




Social Realities and Purposeful Learning in Multilingual Contexts

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Cover Page Footnote

Author:

Patricia Velasco, EdD, is retired from Queens College, CUNY, where she was an assistant professor in the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education (EECE) and coordinator of the Bilingual Education Program. Her research interests include the development of metalinguistic awareness and its role in biliteracy, teacher education, and understanding the language and educational ideologies of Indigenous Mexicans living in NYC. In 2012, she coordinated the work for NYSED Home and New Language Arts Progressions that were part of the Bilingual Common Core Initiative. Patricia co-directed a project for NYSED creating practices for multilingual learners facing the demands embedded in the New Generation Learning Standards.

Book Review Introduction

Social Realities and Purposeful Learning in Multilingual Contexts

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Volume 12 represents a new opportunity for *JMER*'s book section. We are presenting three very different book reviews that we believe complement one another. Olivares Orellana's review of Ahit Mohanty's (2018) *The Multilingual Reality: Living with Languages* highlights how multilingualism in India is an everyday, complex phenomenon characterized by hierarchical relationships among languages, discrimination, and marginalization. Mohanty expands on the concept of a Double Divide, meaning that at the top and in limited supply stand English and French, representing prestige and access to higher, elitist, education. In contrast, the major regional (vernacular) languages stand apart, preventing entrance to privileged contexts. Not only does the chasm affect the place of languages in society at large, but, most importantly, the linguistic identity of individuals and community members is compromised, leading to failure and deprivation. Mohanty's book briefly discusses multilingual education in the context of sociolinguistic disadvantages of minority language speakers in India and focuses on multilingual education from the social justice lens: the right to use one's language in legal, administrative, and judicial acts, including language education.

In sharp contrast, Falchi's review of Espinosa and Ascensi-Moreno's (2021) *Rooted in Strength: Using Translanguaging to Grow Multilingual Readers and Writers* is deeply situated in early-childhood bilingual classrooms where translanguaging is at the core for propelling reading and writing success. Within this context, translanguaging is defined as using home and new language resources to make sense of the world at large and the immediate task of learning how to read and write. From this perspective, translanguaging is particularly well suited to build background knowledge while gaining control of the different aspects of the reading and writing processes.

Ijalba's review centers on Cioé-Peña's (*M*)othering *Labeled Children: Bilingualism and Disability in the Lives of Latinx Mothers* (2021). In this book, the lives of three Latinx mothers raising children who are labeled both bilingual and disabled are explored. In such circumstances it is easy to assume that these parents are ill equipped to face the demands of the NYC public school system. Peña's book showcases what Bourdieu (1998) referred to as reactivation of capital or accrued abilities learned in a different context and deployed in new circumstances. For these families the new circumstances include facing a new country, interacting in a new language, navigating the complexities

of the public school system and the labeling of their child as bilingual and dis/abled. At the heart of the resourcefulness these mothers display are their children's well-being and aspirations. These efforts, though, often go unnoticed by teachers who consider bilingualism and dis/ability factors that hinder learning and success. Peña's message centers on acknowledging and building on each of these Latinx family's strengths, commitment, and affection. Within this approach, teachers can support such families in defining their goals, visions, and hopes for the future.

Taken together, Mohanty's book highlights the sociolinguistic inequalities and Cioé-Peña's volume uncovers the struggles parents face challenging a deficit-based school system that are sadly reproduced in many bilingual settings. Espinosa and Ascensi-Moreno's contribution demonstrates how these inequalities and struggles can be leveraged in classrooms where translanguaging opens the door for creating purposeful learning experiences in a flexible and unrestricted classroom context.

We are certain you will enjoy these three book reviews.

Reference

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *State nobility: Elite schools in the field of power*. Stanford University Press