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Edited by Elizabeth Ijalba, Patricia Velasco, Catherine J. Crowley
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Language, Culture, and Education

Exploring language, culture, and education among immigrants in the United States, this volume discusses the range of experiences in raising children with more than one language in major ethno-linguistic groups in New York. Research and practice from the fields of speech-language pathology, bilingual education, and public health in immigrant families are brought together to provide guidance for speech-language pathologists in differentiating language disorders from language variation, and for parents on how to raise their children with more than one language. Commonalities among dissimilar groups, such as Chinese, Korean, and Hispanic immigrants are analyzed, as well as the language needs of Arab-Americans, the home literacy practices of immigrant parents who speak Mixtec and Spanish, and the crucial role of teachers in bridging immigrants' classroom and home contexts. These studies shed new light on much-needed policy reforms to improve the involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse families in decisions affecting their children's education.

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Language, Culture, and Education

Challenges of Diversity in the United States

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This volume is dedicated to immigrant families, who give up so much of their own lives in search of a better future for their children. It is dedicated to our own parents and grandparents, who underwent that same process and provided a better future for us.

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Expanding Language and Ability Difference: A Foreword

Ofelia García

For a very long time bilingual education scholars have been claiming that the continuing failure of language minoritized students cannot be solved with bilingualism alone, but rather with changes to the structural inequalities and racism of US society (see, for example, Flores, 2013; Flores & García, 2017; Flores & Rosa, 2015; García & Kleifgen, 2018). This volume, edited by Ijalba, Velasco, and Crowley, emphasizes the inequalities experienced by bilingual minoritized children in healthcare and schooling simultaneously, and the consequences of such social neglect in the lives of these families.

Focusing on children whose families are poor, immigrant, and often undocumented, the volume also makes evident the strengths of these families in supporting their children. Whereas most volumes that address issues of language, culture, and education focus on schooling, this volume takes on the Spanish-language meaning of “educación,” paying attention to the family and the community’s roles in educating children holistically. Of course, this holistic education of children always includes the language of the home, and so bilingualism is part of the ways in which families socialize their children, without suspicion of these practices, and without perceiving language or ability difference as a problem. In fact, some of the villains in this book are not families at all, but uninformed educators and professionals – those who warn the parents to speak English only, or those who provide early childhood interventions according to sociocultural norms of the English-speaking US white middle class, or those who consider language to be only conventions of standardized norms. The public often blames minoritized families for their children’s failures. It is said that these families’ language practices are responsible for a “word-gap” (Hart & Risley, 1995). But by centering the voices of the families, the tables are turned. It is the professionals who are portrayed as having a gap in understanding the different linguistic and cultural practices of these families.

The volume is a wake-up call for public health providers and educators who have been taught to believe that success is about having homogeneous language, cultural and ability practices, rather than recognizing everyone’s differentiated role in constructing an equitable society. Assessment and

evaluation have become the most important sorting mechanism. But this volume makes evident that test scores which only compare these children to what is considered “the norm” are only ways to conserve power in those who have established “the norm” – monolingual white middle-class families. The contributions in this volume question how and why standards and norms are created, bringing differences of all kinds to the surface, and showing them in all their multi-splendor.

Because language is at the center of all socialization and educational endeavors, this volume pays particular attention to the difference between language difference and language disorder. This is a most important topic, and one that is often treated separately, when in actuality it often occurs together. That is, although there are many volumes on language disorder, on language difference, and on bilingualism, speech and language pathologists have had little interest in issues of multilingualism, and multilingual scholars have neglected language disorder. As a result, many children who are bilingual are misdiagnosed as having language disorders. And many very young children who are growing up in bilingual homes are misdiagnosed as having language delays. The reverse is also true. Some bilingual children who have language disorders that have little to do with their bilingualism are not diagnosed, and therefore, they do not receive support services to which they are entitled. To change the culture of psychologists, speech and language pathologists, pediatricians and educators, and the testing instruments they have been given for their craft, it is important to develop their critical stance. It would also be essential to cultivate their intersectional stance, enabling them not only to question the narrow lens through which they are seeing these children, but also widening the lens so that what has been previously considered solely language pathology is perceived within a continuum of language difference. It would then be possible to develop holistic and appropriate services that leverage the language and cultural practices of the families. Unless all professionals work together to question the norm and make standards inclusive of differences, it will not be possible to change the failure path to which bilingual minoritized children have been assigned.

Because bilingual families are at the center of this book, their linguistic practices are shown to be outside of what is considered “standard” Arabic, English, Korean, Mandarin, Mixtec, or Spanish. What some call “translanguaging” (see, for example, García & Li Wei, 2014) is evident among the linguistic practices of the families. Some of the chapters show language practices in flux, as is common in all bilingual families. In situations of global mobility, as the ones we are experiencing today, it is impossible to view language statically. Language is always in flux, as interactions with different interlocutors, in different time–space scales, proceed (Blommaert, 2010). This book recognizes the dynamics of bilingual interactions and bilingualism, and

the difficulties of describing language performances and bilingualism at a specific point in time, and in lab conditions that neglect the social interactions in which language resides. And yet, because of the interdisciplinarity and intersectionality that this book supports, some of the chapters make use of data derived from experimental conditions. The difference, however, is that data is not taken at face value, but critically examined within the sociopolitical context which has produced the data. For example, the book does not shy away from describing the socioeducational context of these children after President Trump's election, and the consequences of the larger sociopolitical framework in the ways that evaluation scores are interpreted and services are provided.

Not only are families visible in this book, but children are too. Families may exert some control over all practices at home, but children themselves, in their social interactions, are driving their own language practices. Children of all types are portrayed in this book – very young ones and older ones, children with language delays and others who don't, autistic children considered to be delayed, twins and triplets, those being raised within the bilingual continuum of practices and with different languages, children who can read and others who cannot.

Something that this book does well is give guidance. That is, the book not only presents a critical perspective as to what the practices have been, but also guides parents, educators, and other professionals as to how to distinguish, as Crowley and Biagorri say, true disability from "something else," and how to nurture the language capacities of all children, including their bilingualism. The chapters in this volume provide important case studies that help open the eyes of professionals, but by combining this widening of the vision with the louder voices of families that are seldom heard, they open paths to understanding differently. And yet, the editors have been careful to include chapters that not only open paths to viewing from another angle, but also paths of *action* so that we can do more than just be advocates for these children. That is, the book does not leave families and professionals alone. It enables action, providing "damage control" strategies for some, transformative practices for others.

Nowhere is this action more important than in demystifying bilingualism, in the face of linguistic prejudice against the use of languages other than English in the United States. The use of bilingual practices in family interactions, in play activities, in shared reading is here encouraged, so that children diagnosed with disabilities can have the same opportunities of meaningful interactions with others.

The line between social differences and differences due to medical conditions are sometimes difficult to establish or to even perceive. With language, it is more so. And with communities in flux – linguistically, culturally, historically, politically, such as the ones portrayed in this book – it is even more so. Our actions with these communities then, have to be more deliberate,

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more aware of the complexity, more tangible, and at the same time, less permanent. To enable bilingual minoritized children to partake in social opportunities, their differences have to be not only acknowledged, but leveraged. That is precisely what the families portrayed in this book do. And so, the lessons must come from the families up to the professionals, and not the other way around. In an unequal society, the professionals, most often white monolingual and middle class, seldom understand the complexities of being different and being racialized (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017). This book, edited and authored by scholars who are committed to placing difference at the center, opens up a collaborative and fluid path, one that responds to the children themselves, and not to external norms and standards.

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Many people have contributed to this volume with their insights, helpful advice, and encouragement. The seeds for this project were planted in 2012, when Helen Barton, the commissioning editor for Cambridge University Press, visited me at the Bilingual Biliteracy Lab at Queens College. At the time, Helen envisioned the research I conducted with immigrant families as a book that could be shared with a wide readership. This project began to take hold in 2013, when I asked Patricia Velasco, from the Department of Bilingual Education at Queens College, and Catherine J. Crowley, who founded the Bilingual Extension Institute at Teachers College, Columbia University, to collaborate as co-editors in the present volume. Helen's support was unwavering throughout the life changes we endured and the changing political landscape that continues to influence our work. We are grateful for her continued support in seeing this project to completion.

Patricia brought her expert knowledge of bilingual education and of being a teacher of teachers. Her work originates from the classrooms, working with students of all ages – that is children and college students. I am particularly thankful for Patricia's enthusiasm, coordination, and the many discussions on the topics presented. Similarly, Catherine (Cate) contributed her expertise in bilingual assessments with school-age children and her knowledge of the law. As a lawyer and speech-language pathologist, Cate brings the unique perspective of language and education as inalienable civil rights for the children in our schools. She has also championed the need for building cultural-linguistic competence in the professionals that conduct speech-language and educational evaluations. Cate is a pioneer in developing best practices in speech-language assessment with culturally and linguistically diverse children in our schools. I am grateful for her enduring support and contributions to this project.

As co-editors, we particularly want to thank Dr. Ofelia García, who is revolutionizing bilingual education by advocating for language integration and translanguaging in our classrooms. Dr. García has been a guiding light in many of the studies presented and in our approach to working with immigrant families. Her stance that all language varieties are valid and in a state of flux, underscores the complexity of language practices in the homes of immigrant

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families and in the communities where languages and cultures are in contact. It also underscores the complexity of preparing professionals that are culturally and linguistically competent to work with a diverse population. Dr. García's support for this project and her insights are most valuable to us and are much appreciated.

We are especially grateful to Dr. Eva Fernández, Assistant Provost/Assistant Vice-President at Queens College, City University of New York. Dr. Fernández contributed her expertise in psycholinguistics and bilingualism and provided us with valuable suggestions on many chapters in our book. She was enthusiastic about the interdisciplinary scope of our book and our mixed-methods approach. We are grateful for her expert feedback, insights, comments, and encouragement in support of this project.

We extend our appreciation to the invited contributors to this volume, who shared their expert skills, knowledge, and experience in the chapters that follow. This volume is enriched with their different approaches, background and the knowledge and skills they bring to this collection of writings. Anny Castilla-Earls shared with us how she actively researched and planned raising her own children bilingual. Victoria Puig shared her knowledge of Early Intervention and her experiences in working with immigrant families. Reem Khamis-Dakwar contributed her knowledge about the heterogeneity of Arab-Americans. Esperanza Tuñón Pablos shared her work with Mexican immigrant women and how they assume the healthcare needs of their families in the United States. We appreciate the expertise on literacy and feedback of Bobbie Kabuto, who is co-author with Patricia Velasco in understanding the literacy practices of an immigrant Mixteco family. We thank Miriam Baigorri, who co-authored the chapters on disability evaluations with Cate Crowley, and Sara Horne for her assistance with these chapters. We want to express our gratitude to Angela Giraldo, Rosemarie Sepulveda, Qi Li, and Nakyung Yoo, who worked with families and are co-authors with Elizabeth Ijalba on various chapters in this book.

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