

Reviewed by Laura Ascenzi-Moreno
Brooklyn College, City University of New York
United States

It is our fervent hope that you will choose to act. Professionalism demands – an your students will need – your best efforts in creating classrooms that serve all students well and that shape a citizenry for our most hopeful vision for the future.

The passion for responsible, thoughtful and high-quality teaching for language-minority students is the motor for this engaging book by Youb Kim and Patricia Hinchey. In their book, Educating English Language Learners in an Inclusive Environment (2013), Kim and Hinchey tackle the important job of aiding and entrusting future teachers in the development of a robust vision and mission for their work with language-minority students. The United States is growing increasingly multilingual. According to the 2010 census, 20.8% of Americans over the age of 5 speak a language other than English at home (Census, 2013). Additionally, the distribution of language-minority students has shifted – once considered a population primarily concentrated in urban areas and borderlands, language-minority students are now living in a variety of states and areas which previously did not have a noticeable population of language-minority students.
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This Census data has serious implications, as well as exciting challenges, for educators across the country. Teachers, who formerly did not have language-minority students in their classrooms, now may have a diversity of these students in their classes. It is at this crucial time when teachers across the country must have the knowledge of who language-minority students are and how to instruct them, that Kim and Hinchey’s book makes a fervent appeal to future teachers to examine their preconceptions about this population and to find the courage and inspiration to create school environments and classrooms where these students will thrive.

This book is structured cyclically – it brings the intended audience, future teachers, face to face with macro issues that language-minority students battle with daily as well as provides an overview of core concepts necessary for teachers who work with these students on learning language and content. It ends, as it begins, with an introspective tone which challenges teachers to ask themselves where they stand in relation to the teaching of language-minority students and what actions they plan to take in order to be both exemplary pedagogues as well as critical advocates for language minority students. Additionally, the structure of the text lends itself to be read and studied in the company of the others. A distinguishing feature of this book is that each chapter culminates in a section entitled, “explorations.” Each of these explorations, the authors invite readers to test out what Kim and Hinchey broached in the text. These invitations are perfect for future teacher candidates to engage in on their own, or in the company of other students within a class. Also, an important part of this volume’s structure is the rich list of resources for teachers. These resources are grouped by headings such as “Books for Classroom practice” and “Books for Understanding Learners, Parents and Immigrant Communities.” These resources are meant to complement and deepen the concepts that each of the chapters address.

Chapter 1, entitled, “Imperatives, Why Should You Care?” speaks to the issue of bias head-on. Kim and Hinchey do this by weaving in the voices of students into the chapter, thus providing snapshots into the how the bias that language-minority students may experience because of their language difference, ethnicity or immigrant status profoundly influences every aspect of their learning experience. Although the student experiences that Kim and Hinchey highlight are not particularly out of the ordinary,
within this context of a teacher education book, the
narratives seem glaring. There is the student who must
endure his teacher joking that he is a terrorist or students
who are told to go back to their country or students who
feel they must distance themselves from other students who
come from a similar background in order to “fit in.” These
narratives are so important because they make language-
minority students’ inner landscapes – their socio-emotional
needs – apparent and impossible to ignore. In this chapter
the authors also argue that the education of all students,
including language minority students, constitutes the
professional responsibility of teachers, regardless if they
specialists in English as a second language. They argue
firmly that all teachers must take professional responsibility
in learning about language minority students and how to
teach them. The powerful lay narrative that many teachers
hold – that they teach content and not language – is
dispelled. The authors end this chapter on a positive note,
stating that working with language minority students is not
a burden, but rather a “priviledge and [a] pleasure” because
of the potential for both student and teacher growth through
this relationship (p. 15).

In the following two chapters, the authors address
culture (Chapter 2) and language (Chapter 3). In both of
these chapters, Kim and Hinchey continue to use a friendly
tone to introduce these complex topics and break them
down in ways that allow readers to access multiple
perspectives on each of these topics. For example, in
Chapter 2 on Culture, Kim and Hinchey question the
commonly held idea that there is a normative identity, and
instead propose that everyone possesses multiple and
shifting identities. Furthermore, the authors do the
important work of tying each of the concepts of culture and
language to power, thus aiding future teachers to see that
often the notions that we hold of both of these concepts can
suppress our students and therefore be counter-productive
the ultimate goal of supporting these students to be
successful learners.

The following two chapters, “Nurturing Literacy in
English” (Chapter 4) and “Effective Instruction and
Assessment” (Chapter 5), address the teaching of language-
minority students. In these two chapters, the authors
provide an overview of the theory behind first and second
language acquisition as well as highlight effective
techniques that will aid language-minority students
acquiring English. Furthermore, they exemplify how an
inclusive classroom looks and feels, as well as why it is important to set up classrooms in a way in which students feel comfortable learning there. As previously noted, the connection between power and literacy is broken down in a way that is clear for future teachers to understand. Kim and Hinchey’s explanation of the complex relationship between power and literacy is meant to aid future teachers in developing a stance towards how they will teach literacy in their classroom. What is so powerful about these two chapters is they provide a concise, solid synopsis of decades of research but they also lay out implications for teacher practice, which are in many ways radical propositions for teachers. One such implication for teacher practice is the use of home language in the teaching of English. They write, “literacy in the first language, then, is extremely helpful in cultivating literacy in the second language, even if it’s true that what students know about their first language can lead them astray at times in English” (p. 83). This position recognizes that students’ home language is important not solely for the development of English, but rather, the students’ home language is crucial for these students’ holistic linguistic growth. In this way, the authors argue from a position that language practices are dynamic. Garcia & Kleifgen (2010) explain the importance of dynamic language practices in education in the following, “a dynamic bilingualism model proposes that complex bilingual language practices are both the center of how languaging occurs and the goal for communication in an increasingly multilingual world. “In this way, the authors are demonstrating that teachers can mold and redefine their role as teachers – as brokers of experiences even if those experiences are not in English rather than imparters of English – and as such use their students’ resources as means for learning.

In their last chapter, “The Politics of ELL Policy and Programs,” the authors invite future teachers to think broadly about what it means to be a teacher and advocate for their language-minority students. As they introduce the content of this chapter, they provide a historical perspective on language policy which demonstrates that in the United States the teaching of students in different languages was done the 19th century and that attitudes towards immigrant students has wavered throughout the history of this country. Through this discussion, they make evident that language policy is more closely tied to political climate, than what makes sense pedagogically for language-minority students.
Furthermore, in returning to the discussion of what the education field even calls language-minority students, they raise the problematic nature of labeling. In doing so, they make the point that the choices that teachers make – even the labels that we choose to use for our students – matters. Kim and Hinchey’s work falls in line with current research which demonstrates that labels impact both students’ and teachers’ perceptions of the capabilities of these students (Flores, Kleyn and Menken (in press). They conclude with an invitation for readers to fully accept their role as advocates of language-minority students and consider what implications this has both in how they conceive of their roles as teachers and how they enact practices.

What sets this effort apart from others is that it takes on the task of having future teachers reflect and reconsider their attitudes towards language-minority students and in doing so, moves readers from thinking of language-minority students as being *those* students to being *our* students. Kim and Hinchey argue that teachers are not simply pedagogues but they are also intellectuals and advocates and in fact, these roles are fundamental to teachers’ success with language-minority students. This book fills the gap for courses in schools of education, where in many states teachers who enter in a general education track are required to take a course on linguistic diversity. Chapters would also be appropriate to provide to education professionals in the field who lack a foundation in the teaching of language minority students, as this book has the power to shift both future and current educators’ thinking on language-minority students.

References


About the Reviewer

Laura Ascenzi-Moreno
Brooklyn College, City University of New York
United States
lascenzimoreno@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Laura Ascenzi-Moreno is an Assistant Professor and Bilingual Program Head in the Childhood/Bilingual and Special Education Department at Brooklyn College. She received her Ph.D. in Urban Education from the City University of New York Graduate Center. She worked in Brooklyn, NY in a Spanish/English two-way immersion school, Cypress Hills Community School as a dual language teacher and curriculum coach for a combined twelve years. Her research interests include bilingual education at the elementary school level, multiple literacies, assessment, teacher knowledge and school governance. She is an Associate Investigator in the City University of New York-New York State Initiative on Emergent Bilinguals (CUNY-NYSIEB).