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Unpacking Writing and Channeling Change

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Unpacking Writing and Channeling Change

Aida A. Nevárez-La Torre

Editor

I am very pleased with the warm welcome that the first volume of JMER received from the NYSABE organization and its membership. Given the high need for, and interest in, participating in this type of scholarly forum, our efforts continue to be focused on producing a journal of intellectual and professional integrity.

A special note of gratitude is given to Dr. Giselle Esquivel for her illustrious contribution to JMER as the Associate Editor during the past three years. Her dedication to bilingual education and bilingualism is highlighted through her work as a researcher and scholar in the field of psychology. In the past she presented her research in several NYSABE annual conferences and, more recently, she was the Editor of the Book/Media Review section of this journal. Dr. Esquivel wants to pursue other professional interests, but has agreed to remain connected to NYSABE and JMER by serving as a member of the journal's Editorial Advisory Board.

Different from the first volume, which had a focused theme; this second issue is structured around an open theme. That is, diverse issues of contemporary significance in the field of multilingual education are discussed in the articles. An additional modification is that the first section of articles has been renamed. The new name, *Explorations*, is indicative of the wide breadth of methodological and thematic research and conceptual discussions to be presented in this section.

This editorial has two purposes. In response to queries from potential authors, first I offer guidance as to some of the essential elements of a publishable manuscript. Potential authors are invited to read and use these guidelines in drafting quality manuscripts to submit to JMER. The second purpose is to provide an overview of the different articles included in the second volume.

It is my commitment as editor of JMER to expand the interest of potential authors in submitting manuscripts that contribute to the high quality of research intended for readers of this journal. Thus, an important goal for me is to facilitate the writing of manuscripts that are consistent with the standards of JMER. While as editor I am unable to assure acceptance of manuscripts prior to a thorough editorial review process, a description of guidelines will serve to enhance the understanding of authors as to what constitutes a strong manuscript submission. In essence, it is important to make transparent, for both experienced and novice researchers and authors, what are the general criteria that reviewers use in deciding what constitutes a high quality manuscript worthy of publication.

The guidelines included here focus on *research studies manuscripts*. Conceptual-

theoretical manuscripts often follow a different format and are usually solicited by the editors with specific criteria in mind. It should be noted that the guidelines provided here are general in describing different components of a manuscript, as these emerge from editorial experience and scholarly publication sources (see Journals Consulted below). Yet, these characteristics are specific to how JMER's Editorial Advisory Board and Editors envision scholarly research and conceptual writings from various cross disciplinary interests.

The *Introduction* section of a manuscript should reflect a cohesive conceptual/theoretical framework. The majority of studies discussed should be current, except for those of a historical research nature and those that are considered classic research in the field. The studies chosen to be reviewed should have a direct relevance to the study. A helpful review of the literature should provide a critical perspective, and be focused and concise. The author should clarify the purpose of the study in light of what currently is known in the field and any knowledge gaps that might exist. The questions that are explored need to be specified and any variables defined in operational terms. It is also helpful to provide an explanation of the organization of the discussion for the reader.

The *Method* section of the manuscript needs to be guided by attention to detail and specificity of procedures and measures employed. The author should identify the research paradigm used in the study and a rationale for its use. All the methods for data collection and analyses need to be fully depicted. A clear and complete account of the study's participants, setting, and steps for data collection and analysis should be included. Keep in mind that it is always useful to explain the process of obtaining access into the setting, the procedures followed to obtain informed consent, and the ways participants' anonymity is protected. It is essential to carefully explain the rigor and appropriateness of the method used for data analysis.

The author should take care of clarifying for the reader that the *Results* are presented separate from the *Discussion*. The description of the results needs to be done in a clear and comprehensive manner. It is recommended that the section on *Results* be carefully planned and presented so that it is accessible to JMER's readership.

The *Discussion* should evaluate and interpret the implications of the results. An important aspect of the discussion is to talk about how the results relate to the research questions and to the literature review done in the introduction. It is also helpful to discuss candidly the study's delimitations and any limitations.

The last section of a manuscript is usually referred to as the *Conclusion*. Here the author should identify the big lessons that can be extracted from the research. It is also recommended that any implications for practice and ways to expand the research in the future are specified. Consider if this section offers significant insight (not just a summary of the study) and the ways that the investigation contributes to the scholarly literature.

Some general aspects of *Mechanics* need to be highlighted as well. The manuscript should be written in a style that responds to the readership of JMER; practitioners who work in multilingual schools and researchers who do investigations in these same settings. Be certain

that your manuscript has been written clearly and cohesively and that you have followed all submission guidelines of the journal. Consider if you consulted the latest edition of APA manual (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th ed.) so that your manuscript can be read with ease and the reader may focus on the content rather than its style. The author's identity should be masked in the manuscript by using the convention of (Author, date). It is helpful to avoid unnecessary and excessive self-citations and repeated citation of the same source. It is the author's responsibility to make sure that every citation is included in the references section and that the format for quoting and referencing sources follows the APA manual. Remember to carefully edit your manuscript, making sure that is proofread and checked for spelling before submission.

The articles included in the second volume of JMER, loosely intersect with the idea of change from the bottom up. That is, they all identify areas in need of educational renovation facilitated by talented educators in multilingual settings. At the onset, Dr. Freeman Field considers the contemporary debate about educational accountability for ELLs and bilingual students illuminated by the findings from research done across three decades in three different geographical areas in the United States. She uses a sociocultural lens to suggest ways that dual language educators and researchers can help move this debate forward. Juxtaposing the national debate with educators' professional endeavors at the local level, this author illustrates how narrow-minded policies imposed by federal and state mandates can be challenged and defused through practitioner-led reform and data inquiry efforts.

Drs. Eisenstein Ebsworth, Gottlieb, Gottlieb, Goldstein, and Bennett discuss an investigation about the reasons for referring emergent bilinguals to special education programs. Acknowledging the continued importance of the student referral process to Special Education, and the scarcity of studies in this area, they used a new inquiry lens to reexamine data collected from a multipurpose study conducted years earlier. Their current investigation focused on whether there was a significant difference between U.S. mainland-born and non-mainland-born Latino referrals for special education, based on either language or behavior. The unexpected results alert educators to the urgency in expanding both the research and practical understanding of this complex process to design innovative measures that produce advanced and valid referral procedures.

Drs. Lemberger and Carrasquillo write about the subject of teacher quality through a longitudinal qualitative study that considered the certification process, test-taking experiences, and instructional practices of a group of graduate bilingual education and English as a Second Language teachers. Study findings elucidate the resiliency of teacher candidates in achieving teacher certification and in working as educators of multilingual students. The researchers provide further insight into the efficacy of teacher certification tests and their relationship to teacher quality and the instructional practices teachers implement. They challenge teacher educators to carefully monitor and support their teacher candidates through the certification process. It is also proposed that teacher educators and educational researchers unite in demanding teacher quality assessments that are sensitive to the multidimensional teaching task

and more aptly identify expertise in teachers who work with multilingual students.

Two articles are included under the *Practitioners' Explorations* section of the journal. Drs. Mercuri and Ebe's provocative analysis of one teacher's science inquiry unit serves to actualize the sometimes-elusive link between theory and practice. Their synthesis of research on best practices for teaching EBs is structured into a set of Guidelines for Effective Practice, which they in turn use to dissect the planning and implementation of instruction in a dual language elementary classroom. The findings suggest that teachers may benefit from using the Guidelines developed by the authors, to design instruction that incorporates research-based practices. The authors invite more studies that explore the validity of the Guidelines to channel instruction across the curriculum in multilingual schools.

As a teacher researcher, Dr. Mykysey, investigates the writing development experienced by a group of EBs in first grade. Her role as a bilingual reading specialist in an urban school was characterized by colleagues who were entrenched in using teacher-centered practices and students who did not like or want to write in any language. Learning how to conduct inquiry in her own classroom, she pursued a greater understanding about her students' writing attitudes and behaviors. What she learned goaded a change in her philosophy and instructional pedagogy with results that surpassed her expectations as well as her colleagues' expectations of first graders' writing capacities in a second language.

In the *Scholarly Book and Multimedia Review* section, Drs. Laracuenta and Acevedo critically appraise Esquivel, López, & Nahari's seminal volume entitled, *Handbook of multicultural school psychology: An interdisciplinary perspective*. Their review highlights some of the scholarly contributions achieved in the book and identifies some areas that need to be considered in enhancing its content in future editions.

Journals Consulted

Reading Research Quarterly

TESOL Quarterly