge that they bring from their homes into the classroom is currently and increasingly being discussed in the scholarly literature and researchers use different terms, including *flexible bilingualism* (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), *heteroglossia* (Bailey, 2007), *polylingualism* (Jørgensen, 2010), *metrolingualism* (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010), and *code meshing* (Michael-Luna & Canagarajah, 2007; Canagarajah, 2011). The term that has become the most widely accepted is *translanguaging*, which was initially posited by the Welsh educator, Colin Williams (1996) and developed by García (2009) and García and Wei (2014).

For both Moll (2013) and García (2009; García & Wei, 2014), language flexibility allows a student to demonstrate the critical, logical, reflective, metacognitive, and creative thinking that schools encourage. These thinking processes are activated when students face unfamiliar problems, uncertainties, questions, or dilemmas that can be solved by allowing students to translanguaging, to use the wide array of linguistic resources they have at hand. The idea implies an extension of what has already been shown. Thinking is deeply tied to language (Vygotsky, 1978) and it follows, that in

bilinguals, thinking is tied to the multiple array of languages at their disposition. For Moll (2013), opening the spaces whereby language(s) can co-exist, lies at the heart of a *bilingual zone of proximal* development, thinking processes that can only be expressed or brought to the surface when language flexibility is allowed to flourish. Until now, the aspect that has proven difficult is how to translate these notions into pedagogical practices that have the power to influence how a teacher imparts instruction and how does she allow her students to learn.

The intended audience for *Vygotsky and Education* (Moll, 2013) are teachers working with immigrant children. The demands imposed by the book are high, in that the author showcases pedagogical practices that bridge theoretical notions of translanguage and funds of knowledge into classrooms where multilingual learning happens. Luis Moll shows how teachers of bilingual students need to first reflect on their own assumptions about how knowledge is acquired, the importance of social experience, the language(s) used by their students to create and express knowledge, and learning. In his book, Moll describes teachers who know how to integrate their bilingual students' linguistic funds of knowledge flawlessly and easily.

The present review was written by Dr. Bobbie Kabuto, Associate Professor at the Elementary and Early Childhood Education Program at Queens College, CUNY. Dr. Kabuto book's *Becoming biliterate: Identity, ideology and learning to read and write in two languages* (2011) mirrors Moll's and García's view. In her book, Kabuto plays the double role of being the mother and researcher describing the longitudinal process of her daughter's biliterate development. Kabuto experienced how her daughter Emma and she used their multiple linguistic resources to problem solve the complex demands entailed in teaching and learning two writing systems (Japanese-English). The fact that Kabuto trusted her own daughter's funds of knowledge places her in a unique position to review Moll's book. Moll describes multiple classrooms where teachers share the conviction that trusting their students' funds of knowledge, including linguistic funds of knowledge, is the key to achieving academic success in the emergent bilingual population. This conviction is shared by the reviewers and readers of JMÉR.

## References

- Bailey, B. (2007). Heteroglossia and boundaries. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Bilingualism: A social approach* (pp. 257–274). New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Canagarajah, S. (2011). Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging. *Modern Language Journal*, 95(3), 401–417.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for teaching and learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), 103–115.
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- García, O. & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. London, England: Palgrave Pivot.

- Jørgensen, J. N. (2010). *Languaging: Nine years of poly-lingual development of young Turkish-Danish grade school students* (Vols. I–II). Copenhagen Studies in Bilingualism, the Køge Series, vols. K15–K16. Copenhagen, Denmark: University of Copenhagen.
- Kabuto, B. (2011). *Becoming biliterate: Identity, ideology, and learning to read and write in two languages*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Michael-Luna, S., & Canagarajah, S. (2007). Multilingual academic literacies. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 55–77.
- Moll, L. C. (2013). *L.S. Vygotsky and Education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Otsuji, E., & Pennycook, A. (2010). Metrolingualism: Fixity, fluidity, and language in flux. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 7(3), 240–254.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Williams, C. (1996). Secondary education: Teaching in the bilingual situation. In C. Williams, G. Lewis, & C. Baker (Eds.), *The language policy: Taking stock: Interpreting and appraising Gwynedd's language policy in education* (pp. 193–211). Llangefni, Wales: Canol.