
Review Essay

Category: Intercultural Communication and Language Education

The Bilingual Approach: Foreign Language Education for the Twenty-First Century

Review of: Jaumont, Fabrice. 2017. *The Bilingual Revolution: The Future of Education Is in Two Languages*. Brooklyn, NY: TBR Books.

Review by: Kathleen Stein-Smith

In a globalized and interconnected world, communication is vital if individuals are to work together to effectively address complex global issues, and shared languages are the most powerful means of communication. Yet, although the United States is a nation of immigrants, U.S. citizens tend not to study foreign languages, with few K–12 public school students studying a foreign language and even fewer college and university students enrolled in a course in a language other than English.

In his book, *The Bilingual Revolution: The Future of Education Is in Two Languages* (2017), Fabrice Jaumont develops his overarching theme of “a better future for our children and our world,” making the case for dual-language education by weaving together the stories of parents and communities who have created successful programs. He uses interdisciplinary literature supporting bilingualism and bilingual and dual-language education.

In order to counter this U.S. language paradox, Jaumont argues that “the cognitive, academic, social, personal, and professional advantages of bilingualism are undeniable” and that it is necessary to demand a “bilingual revolution” (2017, 6). He argues that education needs to build the language skills of individuals and society and encourage a paradigm shift in attitudes toward foreign languages and foreign language learning. This revolution will create linguistic knowledge and cultural skills U.S. citizens need as global citizens and within an increasingly multilingual United States. In this bilingual revolution, empowering children and their families who may speak a language other than English in the home to embrace their languages is just as important as building foreign language skills among English speakers. In this practical and informative volume, Jaumont makes a case for foreign language learning from the earliest grades while also empowering parents and communities to advocate for their heritage languages and the role these languages play in cultural identity.

The personal, cognitive, and professional benefits of bilingualism are recurring themes, and Jaumont examines them convincingly in chapter 12, “Why Dual-Language Education is Good for Your Child.” Equally important themes are that of equity—of educational equity for children from different

linguistic backgrounds—and why the public schools, available to all, should be the setting for bilingual learning available to all students.

Bilingual education is important for the individual, for society, and U.S. students to acquire the linguistic and cultural skills needed to be effective global citizens. While foreign language educators, advocates, and stakeholders have long advocated for foreign language education beginning in the earliest grades, parents and communities have a powerful voice and can advocate for foreign language education. In addition, these essential twenty-first century skills deserve a place in our public skills, available to all students.

Jaumont weaves a story of the necessity of bilingualism in a globalized world and the importance of beginning language learning in the earliest grades, with the power of parental and community engagement and activism. The principle of equity and the role of public schools, as well as the very real challenges of developing curricula and teacher training, are examined with the experience and vision of leadership and advocacy.

Key concepts include immersion as a foreign language education methodology, an early start to continued learning of one or more languages, and—most importantly—the partnership between international educators and foreign language educators. *The Bilingual Revolution* is a valuable guide for every foreign language educator seeking to empower, educate, and engage stakeholders about the power of foreign language education in a globalized world.