Chapter 9

Moving Towards Translanguaging:
Service-Learning That Leverages Emerging Bilinguals' Linguistic Development

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ABSTRACT

Emerging bilinguals at US schools are generally subject to programs that are inadequate for their learning needs. It is crucial to find teaching models through which they can develop their academic language skills. This chapter presents the program Learn from the Experts, a partnership between a university and a high school, that fosters collaboration between Spanish and English learners. In this program, which follows the translanguaging pedagogy, Spanish learners from the university meet to collaborate with Spanish heritage English learners from the high school in lessons designed to develop each of the participants' skills in the language they are learning. The chapter also presents pedagogical changes made to the program resulting from the program team's reflection. It contributes to the development of models that support emerging bilinguals' language learning through collaboration with more experienced speakers without compelling speakers of minoritized languages to distance themselves from their languages and cultures.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the strong presence of bilinguals and emerging bilinguals in Texas, programs designed to support the bilingual development of students in Texas public schools are still insufficient to support these students (Collier, 1995; García & Sylvan, 2011). In Texas, emerging bilinguals constituted 16.9% of school-age children in 2008-09. By 2018-19, the percentage had grown to 19.4%, a 14.4% increase (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Due to the increase in percentage of emerging bilingual children in Texas, schools, together with their communities, need to find solutions for the lack of programs, resources, and equipped and qualified personnel to support these students' academic development. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it presents a model developed in the service-learning program *Learn from the Experts*, a partnership between a university and a high school in South Texas intended to foster collaboration between Spanish and English learners and provide the support emerging bilinguals need in their language learning processes, which are not always available to them. Second, it describes how the program and its team have matured concerning their pedagogical choices, which were informed by careful observation of the students' learning processes and the literature on bilingual development.

For the academic year 2018-19, only 44% of the students identified as bilingual or ESL (English as a Second Language) learners were enrolled in some kind of bilingual education program (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Valenzuela (1999) explains that many of these students are pushed out of the school system after being kept in programs that only teach them isolated vocabulary and grammar. For these students to succeed at school, they need knowledge about and experience with the academic language used as the medium of instruction (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). However, they also need support to develop this knowledge and experience in a manner that respects and leverages their actual linguistic practices (García, Sylvan & Witt, 2011; García & Wei, 2014; García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017). Prior research supports this idea, finding that heritage language proficiency is related to bilinguals' academic achievement in English (Cummins, 2000; Ramirez, Ramey & Yuen, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). Therefore, schools need to provide bilingual students with resources that they can use to develop their full linguistic repertoire. However, as many scholars have confirmed, schools are not equipped and teachers are not trained to support their students' bilingual development (Delpit, 1995; Valdés, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). The model presented in this chapter has potential to support emerging bilinguals in their language learning through collaboration with more experienced speakers, which can fill in the gaps of an educational system lacking well-equipped and qualified instructors.

Another group of learners who could also benefit from more contact with the language they are learning are university students trying to meet a language

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