

Building Inclusive Environments that Support Access and Success for Emergent Multilingual Learners

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The spring 2022 issue of *GATESOL Journal* provides language teachers, administrators, community developers, curriculum designers, and advocates of the emergent multilingual population in Georgia, the U.S., and around the world with insights on developing inclusive practices. *Inclusion* is “the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people” (YW Boston Blog, 2019, para. 8). This issue will showcase how inclusive practices can be supported *in* language, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices, and peace-oriented education.

Teacher Educators, International Students, Immigrant/Refugees and Inclusion

Classroom observation for both supervisory and non-supervisory purposes is a fact of life in second language and foreign language teaching. In fact, a widely accepted teacher development practice is for classroom teachers to be observed by more experienced teachers who are expected to provide helpful feedback on relevant qualities of classroom instruction. Unfortunately, few programs prepare language teachers or teacher educators to serve as either feedback providers (e.g., supervisors, supportive peers) or as feedback receivers (e.g., teachers). This issue opens with the multilingual researcher, Tuğba Nur Doğan Faitour, and her empirical study about herself and her experiences. She examines her role as an emergent bilingual speaker of English who provides peer support to her colleague abroad who also identifies as an emergent bilingual. Doğan Faitour takes a mixed-methods approach and examines the quantity and quality of English mitigation devices used to discern the effectiveness of her feedback to create a safe, non-threatening, and inclusive context for the purposes of increasing teacher awareness.

How to build an inclusive and safe space for multilingual learners is a theme Ji Ma also addresses in her literature review, which examines the challenges and strategies facing international students and faculty in the U.S. higher education system. Ma’s literature review utilizes one book and 37 journal articles and aims to challenge “the normativity of the value of international education and international students by examining CLR [culturally linguistically responsive] practices” (p. 32) to support international students. Her paper uncovers the deep complexity of the varying relationships among international students, faculty, staff, and domestic students. Ma proposes five instructional strategies, five classroom environment practices, and two

student services that universities in the U.S. can implement which could alleviate challenges that international students face. With the efforts from faculty, staff, scholars, and students from multiple cultures, Ma emphasizes that “we can build linguistic and culturally diverse spaces in academia that could benefit all” (p. 32).

Also interested in building inclusive learning environments that support access and success for multilingual learners is Guptill, who discusses his original instructional design for adult immigrant and refugee populations. His curriculum design employs Critical Pedagogy and a Language for Peace Approach, which aims to support language educators to teach English language skills and nourish and sustain students’ agency and empathy in localized civic engagements. His paper walks us through the process of answering the following inquiry: How can students, teachers, and community members work co-intentionally and collaboratively to create and sustain a civically engaged community? Guptill provides readers with possible needs assessments, suggested activities for peace-oriented service-learning, and will provide you with ideas for incorporating civic engagement into your classrooms.

Inclusive and Engaging Pedagogical Practices for Language Teaching and Learning Spaces

The final three articles of this issue address best practices for engaging emergent bilingual students in learning. Reyes, Leckie, and Stevenson use the term *emergent bilingual*, and not *English learner*, to strive for inclusivity because they argue that *emergent bilingual* emphasizes students’ linguistic assets (not deficiencies) and what these students bring to the teaching/learning space in schools. (*GATESOL Journal* recognizes the importance of this terminology and will strive to use it henceforth in all its editorials and promote it with authors who submit papers.) Reyes, Leckie, and Stevenson emphasize the imperativeness for language educators to make “language and concepts visual and visible” (p. 52) in the learning environment because imagery can leverage access to content concepts and facilitate academic language development. They have identified several strategies and structures that are recognized to support students’ language and literacy development among emergent bilinguals, such as using anchor charts, interactive vocabulary walls with pictures, and sentence frames. Reyes et al. draw our attention to the importance of enhancing family-school partnerships and connections among culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families.

Mobley and Ramsay-Jordan’s paper builds upon best practices for emergent bilingual students and transitions our understanding of the teaching environment to include virtual classrooms and spaces for learning. The article has us examine our own pedagogical practices and calls us to review the importance of providing meaningful interactions, understanding the power of student motivation, placing importance on vocabulary instruction, learning about the partnership model, and using graphic organizers. Mobley and Ramsay-Jordan’s paper is a response to the current teaching and learning climate and is meant to support educators to produce creative ways to utilize virtual spaces for reading development and inclusivity.

The final paper by Kristensen addresses the best practices for engaging young emergent bilinguals and explains clearly and succinctly the teaching techniques of reader’s theatre and role-play. Kristensen summarizes how readers’ theatre was successfully implemented in a kindergarten classroom in Atlanta, Georgia, and outlines the procedure in a nine-step process. The guidelines shared in this Teaching Technique piece can support emergent bilinguals to engage in meaningful learning experiences while also increasing their language skills.

Finally, I (David) would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my colleague, Dr. Robert Griffin. The *GATESOL Journal's* growth is due to his endurance and willingness to dedicate valuable time, energy, and resources to provide our readership with substantial and quality articles. His vision and persistence is going to be missed but we at *GATESOL Journal* look forward to reading his scholarship and seeing how it blossoms and influences the academic fields that he is a part of. Thank you for all you have done Dr. Griffin. Huzzah.

Reference

YW Boston Blog. (2019, March 26). *Beyond the DE&I acronym: What are diversity, equity, and inclusion?* <https://www.ywboston.org/2019/03/beyond-the-acronym-dei/>

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