International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism
Vol. 14, No. 2, March 2011, 121–131

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

EDITORIAL

From policy to practice in the Multilingual Apple: bilingual education in New York City

New York City is extraordinarily diverse, making it a fascinating context in which to research bilingual education. City schools have for generations served large numbers of immigrants and children of immigrants bilingually and only in English, making the city at once an international model for serving these students successfully and a site where tensions surrounding immigration and linguistic diversity come to the fore. Taken together, the articles in this special issue of the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (IJBEB) delve into the successes and struggles in New York City's efforts to serve its immigrant students.

About half of all New Yorkers speak a language other than English at home, and more than a third are foreign-born (US Census 2000). The 2000 US Census lists at least 170 different languages spoken in New York City, making it the most linguistically diverse city in the United States. However, as the languages spoken by many thousands of residents fall into the 'Other Language' categories of the Census, this remains a dissatisfying underestimate. Instead, the Endangered Language Alliance estimates that the number of languages spoken in New York approaches 800 (Roberts 2010). Regardless, what is evident is that the city is a site of extreme linguistic and cultural diversity. It is due to the many languages spoken in New York City that its familiar nickname 'The Big Apple', was rechristened as 'The Multilingual Apple' by García and Fishman (2002, 4), who aptly note that 'English has never been, and cannot be considered today, New York's vernacular'.

A note on terminology: While the New York City Department of Education continues to refer to students who speak a language other than English at home and are entitled to receive language support services in school as 'English language learners' or ELLs, the authors in this special issue instead favor the newer term 'emergent bilinguals'. This term, coined by García in recent publications (García, Kleifgen, and Falchi 2008; García 2009; García, this issue), promotes an ideological shift, turning attention away from English as the sole goal of the students' learning and instead reminding us that in adding English to their linguistic repertoire these children become bilingual.

Serving 1.1 million students in nearly 1700 schools, the New York City Department of Education is the largest school system in the United States (New York City Department of Education 2010a). Emergent bilinguals currently comprise 14% of all students in New York City, and another 13% received language support services in the past but are no longer considered emergent bilinguals by the city (these students are known in city schools as 'former ELLs'). Thus, 27% of all students in city schools were enrolled in English as a second language (ESL) and/or

ISSN 1367-0050 print/ISSN 1747-7522 online

DOI: 10.1080/13670050.2011.544117
http://www.informaworld.com

bilingual education programs upon entry in the school system (New York City Department of Education 2009).

Spanish is the predominant language of emergent bilinguals in city schools, spoken by 67.4% of these students, and it is followed by Chinese (11.4%). Bengali, Arabic, Haitian Creole, Urdu and Russian each comprise approximately 2 3% of the total emergent bilingual population, followed by French, Albanian, Korean, Punjabi and Polish (each comprising $\leq 1\%$ of the total emergent bilingual population). A 2009 report by the New York City Department of Education provides data about emergent bilinguals in city schools and lists the top languages spoken by emergent bilinguals, as shown in Figure 1.

A majority (57%) of emergent bilinguals were born in the US, with US-born students found mainly at the elementary level. The remaining 43% of emergent bilinguals are new arrivals from the following top 10 countries of origin (listed in order of the number of new arrivals): Dominican Republic, China, Mexico, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Guyana, Ecuador, Haiti, Pakistan, and India (New York City Department of Education 2009).

US language education policy context

Bilingual education in New York City is being greatly impacted by the language education policies adopted across the US; therefore, it is important to briefly outline what is happening nationally to contextualize the articles in this special issue. In response to greater immigration to the US during the last decade than ever before, with fierce debates waging over immigration policy, the languages spoken by immigrants are increasingly being restricted in US schools (Menken 2008; Ricento 1995). Specifically, the number of bilingual education programs nationally has been decreasing (Crawford 2007; Zehler et al. 2003).

In recent years, the states of California, Arizona, and Massachusetts have passed anti-bilingual education legislation, dramatically reducing the numbers of bilingual education programs in those states. These anti-bilingual education policies not only have affected the states in which they were adopted, they both reflect and influence public sentiment elsewhere. Repercussions are even being felt in New York City, which has a strong history of supporting bilingual education in its official policies, and where efforts to end bilingual education in city schools have been averted in the past (Menken 2008; Reyes 2006).

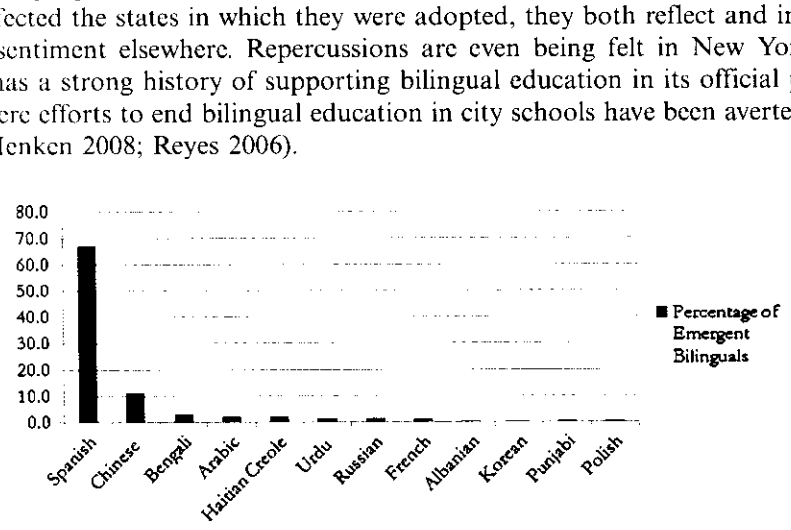


Figure 1. Top languages spoken by emergent bilinguals in New York City schools. Source: New York City Department of Education 2009.

Though the educational system in the US is highly decentralized, and thus a great deal of decision making power is allocated to individual states, current federal education policy has proven to be far more invasive than in decades past. No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which has been in effect since 2002, is the main federal legislation funding public schooling. Since the implementation of NCLB, the federal government has used high-stakes standardized testing of students as a tool to ensure greater accountability by each state for the government funding it receives (Menken 2008; Menken and Shohamy 2008).

The legislation mandates that emergent bilinguals participate in academic content assessments in English as well as English language proficiency assessments, and failure results in consequences for students, such as grade retention or not being permitted to graduate, and consequences for schools, such as school closure. Given the high-stakes consequences now attached to test scores, which are a cornerstone of these reforms nationally, testing has become a primary focus of US schooling and a significant presence in the everyday lives of students and educators. Along with many others (e.g. Crawford 2004; Gándara and Baca 2008; Solórzano 2008; Valenzuela 2005; Wiley and Wright 2004), elsewhere I have critiqued the numerous negative consequences of testing and accountability for emergent bilinguals, who increasingly receive instruction in English to prepare them for the tests, and who are disproportionately penalized for failing (Menken 2008, 2009, 2010).

At the time of writing, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is several years overdue for reauthorization. In the meantime, the Obama administration in 2010 provided funding to selected states through a grants competition program called 'Race to the Top', which incorporates the 'test and punish' approach of NCLB. In order to receive this federal funding, states need to show evidence of advancing standards and assessments, systems for gathering and analyzing data to measure student progress, teacher effectiveness, and improvement of failing schools. All of these areas rely heavily on standardized testing, for instance, as a means to determine if a school ought to be closed or if students are progressing in the ways the law requires. Twelve states – including New York – have been awarded Race to the Top grants. Since 2002, New York City Mayor Bloomberg and schools Chancellor Klein[1] have received national attention for aggressively promoting testing, closing failing schools, and publicizing test scores as a means to publicly evaluate schools (they also intend to publicize the under-performance of teachers of tested grades and subjects).

Emergent bilinguals have received attention across the country for overall poor performance on the assessments that federal policies require. In New York City, as elsewhere, emergent bilinguals at both the primary and secondary levels are far more likely to fail tests than other students (Menken 2008). It is New York State policy that all students must pass a set of standardized tests to graduate from high school, in spite of the fact that performance on these tests is mediated by language proficiency level. Accordingly, emergent bilinguals have the lowest graduation rates (25%) and highest dropout rates (28%) of all students (Menken 2009, 2010). Moreover, the national policy context creates difficult challenges with which city schools must contend in their efforts to serve emergent bilinguals well.

Policy for emergent bilinguals in New York City

In New York City, individual schools have the authority to determine the type of educational program(s) offered to emergent bilinguals, although city and state

policies set certain parameters that must be followed along with the federal requirements mentioned in the preceding section. In 1974, the Aspira Consent Decree – the result of a lawsuit brought against the New York City public schools by Aspira, a national organization for Latino youth – established the right of emergent bilinguals in the city to receive bilingual education (Reyes 2006).

New York State's educational policy for emergent bilinguals is delineated in a regulation entitled Part 154, as amended in 2007 (New York State Education Department 2007). The regulations outline how to identify emergent bilinguals, the assessments and data that must be gathered about these students, and services to be provided to them. Significantly, Part 154 upholds the Aspira Consent Decree in the following mandate:

> Each school district which has an enrollment of 20 or more pupils with limited English proficiency of the same grade level assigned to a building, all of whom have the same native language which is other than English, shall provide such pupils with bilingual education programs. (New York State Education Department 2007)

New York's policy is very supportive of bilingual education in this regard, as only a small handful of US states go so far as to actually require bilingual education programming (Menken 2006).

In accordance with further city and state policy, as embodied in the Language Allocation Policy of the New York State Education Department as well as that of the New York City Department of Education (New York State Education Department 2009; New York City Department of Education 2010a), city schools are required to adopt one of the following three programs for emergent bilinguals (their terminology): transitional bilingual education, dual language bilingual education, or free-standing ESL.

The Language Education Policy of the New York City Department of Education (2008) details how many minutes of language support services emergent bilinguals are entitled to receive according to their English language proficiency levels, and provides recommended schedules to ensure these guidelines are implemented. Likewise, the policy clarifies how much each language should be used during instruction in each program type. In the case of transitional bilingual education programs, city policy states that beginners should receive 60% of instruction in the students' home language and 40% in English; intermediates should receive 50% of instruction in each language; and advanced students should receive 75% of their instruction in English with 25% in the home language (New York City Department of Education 2008).

The second programming option for emergent bilinguals described in the city's Language Allocation policy is 'dual language programs'; these programs have other names elsewhere, such as 'two-way immersion' (Baker 2006; Wright 2010). The policy only describes the 50:50 program model, wherein instructional time is equally divided between the two languages, and students are a mixture of native English speakers and native speakers of the minority language used in instruction. The configuration it provides for this type of program is either the 'self-contained configuration', in which one teacher provides instruction in both languages, or the 'team-teaching configuration', with one teacher instructing in English and a partner teacher providing instruction in the target language (New York City Department of Education 2008).

The New York City Department of Education (2008) defines 'free-standing ESL programs' as those in which instruction is provided in English. The following are the three organizational models of ESL programs described: push-in, pull-out, and self-contained. In both push-in and pull-out models, emergent bilinguals spend the majority of their school day in general education classrooms where instruction is only in English, and receive ESL instruction either by having an ESL teacher 'push in' to the general education classroom, or 'pull out' students to receive ESL instruction in a separate classroom. In the self-contained model, a classroom is comprised entirely of emergent bilinguals who receive both content instruction and ESL instruction at once (New York City Department of Education 2008). As detailed below, free-standing ESL programs are currently the most common option provided for emergent bilinguals in city schools.

Model programs for emergent bilinguals in New York City schools

Since the 1970s, a wide range of programs have proliferated in New York City public schools. As an indicator of interest in how the city serves its emergent bilinguals, a multiple database search indicates that there have been at least 995 scholarly publications about bilingual education in New York City to date.[2] The city is often turned to as a national and international model for the provision of services to emergent bilinguals, and, as detailed below, the success of certain school programs is well documented.

The New York City Department of Education (2009) reports that there are currently transitional and/or dual language bilingual education programs available in Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, French, Arabic, Polish, and Yiddish. Drawing from the literature in support of bilingual education, and particularly the finding that emergent bilinguals who have the opportunity to learn through the medium of their home language are likely to outperform their counterparts in English-only programs or even in 'weak' forms of bilingual education such as transitional bilingual education programs (Baker 2006; García 2009; Krashen and McField 2005; Thomas and Collier 2002; Wright 2010), the New York City Department of Education has in recent years provided grants for schools to develop or expand dual language bilingual programs.

The New York City Department of Education (2010b) lists 94 dual language bilingual programs operating in 88 schools (some schools offer programs in two minority languages). Among these dual language bilingual programs, a number have been documented for their successes in serving emergent bilinguals. At the elementary level, for instance, four highly regarded and longstanding Spanish/English dual language bilingual elementary schools have each been examined in academic research as well as the media – P.S. 89 Cypress Hills (García and Trough 2002; Howard et al. 2005), P.S./I.S. 210 Twenty-First Century Academy for Community Leadership (Caballero 2000; Pita and Utakis 2002), P.S./I.S. 311 Amistad Dual Language School (Einhorn 2002; Hemphill, Apsel, and Man 2005; Tavlin 2005), and P.S. 24 The Dual Language School for International Studies (Hemphill et al. 2005; Lantieri 2010). Likewise, the Shuang Wen elementary school offers a dual language bilingual program in English and Chinese that is frequently written about (Mendelsohn 2009; Tavlin 2005; Tsui 2009; Zhao 2002).

At the secondary level, there are a number of successful high schools where all of the students are emergent bilinguals that have been well documented in scholarly

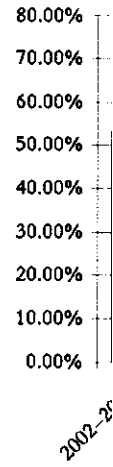
research. For example, the Gregorio Luperón High School in Washington Heights, a largely Dominican neighborhood in Manhattan, has received attention for its successes in serving a student population of all Spanish-speaking emergent bilinguals through both English and Spanish (Bartlett and García 2011; García and Bartlett 2007; Koyama and Bartlett, this issue). The Internationals Network for Public Schools is a consortium of 13 high schools[3] in which all of the students are emergent bilinguals, and which have a longstanding history of success as indicated in graduation rates, college admission rates, and test scores that far exceed city averages (Ancess 2003; Fine et al. 2007; Langer 2001). While on paper these schools offer ESL, in actuality the home languages of the students are incorporated into instruction in innovative ways (Flores and Chu, this issue; García 2009, this issue; García, Flores, and Chu 2011; García and Sylvan, with Witt, forthcoming). While most of the International High Schools are linguistically diverse, in recent years two new schools within the network have opened in which all of the students are Spanish-speaking emergent bilinguals (Internationals Network for Public Schools 2010).

Bilingual education in jeopardy in New York City schools

In spite of many successes, New York City is being affected by the national language policy context, and recent trends are troubling. What had been a broad range of programs in city schools for emergent bilinguals is now narrowing rapidly as bilingual education – and particularly transitional bilingual education – falls out of favor. Transitional bilingual education has been the predominant bilingual education model in city schools since the passage of the Aspira Consent Decree of 1974 (Reyes 2006). While no new official language policies have been adopted at the city or state level, large numbers of these programs are being eliminated and replaced with ESL programs in city schools.

While the New York City Department of Education (2009) publishes enrollment data for ESL, transitional bilingual education, and dual language programs separately, to gain a clearer sense of the trend for bilingual education as a whole, here I combine city data for transitional and dual language bilingual programs into one larger category. What I found from my analysis is that in the 2002–2003 school year, 53.4% of all emergent bilinguals were enrolled in ESL programs, while 39.7% were enrolled in bilingual education (either in a transitional or dual language bilingual program). By contrast, in the 2008–2009 school year, the percentage of emergent bilinguals enrolled in ESL rose to 70.7%, while the enrollment in bilingual education programs declined to only 23.0% of all emergent bilinguals. I have discussed this trend and cited city program enrollment data in the past (Menken 2008, 2009), and what is striking about the most recent data – which includes the 2008–2009 school year – is how the disparity between ESL and bilingual education enrollment continues to widen dramatically. The recent loss of bilingual education programs in the city can be seen in Figure 2.

While the chart in Figure 2 combines all transitional and dual language bilingual programs into a single category, as explained above, the loss of bilingual programs is not uniform across program type. Instead, reflected here is the loss of many transitional bilingual education programs that a slight increase in dual language bilingual programs has been unable to curtail. In the 2002–2003 school year, 37.4% of emergent bilinguals were enrolled in transitional bilingual education, and that number dropped to 19.3% in the 2008–2009 school year. Meanwhile, dual language



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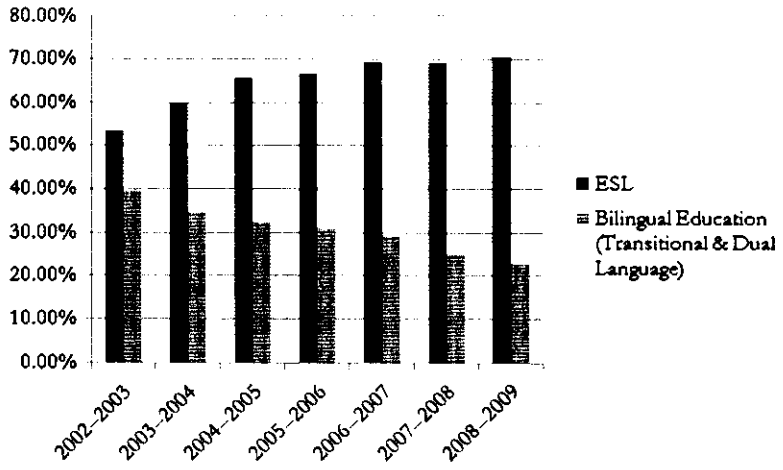

Figure 2. Program enrollment of New York City emergent bilinguals by school year, 2002–2009.
Source: New York City Department of Education 2009.

program enrollment has actually increased slightly in that same time period from 2.3% to 3.7% of all emergent bilinguals. While more students are now able to receive dual language bilingual education, these programs remain scarce.

As such, there are far fewer opportunities for emergent bilinguals in New York City to receive instruction in a bilingual program than in the past. Obviously, school practices are in clear violation of the Aspira Consent Decree as well as the State's policy regulations delineated in Part 154, which mandate bilingual education when there is a sufficient number of students. But for now, city and state policy makers are turning a blind eye to these violations at the school level. Although New York City boasts excellent programs for emergent bilinguals, unfortunately the city does not serve all emergent bilingual students well.

Discussion of the articles in this Special Issue

The articles in this special issue of IJBEB offer a critical examination of bilingual education in the Multilingual Apple. The articles are sequenced to move from policy to practice, starting with wide scope analyses of the entire system and proceeding into schools and classrooms. In the first article, Ofelia García analyzes the New York City school system as a whole. She offers us a retrospective on bilingual education in the city, in a richly detailed way that could only be possible when written by someone who has lived the history about which she writes. Starting with how emergent bilinguals were educated in the city in the 1960s, García draws lessons from the past to propel us into the future, arguing that more dynamic conceptualizations of bilingualism and greater flexibility in educational practices are needed to enable New York City schools to educate emergent bilinguals of the twenty-first century.

In a quantitative study drawing upon system-wide data, Nelson Flores and Haiwen Chu analyze the impact of the small schools movement on emergent bilinguals and Latino students. This movement to break up large city high schools into several smaller schools has been central in the mayor's education reform efforts and has been highly politicized and scrutinized publicly. In response to critiques that

the small schools movement has not served emergent bilinguals well and instead has contributed to the citywide loss of bilingual education programs (Advocates for Children and Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund 2009; Advocates for Children and New York Immigration Coalition 2006; Reyes 2003), Flores and Chu deepen our understandings of these reforms by analyzing the enrollment of emergent bilinguals and Latinos in small schools and the academic outcomes of these students in schools of differing sizes.

Jill P. Koyama and Lesley Bartlett offer a critical analysis of the impact of competing federal, state, and local policies and politics on a single school. They examine policy discourse and draw upon political spectacle as the theoretical framework for their analysis of qualitative data gathered over several years in Gregorio Luperón High School. While the school is labeled as failing under federal policy, under local policy it is deemed a success. Koyama and Bartlett unpack a complex web of policies and political ambitions to examine how the school must participate in this political spectacle in order to protect and promote its program for Latino emergent bilinguals.

In the fourth manuscript of this special issue, Victoria Hunt provides a rare analysis of successful dual language bilingual education programs that have withstood the test of time, in order to examine the work by the leaders of the schools where these programs are implemented. She focuses on the principals of three New York City dual language schools that have each been in existence for at least 10 years and explores how their leadership is a contributing factor to the success of these schools. In so doing, she identifies four leadership structures that the principals have cultivated to make their programs work well.

Tatyana Kleyn and Sharon Adelman Reyes concentrate on bilingual teachers and describe the obstacles that teachers of different ethnolinguistic groups face in implementing instruction that is bilingual as well as multicultural. Their research bridges the fields of multicultural education and bilingual education to identify the challenges posed to each during implementation in different language minority communities. This article is unique in bilingual education research, which is typically of Spanish–English programs, in that it takes advantage of New York City's diversity and studies teachers of Spanish, Russian, Haitian Creole, and Chinese.

In the final article, María E. Torres-Guzmán looks at the seeming minutiae of daily classroom interactions to show how these actually reflect larger power dynamics at play. Specifically, she provides a very detailed analysis of transcripts to document how different dual language bilingual teachers implement Read Alouds (wherein teachers read texts to their students), as part of a prescriptive literacy program currently being used in many city schools. Torres-Guzmán finds that the teachers approach Read Alouds quite differently in their classrooms, and use strategies that either simplify or enrich the text according to the teacher's compliance with or resistance to the literacy program.

Taken together, these articles offer new understandings of how New York City schools educate emergent bilingual students, and provide direction for future efforts to improve the education these students receive. While the articles acknowledge how the current climate is negative for immigrant students attending US public schools, making it more difficult for emergent bilinguals to become bilingual and biliterate citizens of tomorrow, there is also a wealth of knowledge and experience in serving these students well that is on display every day in city schools. Therefore, in this city of

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immigrants, there remains hope that rather than serving as a gatekeeper, the New York City school system will be able to be a gateway of opportunity for emergent bilinguals.

Notes

1. Cathleen Black was recently appointed New York City Schools Chancellor, as this issue goes to press.
2. To learn the number of academic publications about bilingual education in New York City, I conducted a multiple database search through the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), EBSCO version. This allows the searching of 36 databases at once, inclusive of the ERIC database, and deletes duplicates. By contrast, a Google Scholar search yielded 7070 results. As such, 995 is a conservative estimate.
3. 11 of the 13 International High Schools are located in New York City, where the Internationals originated, while two are newer schools in California (Internationals Network for Public Schools 2010).

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