

For the Second Special Issue on Dissertations of the *Bilingual Research Journal*

This *BRJ* Special Issue on *Recent Dissertations on Bilingual Education* celebrates and showcases the finest research work contributed to the area of bilingual education by recently graduated scholars. Attesting to the high quality research *BRJ* Special Issue is the fact that four of these contributing authors have recently been recipients of dissertation awards at national professional associations. Hence, this special issue has become, in most part, a publication outlet for award winning dissertations.

Belinda Bustos Flores was selected as first-place winner of the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) Outstanding Dissertation Competition during 2000. Patrick Smith was selected as the first-place winner of the NABE Outstanding Dissertation Competition during 2001, and Natsuko Shibata Perera won second place during the same year. Anita Hernández was selected as the recipient of the First Dissertation Competition of the Bilingual Education Research Special Interest Group (SIG) from the American Educational Research Association (AERA) during 2000, and Francisco Ramos was selected as the second-place winner for the same competition during 2001. I had the pleasure to be able to help establish this latter competition while I was chairing the Bilingual Education Research SIG, and also to chair the selection committee and present Hernández and Ramos with their shining plaques.

This group of accomplished, bilingual education scholars are opening new lines of inquiry with their dissertation work. This *BRJ* Second Special Issue on Recently Completed Dissertations has the objective of helping them to launch their academic and professional careers by providing some mentoring guidance and a publication outlet. Feedback from the six authors who endured the submission and re-submission process points to the importance of mentoring for learning the “art” of publication in academia. The challenging task of converting a voluminous dissertation (hundreds of pages of text) into a 20–30 double-spaced manuscript for a journal publication was not an easy endeavor! Authors were required to focus their article on the most important or significant portion of their original dissertation research. The editing process was arduous and required a lot of stamina and intrinsic motivation to persevere, and it was made possible by the opportunity created by dedicating a special outlet for disseminating the work of young scholars.

I need to express my gratitude to the Editorial Policy Board of the *BRJ*, and particularly the *BRJ* editors, Alfredo H. Benavides and Josué M. González, for their wise decision to devote a special issue for recently completed dissertations. I must also express my appreciation to the highly qualified group of expert bilingual education researchers who agreed to participate as expert reviewers for this special issue. These expert reviewers included Theresa Austin, University of Massachusetts at Amherst; Robert DeVillar, the University of Texas at El Paso; Liliana Mina-Rowe, University of Connecticut; Gisela Ernst-Slavit, Washington State University at Vancouver; Evangeline Stefanakis, Harvard University; Rita Brusca-Vega, Northeastern Illinois University; and Thomas Yawkey, Pennsylvania State University. These expert reviewers donated their time and provided valuable and specific feedback for the contributing authors to improve the content and format of their manuscripts.

There are three overarching topics presented in these six articles. The first topic refers to the importance of the influence of affective factors (i.e., attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions or opinions) on teachers and parents of bilingual children. Three articles refer to this first topic. First, Cynthia Duke Gitelman Brilliant's article presents evidence that Spanish-speaking parents who receive some involvement training participated in a wider variety of school-related activities, and in a more frequent manner, than counterparts not receiving training. Brilliant's study acknowledges the fact that Hispanic parental attitudes and interest in getting involved in school activities is related to level of familiarity with school culture in the United States. This study contributes to the effort to dispel the myth that Hispanic parents do not get involved in school activities because they do not care.

Next, Belinda Bustos Flores contributes important evidence for gaining understanding of the influence of teachers' beliefs and classroom realities for bilingual students. She conducted an exploratory survey study of teachers' beliefs about the nature of knowledge and how these beliefs influenced self-reported practices with bilingual students. Results pointed to the important effect of teachers' prior professional experiences on their beliefs about how bilingual children learn. Bustos Flores's study has significant implications for bilingual teacher preparation programs, which must include theoretical and philosophical paradigms that provide a context for teachers to develop congruity between their beliefs and practice.

Then, Francisco Ramos explores teachers' opinions and knowledge about native-language instruction for language-minority students. Results showed that K-8 teachers differed in their opinions between theoretical principles (knowledge) and practical implementation (beliefs) of native-language instruction. The disconnection between theoretical or conceptual knowledge and beliefs on their translation into classroom practice has important implications for bilingual teacher preparation programs. Both Bustos Flores' and Ramos's research points to the need to provide opportunities for teachers

to connect their conceptual knowledge, beliefs, and practice within the context of bilingual teacher preparation programs.

The second overarching topic refers to second-language development, and is represented by two articles. First, Anita Hernández studied 5th grade first- and -second-learners' writing skills and the effect of their teachers' beliefs on their writing performance. The researchers' analysis of 5th graders identified by teachers as strong writers did not differ from their counterparts identified as weak writers. In fact, Hernández's study overlaps the first with the second topic because it presents evidence of affective factors influencing teaching and learning in bilingual students, such as teachers' perceptions of students as weak or strong writers.

Second, Natsuko Shibata Perera investigated the second-language learning process in preschool Japanese-English children attending a two-way immersion program. She contributes some important theoretical evidence demonstrating the important role of prefabricated language as a tool for socializing and developing linguistic creativity in English within home and school contexts. Her study also contributes valuable educational implications for the use and analysis of prefabricated language in immersion classroom settings. This kind of conceptual knowledge would be very valuable for teachers of young, ESL learners, and is especially valuable in bilingual teacher preparation programs that dispel the myth that the use of prefabricated language may prevent children from using language creatively.

Last is the third topic, representing and valuing the minority culture and language modeled by parents at home, community resources, and by the schooling process of Hispanic children. Smith's article blends very nicely the first with the third topics of how parental involvement in the schooling process can be enhanced through representing and valuing the minority language and culture. He found that community resources brought by elders and recent immigrants were less likely to be represented in the curriculum than the knowledge and experiences of language-minority parents and elite bilinguals. This study contributes evidence of the social distance present between educators and community resources, and educators' avoidance of using "non-standard" varieties of Spanish in the classroom. Bilingual teacher preparation programs can also use the educational implications of this study by raising awareness of teachers' attitudes about minority community resources present in language and culture.

It is with great pleasure that I invite you to read these six wonderful research masterpieces of recently graduated scholars!

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Guest Editor
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