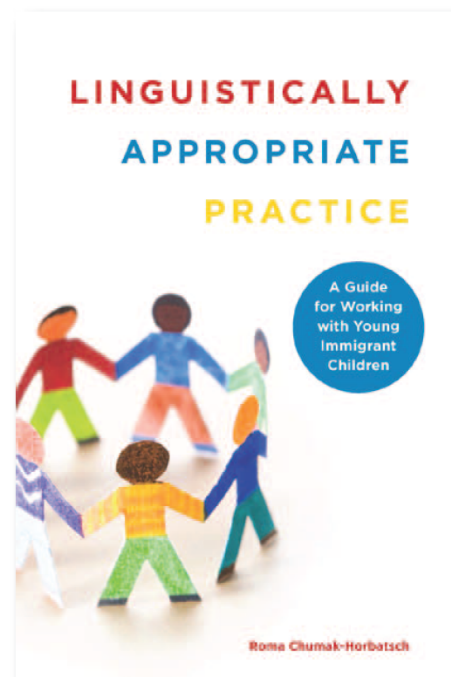


Linguistically Appropriate Practice

A Guide for Working with Young Immigrant Children

By Roma Chumak-Horbatsch
University of Toronto Press



Although written with young immigrant children in Canada in mind, this skilfully crafted book is a treasure-trove for early childhood administrators and teachers. It is of value to anyone wanting to introduce inclusive pedagogies for children with plurilingual repertoires from diverse cultures.

The book looks at young immigrant children in a new way. Far more than learners of their new language, immigrant children are 'bilinguals in the making', who arrive in childcare centres and classrooms with unique language and literacy needs. To meet these needs Chumak-Horbatsch introduces us to a new three-part classroom practice, called Linguistically Appropriate Practice or LAP.

The book is organized into three parts:

Part 1: 'Laying the groundwork for LAP' provides important background information about immigrant children and addresses the following questions: Who are immigrant children? What characterizes their language circumstance? What is LAP?

Part 2: 'Setting the stage for LAP' focuses on preparing the classroom to launch LAP. It explores four tasks that are central to the adoption of LAP: transitioning immigrant children from home to classroom; partnering with families; using home languages in the classroom; and recording classroom language and literacy behaviours.

Part 3: 'Implementing LAP Activities' addresses the following question: How do we work with young children who arrive without proficiency in the classroom language?

Chumak-Horbatsch's linguistic appropriate practice approach is, she tells us, grounded in dynamic bilingualism. She describes this as 'a theory that focuses on languages that speakers use, rather than the separate languages they have'. She goes on to point out that, although practice has shifted in the last ten years from an Anglo-conformity or overtly assimilative approach, to one more 'supportive' of children's languages and cultures, it still remains locked in monolingual habits that do not sufficiently address the dual language realities and needs of emergent bilingual children.

Chumak-Horbatsch embraces the ideas of translanguaging and transliteracy and demonstrates how early childhood teachers can teach for cross linguistic transfer. Her advice and ideas serve as an organisational guide on how to promote other languages in the early years.

Chumak-Horbatsch challenges the concept of the preproduction stage (more commonly known as the silent period) in second language acquisition. She asks 'are children silent or silenced?' She says that, in reality, it is the monolingual classroom that silences children because they experience language shock and extreme linguistic uncertainty. They quickly come to realise that their home language is of little value or consequence and that their way of speaking is discouraged. Chumak-Horbatsch emphasises that 'referring to the silence of newly arrived immigrant children as transitional behaviour or as the first stage of their classroom language learning is inaccurate and personally and socially damaging. In reality these children are silenced by the monolingual classroom agenda.'

The author clearly explains how the changing perspectives of bilingualism have affected her work and she moves with ease from theory to informed practice. The early childhood practitioner will find over 50 exciting classroom activities that can be adapted to match the developmental level of the children and the classroom curriculum. Her closing chapter looks to the future. It appeals to those working with immigrant children to turn their attention to this growing population, take their unique language and literacy needs into account and help them realize their bilingual potential.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. It is extremely readable and provocative. There is an abundance of research-based sources which give a sound theoretical background to her arguments. It is highly recommended as a resource and a manual of what is linguistically good practice for 21st century early childhood programmes.

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