

“Reading, Living, and Writing Bilingual Poetry As ScholARTistry”

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Reviewed by Naomi, Victoria, and Alissa

Summary

This article is written from the perspective of a bilingual scholar and emerging poet who visits schools to give demonstrations on the progress of biliterate Latino. She uses poetry as her main source of teaching. Not only is it just poetry that is utilized, but it is bilingual poetry. Cahnmann calls this approach ‘ScholARTistry.’ “ScholARTistry is defined as “a hybrid practice that combines tools used by the literary, visual, and/or performing arts with tools used by educators and other social scientists to explore the human condition” (Cahnmann). There are three goals to ScholARTistry (Neilsen):

1. To make academic writing an area where virtuosity and clarity are valued
2. To make educational research an area where the arts are legitimate inquiry
3. To infuse scholarship with the spirit of creative connection

Cahnmann encourages the use of bilingualism in the classroom, believing that it will help students identify, and also alternate, with vernacular. She believes that “all teachers can use poetry as a way to meaningfully incorporate multicultural and multilingual resources into their classrooms and lives” (Cahnmann 343). Her interviews with students show that they sometimes struggle with their performance and the balancing of two languages. Not only are the students

juggling two languages, they are conflicted with the language norms and adjusting to what is expected of them from that culture. Through ScholARTistry, Cahnmann allowed the students to creatively express themselves through poetry. The students were able to free to write about personal experiences, and even use their home language within their work. “Reading, living, and writing poetry are three scholARTistic ways to cross cultural and linguistic worlds with attention and dignity” (350).

How to Use “Reading, Living, and Writing Bilingual Poetry as ScholARTistry in the Language Arts Classroom” in Major Essay #3

If someone is going to argue that classroom instructors at all level should commit to pursuing and achieving Goals A and C from Grammar Alive, then this article will provide evidence for the confirmatio. The article focuses on the importance of incorporating the second language of students in the classroom especially in poetry. Because students are encouraged to incorporate their home language in their poetry, they will begin to distinguish between the language varieties of their home language and that of the classroom. As a result, students will learn to appreciate the variation in languages, which will help teachers pursue and achieve Goal C. Also, by allowing children to incorporate their home languages teachers will become more aware of the different languages spoken in their classroom, thus making it easier for them to assist their students in understanding the dissimilarity between their home language and that of Standard English. Once teachers become more familiar with their students’ backgrounds, they will be able to commit to pursuing Goal A, which states that students will effectively communicate in Standard English.

This article can also be used as a counterargument for the same claim that teachers should commit to pursuing and achieving Goals A and C. If language arts teachers don’t incorporate

this bilingual poetry correctly, then they might start encouraging students to code-switch. If they begin to encourage students to code-switch then they won't achieve Goals A and C, but instead will make it more difficult for the children to understand when using Standard English is appropriate. Although children will begin to make gains in understand the natural variation between languages, they will not become more proficient in effectively speaking and writing in Standard English.

Quotes from “Reading, Living, and Writing Bilingual Poetry as ScholARTistry in the Language Arts Classroom” for ME #3

Quote: “Language arts educators who teach Latino English language learners know that part of our job is to help students learn to distinguish between the vernacular varieties of Spanish (or Mandarin, or Portuguese, or Swahili), English they use at home, and the school varieties of language expected in the classroom and in other professional and institutional contexts.” (342)

- This quote is in support of Goal A. So this could help if you are arguing that teachers should live up to the goal of teaching their students to “effectively” use Standard English in reading and writing and to teach them “when use of Standard English is appropriate” or important. (Goal A from Grammar Alive)

Quote: “Bilingual or not, language arts teachers know how to teach students to correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar according to prescribed, standard English norms.” (342)

- Again this is in favor of Goal A that teachers should strive to teach all of their students to become fluent and comfortable in Standard English.

Quote: “Poetry and the arts can be important tools for exploring different linguistic and cultural worlds.” (343)

- This quote relates to Goal C because it is referring to how classroom instructors could use poetry and the arts to promote “an understanding of the quality in the expressive capacity and linguistic structure among a range of language varieties.” (Goal C from Grammar Alive)

Quote: “My students mixed English words in Spanish sentences, inventing what appeared to be a new hybrid language that wasn’t one or the other but both.” (344)

- This quote sort of goes against what Goal A is saying since it demonstrates how some bilingual children struggle when speaking one language or speak a certain way at home then are told to speak a different way at school, or Standard English. They end up combining the languages and therefore not feeling particularly confident when having to speak and write Standard English. (Goal A from Grammar Alive)

Quote: “The act of writing helps one to document and interpret the pleasures, pains, and uncertainties of moving between different linguistic and cultural worlds from different social and cultural positions.” (349)

- This quote could help with major essay #3 because if you are arguing that teachers should achieve the two goals, then this quote gives support for why it is important. It explains how students could benefit from writing by gaining “understanding” for the “variation that occurs in language across” different cultures. (Goal C from Grammar Alive).

Quote: "...poetry remains a vital form of witness to negotiations of language, culture, and power." (351)

- Again this quote points out how poetry or writing could promote better understanding of different languages and cultures.