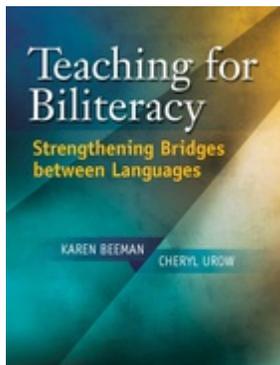


## Professional Book Review

Beeman, K., Urow, C. (2012). *Teaching for biliteracy: Strengthening bridges between languages*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon. 174 pp., ISBN-10: 1934000094. \$37.95.

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With a growing number of English language learners across the United States, much research is needed regarding the instruction taking place in classrooms. Gibson (as cited in Worthman et al., 2002) explains, “Today, one in five Americans is either an immigrant or the child of an immigrant” (p. 241). It is because of such demographics that English language learners (ELLs) now require more attention in public schools than ever. In an effort to address the needs of ELLs, Beeman and Urow (2012) have established a biliteracy framework that can benefit educators and administrators working in public schools.

In their book, *Teaching for Biliteracy: Strengthening Bridges between Languages*, Beeman and Urow describe their framework as having three components. They are: (a) learning new concepts and literacy skills in one language; (b) the bridge, where both languages are used side by side; and (c) extension activities in the second language. Additionally, Beeman and Urow (2012) provide some important premises throughout their book that educators and administrators alike should take into consideration when addressing the instructional needs of ELLs.

The two main purposes of this book are to contribute to the body of literature on language transitioning and to provide a framework that educators and administrators can follow as a basis for that transition. Because there is little work available on how to facilitate the process of language transitioning, the authors propose a step-by-step framework that will allow English language learners to successfully move from one language into another. In each of the 10 chapters of this book, Beeman and Urow begin with key points that engage the reader in what is to come. Furthermore, they end each chapter with activities for reflection and action in an effort to follow up on what was just read and to prepare the reader for the upcoming chapter.

Chapter 1 focuses on the foundations of teaching from a biliteracy perspective. In this chapter, Beeman and Urow commit to explaining their biliteracy framework to the reader. First, they illustrate how the educator can

draw from curriculum standards in varied content areas to teach new concepts. Secondly, the bridge is introduced. The bridge occurs in two parts: (a) When the teachers bring together two languages, and (b) When the teacher helps students connect newly acquired content area knowledge and skills from one language to another. Lastly, in an effort to facilitate the final part of the biliteracy framework through extension activities, Beeman and Urow explain that the educator must aid students by providing activities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. With each of the content area concepts being addressed, the teacher facilitates the transfer between students' primary and secondary language by allowing the students to further strengthen cognitive and linguistic connections.

Furthermore, Beeman and Urow advise that while instructing ELLs, certain considerations should be adhered to, explaining three premises that should be taken into consideration while attempting to meet the needs of ELLs. Through the use of key points at the beginning of each chapter and vignettes, the authors elaborate on each of their premises. The three premises are: (a) Spanish is a minority language within a majority culture; (b) Children use all of their linguistic resources when learning to read and write; and (c) Spanish and English are two distinct languages that are governed by distinct cultural and linguistic norms. To illustrate, they consider things such as teacher background knowledge in comparison to that of the student, students' varying language dialects, and the possible mismatch between the home language and the academic language presented in schools.

The second chapter explores the varying perspectives of multilingualism. The authors illustrate various student profiles followed by key characteristics to include linguistic, cultural, and academic factors that distinguish ELLs from the mainstream, monolingual English population. They furthermore provide tools and strategies to aid the educator in addressing the varying perspectives of multilingualism.

Beeman and Urow dedicate their third chapter to explaining the importance of capitalizing on teachers' life experiences and diversity. They illustrate this notion by providing teacher profiles from varying countries that serve as a basis for making cultural connections with students. Since teachers' backgrounds influence teaching styles, Beeman and Urow strongly advise that educators engage in self-reflection when attempting to meet the needs of English language learners. The authors end the chapter by providing a sample teacher self-reflective survey that educators can use as a gateway to understanding the needs of ELLs.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, Beeman and Urow begin to outline the planning strategies of their biliteracy framework. Again, each of the chapters begins with key points and moves to focus on methods that integrate language and content area instruction. Additionally, they provide a "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) approach to teaching. They explain the importance of educators knowing their students, tapping into their linguistic and cultural resources, as well as providing a template for oral language analysis.

Beeman and Urow follow up with Chapters 7, 8 and 9, which focus on reading comprehension, writing, and word fluency. They address the importance of integrating reading skills with reading comprehension while at the same time addressing the varying cognitive levels of ELLs. To illustrate this approach, they offer student writing samples in addition to word study strategies that educators can implement.

The final chapter of this book reiterates the first chapter by providing a more in-depth analysis of the bridge. Beeman and Urow take this opportunity to explain more about the strategy of the bridge and how it can be used as a pathway to building a second language. They end their chapter by providing an opportunity for educator reflection while at the same time integrating the three premises for educating ELLs.

Although written with precision and clarity, this book does not always provide sufficient theoretical background information. For example, regarding the use of the bridge, there is no theoretical basis given for such an instructional practice. As students are learning a second language, much is to be taken into consideration such as the cognitive negotiation taking place as the student acquires the second language. The authors could have utilized the work by Cole (1996) and Gee (2012) who elaborate on the theoretical perspective of negotiation of artifacts, what these mean to the learner, and how they are manipulated to facilitate learning. Additionally, Garcia's (2009) explanation of how ELLs use translanguaging to connect languages would have benefited this book. All of these concepts influence how learners acquire new knowledge and build on existing knowledge. Although Beeman and Urow do touch on these concepts, there is no strong theoretical perspective offered.

Nevertheless, because of the importance of language transitioning, this book serves to provide step-by-step strategies that can be used when instructing ELLs. The authors do this by providing a basic framework for attaining biliteracy and by illustrating their three basic premises on which this framework is built. Given the importance of the passage of restrictive language policies such as California's Proposition 227, Arizona's Proposition 203, and Massachusetts' Question 2, this book provides a dynamic, thought-provoking, and much needed contribution to the field of biliteracy. Furthermore, it can serve as a guide to educators and administrators of English language learners while providing some basic considerations for instructional practices.

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