

Rethinking Policies, Procedures, and Practices Surrounding Language Learning and Learners

GATESOL Journal
2021, Vol. 31(1), pp. 1–2
doi:10.52242/gatesol.126
ISSN: 2331-6845

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The summer 2021 issue of *GATESOL Journal* is replete with research-based insights and strategies for supporting multilingual learners in varied teaching contexts. The five articles in this issue address ways to better equip multilingual learners for success in an increasingly diverse and multicultural society. One common thread throughout the issue is the *rethinking of policies, procedures, and practices* that surround language learning and learners. As the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 is on the rise and the future of K–12 and higher education continues to remain uncertain, we sincerely hope this issue of *GATESOL Journal* provides our wide conglomerate of readers—from K–12 mainstream and ESOL teachers to researchers and teacher educators in and outside of Georgia institutions of higher learning to state policymakers—ideas they can take back with them to their respective spheres of influence to make a lasting difference in how we *do* language teaching and learning in Georgia and beyond.

Rethinking Policies and Procedures Impacting Language Learning and Learners

In the first article in this issue, “The Perceived Metalinguistic and Cognitive Influences of Bilingual Education,” Margaret Ashton and Dr. Eliana Hirano employ qualitative methods to investigate the perceptions of individuals who had participated in K–12 bilingual education programs. They interviewed 10 individuals who had spent at least four years in a K–12 bilingual education setting to determine trends in self-perceived outcomes of bilingual instruction. They found recurring insights regarding both metalinguistic and cognitive abilities among their participants. For example, all participants reported metalinguistic awareness of grammar between their L1s and English, while others described enhanced cognitive skills which facilitated their learning of an L3. Interviewees who had spent more time in a bilingual setting struggled to come up with specific examples regarding how their bilingual education may have influenced them. Most notably, Ashton and Hirano discuss the implications of their study on emerging dual language immersion (DLI) programs in Georgia, recommending programs invest in promoting to students and parents the non-linguistic benefits of their bilingual education programs.

The next article in this issue, a literature review by Shuang Fu titled “Breaking the Silence: A Critical Review of Language Policy and Planning for Long-Term English Learners,” critically examines policies surrounding long-term English learners (LTEs), which Fu defines as multilingual learners who are still receiving language support services after being in a U.S. school for 6 or more years. She organizes her review of 19 peer-reviewed journal articles along the three strands of the language planning and policy (LPP) paradigm: language management, language

ideology, and language practice. Fu elucidates the stereotypes, struggles, and challenges LTELs face, and argues for distinct policy changes: alternative measures of language proficiency beyond standardized English language proficiency (ELP) tests, abandonment of labels to classify multilingual students, and resistance to established hegemonies to promote positive learning experiences and equitable outcomes for multilingual learners.

In their article titled “Supporting Practitioner Inquiry in Teacher Education: Opportunities and Challenges in ESOL Contexts,” Drs. Lindsey Chapman, Chelsea Morris, and Katherine Green endorse the implementation of practitioner inquiry in teacher preparation programs to help teachers better address the needs of emergent bi/multilingual students. They describe the experiences of two teacher candidates to emphasize both opportunities and challenges when using practitioner inquiry. For example, they describe how one candidate was able to overcome misconceptions about adopting a translinguaging pedagogy in their classroom through support from their mentor teacher, field experience supervisor, and the student’s own analysis of the practitioner literature base. Among other recommendations for teacher preparation programs, they recommend teacher candidates keep a journal to record their initial wonderings, field notes, pictures of student artifacts, and notes on relevant literature from their ESOL coursework.

Rethinking Strategies to Enhance Student Language Learning

The last two articles published in this issue are teaching techniques pieces. In her article titled “(Re)Imagining Multilingual Learners: Using Photo Stories to Honor Students’ Strengths, Interests, and Experiences,” Dr. Jennifer Allen highlights photo stories as a literacy strategy that fosters critical and productive dialogue among educators and students. This dialogue, Allen argues, can help teachers recognize, appreciate, and even celebrate the diverse languages, cultures, interests, and life experiences present in their classrooms. She shares the steps involved in inviting students to create personal photo stories that honor their lived experiences.

Finally, in their piece titled “Enhancing Intensive English Program Reading and Writing Courses through Integrated-Skill Activities,” Dr. Adil Bentahar and Kenneth Cranker describe an approach they have utilized in their foundation-year intensive English program (IEP) at the University of Delaware. The approach, one that integrates listening and speaking skills with instruction and assessment in reading and writing courses, has shown promising results in regard to enhancing students’ reading and writing skills. They argue an integrated-skill approach is more closely aligned with the kinds of tasks students typically encounter in university classrooms. Examples of some integrated-skill activities they have used in their IEP classrooms are at the core of this piece.

This issue of *GATESOL Journal* showcases the work of scholars across the state and beyond who are committed to challenging the status quo and are actively seeking innovative ways to rethink policies, procedures, and practices surrounding language learning and learners. We trust our readers, all of whom we know share similar commitments, will find the research- and practitioner-based articles in this issue helpful as they too reconsider what constitutes effective and equitable language learning.