

From the Editors

Greetings, and welcome to the special edition of the *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* on the special topic of *Midwestern Perspectives on Bilingual Education: Changing Demographics and Educational Challenges and Opportunities*. As editors for this issue, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the *MWER* team for the opportunity to edit this special issue of the journal. The broad field of English Learner (EL) education is an evolving one that has a long but underreported history in the Midwest. In this issue, we present a series of articles that investigate and shed light on the pedagogic, political, and policy practices that shape the educational experiences of ELs. Interestingly, the articles as a group are an important contribution to the field of EL education because of their analysis of the dynamic and non-linear process of how policy decisions made outside the school are met by educators' agency; in other words, how educators shape, reshape, and implement these same policies. Further, much of the research presented here focuses on the work done in dual language classrooms. Below, we offer a short summary of each of the articles in this special issue.

Bilingual Education in English-only: A Qualitative Case Study of Language Policy in Practice at Lincoln Elementary School

Ingrid Colón and Amy Heineke argue for an analytical framework that examines the interaction between bilingual education policies and the educators who teach in bilingual classrooms, as well as the impact of demographic and economic factors brought about by shifts in the community. Through a case study, the authors provide a richly layered analysis of bilingual education implementation in a school in a large Midwestern school district and how teachers shaped this implementation.

Creating a Climate for Linguistically Responsive Instruction: The Case for Additive Models

In this piece, Arthi Rao and Zitlali Morales posit that dual language (DL) and transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs have traditionally been understood to not share the same educational goals. The authors are interested in how each are constructed as culturally and linguistically responsive programs, noting that the literature often presents dual language education as more compatible with notions of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. Through a qualitative examination of a DL program and a TBE program, the authors argue that implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies are not only dependent on program models, but societal factors as well.

The Impact of Educational Policy on English Learners in a Rural Indiana School Corporation

In her paper, April Maria Burke notes that Midwestern demographics have changed sharply over the last 15 years. In states like Indiana, the increasing number of EL students has had a noticeable impact on education policies and practices. This demographic shift, along with other unique challenges for Indiana, such as its rural demographics and political climate, has forced policymakers and educators to respond to accountability demands imposed by the federal government. Burke seeks to understand how school personnel respond to school accountability mandates, interpret test scores, and make decisions on behalf of ELs, and concludes with a series of recommendations for policymakers and educators.

“But I’m a Language Teacher!” Dual Immersion Teacher Identities in a Complex Policy Context

Here, Colleen Chesnut takes a deep look at dual language teacher identity formation through participation in schoolwide professional learning communities. The identity of dual language teachers is presented in the form of personal and professional reflections. The teachers interviewed for this research work in a context that seems to value the idea of language diversity for students, but simultaneously devalue the identity of the educators who engage in multilingual education. DL teachers bring a valued perspective to their students, but they are not allowed to fully realize their own professionalism. The focus on English-based assessments and the reinforcement of English as the dominant language diminished teachers’ role within the school community. The article provides an “on the ground” account of the relationship of DL teachers and their non-DL colleagues, and how they negotiate their identity around the question of “best practices.”

Dual Language Instruction and Achievement: A Need and a Void in the Midwest

In the final feature, Tammy Oberg De La Garza, Erin Mackinney, and Alyson L. Lavigne offer a unique perspective on the needs and challenges facing administrators responsible for implementing dual language programs. While DL programs offer the best opportunity for strong linguistic and academic development of all students, principals and superintendents have a difficult time finding and retaining qualified teachers. This mixed method design focuses on DL programs in Illinois, with a strong focus on Chicago public schools. Among the important findings, the authors discuss the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and the experience of DL teachers in schools.

Serving English Language Learners Afterschool

As an end note, Jenell Hostead and Kathryn Doll offer a commentary on the critically important role of afterschool programs for both the academic and language development of ELs. Here, the authors outline the increase in enrollment of immigrant and ELs in afterschool programs and point to the importance of providing strong and meaningful experiences for the students enrolled. They offer practical guidelines for ensuring that afterschool programs meet the unique academic and social needs of EL students.

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