The United States has always been populated with diverse languages and still is today. For example, Native Americans spoke many languages across this continent before being colonized by Europeans, when even more languages were introduced. Therefore, language and cultural brokering have always been with us. We have always depended upon neighbors to act as mediators between languages or cultures across communities in the United States. These language and cultural brokers help us make our intentions clear to others. They make introductions for us, translate our letters, explain how things work, and rectify our mistakes. Some of our students are language brokers for their families. Some of our colleagues are language or cultural brokers for us or for other teachers. As teachers, we are language and cultural brokers because our work includes explaining how things work to all our students, regardless of their home language and cultural background.

The books we review provide inspiration and understanding as they explain how to use students’ linguistic resources in your teaching. The first book, The Arts and Emergent Bilingual Youth: Building Culturally Responsive, Critical, and Creative Education in School and Community Contexts, will inspire you to incorporate the arts to develop a creative curriculum and shows how real teachers in classrooms across the United States do so. This book does not just explain culturally responsive pedagogy; it really shows what it means. Authors Sharon Verner Chappell and Christian J. Faltis do not simply advocate having fun with art; they critically examine why the arts are essential and can be vehicles for developing bilingualism and teaching effectively.

The second book, Articulate while Black: Barack Obama, Language, and Race in the U.S., provides a deep understanding of language variation by examining the word “articulate,” found in the popular rhetoric surrounding Black speech. This book, written by linguists H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman, helps us think about language brokering as highly political and accounts for the historical and present state of our national meta-awareness of language in use.

The third book we review brings us back into the classroom. The research studies explored in each chapter deliver a strong message: the languages children bring to school are highly important, and these language assets contribute to our communities. Language assets also contribute to learning English and content material in school. The research studies in this book will increase your understanding of biliteracy as an asset to the child, to the classroom, and to the community.

We have always been a nation of multiple languages requiring language and cultural brokers. Perhaps you are, or will become, a broker yourself. These books will contribute to your understanding of multiple languages and cultures as valuable resources for both individuals and communities.
Would you like to use drama, visual art, and media to help students develop bilingually? If this sounds intriguing, you will want to dig into the chapters of *The Arts and Emergent Bilingual Youth*. Each chapter includes stories of innovative classroom practices sprinkled with a healthy dose of research and theory and enlivened with drawings, poetry, and photography. The chapters are organized around themes such as storytelling through the arts and critical responses to world events. These chapters will inspire you to great teaching.

The Foreword and Chapter 1 provide the research and theoretical background needed for sound teaching. Thought-provoking artwork is presented in each chapter along with questions to help you interpret and respond to the art. Teacher-authored vignettes, grounded in research and theory, are a stimulating staple of each chapter.

This book is not only for teachers who are already artistically oriented; it is for all teachers. For example, the first artifact the authors present is a photograph of a shadow portrait. To create a shadow portrait, the student artist can consider the meaning he or she wants to represent, then use his or her own body to cast a shadow to illustrate the concept. This is an activity that anyone can experiment with and enjoy.

Shadow art is the first of many modes of expression described in this book. Chapter 3 describes a theatre performance that is intricately linked to students’ funds of knowledge. In this chapter, the authors critically explore family-school-community partnerships. They question the “at-risk” frame of administrators and grant funders who make decisions for after-school and community programs. As an alternative to deficit perspectives of students and their communities, the authors take an asset-based stance. They offer concrete examples of teachers who have implemented such programs, giving particular attention to the complexity embodied within school–community relationships.

In addition to theatre performance, this chapter provides examples of visual art, multimedia science presentations, and an edible school garden—options that illustrate student and community funds of knowledge as curriculum.

As the examples in Chapter 3 show, the authors view the arts in broad terms. Chapters 4 through 9 expand our understanding of teaching content through the arts. Chapters 4 and 5 vividly illustrate how dramatic play, improvisation, humor, and story scaffold emergent bilinguals into greater facility with the English language by creating an environment in which students play with language without fear of criticism. In these chapters, the authors provide the theoretical rational undergirding play in education, but also critically interrogate how play can be used to assert dominance, which may position some as able-bodied while excluding others. Questions at the end of each chapter lead readers to critically analyze classroom practices in light of each chapter’s theme.

Writing and literature response are explored in Chapters 6 and 7. Summer programs, programs for migrant students, a high school art class, and an ESOL classroom are the settings in which teachers developed critical literacies using diverse media such as graffiti, photography, pantomime, and news articles. These chapters describe students who think deeply about the events in their lives and connect their experiences to world events. The authors explain how critical pedagogy is an essential practice for linking students’ lives to the topics they study. Students learn to interrogate the gaps that exist in history and in coverage of current events.

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New media is an important topic in education today, and this book offers an interesting approach to the topic. In Chapter 8, the authors posit that multimodal texts provide bilingual youth with tools that level the educational playing field in some important ways. The opportunity for self-representation of bilingual youth is explained and illustrated by vignettes, such as one in which students collaboratively created scripts to produce digital narratives.

After such powerful examples of arts-infused teaching, Chapters 9 and 10 offer insights into how to transform curriculum given the constraints teachers face today. The book concludes with more inspiring descriptions of classroom practices that bring out the potential of bilingual students such as Danio, an eleventh grader who writes:

Break free break free
Ain’t it obvious Youth Roots Oakland Leaf
We social activists
Now put yo fist up and listen to this (p.188)
(LKS)

The authors suggest how teachers can help students think critically about their language while exploring the phonological features of Black language, which includes various regional and linguistic identities. Linguistically, all languages are equal, hence rendering the myth of a “standard” language unnecessary (p. 191). The authors urge us to recognize all forms of language as legitimate, and they demonstrate how teachers can incorporate language differences into classrooms. By focusing on what students are actually saying when speaking, they can avoid the tendency for quick judgment when approaching

“How Black folk are heard makes a big difference in how Black folk are perceived.” (Michael Eric Dyson, p. xi).

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Black language. Furthermore, “[R]ather than interpreting Black language behavior through the lens of Black inferiority, ignorance, or violence, these creative language practices should be utilized for educational purposes” (p. 177).

Alim and Smitherman present language, race, and identity through socio-historical and theoretical lenses in ways that are thought provoking, complex, and captivating. As literacy educators, we can reexamine the role that language plays with regard to culture and how we respond to learners. Educators can encourage students to share how language is used in their daily lives so that students become active learners and contributors to class community. Viewing language as an asset provides essential information for teachers so they can better address the needs of linguistically diverse students. (TMW)

shows how “meaningful, challenging, and dynamic literacy and language learning communities [develop] where one or more languages are used for communicating and learning” (p. vii).

The organization of the book allows readers to obtain “grade level” or age-specific information by separating it into two sections: Part I—Emergence of Biliteracy: Preschool Years, and Part II—Biliteracy in Early Elementary School. Introducing each section of the book is a vignette that sets the stage for the issues and ideas presented in the three or four chapters that follow. The book concludes with a final chapter on reflections and future directions for research about biliteracy. Also included in the book is a five-page glossary explaining relevant terms dealing with bilingualism, biliteracy, and linguistics.

Part I—Emergence of Biliteracy: Preschool Years introduces significant questions and issues regarding biliteracy in preschool. These chapters are particularly inclusive as they report on findings from research conducted in the home with family members and caregivers and examine their roles in biliteracy development. Chapter authors explain the literacy practices of Latino emergent bilingual children in preschool and look closely at young children who are exploring and learning about the similarities and differences in English and Chinese writing systems. Chapter 1, “Supporting the Early Development of Biliteracy: The Role of Caregivers and Parents” by Eurydice Bauer and Dumasile Mkhize, makes an important contribution to the still-slim body of literature and research supporting the positive impact of young children’s families on biliteracy development, especially with Latino children.

Part II—Biliteracy Development in Early Elementary School opens with a vignette familiarizing the reader with issues and questions related to grades 1 to 3. The four chapters in this section of the book focus on teaching and learning that occur in instructional contexts that are supportive of biliteracy. Three of the four chapters (5, 7, and 8) focus on different aspects
of bilingual children’s writing development. In Chapter 6, “Zehra’s Story: Becoming Biliterate in Turkish and English,” Zeynep Camlibel and Georgia Garcia focus on a young biliterate learner’s overall language development. The authors suggest that “providing her [Zehra] with continued literacy instruction in Turkish, along with high-quality ESL and English literacy instruction, should aid her later development of strong reading comprehension and writing skills in English” (p. 130). This statement applies to all learners on their path to biliteracy.

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The concluding chapter, “Reflections and Directions for Biliteracy Research” by Eurydice Bauer and Mileidis Gort, provides a thoughtful discussion connecting all teaching and learning contexts—in both the early years and school years. The authors remind the reader that the “emergent bilingual learners represented in these pages showcase the possibility and potential for bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic success in our children” (p. 190). (JLR)

Search for New Editor of Voices from the Middle

NCTE is seeking a new editor of Voices from the Middle. In May 2016, the term of the present editors (Doug Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Diane Lapp) will end. Interested persons should send a letter of application to be received no later than August 29, 2014. Letters should include the applicant’s vision for the journal and be accompanied by the applicant’s vita, one sample of published writing (article or chapter), and two letters specifying financial support from appropriate administrators at the applicant’s institution. Applicants are urged to explore with their administrators the feasibility of assuming the responsibilities of a journal editor. Classroom teachers are both eligible and encouraged to apply. Finalists will be interviewed at the NCTE Annual Convention in Washington, DC, in November 2014. The applicant appointed by the NCTE Executive Committee will effect a transition, preparing for his or her first issue in September 2016. The appointment is for five years. Applications should be submitted via email in PDF form to kaustin@ncte.org; please include “Voices from the Middle Editor Application” in the subject line. Direct queries to Kurt Austin, NCTE Publications Director, at the email address above or call 217-328-3870, extension 3619.