



Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education: A Bilingual Approach.
Norbert Francis and Jon Reyhner. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 2002. 262 pp.

CAROL BARNHARDT

University of Alaska, Fairbanks

ffcab@aurora.alaska.edu

Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education provides the academic and theoretical evidence to support what many indigenous parents, bilingual aides, elders, and school board members simply know is "good practice." Francis and Reyhner also provide a significant amount of research-based evidence that policy makers—especially those not directly involved at the classroom or community level—can use, at state and federal levels, to argue for the short- and long-term academic benefits of certain models and approaches for bilingual education. This is especially important for communities who are attempting to balance the testing and teacher qualification demands of the No Child Left Behind Act with their own language and cultural priorities.

Judging from Francis and Reyhner's account of the status of indigenous language programs in schools, current bilingual education efforts in several Alaska communities are representative of the efforts occurring in many locations throughout the United States. In the decreasing number of communities where children still come to school speaking their indigenous language, stepped-up efforts are being made to provide additional support to existing programs for students, teachers, and parents. At the same time, increasing numbers of communities are attempting to quickly develop new Native language immersion programs that will provide their English-speaking children with the opportunity to learn their Native language in a school setting. The array of theories and practices being used in Alaska's bilingual programs is wide-ranging and the rationale behind the selection of a particular bilingual program model is often unknown by the participants. However, all programs have been developed with the support of community members who believe that it is to their children's advantage to be able to speak and write and learn through their own Native language.

Francis and Reyhner's work provides a strong argument for "additive bilingual education approaches" for two groups of students: (1) students whose dominant language is the "national" language—with revitalization or enrichment programs; and (2) students whose dominant language is an indigenous language. "Additive" is used to mean the maintenance and growth of two languages. The authors provide a theoretical framework and suggestions for practice that support their belief that indigenous children's academic language, literacy competence, and problem solving abilities will be stronger through the



use, and meaningful classroom and school integration, of their indigenous and their national languages.

Part 1 of the book includes three chapters that survey selected indigenous language contexts in areas of North and South America, and the use of the term "national language" throughout the book reminds readers that the book addresses language learning in multiple political and linguistic contexts in North and South America. This comparative and historical approach provides a useful framework for Part 2, which focuses on "Curriculum and Materials, Classroom Strategies." Chapters 4, 5, and 6 provide extensive discussions, which integrate theory and practice relative to operationalizing additive bilingual programs. These fairly dense chapters are not intended to provide prescriptions or recipes for teachers or teacher aides. In fact, the authors frequently remind readers that choices of the program approaches and strategies best suited for a particular situation can only be made by informed and knowledgeable bilingual teachers. The final chapter, "Language Assessment," surveys language assessment issues and highlights the complexities of assessing language competency for different purposes and different audiences.

Throughout Part 2 it is evident that Jim Cummins' "Common Underlying Proficiency Model" is central to understanding and implementing the authors' argument that schools need to recognize and build upon the contributions that *both* languages can make to children's competency in language and literacy. Additive bilingual approaches are far more meaningful when they are developed upon a foundation that respects the contributions of both languages to the child's "shared network of proficiencies" (p. 190). Learning how to develop strategies that allow students to tap into this network for problem solving and for success in oral and written tasks in both languages is fundamental to using the book's recommendations for additive bilingual education approaches.

As a teacher educator in a state where there are 20 different indigenous languages, I am always looking for resources to help prepare pre-service and practicing teachers (both Alaska Native and non-Native) to better meet the needs of indigenous students and indigenous communities. *Language and Literacy Teaching for Indigenous Education* provides an excellent framework for helping parents, elders, other community members, teachers, teacher aides, administrators, and program planners to collaboratively develop language policy and practice at a local or regional level.

(c)2003 American Anthropological Association. This review is cited in the December 2003 issue (34:4) of *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. It is indexed in the December 2003 issue (34:4).