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978-1-107-04244-5 - Children's Multilingual Development and Education: Fostering Linguistic Resources in Home and School Contexts

Alison L. Bailey and Anna V. Osipova

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Children's Multilingual Development and Education

The study of families and educators who successfully sustain children's linguistic resources is a novelty in current educational research, where focus has largely been on the development of students' English language skills. In this book, Alison Bailey and Anna Osipova provide a systematic examination of the beliefs and practices of parents and educators who share the common goal of improving educational and social outcomes for multilingual children. Giving voice to parents and educators, they explore the strategies being devised to foster multilingualism and support its development both at home and in the classroom. This book presents new research findings and combines these with compelling first-hand accounts of the successes and concerns of both families and educators, making its content pertinent to a wide audience of researchers and a range of higher education courses.

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Children's Multilingual Development and Education

*Fostering Linguistic Resources in Home and
School Contexts*

Alison L. Bailey and Anna V. Osipova

With a Foreword by Fred Genesee



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To our parents, those who continue to love and
support us
&
those whom we remember and miss dearly.

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Foreword

It has been estimated that more children grow up speaking two or more languages than only one. While it is difficult to cite precise statistics that provide conclusive evidence for this, no one would disagree that there are a lot of bilingual individuals in the world, and many of them are children. Studies on alternative forms of bilingual education and second language instruction have enjoyed some popularity for some time – dating back to the 1960s with the inauguration of immersion programs in Canada and bilingual education in the United States (see Genesee and Lindholm-Leary, 2013, for a review). However, until recently, researchers in most other fields of inquiry have largely ignored issues related to multilingual acquisition. Fortunately, this has started to change. For example, in my own field of inquiry on second language and bilingual acquisition, or what some might broadly call cognitive neuroscience, studies on language learning, representation, and use in children and adults who are learning and using more than one language have become mainstream and highly respected as researchers realize how prevalent bi- and multilingualism is. Enhanced interest in bi- and multilingualism has also been motivated by the recognition that theories of language learning must include all types of language learners, not just monolinguals. We now have much more empirical evidence on many aspects of second language learning than ever before to inform decision making, although there is still much more to learn.

As valuable as current evidence on second language and bilingual acquisition is, it often exists in a contextual vacuum. That is to say, the empirical evidence is often abstracted from the actual lives of children who grow up bilingual and our understandings of empirical evidence often fails to consider the contexts in which acquisition actually takes place. Bailey and Osipova's book on *Children's Multilingual Development and Education: Fostering Linguistic Resources in Home and School Contexts* helps fill this vacuum. In a very useful and non-academic fashion, Bailey and Osipova review a great deal of what we know about raising and educating children bi- and multilingually in a uniquely contextualized way. At the same time, they extend our understanding of bi- and multilingual development by examining in detailed and intimate ways the contexts in which childhood bilingualism actually occurs.

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Their story is about the “big picture” in which children actually grow up to become bi- or multilingual. They use the terms “multilingual” and “multilingualism” to include bilingual and bilingualism, so I will use these terms in the same way in this Foreword. Although they assert in the Preface that this book is not for parents but, rather, is *about* parents, there is nevertheless much in this very readable volume that will help guide and inform parents, as well as educators and other professionals who contribute to the development of these children.

At the core of this book is a detailed discussion of the results of an ambitious study of the beliefs, fears, motivations, practices, and challenges of parents who raised children to be competent in more than one language. Their study was conducted in the United States – predominantly California, and included 23 families with 39 children. Families selected for participation were raising and educating their children under very diverse circumstances. This was done deliberately to ensure that the families represented the wide range of circumstances in which children in the United States actually become bilingual. Although based on a sample from the United States and, thus, arguably limited in geographic scope, the authors also discuss studies conducted on bi- and multilingualism around the world.

While diversity among bilingual children and their families is often alluded to in other studies, it is seldom described or discussed in such intimate detail as in this book. As a result, one of the main conclusions to be drawn from their study and the book as a whole is that to really understand multilingual development and how to promote it requires an understanding of the diverse circumstances in which it occurs. While one could argue that this was an obvious and foregone conclusion, given the nature of their sample, the full diversity of circumstances in which children become multilingual is seldom highlighted in such insightful detail. More pointedly, the fact of such diversity and its critical relevance to multilingual development are seldom taken seriously by classroom educators, educational administrators, or policy-makers (let alone other professionals) who work with multilingual children. In fact, as the authors point out, most educators working with multilingual children in the United States are themselves monolingual and thus have no intuitive sense of such diversity; this is likely to be true in other communities around the world. In North America, teachers often do not even know what other languages their minority-language students know or the circumstances of their language development, critical information for appropriate differentiation of instruction. It is a truism in Western education that all children are different and that effective education takes individual differences into account, and, yet, when it comes to educating children who have minority language/cultural backgrounds, we often fail to delve into their individualities. By focusing on families raising children in diverse contexts, the authors sensitize readers to the

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critical importance of context in understanding multilingualism. By implication, they are also alerting researchers, educators, and parents around the world to this fact.

Their sample included children from minority groups who were acquiring English as a second language along with their birth language as well as majority group children in English-speaking families who were acquiring an additional language at home or in school; these groups in turn included recent and established immigrant families along with native-born American families; they included families who were acquiring foreign, heritage, or ancestral languages, which in some cases were similar and in other cases highly dissimilar (e.g., Chinese and English). While most children in the sample were acquiring one additional language, there were also children who were learning or had learned more than one additional languages – five in one case! The learners were toddlers, preschool-age, school-age, or young adults at the time of data collection. Data collection included face-to-face and semi structured telephone interviews with parents (mostly mothers) about family background, the context in which multilingualism occurred, the child's multilingual development, beliefs about bilingualism, strategies and practices for supporting multilingualism in the home, and perceived roadblocks to achieving multilingualism, among others.

The study also included 13 educators who encountered multilingual children in their day-to-day teaching, but had not necessarily taught the children of the parent participants in the study. Data were collected from the educators using individual and focus group discussions and semi structured interviews and touched on topics related to teacher interactions with multilingual students in their classrooms, their beliefs about multilingualism, challenges and rewards in working with multilingual students, strategies and practices they found effective in promoting multilingualism, among others. Including educators is an invaluable part of the study because it provides a broader and, thus, more realistic picture of what it means to raise children to be multilingual – while past studies have examined families or educators, few have examined both at the same time. To examine the lives of multilingual children taking family or school perspectives alone into account is to get only half the story. Much insight is to be gained from looking at the overlap and disjunctions in these two domains of multilingual children's lives. Taking such a broad perspective is critical if we are to move beyond a deficit or subtractive view of bilingual development to an additive one – ignorance of the complexities of multilingual children's lives is prone to oversimplifications and misunderstandings since it feeds a false dichotomy comprised of bilinguals versus monolinguals.

Bailey and Osipova adeptly use the information collected from the parents to identify salient beliefs they hold about multilingualism in general and in their families (Chapter 3) – beliefs that shape the decisions, practices, and strategies they adopt to support children's multilingualism. In fact, many of their beliefs

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reflect misunderstandings or fears about raising and educating children to be multilingual. Many of these fears are not supported by empirical evidence, but are nonetheless important in their lives. While some of the discussion in this chapter is quite specific to attitudes, beliefs, and policies surrounding multilingualism in the United States, there is still a great deal that will be of broad interest and relevance to those interested in individual multilingualism elsewhere. More specifically, the following topics of broad relevance are discussed and then challenged using available research evidence: learning more than one language is detrimental to children's development; multilinguals are late talkers and have limited language competencies; some children and, in particular, children with disabilities cannot learn additional languages; knowing other languages jeopardizes children's academic success and puts their social development at risk; and there are certain strategies for raising children bilingually that are more successful than others; and others. Discussing these widely held beliefs and concerns using first-hand expressions of the participants' beliefs and concerns grounds them in the day-to-day lives of parents and, thereby, validates them while raising awareness of the need to provide parents more information so that they can make better-informed decisions. Indeed, later in the book, the authors note that parents make a plea that educators provide them with more information about language learning in general and multilingualism in particular so they can make responsible decisions. It has been my experience that teachers themselves also need such information. The authors' coverage of these issues is refreshingly balanced and authentic precisely because it is embedded in the lived lives of their participants.

The richest part of the book is to be found in Chapters 5 and 6 on "Raising Multilingual Children" and "Fostering Multilingualism in Diverse Educational Contexts," respectively. It is in these chapters that the authors directly explore the expressed beliefs, fears, motivations, and challenges of raising and supporting multilingual children. In a section in Chapter 5 called "Pathways to Multilingualism," the authors sketch out the alternative and varied contexts in which parents support their children's multilingual development, and here we see the intense and complex reflections that parents engage in as they embark on and try to sustain their individual paths to multilingualism. They illustrate the diversity of contexts in which multilingual children grow up by describing the histories of different types of families – for example, English-dominant parents versus bilingual parents versus non-English-dominant parents. In this way, it becomes clear that there is not a single portrait of the multilingual family; there are many. It is these portraits that, in my opinion, are most revealing because it is here that we see how individual family practices and strategies for promoting their children's multilingualism is shaped in critical ways by their historical and present-day contexts as well as by their beliefs about multilingualism and their motivations for wanting their children to be multilingual.

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Parents' concerns were not just about language but also about culture – how to maintain heritage cultures, fitting into mainstream cultures, being part of an interconnected and globalized culture, and connections with family and others. It is impossible to summarize here the full richness of understandings that emerge from the authors' discussions of the parent interviews in this chapter – readers will have to discover this on their own.

A useful and key construct to emerge from this chapter is the notion of investment. Bailey and Osipova point out that parents make multiple forms of investment – in time, money, emotion, education, friendships for themselves and their children, and in the family, to achieve their vision of multilingualism for their children. Investment is about commitment, taking charge, resilience, facing and overcoming challenges, and the future. It is here that another overarching theme emerged from my reading – the tremendous effort that is needed to raise and educate children to be multilingual in environments that do not support multilingualism and may even obstruct its achievement. It is also here that we see that the nature of the effort that parents must invest to achieve multilingualism changes with time as their children grow up. The authors devote a separate section to consider the challenges that parents perceive as obstacles to achieving their goals of multilingualism, including challenges linked to insecurities in the family, outside influences (e.g., monolingual peers), being different from monolingual families and children, and monolingual school systems. It is intriguing to speculate whether one would find the same challenges and demands for effort and investment in other cultural-linguistic contexts – a topic of another book.

The authors continue their discussion of how context affects children's multilingual development in Chapter 6 as they review the interview data from the teacher participants. Here the authors consider the beliefs, challenges, practices, and strategies of educators who encounter multilingual students in their classrooms, even when the classroom and school function monolingually. It is interesting to note that even teachers working in programs that are designed to support multilingualism talked about the challenges they face supporting children's multilingual development despite the school's stated aims. More specifically, they talk about challenges related to instability in program design, lack of adequate resources in all languages used in the classroom, isolation from mainstream classrooms and teachers, and teachers' concerns about their own abilities to function in more than one language. Despite these evident challenges, the teacher participants expressed wholehearted enthusiasm for working with multilingual students. Aside from the importance of the details about educational contexts presented in this chapter, this chapter is important because it highlights the importance of taking a broad holistic view of multilingual development. In this chapter, the authors stress that is not only up to families to maintain,

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support, and protect the multilingual resources of their children; but schools and, by extension, the wider community also have a role to play. It is only by including educators in the study that their call for families and educators to work together is so clear.

In sum, Bailey and Osipova provide a refreshingly grounded, contextually rich discussion of the lives of children who grow up in families that want them to be multilingual. This volume is an important antidote to the often overly simplistic view that we have of the lives of multilingual children. It tells us that there are many ways for children to become multilingual; that forces in their families as well as in their schooling and communities at large play important roles; and that we need to work together to protect, foster, and celebrate children's multilingualism. This book should motivate parents, professionals, and researchers to reconceptualize how they think and work with these children.

Fred Genesee,
McGill University

Genesee, F., and Lindholm-Leary, K. (2013). Two case studies of content-based language education. *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education*, 1(1), 3–33.

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Preface

Just like music is a language and you don't get confused when you listen to Bach versus, you know, jazz! You know, you can be exposed and understand that they are both completely different.

Tina, Taiwanese-English bilingual mother

We are inspired by these words from Tina, a bilingual mother aspiring to raise her young daughter with two languages. Her words remind us with simple aplomb how amazingly adaptable the human mind is. Of course we do not confuse Bach with jazz, and what is more we can appreciate and understand both with ease. A myriad of books on raising bi- and multilingual children have hit the bookshelves recently, both real and virtual, indicating the public's burgeoning interest and investment in multilingual parenting. These books offer parents guidance, recommendations, or the latest top 10 tips for providing children with a polyglot upbringing. This book differs from them all in one major respect: This is not a book *for* parents (although parents will undoubtedly find it of interest), rather it is a book *about* parents and the educators who partner with families to create and sustain the linguistic resources of children.

This volume came about as we reflected on the questions from an increasing number of parents we encounter in our professional and personal lives who are raising or preparing to raise their children with exposure to more than one language. The unique and compelling stories of successes and sometimes difficult dilemmas experienced by these parents motivated us to embark on a systematic look at U.S. families who speak two or more languages and their child-rearing practices, as well as the multifaceted roles of the educators who may support these endeavors.

In conducting this work, we quickly realized that there was a disjuncture between the popular image of the U.S. as a monolingual nation and the reality of the families we were interviewing. As quickly as the questions of our parent acquaintances gave us hope that multilingualism was a serious and determined part of their families' lives, we realized that their questions also revealed how pervasively certain myths and misinformation about multilingualism still abound in U.S. society. Consequently, this book tackles the beliefs

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of the participating parents and educators turning to the research literature for their verification.

The study of parents and educators that we report in this book should appeal to educational researchers, as well as to psychologists, applied linguists, sociologists, and anthropologists who study language, ethnicity, and multiculturalism in children, their families, and their wider communities. The volume counters many of the (low) expectations held by wider society for the linguistic prowess of the typical American. Our book explains how, through their interactions, planning, teaching, and mentoring, families and educators work hard, often facing difficult challenges but nevertheless making multilingualism part of the fabric of the daily lives of an increasing number of U.S. children.

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xx Acknowledgments

never stopped listening, talking the ideas over, and offering great perspectives. “Эта книга посвящается моей маме и отцу, которые говоря со мной только по-русски, всё-таки вырастили из меня полиглота.” Finally, we thank our thoughtful anonymous reviewers and editors at Cambridge University Press. We are especially grateful to Hetty Marx at Cambridge who helped us to develop the original proposal, and to Rebecca Taylor, Carrie Parkinson, Rob Wilkinson, and James Harrison for seeing the final manuscript to press. All errors herein remain our own.

Abbreviations

CAL	Center for Applied Linguistics
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
DBE	Developmental Bilingual Education
ELD	English Language Development
ELL	English Language Learner
ELP	English Language Proficiency
ESL	English as a Second Language
FEP	Fluent English Proficient
FLA	Foreign Language Learning Aptitude
HLS	Home Language Survey
LEA	Local Education Agency
LIEP	Language Instruction Educational Program
LD	Learning Disability
L1	First language
L2	Second language
NCELA	National Clearinghouse of English Language Acquisition
OTL	Opportunity to Learn
SEI	Structured English Immersion
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SIOP	Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol
SLD	Spanish Language Development
SLI	Specific Language Impairment
SDAIE	Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English
TBE	Transitional Bilingual Education
TWI	Two-Way Immersion
TWIOp	Two-Way Immersion Observational Protocol
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development