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Editorial

The Importance of Disseminating Knowledge: An Issue of Mission, Voice, and Passion

Aida A. Nevárez-La Torre

Editor

The main focus of an academic and professional journal is to disseminate knowledge. In the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Multilingual Education Research* (JMER) it is appropriate then to discuss the importance of this main focus. The common intent of the many educational journals published today is to communicate different ways of interpreting reality, new discoveries, advanced understandings, novel concepts, and best practices for the advancement of education. Since educational change and transformation are critical to the evolution of teaching and the promotion of learning, the knowledge propagation function of academic and professional journals is of the utmost significance to achieve this goal.

As the editor of JMER, I understand this function is a very serious responsibility. In my view the dissemination of knowledge for the purpose of transforming and improving multilingual education across New York State is an issue that has three vital dimensions. Those are, mission, voice, and passion. The *mission* of JMER is to serve as a vehicle that responds to the changes and growth of knowledge in a variety of national language education concerns that have local and regional relevance. The journal proposes to respond to the emerging needs and interests of teachers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers, counselors, psychologists, advocates, and community leaders whose work focuses on the successful education of multilingual students.

Our mission interlaces with two key goals of the work done by the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE). First, NYSABE aspires to communicate relevant information on the current research related to bilingual education. JMER, as one of the publications of this organization, serves as an essential tool in actualizing this goal. Second, NYSABE actively advocates on the sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and sociocultural issues that affect the education of English language learners. In that same vein, JMER embraces a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, to reach a broader scholarship and readership and to encourage reflective transformation of any structural and ideological oppression in education.

The dimension of *voice* alludes to the act of validating and communicating knowledge constructed from insightful practice and inquiry (Freire & Macedo, 1987). JMER recognizes the crucial matter of whose voice is given authority to speak and write about teaching and learning. Our pages will reflect an inclusive voice, giving credence to quality and rigorous explorations done by *expert academicians* and *expert practitioners* who are invested in the education of

linguistically diverse students. An inclusive, rather than an exclusive, approach formulates inquiry in the social sciences as a truly democratic endeavor (Kincheloe, 1991).

Passion serves as a unifying foundation to the dimensions of mission and voice. Its significance, which penetrates the personal and professional realms, can be better explained through the real-life experience of an educator. My mother dedicated over 40 years to the public school system in Puerto Rico. She started as a teacher and over the years ascended to the position of undersecretary of education in the island. Within three months of retirement she was invited to become the director of Fundación Modesto Gotay (Modesto Gotay Foundation), an institution for severely disabled children and adults. She has productively held this position for the past 20 years. Recently, I asked her what kept her going and, among several reasons, without hesitation she answered “a passion to educate and a passion to serve others.” The idea of passion that she referred to is not an ephemeral emotion or superficial enthusiasm. It, rather, underscores a longstanding commitment to share knowledge and help others become the best that they can be with ardor and zeal.

JMER’s objective to disseminate knowledge embodies this same quality of passion. This dimension of what we are about calls for enduring dedication, clarity of purpose, and a willingness to own the task of communicating knowledge. Consequently, our work is for the purpose of altering minds and practices to advance multilingual education inside and outside our work spaces.

We begin our trajectory of enacting JMER’s function of knowledge dissemination with this inaugural volume. The theme that guides this publication, *Critical Issues in Multilingual Education: Reviewing the Past to Create the Future*, sets the stage for this journey. Our first step is to acknowledge and reflect upon the history of bilingual education, to learn from it and construct new educational possibilities that will broaden the value of language diversity for decades to come. The format of JMER includes three main sections: Articles, Practitioner’s Explorations, and Scholarly Book/Multimedia Reviews. The topics included within the main sections represent issues that have sparked debates and investigations in the past, and today still continue to be relevant and critical to the field of language diversity.

The Articles section discusses empirical research and analyzes original data that authors obtain using sound research methods, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies. Articles may also review current knowledge in an important area of multilingual education and discuss new directions for research.

The first volume opens with Dr. Ofelia Garcia’s in-depth examination of the ways in which New York City schools have responded to the multilingualism of its children in the last 40 years. She challenges the readership to envision novel understandings of bilingualism in education that are appropriate for the 21st century.

Drs. Manuela Wagner and Terry A. Osborn’s article focuses on how attitudes toward heritage language learning have changed, both with regard to program development and in

learning and teaching. Their work bridges language teaching beyond the fields of bilingualism and foreign language.

Drs. Chun Zhang and Su-Je Cho write a comprehensive review of various challenges in regard to educating children with and without disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds. Based on the scholarly literature reviewed they make insightful recommendations for effective practices and research to aid in producing positive outcomes for CLD children both with and without disabilities.

The Practitioners' Explorations section of JMER focuses on best practices including innovative instructional interventions, practitioner inquiry, and collaborative projects leading to meaningful changes in educational policy and practice. As an ESL practitioner Dianne Maysonet reflects on her transformation from a teacher to a teacher-researcher. Using the findings of her first classroom inquiry she proposes some practical suggestions for teachers who teach ELLs with transient backgrounds.

Dr. Giselle B. Esquivel is the associate editor of the the Scholarly Book/Multimedia Reviews section. Reviews provide a scholarly evaluative discussion of the significance of the work in the context of current theory and practice. Addressing the issue of assessment in the education of ELLs, Dr. Evangeline Harris Stefanakis does a provocative review of Dr. Kate Menken's *English Learners Left Behind: Standardized Testing as Language Policy*.

Through developing and publishing the first volume of JMER one aspect of our mission has been met, that is, to communicate academic and professional knowledge. However the dissemination task is not completed. I invite our readership to take ownership of the mission of this journal by reading, analyzing, and discussing its contents with school colleagues, preservice teachers, teacher educators, researchers, administrators, community educators, parents, and students and others whose work impacts the education of ELLs. It will not be until all the NYSABE family commits to disseminating knowledge that our ultimate goal of achieving excellence in multilingual education will materialize.

References

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