



# GATESOL In Action

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## Welcome from the Senior Editor

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### What I learned the summer of 2018:

#### Critical reflections of an ESOL, Language and Literacy Teacher Educator

**This summer I was privileged to have the opportunity** to spend time in equity-based training with the CREATE Project in Atlanta, GA, to study the Holocaust with the Facing History Project at DePaul University, to visit the Holocaust Museum in Skokie, Illinois and to visit the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama with colleagues and students from Georgia State University. Finally, yet importantly, I had a chance to visit Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico. I was privileged to have these experiences and I feel obligated to do something with the insights I have been afforded.

#### **Do You Know People?**

“Privilege” comes in many forms because some people have not been afforded opportunities to engage in similar kinds of experiences because it may be that they do

not *know* people who could help them to access these activities. Do you *know* people? People who can help you acquire goods and services and access to activities that you otherwise would not have been able to have on your own; goods, services and activities you would have had to “wait in line” for, might not have known about, or could not afford? You are privileged if you *know* people who *know* other people who can help you gain insights into places to work or even give you a job or position without having to apply or compete for it. Do you *know* people, especially people in positions of power? When you *know* people who will help you, you are privileged. When you have the financial resources, you are privileged and when you have the knowledge and skills to access these activities, you are privileged. In addition, yes, there are many other kinds of privileges such as our skin pigmentation, the language(s) we speak, our gender, our class, our country of origin, our cultural background, our education, our abilities, our career or job title and so on.

However, the question that haunts me now about these provocative activities this summer is what do I do with these privileges? My first response is to share the experiences with you so that you may be inspired by what I write to take action. Individually and collectively, these visits and studies spoke to me of the need for: language and linguistic awareness; critical historical awareness; the development of knowledge, challenging humanity’s injustices and the power of privilege in our ways of being in research, service, curriculum and our teaching. Some of these issues are addressed in the papers in this edition which I will get to at the end of this editorial.

## Equity-Based Training, Atlanta, GA.

As an Afro-Caribbean professor from the Bahamas living in the United States, I had very limited awareness of something called “Equity-based training.” I knew that there were facilitators who specialized in helping others address systemic racism in the United States but I was not aware of the range or very rich and compelling ways of interrogating systemic racism and the privileging of whiteness. When colleagues from a research project invited me to participate in the week-long sessions (from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.), I was curious and agreed to participate. This work was emotionally shocking and uncomfortable because during previous facilitations on race in the United States, the presenters were always “gentle” and “careful” in awakening attendees to implicit bias with examples of what it looked like in the academy and society. This time, we were forced to confront our own implicit biases “in the skin we live in” as black, brown and white people through the protocols of the San Francisco Coalition of Essential Small School (SF-CESS). Their mission is “to **interrupt** and **transform** current and systemic educational **inequities** to ensure all students have access to **personalized, equitable and high performing schools** that believe and demonstrate **each student can, should and will succeed**” (SF-CESS, 2018, p.1). Through working alone and in large and small groups we were, time and time again, pushed by the facilitators and our peers to “speak our truth, go to the source of knowledge, stay engaged, experience discomfit and pay attention to patterns of participation” (SF-CESS, 2018 pp. 11-16). It was very

**emotionally draining** work every day as I worked on myself and with others to be better human beings striving to transform schools and society.

My week at DePaul University and the Facing History and Ourselves (FHO) Project and symposium on the Holocaust was humanizing. We read critical historical texts, listened to lectures and engaged in passionate discussions on scientific racism and anti-Semitism and the American response to the Holocaust. One experience which was pivotal for this engagement was the visit to the Holocaust Museum in Skokie, IL which has been designed for visitors to experience the museum from the personal perspective of the survivors through the display of their artifacts. It is the first museum in the world that utilizes hologram technology to tell the survivors' stories. We met one of the survivors and had a chance to ask her questions. The work of FHO is built on "intellectual rigor, informed civic responsibility, ethical reflection and emotional engagement" (FHO, Pedagogical Triangle). Their mission is to "engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry" (<https://www.facinghistory.org/>). Like the work of the SF-CESS, the FHO work was also emotionally draining yet also very much uplifting because you could not leave the museum as a "bystander, doing nothing" but as an "upstander, doing something to make a difference" so that heinous actions of humans against one another would not happen again.

My visit with colleagues to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum, From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration, was riveting and emotionally compelling as well. The work of Bryan Stevenson (2014) and the Equal

Justice Initiative (EJI) is “committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice, and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable in American Society” (<https://eji.org/about-eji>). The National Memorial was “conceived with the hope of creating a sober, meaningful site where people can gather and reflect on America’s history of racial inequality” (<https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/memorial>). The EJI believe that:

...the history of racial inequality and economic injustice in the United States has created continuing challenges for all Americans, and more must be done to advance our collective goal of equal justice for all. The United States has done very little to acknowledge the legacy of slavery, lynching, and racial segregation. As a result, people of color are disproportionately marginalized, disadvantaged and mistreated. The American criminal justice system is compromised by racial disparities and unreliability that is influenced by a presumption of guilt and dangerousness that is often assigned to people of color. (<https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/museum>).

My last summer of 2018 experience was in Albuquerque, New Mexico where I travelled to Acoma Pueblo and Sky City Cultural Center Haak’u Museum. My companion and I learned that, “Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico is more than just a tourist destination. It’s part of New Mexico’s cultural heritage, as the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in North America and the 28<sup>th</sup> historic site designated by the national trust for historic preservation. Acoma history is also the story of the Southwest,

from its initial role as the home to the Anaasazi people, to the thirteenth century founding of the Pueblo, which is still alive and well as a community and touchstone for Native Americans in the area and nationwide.” <http://www.acomaskycity.org/home.html>).

This visit to Acoma Pueblo was very educational and spiritual because I learned how much I do not know and appreciate about Native Americans. I was disappointed to learn from our tour guide that the native language, Keres, is not being taught in the schools and according to him, the school curriculum was not specialized for Native Americans. In this very spiritually moving and beautiful place, my companion and I left with a strong sense of disquiet because there was so much more to learn and more to do to right the wrongs of the past and their ongoing impact on the present. My four experiences this summer speak eloquently and beseechingly to me of my role as an educator in the righting of those wrongs. In our work with English language learners, a marginalized and minoritized group, we need to actively pursue language and linguistic awareness; critical historical awareness; and the development of knowledge about the Other as we challenge a culture of humanity’s ongoing injustices through wittingly and unwittingly exercising power and privileges over others.

In our equity-based training, a colleague and I identified the following descriptors that ELLs want to tell educators:

- We speak multiple languages and dialects;
- We come from different classes, religions, cultures, traditions, etc.
- Our histories are older than the United States;
- We come from various school systems with VERY HIGH standards;

- Immigrants have contributed to every sector of the U.S., e.g., Steve Jobs was Syrian; California rail system was built by Chinese laborers.
- Talk to us, learn about us, INCLUDE us, let us use our languages, hear our truth;
- Talk to us/speak to us in OUR LANGUAGE;
- Maximize our Presence!

You can feel the pain of being an outsider in our words. Can you HEAR us? Native speakers of English feel privileged that we speak the language of power in the US and in many international contexts around the world but Kracsch (1997) has a different “feel” for “native” speakers. Here is what she says: “The native speaker is in fact an imaginary construct—a canonically literate mono-lingual middle-class member of a largely fictional national community whose citizens share a belief in a common history and a common destiny” (Kramsch, 1997 p. 363). Is that you? I believe not but let us all examine our privileges and not let them obstruct our work towards equity and justice for all. My summer of 2018 has been AMAZING to put it mildly, I hope yours was too.

As I referenced earlier, the need for: language and linguistic awareness; critical historical awareness; the development of knowledge, challenging humanity’s injustices and the power of privilege in our ways of being in research, curriculum and our teaching, our seven papers in this edition, take up this gauntlet.

In **Personal Stories and Perspectives**, Choi encourages all of us to be brave if we are multilingual and to practice translinguaging. Choi, a multilingual speaker, writes about her trip to Peru and her attempts to learn Spanish that were complicated when

her other languages began to interfere. Her piece, *Multilingual self: Inspired by a recent trip to Peru*” is translanguaging in action!

In **Critical Viewpoints**, Jeddi writes her views on racist immigration policies and sentiments and the ways in which these ultimately impact ELLs in schools. In her piece, *“This warrants a visit to the Human Rights Museum,”* Jeddi critiques government actions in the summer of 2018 and urges educators and everyone to practice equity and to become more welcoming and knowledgeable about people of diverse backgrounds because of the numerous benefits they provide: “diverse skills, experiences, language resources, and worldviews.”

Lake in his **Book Review** of Farrell’s (2017), *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching*, offers us some food for thought on selecting books that help us to develop our critical views and knowledge in sociolinguistics. Our text choices have the potential to influence how educators welcome and teach others with diverse linguistic backgrounds to our classrooms. Lake contends that knowledge building can be facilitated through “discussion questions with the potential to open up meaningful discussions” for educators.

In our first **Innovative School-Based Program and Report**, Leckie writes about a *“Language experience camp: Connecting schools, students and families in southeast rural Georgia.”* We are very pleased to welcome a school-based report to our publication and we encourage more of them. Leckie’s report on a summer camp with “no tests” describes how a team of educators developed and conducted a week-long, theme-based interactive summer camp for ELs. The camp was developed in response

to educators' desire to "expand social opportunities for ELs and their families as well as provide intensive continued language development support."

In **From the Trenches Outside of Georgia**, McCleod-Chambless writes her critical reflections on "*Learning to teach again, in China.*" McCleod-Chambless takes us on an exciting intercultural roller coaster ride that is filled with highs and lows, rough spots and smooth coasting pathways all as she learns to live, learn and teach in a new setting. In the process, she becomes a different educator and human being.

"*Boys and girls for others,*" is our **Classroom Praxis Report**. In this piece, Jackson provides a detailed description of how she incorporated a critical multicultural approach to integrate social justice in a third grade Social Studies EL classroom. The purpose was to help students become critical thinkers as they tackle real problems to become agents of change in their lives.

In our second **Innovative School-Based Program and Report**, Paynter and Arnett discuss the "*Benefits of collaboration and the ESOL Teacher and the Library Media Specialist.*" They challenge ESOL educators to capitalize on the resources that library media personnel possess not just for their own professional benefit but also for their students. The authors describe how the media room can become a strong refuge for ELs outside of their regular classrooms. They model how teachers can work collaboratively to maximize learning experiences for their students.

Our papers in this edition all speak to empowering our learners; developing teachers' skills, knowledge, and experiences in a wide array of settings; the importance of learning other languages and being cultural brokers. Collectively, all the papers

encourage us to go beyond the basics and, if we truly want to improve the lives of our learners, it starts with us as educators. We must put out more effort to learn about them and their world and to advocate for them in all matters.

What a summer it has been! Many thanks to our reviewers! We hope you have an awesome fall!

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