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Abstract

This chapter reviews the significance of language in the early years with a particular focus on language maintenance and bilingualism in North American early schooling. The analysis of the common phenomenon of quick home language loss among children in child care centers is focused on the power relations among teachers, families, children and the society at large. Young children and families often receive subtle messages from educators that convey to them that their home language is not as valuable as English. Innovative instructional practices are recommended to challenge the common phenomenon of loss of children's first language and culture and foster cultural and linguistic diversity. These recommendations point towards the need of addressing the politics of language loss.