

Staying the Course through Challenging Currents

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Alexandra J. Reyes

Georgia Southern University

Eliana Hirano

Berry College

Amid the volatile waves of rapidly shifting expectations, unpredictable policy updates, and ever-changing circumstances, many educators are struggling to stay afloat. It is from within this context that we publish the fall 2025 issue of *GATESOL Journal*. While the articles featured in this issue vary in focus (i.e., supporting teachers of newcomers in rural schools, utilizing closed-model artificial intelligence to streamline standards alignment, and refining generative AI prompts to scaffold writing), all address the challenge of meeting student and teacher needs, despite changing demographics and evolving technologies. Taken as a whole, this journal issue envisions the educational horizon as one in which technological tools and human expertise are thoughtfully harnessed in service of educational growth and English language development.

Shifting Tides

In Leckie and Wall's empirical research article, they detail their work with four rural elementary school teachers to identify pragmatic approaches in supporting newcomer English learners. Although seasoned professionals, these general education teachers had little or no prior experience working with this student population, a situation that is not uncommon in rural schools. Compounding the challenges of unfamiliarity, many rural school districts lack the resources and supports more often found in their counterparts with established multilingual communities and larger numbers of identified ELs. Employing a formative experiment approach, the researchers guided the participant teachers through cycles of observation, goal setting, and reflection to modify and refine instruction. With mentorship, the teachers were able to use the students' home languages, incorporate visual supports, and foster culturally sustaining learning environments in general education settings to propel academic and English language development.

Braiding a Strong Rope

Shafer Willner's pedagogical practice piece delineates how educators can utilize a closed artificial intelligence system to align content standards, the WIDA ELD Standards Framework, and K-12 ELA Literacy Foundations standards to streamline the planning process. Rather than resisting technological innovation or becoming mired in the minutiae of aligning curricular, literacy, and language development standards, the author proposes braiding these standards with the assistance of closed AI. Using Georgia as an anchor, Shafer Willner outlines how educators can use the tool

Dr. Alexandra J. Reyes, Associate Professor, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA; email areyes@georgiasouthern.edu

Dr. Eliana Hirano, Professor, Berry College, Mt. Berry, GA; email ehirano@berry.edu

for generating unit goals and lesson objectives that are accurate, relevant, and well-aligned. This time-saving strategy efficiently integrates academic content, foundational literacy, and English language development goals, potentially freeing up teachers to focus energy on collaborative planning and differentiation.

Helming the Craft

Dos Santos's teaching technique explores how teachers can guide multilingual learners in crafting well-structured prompts to leverage generative AI for writing support. The article describes how students in a ninth-grade ELA class employed the Prompt Creation Reference Chart (dos Santos et al., 2025) to refine structured prompts to provide scaffolding for a persuasive book review assignment. By using the chart to determine the author, purpose, and request, multilingual students engineered generative AI prompts that resulted in customized scaffolding. The students then revised the prompts to produce a manageable set of steps to steer their writing. Applying the output to the writing task allowed learners to build confidence and develop their skills in writing as a social practice. Through this example, dos Santos highlights the potential of generative AI to serve as a tool for critical engagement and suggests that the structured chart encourages thoughtful prompt engineering, thereby fostering the ethical use of artificial intelligence platforms.

Navigating the Currents

The fall 2025 issue of the *GATESOL Journal* shines a light on the numerous ways that educators can embrace the opportunities that are often overshadowed by uncertainty. While educators may feel unmoored by the relentless fluctuations that currently impact our profession, we can take inspiration from the educators, learners, community members, and leaders in the field who are striving to chart a course to safe harbor. The articles in this issue illuminate inspiring ways for those who work with multilingual learners to embody adaptability and resilience in the face of changing contexts. Although shifting currents create challenges, they also offer possibilities for us to recommit to our mission and set out on new routes.

References

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