

PREFACE

This is a book about teaching for biliteracy—reading and writing in Spanish and English—in the United States. It is the book we wish we had had when we began as bilingual and dual-language classroom teachers and administrators over 20 years ago. It is the book we wish we had had when our school administrators handed us literacy materials in English and told us, “just translate it into Spanish.” This is the book we wish we had had when, in an effort to learn how to make better use of our literacy materials, we attended workshops and seminars that offered great suggestions about strategies and curriculum but focused on the teaching of English literacy to monolingual English speakers with no mention of biliteracy. This is the book we wish we had had when we spent part of our vacations in Spanish-speaking countries in bookstores reviewing and buying Spanish-language materials for our classrooms because what we had never quite fit the needs of students developing biliteracy.

We stopped expecting the seminars on English literacy to tell us what to do in Spanish. We started observing our students’ language use more closely and we identified patterns in their biliteracy development. We made notes about aspects of biliteracy that were challenging for our bilingual learners, and we developed tools, resources, and strategies that were effective in our classrooms. We reviewed current research on biliteracy in relation to our practice, and we created our own professional development workshops for practicing biliteracy teachers. We also created and taught university-level teacher-preparation courses on the teaching of Spanish literacy in an English-dominant environment. We listened to the teachers who attended these workshops and enrolled in our classes and we decided to write this book.

Major Contributions

Teaching for Biliteracy: Strengthening Bridges between Languages describes, explains, and demonstrates for practitioners how to teach for biliteracy. Although the guide focuses on teaching for biliteracy in Spanish and English in the United States, its major principles can be adapted and applied to biliteracy contexts in which languages other than Spanish and English are used. The guidebook is grounded in the latest research, and makes three powerful, practical contributions to the emerging field of teaching for biliteracy.

First, we introduce the concept of *the Bridge* as an integral component of effective biliteracy instruction. We argue that teaching for biliteracy has three parts: Spanish instruction, the Bridge (both languages side by side), and English instruction. The Bridge is the instructional moment when teachers purposefully bring the two languages together, guiding students to transfer the academic content they have learned in one language to the other language, engage in contrastive analysis of the two languages, and strengthen their knowledge of both languages. An important characteristic of the Bridge is that it is two-way: it goes from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish. Because bilinguals transfer what they have learned in one language to the other language, they do not have to learn content in both languages. For example, if students study math only in Spanish, the Bridge provides

opportunities for them to attach English to that math content without relearning the math concepts and skills in English. Students also learn to use cross-linguistic strategies as they explicitly compare and contrast their two languages on the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic levels, and they strengthen their metalinguistic awareness.

Second, we offer *three fundamental sociolinguistic premises* that educators can use to guide their decision making about teaching for biliteracy on the classroom, program, school, and district levels. These premises capture the complexity of teaching for biliteracy in Spanish and English in the United States. According to these premises, teaching for biliteracy is different than teaching for monolingual literacy for the following reasons:

1. Spanish in the United States is a minority language within a majority culture.
2. Students use all of the languages in their linguistic repertoire to develop literacy.
3. Spanish and English are governed by distinct linguistic rules and cultural norms.

The first premise highlights the stratification of languages and language users in society. The second premise reflects a multilingual perspective on bilingual learners. The third premise draws attention to the linguistic similarities and differences between the target languages and the cultural norms of those who use them in different discourse communities.

Third, we provide a *biliteracy unit framework* that teachers can use to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate their literacy instruction for bilingual learners participating in bilingual, dual-language and Spanish-for-Spanish-speakers programs. The biliteracy unit framework shows teachers how to do the following:

- Draw on student, teacher, and community language resources, linguistic creativity, and cultural funds of knowledge as an integral part of classroom instruction
- Integrate language arts and content-area instruction
- Scaffold students' learning of content-area concepts and skills in two languages
- Provide students with opportunities to read and write grade-level texts across the curriculum
- Support students' development of academic English and Spanish across content areas
- Make cross-linguistic connections during the Bridge.

This framework is compatible with literacy frameworks and programs used in K–12 schools today, and it provides the organizing structure for the book.

Special Features

We provide practitioners with resources that enhance the teaching and learning of Spanish and English for all students fortunate enough to learn in two languages. Useful tools, strategies, and resources for teachers of Spanish and English biliteracy appear throughout the book, many of them displayed in boxes. These include tools specific to the instruction of Spanish literacy in the United States and tools for planning for the Bridge. That is, we provide classroom strategies supporting the key use

of all of students' linguistic resources during that planned time where students who have completed the instructional part of a unit make cross-linguistic connections between their languages and move to extension activities in the other language. We also provide tools to assess for biliteracy, an ongoing process that provides feedback for planning further lessons. Also, each chapter ends with questions and activities for reflection, to help you evaluate your own teaching practices. To honor Spanish and to keep simultaneous translations to a minimum, we have included examples of lessons, rubrics, and other tools in Spanish. When Spanish is used for content that is crucial to understand, we have included translations in the text.

Readers will find the following text and online features to aid in using the book strategically:

- **Key Points** introduce the main ideas of each chapter.
- **Vignettes** from actual practice highlight contemporary challenges.
- **Practical tools, resources, and strategies** counter biliteracy instruction and assessment challenges at the classroom, program, school, and district levels
- **Profiles of prototypical bilingual learners and biliteracy teachers** illustrate the biliteracy tools, resources, and strategies in practice.
- **Activities for Reflection and Action** at the end of each chapter invite teachers and administrators to apply the key points of the chapter to their own practice.
- **“How Spanish Works,”** a supplemental chapter at the end of the book, highlights aspects of the internal structure of Spanish that have a direct impact on the teaching of literacy in Spanish and the development of metalinguistic awareness, a key element of biliteracy.
- **Web site resources** that supplement the text include sample biliteracy unit frameworks for 1st, 3rd, and 4th grades and high school that are described in the book; a blank biliteracy unit framework template that teachers can download, adapt, print, and use as they create their own bilingual study units; a sample survey for collecting linguistic, cultural, and academic background information on students; and recommendations for further reading.

Using This Guide

In this guidebook, you are introduced to research on biliteracy, to the students and teachers engaged in developing biliteracy, and to a framework for planning, instructing, and assessing in a biliteracy context. All the ideas, suggestions, and examples can be used and adapted by a district, school, or teacher. We intentionally do not promote any one product or program. Instead, we believe in teacher professionalism and expertise, and we hope that this book supports teachers and provides them with tools and knowledge to enhance their practice.

Teaching for Biliteracy can be used as a professional development guide—in study groups, workshops, or professional learning communities— with practicing teachers and administrators who work in districts, schools, programs, and classrooms that teach for biliteracy. It can also be used as a teacher preparation and educational leadership guide for educators preparing to promote biliteracy at school to help navigate the complex task of teaching for biliteracy. We know there is no single answer for all students, teachers, and schools, and, therefore, *Teaching for Biliteracy* is

offered as a guide rather than a recipe. We have written it to provide teachers with the information and direction to make the best decisions for their students, their school, and themselves.

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