Leveraging Innovative Digital Media Technology: Voicing Scholarship on Multilingual Education

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Ming Zhu, PhD, is the Founder of Deer Future Education LLC, an educational organization, and the President of Future Education Research Network Inc., a nonprofit research company, both based in Boston, MA. She has closely mentored hundreds of international and domestic students who have since achieved great academic and professional success. Upon receiving her doctoral degree from Fordham University in 2018, she has become a dedicated member of the *Journal of Multilingual Education Research* and served as an adjunct professor within Fordham's Graduate School of Education. Her research interests include acculturation, multilingual education, multicultural education, and international education. mzhu15@fordham.edu

Link to Podcasts

Editorial

Leveraging Innovative Digital Media Technology: Voicing Scholarship on Multilingual Education

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Volume 12 of the *Journal of Multilingual Education Research* introduces their first two podcast episodes. These provide an insightful look at the editors of the journal. The first features an interview with *JMER*'s senior editor, Dr. Aída A. Nevárez-La Torre, in which she spoke about how inspiration, passion, and motivation led her to create *JMER*. The second presents *JMER*'s associate editors and editorial assistants, as well as their roles within *JMER*. This episode informs listeners about the journal's sections, including Theory and Research, Practice, and Book/Multimedia Reviews and what the editors look for when screening submissions. Since this volume is open-topic, it features articles on diverse issues related to multilingual schools.

"We continue to grow. We continue to think of ways to expand, and really continue to be relevant." — Dr. Aida A. Nevárez-La Torre, Senior Editor of *JMER*

Over the past few months, I have had the unique privilege of connecting with *JMER*'s senior editor, associate editors, and editorial assistants. Through my conversations with them, I have learned about their motivations for dedicating the entirety of their careers to transforming multilingual education and their commitment to disseminating knowledge through academic research. What most inspires me is the team's eagerness and enthusiasm in leveraging contemporary media platforms to reach a wider audience, giving voice to linguistically and culturally minoritized communities. It is certainly my honor to pioneer a podcast channel for *JMER* with the goal of forging an inclusive online community for researchers, practitioners, and community members to share their findings, reflections, and stories.

Podcasting, since its first emergence nearly twenty years ago, has allowed users worldwide to virtually publish and consume audio recordings covering a broad range of

topics in a convenient manner (Casares, 2022; Quiñones, 2016). Rather than sitting in front of a computer or a tablet, podcast listeners can easily access content of interest on the go. These audio data files are stored online using hosting services such as Podbean and Buzzsprout, which then distribute them to popular platforms such as Apple and Google Podcasts (Sullivan, 2019). According to a 2020 survey carried out by Edison Research and Triton Digital, 75% of the U.S. population over the age of 12 are familiar with podcasting, while 55%, or an estimate of 155 million people, has listened to a podcast. Not only has there been a 16% increase in monthly consumers per year, but these individuals have been spending over 15 hours per week listening to podcasts.

The landscape of current podcast platforms offers users a high level of accessibility and convenience to a diverse range of topics (Casares, 2022). Peoples and Tilley (2011) categorize podcasts into three main categories, including institutional, episodic, and audiobook. In addition to content such as entertainment, news, and advertisements, podcasting has also become a popular tool to communicate messages regarding mental health, social justice, and other advocacy efforts (Carrotte et al., 2023). Additionally, podcasting has been implemented as an instructional tool in higher education (Hall & Jones, 2021). For example, student-generated podcasts were used in a Health Psychology course to improve learning outcome (Hall & Jones, 2021), while instructional podcasts were produced to supplement online learning for Israeli medical students (Anteby et al., 2021). Also, English as foreign language learners at the university level in Taiwan exhibited progress with regard to their speaking fluency and accuracy after making podcasts in English (Yeh et al., 2005). Additionally, Ferrer et al. (2019) suggest how the implementation of student-led podcasting was beneficial for Social Work students' professional development. Despite acknowledging the potential of incorporating podcasting into planning higher education, Moore (2022) pointed out its challenges and the need for educators to explore ways to effectively integrate this component into their curricula.

Last but not least, podcasting has emerged as a medium of communication for scientific communities (Fox et al., 2021; Quintana & Heathers, 2021). Scientific topics that were once difficult to comprehend by the general public are introduced and explained in an easy-to-understand manner with the help of podcasting. For example, more than half a million listeners have downloaded a podcast in the field of biobehavioral sciences titled *Everything Hertz* (Quintana & Heathers, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many epidemiologists also engaged in public service by communicating accurate information regarding these outbreaks using nontechnical language on social media platforms such as podcasts (Fox et al., 2021). Meanwhile, podcasts offer listeners the opportunity to access academic research without needing to subscribe to a journal publication. Although these authors do not foresee traditional academic journals being replaced by podcasts, they do believe that this new and innovative form of media should be leveraged because it has allowed scientific communities to disseminate their research findings to a much wider audience, thus creating a stronger impact.

As *JMER*'s media editor, I feel immensely honored to play a role in growing the journal's digital footprint. Constructing a platform where our editors, collaborators, and authors can make their voices heard is not only a tribute to their commitment but also a

great opportunity to raise awareness in critical issues that have to do with multilingualism. I envision producing podcast episodes that explore questions about multilingual education at the intersection of research and practice.

Volume 12, as the onset of *JMER*'s podcast, introduces the first two podcast episodes, which provide an insightful look at the editors of the journal. The first features an interview with *JMER*'s senior editor, Dr. Aída A. Nevárez-La Torre, in which she spoke about how inspiration, passion, and motivation led her to create *JMER*. She also speaks about her vision of the journal's future growth and evolution. The second presents *JMER*'s associate editors and editorial assistants, as well as their roles within *JMER*. This episode informs listeners about the journal's sections, including Theory and Research, Practice, and Book/Multimedia Reviews and what the editors look for when screening submissions. Both episodes offer listeners an opportunity to learn more about the journal, its editors, and the goals that we as a team try to accomplish.

Since this volume is open-topic, it features articles on diverse issues related to multilingual schools. Midgette and González (2023) capture experiences of refugee students whose transition into U.S. schools is often plagued with trauma that negatively impacts their learning of language and academic content. The authors call for a reconceptualization of culturally responsive pedagogies by aligning cultural representation with an understanding of complex traumatic experiences. They argue for the sensitive and critical use of culturally responsive children's and young adult literature by teachers who work with refugee multilingual learners.

Ossa-Parra (2023) conceptually examines issues related to developing the voices of multilingual writers through discussing an ecological voice construction process model. This model encourages these students to leverage their unique cultural backgrounds to construct authentic voices. Gil, Gedik, and Ginanto (2023) focus on the experiences of a group of international parents as they navigate parental involvement in the United States and urge schools to be "culturally and linguistically responsive." Understanding who these parents are and what they need to familiarize themselves with the new educational system is an essential part of supporting immigrant students, as well.

This volume also contains three book reviews. Olivares-Orellana (2023) reviews Mohanty's (2019) *The Multilingual Reality: Living with Languages*. This book provides a thought-provoking analysis of multilingualism in India through examining the power dynamics of the country's multilingual societies. Olivares-Orellana draws attention to the dominant position of the English language in multilingual societies and how this has led to diminished linguistic diversity.

Falchi (2023) reviews a practical- and pedagogical-oriented book titled *Rooted in Strength: Using Translanguaging to Grow Multilingual Readers and Writers*, by Cecilia Espinosa and Laura Ascenzi-Moreno (2021). This book centers on the power of "translanguaging" in the success of bilingual students and presents instructional approaches that value language and culture as positive resources. As explained by Falchi (2023), the authors contribute to scholarly literature by introducing culturally responsive pedagogy for emergent bilinguals that can potentially transform education.

Finally, Ijalba (2023) reviews Chioé-Peña's (2021) (*M)othering labeled children. Bilingualism and disability in the lives of Latinx mothers.* Framed within the intersectionality of gender, legal status, poverty, linguistic human rights, as well as disability, this book lends insights into the lived experiences of three Spanish-speaking immigrant mothers whose children are labeled bilingual and disabled through the format of interviews. Ijalba's (2023) review of this book emphasizes the vital importance for teachers to acknowledge and then leverage Latinx family's strength and commitment to better support these families and their children.

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