

## Book Reviews

### **Bilingual Development in Childhood**

by Annick De Houwer

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*Bilingual Development in Childhood* is one of the *Cambridge Elements*, part of the Elements in Child Development series, edited by Marc H. Bornstein. It examines the factors that support bilingual language development in the first three stages of a child's life. Drawing on extensive research of early bilingualism, which has dramatically increased over the last 25 years, De Houwer convincingly illustrates that the factors which matter the most in dual language development and proficiency are: the actual amount of input in each language, the parental language interactions, and educational choices.

In Chapter 1, De Houwer lays out all the terminology used in the book and defines its focus. The three life stages she uses are those of Steinberg et al. (2011): “infancy”—the period until the age of 2; “early childhood”—until the age of 6, and “middle childhood”—until the age of 11. She defines three bilingual learning environments which pertain to the three life stages: “Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA),” where children hear two languages from the day they are born; “Early Second Language Acquisition (ESLA),” where children are brought up monolingually but later in early childhood are exposed to a second language (L2); and “Second Language Acquisition (SLA),” where children are brought up monolingually until they start school in an L2 that is different from their first language (L1). De Houwer points out that we must be aware of the “social hierarchy between languages” in bilingual settings. The one used locally in public life and education, the societal language (Soc-L), is often considered more prestigious than non-societal languages (Non-Soc-Ls). Since most of the research has been conducted on BFLA children, with both a Non-Soc-L and a Soc-L at home, this book is primarily focused on such children and, specifically, on their spoken language production.

In Chapter 2, De Houwer examines BFLA, children raised with two languages from birth. It begins with a discussion on “what it means to be born into a bilingual family” and analyzes the characteristics of the language input to the infants. Language spoken to infants appears to be slow, has a very high pitch, and uses rather simple intonation patterns to clarify utterance boundaries. How such speech in two languages is perceived at an early age is the next topic of investigation. As part of their phonological development, infants hearing two languages have to categorize the sounds they hear into meaningful units for each language. Moreover, BFLA infants must construct distinct language-specific perceptual categories to learn words in each of their languages. It is often assumed such lexical comprehension takes longer for BFLA children than it does for monolingual children. However, De Houwer dispels this myth: evidence suggests that a BFLA environment

actually “boosts word comprehension.” BFLA infants appear to understand more than they can say. Some start first producing words in one of their languages and only later in the other language, whereas others produce words in both languages from the outset. Nevertheless, by 18 months most BFLA infants produce words in each of their languages and their vocabulary in each seems to steadily increase throughout the second year of their lives. Apparently, there is no evidence to support the claim that their vocabulary is smaller than that of monolinguals. Nonetheless that is not meant to imply that they are equally proficient in both languages. The two languages of BFLA infants generally do not develop at the same pace. How much time each language is heard often accounts for why more words in one language are produced than in the other, as does how often the child is actually required to use a particular language.

In Chapter 3, De Houwer moves on to bilingualism in early childhood, discussing both BFLA and ESLA, children initially raised monolingually but are later exposed to an L2 in early childhood. The fundamentally different language-related experiences of BFLA and ESLA toddlers result in very divergent paths of language development. She reports that BFLA toddlers continue to understand two languages but their level of comprehension in the Non-Soc-L may decrease since the Soc-L is used in education. In contrast, their speaking ability in each language appears to noticeably expand. ESLA children, on the other hand, we are told, often reject the new language outright but generally show an increase in comprehension after only a year of regular exposure. She reveals that some later go on to produce one-to-two-word utterances, whereas others soon start to speak a lot. De Houwer finds uneven development as very characteristic of ESLA; however, by the time they start elementary school many are quite proficient in their L2. Nevertheless, she claims that they pale in comparison to their BFLA counterparts at that point. With regard to language choice, De Houwer draws our attention to the fact that both BFLA and ESLA children choose their language in accordance with the language of the person they are speaking with but can also change it upon request. This, she argues, is evidence of their sensitivity to people speaking other languages. Finally, child-internal factors, such as chronological age and knowledge of another language, as well as child-external factors, such as the amount of input, are examined to account for the diversity found in early-childhood bilingual development. Chronological age, for instance, often reflects cumulative language exposure and apparently the greater an ESLA child’s L1 vocabulary size is at 2 years of age, the better their L2 comprehension and production will be at 4.5. De Houwer states that the amount of input is key: the more a language is heard the better developed it will be.

In Chapter 4, De Houwer turns to bilingualism in middle childhood, discussing BFLA, ESLA, and lastly SLA, children raised monolingually through early childhood but who attend an elementary school in a new L2. Middle childhood refers to the period during which children start elementary school where a single Soc-L is used as the language of instruction. De Houwer reports that in this period the divergent effects of BFLA and ESLA children’s language learning paths that

were evident in early childhood begin to level off. Cross-linguistic research shows that prior to their 8<sup>th</sup> birthday both BFLA and ESLA children perform better in the Non-Soc L, than in the Soc-L but later the balance reverses. In contrast, test results from children around the world reveal that it takes a very long time for SLA children to understand the L2 enough to fully take part in school. Interestingly, De Houwer found that the older SLA children are when they start learning the L2, the sooner they develop L2 ability, which she attributes to greater cognitive maturity and experience learning an L1. As seen in the earlier periods, De Houwer again refers to the uneven development of bilingual children in middle childhood, having observed that one out of four bilingually raised children no longer speaks one of their languages during this time. Subsequently, she addresses language choice. Elementary school-age BFLA children continue switching between their two languages with ease, but at home they may not always use the language their parents use with them, whereas the majority of ESLA children who primarily hear a Non-Soc-L at home usually speak it with their parents. She concludes this chapter with a discussion of the factors that affect bilingual language development in this stage. As seen in early childhood, knowledge of the L1 appears to facilitate L2 development and frequency of input continues to play a major role. Motivation to learn a particular L2 also has an effect on proficiency as well as learning to read and write it. Furthermore, parental discourse strategies which encourage Non-Soc-L communication are apparently crucial to offset the overwhelming impact of the school language.

In Chapter 5, De Houwer provides a brief review on the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and bilingual development in childhood. She reveals that previous research has found that lower SES was a risk factor for language development in some monolingual children, from infancy to middle childhood, while it had no effect on others. As a result, she argues that such findings make it difficult to examine its effect in bilingual children since a child could show an effect in one language but not the other. De Houwer further points out that it could be the case that in bilingual families where both language and culture interact “culturally determined patterns of parent-child interaction may moderate or even clash with SES-related propensities” (p. 53).

In Chapter 6, De Houwer summarizes the main findings of this book and makes some parting remarks. In spite of the great variation in children’s bilingual development, she believes numerous generalizations can be made about the three fundamental linguistic environments, BFLA, ESLA, and SLA. In brief, she remarks that unlike in ESLA or SLA, BFLA children acquire two languages in infancy, utter actual words in two languages at the age of 2, and start to produce short and then complex sentences in both of their languages around roughly the same age. By the time they enter elementary school, BFLA children are reportedly more proficient in the Soc-L, whereas ESLA children are more proficient in the Non-Soc-L, and SLA children are only proficient in the Soc-L. By age 11, many bilingual children are rather proficient in their Soc-L even if it was learned later on, but they may have poor proficiency in the Non-Soc-L. She

emphasizes that the most important point is that bilingual children can become highly proficient in two or more languages, no matter what age they started learning them. BFLA is often believed to be the best way to become “truly” bilingual. However, De Houwer illustrates that ESLA and SLA children actually fare better because, unlike many BFLA children who may not actually speak two languages after early childhood, both of these groups of children are more likely to still be proficient in both languages by the end of middle childhood. Contrary to popular belief, it appears that the older children are, the easier it is for them to learn a new language. In closing, De Houwer draws our attention to just how extensive research on bilingual children has become over the last 25 years. Such a growth in interest, she claims, must be a reflection of the increasing number of bilingual children around the world. De Houwer thus brings the book to an end by making a plea for scholars across the globe to continue to give child bilingualism the attention it deserves, without comparing it to monolingualism, or referring to it as “accelerated” or “delayed” language development.

In conclusion, this book accomplishes everything it set out to do in a very comprehensive manner. As promised, the factors for bilingual language development in the first three stages of a child's life, infancy, early and middle childhood, are examined in great detail. Drawing on the enormous wealth of research on child bilingualism during the last two and a half decades, De Houwer convincingly illustrates how the significance of such factors may change over time, but when it comes down to it, it is the amount of input in each language, the parental language interactions, and the educational choices which play the greatest role in bilingual language development and proficiency.

*Reviewed by Suzy E. Fukuda  
Aoyama Gakuin University*

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## **Translanguaging for Emergent Bilinguals: Inclusive Teaching in the Linguistically Diverse Classroom**

by Danling Fu, Xenia Hadjioannou, & Xiaodi Zhou

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*Translanguaging for Emergent Bilinguals: Inclusive Teaching in the Linguistically Diverse Classroom*, by Fu, Hadjioannou, and Zhou explores the development, evolution, and realities of educating emergent bilingual students in US-based language classrooms. The authors draw on their own backgrounds as bilingual speakers to critically address the monoglossic ideologies (i.e., those ideas emphasizing monolingualism as the norm in society) that have plagued the education of language-minority students (i.e., those students from a home in which a language other than the dominant language in society is spoken). They argue instead for a practice-based translanguaging approach to harness and leverage students' emergent bilingualism for the purposes of making meaning, communication, and self-expression. This book begins with a foreword by internationally-renowned scholar of translanguaging theory and practice, Ofelia García, in which she examines the breathing of life into a multifunctional translanguaging room. In the introduction that follows, Fu discusses how her perspectives on language learning changed throughout her years as a language learner and educator, from a monolingual-based approach of language separation to a translanguaging one of linguistic inclusivity. The authors then discuss the various types of challenges faced by emergent bilingual students in schools, including the stigma of isolation that comes with branding these minoritised students as somehow being linguistically deficient in comparison to their monolingual classmates. Here, they position the book's main argument that a translanguaging approach can create a socially-just space in the classroom for emergent bilingual students to use any of their language resources to maximise their own learning and overall potential. The book is then split into five chapters that work together to introduce translanguaging as a conceptual and instructional model based on the real-life experiences of emergent bilinguals and the voices of their parents and teachers.

Chapter 1 is entitled "Translanguaging: A Promising Approach for the Education of Emergent Bilinguals." The chapter begins with another look at the major issues facing emergent bilingual students in the U.S. educational system, namely the inadequacy of monolingual-based pursuits of a standard dialect and single-minded literacy skills, rather than a focus on 21<sup>st</sup>-century education for children of minority and heritage languages. The authors examine the demographic shifts in U.S. immigration that resulted in an increased presence of emergent bilingual students, and the persistent educational

challenges these students face, including limited access to appropriate resources and supportive learning spaces, a shortage of ESL-trained teachers, and inadequate assessment measures. The authors argue translanguaging pedagogy to be a promising approach to dealing with these challenges and to preparing students to be active citizens in the globalised and digitalised 21st century. They employ vignettes to illustrate the everyday language practices of bi/multilinguals and to demonstrate the potential for translanguaging in various educational contexts, in the teaching not only of emergent bilinguals, but of all students, to develop content knowledge, language skills, and critical awareness of their social surroundings.

Chapter 2, entitled “Meeting Academic Challenges,” looks specifically at the academic challenges emergent bilinguals face in their education. The authors examine the real-life vignettes of emergent bilingual students in monolingual-based school settings, including in ESL programmes (pull-out, push-in, and self-contained), a dual-language bilingual programme, and a transitional bilingual programme, and the issues faced by these students as they attempt to meet grade-level expectations in terms of curriculum standards. They note some of these troubles to be the discontinuity between mainstream and ESL curricula, instruction loss when students are not continuously present in the mainstream classroom, the gap between interpersonal and academic language, overwhelming levels of verbal input, programmes enforcing language separation conflicting with the actual linguistic practices of bilingual students, and privileging English over other languages. The authors contrast the monolingual-class vignettes with translanguaging classrooms to show how teachers can create translanguaging spaces for emergent bilingual students to maximise their learning potential. They suggest translanguaging classrooms allow students to use all linguistic resources to learn content knowledge whilst developing language skills, cast students as language experts and teachers as co-learners, engage students in collaborative learning, and increase their metacognitive awareness of language choices.

Chapter 3, entitled “Meeting Social Challenges,” turns to the social challenges that emergent bilingual students encounter in educational settings. The authors again explore various vignettes of emergent bilinguals in monolingually-orientated language situations to illustrate and analyse the social isolation and stigma these students face in the classroom. They claim this is due to language hierarchy and separation, and the remedial teaching approaches found in ESL and transitional bilingual programmes. The authors then contrast these against translanguaging classroom vignettes to show how emergent bilingual students in these contexts are recognised and accepted in the schooling community as bilingual individuals and learners. They show how these learners are able to straddle both languages whilst interacting with their social environment to both

maintain previous identities and sculpt new ones. They also discuss how learners are able to break free from the artificially-created social, geopolitical, and linguistic constraints and social isolation to use their full set of linguistic and cultural resources in the classroom to learn and embody their global identities.

Chapter 4 is entitled “Meeting School Challenges,” and focuses on the different challenges faced by teachers and schools in providing adequate education for emergent bilingual students of various language and cultural backgrounds. The authors draw on interview data of emergent bilingual students, teachers, and school administrators to illustrate how these students are unable to receive the same support as other students due to the lack of resources and personnel in the classroom. They attribute these issues to budgetary constraints, a shortage of qualified bilingual teachers, and underprepared mainstream teachers. The authors again compare these classrooms to school settings employing a translanguaging approach to show how, in contrast, teachers can structure their classroom to respond to school challenges and allow students to flexibly draw on all of their linguistic resources to maximise their learning regardless of their language or cultural backgrounds.

Chapter 5 is entitled “Translanguaging in Action.” In this chapter, the authors build on their suggestion for a translanguaging model to address the academic and social challenges faced by emergent bilingual students in school by offering practical recommendations for implementing a translanguaging approach in various educational contexts. They start by reviewing three tenets of a translanguaging model, namely, that learners have a single, unified linguistic repertoire; that teachers are co-learners in the classroom; and that translanguaging is purposefully and systematically integrated into classroom instruction. The authors then examine suggestions for implementing translanguaging in different learning settings for emergent bilinguals students, including bilingual education settings, ESL education settings, and mainstream classroom settings. Finally, they demonstrate how translanguaging can serve as a model to prepare students to be competent global citizens in the 21st-century.

Overall, this book cogently challenges the ubiquitous monolingual-based models for educating language-minority students, arguing instead for a translanguaging approach to meet the needs and expectations of these emergent bilinguals in the 21st-century, globalised world. This book is unique in that it not only draws on the personal experiences of the authors themselves, but also employs real-life classroom vignettes of emergent bilingual students to illustrate and analyse the challenges they face in U.S. schools. It also provides a series of concrete strategies and recommendations to help teachers implement a translanguaging model in diverse classroom settings to overcome the challenges faced by these students in their education. The authors insightfully

illustrate how translanguaging pedagogy can be used to expand students' engagement with their learning, affirm their own identities, develop multiple literacies, increase their overall academic achievement and social awareness, and act as competent members in today's global society. I would recommend this book for all educators of emergent bilingual students, including those of language students in second and foreign language learning contexts. This book opens up new venues for educators, policymakers, school administrators, and researchers alike to engage in professional development so that they may come to recognise and leverage students' emergent bilingualism to improve their overall learning. This book contributes significantly to our understanding of the practical and theoretical nature of translanguaging and its potential to transform the education of emergent bilingual students, not only in the US, but worldwide.

*Reviewed by* Blake Turnbull

*Doshisha University*