

Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice

Volume 9

Issue 1 *Art as Voice: Creating Access for Emergent
Bilingual Learners*

Article 4

Fall 2017


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Recommended Citation

Wager, Amanda Claudia; Poey, Vivian Maria; and Berriz, Berta Rosa (2017) "Art as Voice: Summary of Chapters," *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/jppp/vol9/iss1/4>

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Art as Voice: Creating Access for Emergent Bilingual Learners

Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice Special Issue Fall 2017

Art as Voice: Summary of Chapters

Amanda Claudia Wager, Vivian Maria Poey & Berta Rosa Berriz, *Lesley University*

Welcome to *Art as Voice*! This Special Issue for the Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice focuses on how artistic practices are used to increase literacy and language abilities with multilingual learners. It includes voices from the field that explore how the arts intersect with sociocultural ways of knowing and advocacy, while promoting multilingual practices in schools, community settings, and higher education. Throughout this special issue, we refer to English language learners (ELLs) as “emergent bilingual learners” (EBs) to honor the assets that multilingual students bring to our schools and communities (García, 2009). Since those who speak English as their first language began as, and still are, English language learners, this work benefits all students. Being able to speak, read and write in more than one language is significantly advantageous in our increasingly global society.

This issue builds on artistic practices that integrate language, culture, and pedagogy. It is intended to serve as a resource for educators, community youth workers, activists, arts teachers, researchers and undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in understanding the complexities of arts and language learning as a sociocultural way of knowing. In this spirit, we begin the special issue with the “Introduction to Art as Voice: Creating Access for Emergent Bilingual Learners”, in which we, as editors, explain who we are, how we each came to this work, the “intellectual family” that guides and supports the use of arts as a tool for language learning, while moving this theory into practice through explanation of our experiences using art as voice. In the first section, *A Treasure-Trove of Knowledge: Heritage and Identity*, the initial chapter brings readers to the landscape and sounds of the Mexican-American border in Cecilia A. Valenzuela’s “Sonic Borderland Literacies and Critical Dissonance: A Re/Mix of Culturally Relevant Education.” She demonstrates how deep critical listening practices are a part of our student’s ways of meaning making. Next, listening to the sounds of parents singing to their children, Sarah Davila and Maura Mendoza explain ways that arts-based language workshops can be entry points for immigrant families in “Creating School Partnerships: Multilingual Family Engagement Through the Arts.” Moving to heritage and community-based language learning, in “Between Two Worlds: Utilizing the Arts to Increase Engagement and Effectiveness in the Spanish for Heritage Learners Classroom,” Kathryn E. Mostow addresses ways to increase positive awareness of high school student’s perspectives on furthering their Spanish heritage language through an arts-integrated curriculum.

We then journey into the community within the next section *Weaving Community: Learning with Each Other*. Author Won Kim begins this section by building on the use of drama

in “It Was Like Really Uncomfortable But Kind of Comfortable’: An Ethnographically-Informed Radio Play of Adult ESL Classes with Educational Drama.” Kim creatively reshapes a scripted radio play to describe the lived experiences and potential challenges of integrating multimodal drama-based work into the curriculum of a Canadian-based ESL school for adult international students. Also with adult students in “The Art Museum: A Site for Developing Second Language and Academic Discourse Processes,” Rosalind Horowitz and Kristy Masten investigate how the art museum provides an educational space for emergent bilinguals to develop oral and written academic discourses while thinking critically about the culture of museums. They offer three approaches for incorporating their methodology into undergraduate courses, while recognizing that they are situated in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). And finally, Amy Gooden shares her analysis of a university-urban school district partnership that supported an innovative middle school summer enrichment academy for EBs in “Reach for the Stars: Restructuring Schooling for Emergent Bilinguals with a Whole-Child, Arts-Infused Curricular Approach.”

Heading into the classroom in our next section, *Engaging Pedagogy: Integrating Arts into Schools*, “Drama in Dialogic Read Alouds: Promoting Access and Opportunity for Emergent Bilinguals” leads us back to the elementary classroom, where authors James V. Hoffman, Doris Villarreal, Sam DeJulio, Laura Taylor, and Jaran Shin showcase how drama integrated read-alouds promote participation and deep discussions. In a Spanish-dominant middle school community, Joseph Rodriguez, in “Transcribing Arts and Identities: A Case Study on Literacies at Guadalupe Middle School,” explains how his students use their artistic biliteracies via poetry and image design to increase critical literacy awareness and practice bilingual language development in the English language arts classroom. In “Supporting Teachers in Arts Integration Strategies to Foster Foundational Literacy Skills of Emergent Bilinguals,” Christa Mulker Greenfader, Shelly VanAmburg, and Liane Brouillette counter curricular silos by promoting oral language development through arts-based instruction for elementary emergent bilingual learners. We, Vivian Poey, Berta Berriz, and Amanda Wager, conclude this special issue with “Diverse Experiences and Complex Identities: A Resource Archive of Artists’ and Educators’ Works”, which builds on the ideas developed throughout this issue to provide a range of resources that enrich arts-based work within the field of literacy development with families and communities of emergent bilinguals. The issue includes a glossary of key terms, which are *italicized* throughout the introduction chapter, and concludes with information about the contributors.

This Special Issue compliments and expands on our forthcoming volume, *Art as a Way of Talking for Emergent Bilingual Youth: A Foundation for Literacy in preK-12 Schools* (in press). In this Special Issue, we expand beyond schools to focus on family and community engagement, as well as adult learners. The *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice* has the advantage of being online and open-access, overcoming boundaries of knowledge and communication. We hope that the author’s voices within this Special Issue, as well as those within our book, will continue to:

- provide an alternative arts-based, student-centered and teacher-affirming framework for teaching emergent bilinguals, heritage and community language learners, which honors where they come from and builds on what they already know.
- present integrated arts approaches to teaching that engage emergent bilinguals, as well as all students, as agents of change through a critical analysis of their potential to excel and make their own mark in improving the world.
- provide a forum for innovative educators in the field of teaching literacy through the arts to increase access to arts education for all students, especially those in low-income schools where the arts have proven to be most powerful and where art programs are often lacking.
- challenge the current prescriptions for teaching English that focus solely on standardized, ‘teacher proof’ curriculum, pacing guides and testing.

Wishing you an enriching read and further collaborative and creative learning experiences with emergent bilingual learners, communities, and families.

with much appreciation,

Handwritten signatures of Amanda, Vivian, and Berta in cursive script.

Amanda, Vivian, & Berta
Lesley University
December 2017

Reference

García, O. (2009). Emergent bilinguals and TESOL: What's in a name?. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(2), 322-326.

Acknowledgements:

A Russell Fellowship and Miller Grant, from Lesley University's Graduate School of Education, funded a segment of this work. The Special Issue Editors would like to extend their gratitude to Dr. Jack Gillette, Dean of the Graduate School of Education, and Dr. Margery Miller, Professor Emeritus of Language & Literacy Education, for their support in making these funds available. We also would like to express our appreciation to Dr. Arlene Dallalfar and the JPPP Editorial Board for recognizing the importance of this work and inviting us to contribute this Special Issue to the Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice. We are so grateful to Guy Michel Telemaque for contributing the cover photo, an image in Haiti where his family comes from, and to Jessica Sabogal for permitting us to use this inspiring image of her mural below. As well, much thanks to Philip Siblo-Landsman and Kristen Matuszak for their digital knowledge and creativity in putting the journal online and bringing it to 'life'. To our authors, your knowledge and insights move us and carry us forward. And to the emergent bilingual students, you are the ones we've been waiting for ...



by Jessica Sabogal <http://www.jessicasabogal.com>