

**A. C. Zentella. *Growing up bilingual*.** Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997. 304 pp.

This book offers its readers a well-documented, renewed, and encouraging view of the otherwise maligned, misinformed, and many times unilateral view held by some educators, government officials, and general public on the issue of bilingualism in the US, specifically among the New York Puerto Ricans (NYPR).

Zentella collected data for her dissertation on code switching from June 1979 to December 1980 based on the lives of 20 families with 37 children who lived on a specific block ("el bloque") in El Barrio (a well-known NYC Puerto Rican neighborhood in East Harlem). She returned as a friend several times a year after her academic encounter with that community and helped organize and participated in various social cultural activities. In 1989 she decided that there was a need to write an ethnographic account of the same PR community she had studied in 1979 with a focus on language in context. She embarked on data collection again and combined both quantitative and qualitative methodology because the two "methods are needed to adequately analyze linguistic rules in relation to the whole" (6). She applied an anthropological linguistic analysis since this would allow her to delve into and expose the fears and stigma attached to bilingualism in this particular context. Previous research and popular belief blamed knowledge of two languages for lack of progress, yet many "who stopped speaking Spanish did not get far in the outside world" and in the process paid the high price of cutting off all cultural and family ties (1).

A valuable aspect of this study is that Zentella focuses on the lives of five young females from "el bloque" in their roles as children (1979), and as teenagers and mothers (1989, 1992-

93). How these young women personally evolve and how their bilingualism practices and beliefs change as they encounter schooling, “racial, ethnolinguistic, and economic subordination” is key to understanding this NYPR community (242). Hopefully, this study will also provide a view beyond the walls of ethnic stigmatization and linguistic bias that surround this and other communities and promote a “bilingual critical pedagogy” (282). There are “many ways of talking and knowing” and these should be considered as resources, not as political or national menaces (p. 284).

I highly recommend this book to those who teach English to speakers of other languages for it compels us to undertake the study and teaching of English within the social-cultural environment of the learners. Language does not exist in a vacuum nor can it be only viewed through its multiple components like phonetics, morphology, syntax, and others; language is socially constructed and it also needs to be studied and taught from that standpoint.

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