

Ester J. de Jong: Foundations for Multilingualism in Education: From Principles to Practice

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Foundations for Multilingualism in Education is a unique foundational text for educators of emergent bilingual students. Rather than focusing on the one “best way” to educate this group of students, de Jong takes a more comprehensive approach to the topic, choosing instead to focus on four core principles that will benefit emergent bilingual students regardless of the type of program they are in. The four principles are “Striving for Educational Equity,” “Affirming Identities,” “Promoting Additive Bi/Multilingualism,” and “Structuring for Integration.” While the book is a practical guide for educators and offers specific strategies and approaches to educating emergent bilingual students, the theoretical foundation provided also orients de Jong’s readers to issues of social justice, educational equity, and a full embrace of students’ backgrounds, including their home languages and cultural practices. The organizing principles of this book make it an exceptional addition to the current literature, as they serve to shift the conversation away from programmatic structures and instead provide a useful framework for educators in all settings to strive for educational equity.

In addition to organizing the book around these core theoretical principles, de Jong includes several practical elements that make the guide useful for classroom teachers and accessible for university students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. First, de Jong begins every chapter with guiding questions and key terms. At the end of each chapter, de Jong provides concrete scenarios for discussion in the “Critical Issues” section, followed by “Application and Reflection Activities” offering readers the opportunity to synthesize and apply chapter content. De Jong also includes a list of relevant “Recommended Readings.” These features, in particular the “Critical Issues” and “Application and Reflection Activities,” are detailed and thoughtful, providing readers many opportunities to deepen their engagement with the text and issues at hand.

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The book is divided into 12 chapters. The first chapter establishes educators as critical advocates and language policy makers for emergent bilingual students. This chapter sets an activist tone and highlights the classroom as a site of critical decision-making for emergent bilinguals. Chapter 2 discusses both monolingual and bilingual perspectives, but focuses on bilingualism as a global norm and the benefits of developing and fostering bilingualism. The third chapter introduces bilingual educational practices and explains bilingualism as integrated and interconnected linguistic systems versus separate, autonomous systems. De Jong then explores bilingual models and pedagogical strategies that emerge from each perspective. These first three chapters set the tone and the context for the book, establishing a critical perspective while providing a comprehensive review of the issues at hand. The wealth of information about bilingual education, coupled with an activist-oriented perspective, give the reader knowledge about the topic while situating the information within a social justice framework. Given the current political climate, where English-only ideology dominates, de Jong's explanations of the importance of bilingual education are indispensable.

The fourth chapter explores language in the context of globalization, with a focus on the effects of English dominance on language maintenance and development in numerous settings. As in other discussions throughout the book, de Jong presents the issue from many perspectives while simultaneously underscoring the importance of social justice. De Jong again highlights the importance of the school and classroom as sites for policy-making in Chapter 5, then expands the conversation in Chapter 6 by providing a historical review of language policy at the governmental level in the United States. In Chapter 7, de Jong explores program models for emergent bilinguals, and rather than entering into the usual debate of which model is "best," focuses on the importance of providing a high quality education to emergent bilinguals, rather than a "compensatory" one. In this way, de Jong reorients the debate from best practices to social justice.

Chapters 8–12 focus on the four organizing principles of the book, and include a review of the principles, challenges to implementing each principle in policy and practice, and thoughts on moving forward. Chapter 8 reviews the four core principles of the book and elaborates on each principle as a lens for policy and practice. Chapter 9 focuses on the principle of affirming identities, exploring the benefits of valuing students' identities and knowledge, while also recognizing the challenges educators may face. Chapter 10 discusses the principle of promoting additive bilingualism, focusing on the ways that programmatic decisions affect the status of a language, and how educators can increase a language's status even in subtractive environments. In Chapter 11, de Jong discusses the principle of structuring for integration. After exploring the shortcomings of both segregation and assimilation, de Jong reflects on integration as a balanced alternative. Finally, Chapter 12 examines pluralist versus assimilationist discourses and suggests that multiple pathways to advocacy are necessary to truly affect change. De Jong concludes by presenting the four principles of the book as a possible framework for advancing a pluralist agenda.

De Jong's *Foundations for Multilingualism in Education* provides a sound overview of the current issues in the field of bilingual education and the teaching of

emergent bilinguals. By bringing together policy and practice, de Jong not only highlights the many ways in which educators can be advocates and language policymakers for their students; she also underscores the necessity of doing so if all students are to attain educational equity. By moving away from the debate over the best program models, and instead structuring her discussion around four core principles, de Jong's book is applicable to many educational settings, without losing sight of the goal of bilingual education—to provide all students with educational equity.

Author Biography

Sarah Hesson is a Doctoral Student in Urban Education at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York. She currently works as an adjunct professor at Hunter College, and as a Research Assistant on the CUNY-NYSIEB Project. Her scholarly interests include bilingual education policy and pedagogy, with a focus on educational equity and social justice.