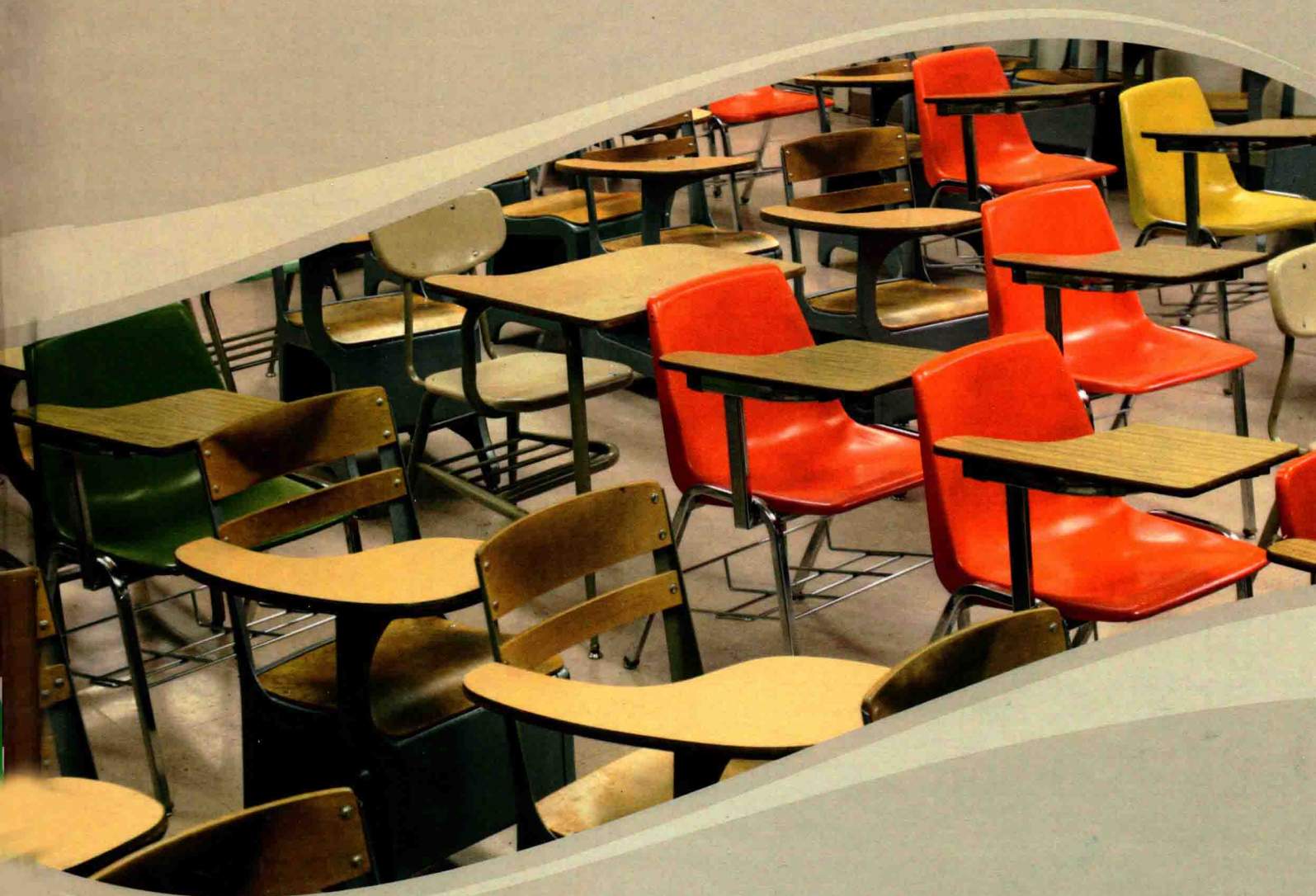


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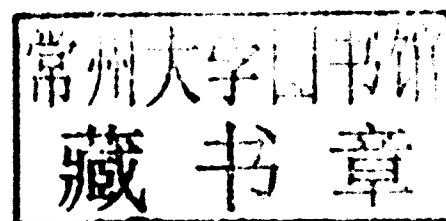


Jared Keengwe and Grace Onchwari

# Cross–Cultural Considerations in the Education of Young Immigrant Learners

Jared Keengwe  
*University of North Dakota, USA*

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*University of North Dakota, USA*



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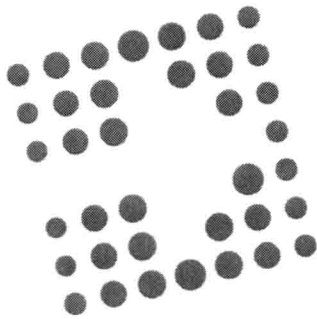
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## Foreword

There have been a growing number of edited book volumes and journal articles dedicated to best practices with immigrant students, especially those who are English language learners (ELLs). Even so, it is important to make a distinction between three categories that certainly overlap but cannot be conflated. Immigrant students can be defined as the largest catch-all category; within the group of immigrant students, there is a sub group of linguistic minorities, who are defined as those who speak a primary language other than English at home, and who could be discriminated against on the basis of being non-native speakers of English. A subset of linguistic minority students are institutionally labeled as ELLs when their English proficiency is determined to be limited and they receive English as a Second Language (ESL) services in school. Although these sub groups are often conflated in the literature, there is a clear distinction between immigrant students, linguistic minority students, and ELLs, since not all immigrant students have limited English proficiency.

Many immigrants, especially those who are ELLs are marked not only by their limited skills in English but also by their immigrant and socioeconomic status, their language background, their race/ethnicity, their lack of access to and achievement in developing academic language in schools, and finally, the structural and organizational factors in their schools which often limit their opportunities to learn. The complex nature of these factors for immigrant students, their families, and for teachers to draw on and navigate is something that this new volume attends to both deeply and sensitively. Moreover, this particular volume is especially noteworthy because of three critical attributes.

First, this volume heavily focuses on immigrant students besides English learners. Multiple chapters in this volume make clear the distinctions and incorporate specific strategies for immigrant students and English learners. In addition, the primary goal that various authors have for ELs in many of the chapters is the development of their academic language in addition to building their subject matter knowledge. It is now generally accepted that, to succeed in learning within the academic subjects (e.g., science, language arts, social studies, and math), ELs need to develop specific and appropriate academic language proficiency in English. Further, this volume also expands our understanding of immigrant students by examining immigrant students' families and their lives outside of school.

The second important feature of this volume is its concern for *young* immigrant learners. This population is one that needs extra attention – the largest number of immigrants, and especially those who are ELLs belong to this category. By 2015, 30% of all children in the U.S. will be immigrants – it is 20% currently. The number of school-age English language learners is largest in the 5-9 age group, rather than the older ages. Moreover, the additional emphasis being placed on early learning and early childhood initiatives at the federal and state level make it altogether more imperative to conduct research on how to teach this segment of the population.

The last and most helpful aspect of this volume is the practical and insightful chapter contributions. These chapters include examples of youth community organizing, a high school mentoring program for elementary school age children, various instructional strategies embodied by teachers in real classrooms with young immigrant children as well as the challenges and opportunities that teachers of immigrant students experience in the United States. Overall, the various contributors provide either classroom, school, or community level examples of addressing the needs of young immigrant students that are rooted in well-founded research and/or the practices of teachers or scholars. At any rate, these chapters would be useful for a wide array of people, including current and future teachers, graduate students, teacher educators, and other researchers interested in this topic of national significance.

It is a very rare feat to find a volume dedicated to the largest student population sub-group and one that is arguably the most in need that can be accessible, useful, and grounded in theory and research in the expanding but solid field of immigrant education and language education. I look forward to using a number of these chapters for both my research classes that focus on pedagogy for immigrant students and English learners, as well as for my other teacher education classes to prepare future elementary teachers. I also plan on sharing the book chapters with my colleagues in the early childhood education program. I welcome and applaud a robust volume that blends research and practice in such an exemplary way.

*Manka M. Varghese*  
*University of Washington, USA*

**Manka M. Varghese** is an Associate Professor in Language, Literacy, and Culture at the University of Washington's College of Education in Seattle, USA. Dr. Varghese's teaching and research focuses on immigrant and linguistic minorities, specifically in the areas of language minority teacher education, language minority teacher identity, and access to higher education for English learners. Dr. Varghese's research has resulted in numerous articles in refereed journals, book chapters, and conference proceedings, including *Theory into Practice*, *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, *TESOL Quarterly*, and *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*.



## Preface

Immigrant learners are the fastest growing segment in the U.S child population. It is estimated that about one million immigrants enter the U.S. each year, with many being at the child bearing age and also having high fertility rates (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In some public schools in states such as California, one in five children are immigrants (Capps & Karina, 2006). The changing demographics and the multiple challenges in dealing with immigrant learners in many classrooms call for a better understanding of the cross-cultural needs of this fast growing segment of the population. Similarly, education, social development, and care of immigrant children continue to be a focus of rapidly increasing public interest and research. There is also growing pressure for improving school achievement of children from at risk backgrounds (Neuman, 2003; Clifford, Early, & Hills, 1999) such as those from immigrant families. Further, while various early childhood public policy initiatives focuses predominantly on social services and the integration of immigrant children in schools and society, it should be noted that education systems play a crucial role in this process.

Second generation immigrant children now constitute more than half of the student body in many schools in Europe and North America, hence creating new cultural, economic, and social challenges. Moreover, immigrant children are faced with myriad problems stemming from cultural, social, and economic reasons, as well as acculturation and adaptation. Irrespective of many programs that are currently offered to assist in language development of immigrant children, overall, the majority of immigrant children struggle financially and experience social trauma associated with geographic relocation and cultural shock. Additionally, many children from immigrant families have limited access to relevant education and high quality healthcare services. Availability and access to culturally relevant education and quality healthcare services are important to support long-term integration of immigrant children in their host societies (Halkias, Fakinou, Harkiolakis, Pelonis, & Katsioludes, 2008).

A relatively large segment of the immigrant population consists of the English Language Learners (ELL). By 1990, estimations of about 43% of recent immigrants either spoke English “not well” or “not at all” (Smith & Edmonston, 1997). By 2015, those enrolling as ELL in U.S schools are estimated to be 10 million, and by 2025, nearly one out of every four public school students will be an English Language Learner (NCELA, 2007). Some immigrant parents enter the host country with English language skills or acquire them soon after arrival. Even so, there is still the possibility that they will not often use the English language when interacting with their children at home. Consequently, the prevalence of non-English languages implies the need for relevant stakeholders to explore the educational experiences of language-minority students—those for whom English is not the first language—as a prerequisite to understanding the larger issues of educational and social stratification (Paret, 2006).

Therefore, *Cross-Cultural Considerations in the Education of Young Immigrant Learners* provides peer-reviewed essays and research reports on young immigrant learners contributed by an array of scholars and practitioners in the field of teacher education and other related education programs. The first group of chapters provides case examples of implementation of various instructional strategies and a synthesis of literature on teaching immigrant learners. Chapter 1 contributors, Luciana de Oliveira, Marshall Klassen, and Alsu Gilmetdinova share a case study of how a kindergarten teacher used scaffolding strategies to diversify instruction in the classroom to support ELLs. The three researchers document different scaffolding resources used and the different kinds of support provided and opportunities created for students so they could use their developing language in the class with the teacher and classmates. Similarly, Chapter 2 contributor, Kim Barker, shares innovative ideas for tutoring and mentoring young English Language Learners (ELLs). Further, an example of community collaboration between a high school and its feeder elementary school that facilitates high school students' volunteering as tutors and mentors to elementary English learners is discussed. Next, in chapter 3, Ursula Thomas provides a case study of how new environments affect children's language ability. Specifically, this researcher explores how an early intervention language specialist addresses the needs of immigrant learners at a Title I kindergarten class as recorded in an instructional journal. Finally, in chapter 4, Erin Casey presents a case study on the literacy needs of ELL and immigrant students in the United States, issues of learning styles of these populations, brain-based learning concepts, Reader Response theory, and the use of fairy tales with second language learners. The researcher provides descriptions of specific Reader Response activities for ELLs and immigrant students as well as suggestions for professional development opportunities for educators of this segment of the population.

The second group of chapters focuses on instructional practices for working with immigrant learners. Writing on this theme in chapter 5, Anita Bright and Michael Ames Connor share specific strategies on mathematics teaching. Emphasis is placed on the importance of teachers allowing instruction be shaped by immigrant learners' family and previous schooling memories. Similarly, in chapter 6, Colleen Gallagher documents four functions that fulfill linguistically appropriate instructional strategies that include: (a) getting emergent bilinguals involved in classroom routines and providing ample opportunities for interaction; (b) drawing on emergent bilinguals' existing language and literacy competencies; (c) promoting grade-level vocabulary learning; and (d) scaffolding listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Specifically, this research provides background knowledge for making linguistically informed instructional decisions. Similarly, in chapter 7, Judi Estes and Dong Choi explore mathematics acquisition in immigrant children, highlighting four key points relevant to mathematics acquisition and immigrant children: (a) bilingualism as an asset, (b) strengths of immigrant families, (c) teachers and mathematical knowledge, and (d) developmentally appropriate mathematics environment. Next, in chapter 8, Cate Crosby explores how we can effectively educate the growing segment of immigrant learners in our schools, with an emphasis on developing academic literacy. The researcher also discusses different academic literacy needs of young immigrant learners as well as provides categories of various pedagogical strategies that teachers might use to meet these needs. Finally, in chapter 9, Joan Aus examines the need for teachers to be aware of how culture impacts content learning. The researcher also describes multiple methods and strategies that are linguistically appropriate and culturally relevant for all teachers, with an emphasis on teachers of English Learners (ELs.)

The third group of chapters provides some analysis of immigrant learners. In chapter 10, Afra Hersi explores students' pre- and post-immigration experiences, with particular focus on their family and school contexts. The researcher follows two immigrant children from Ethiopia and Somalia and examines their

immigration and educational experiences with an aim to identify practical strategies for supporting the academic and social success of immigrant students. Similarly, in chapter 11, Joy Cowdery investigates how a group of English language learners in rural Appalachian schools in Ohio struggle to overcome institutional bias. The researcher provides a synopsis of effects of lack of understanding to accommodate the needs of the growing population of immigrant students, from diverse countries, and how immigrant parents struggle to fit into a new cultural environment and to secure the best education for their children. The researcher also shares a number of barriers and opportunities and suggestions for closing the educational, language, and cultural gap. Next, In chapter 12, Sue Kasun and Cinthya Saavedra explore the aspect of some students living transnational lives (Transnational English Learners [TELs]) and argue for the need of understanding these students as transnational so as to shift the focus for educators away from imagining their immigrant students on a straight, one-way path to assimilation in the U.S. to understanding these youths' abilities to cross borders. Finally, in chapter 13, Elizabeth Bishop examines the work of the Drop Knowledge Project in New York City (DKP NYC), focusing on issues related to immigrant rights and educational justice in out-of-school spaces.

The last group of chapters examines diversity, multiculturalism, and technology use to assess young immigrant learners. In chapter 14, Grace Onchwari examines the challenges and issues of preparing teachers to acquire cross-cultural competencies to deal with the increasing diversity in the national teacher educator workforce. Similarly, in chapter 15, Anita Mysore presents multicultural frameworks and models with a social justice orientation that could assist preservice teachers to become more effective in their instructional practices. Next, in chapter 16, Jacqueline Onchwari provides an overview of the strengths and protective factors immigrant children bring into the classroom with the compelling argument that, if well nurtured, they enhance immigrant children's positive outcomes as well as pass on these foundations to succeed to future generations. The researcher also suggests some strategies that have proven effective in accessing immigrant children's strengths. The researcher examines these issues from the perspective of her experiences as a parent of an immigrant child and a scholar in the field. Finally, in chapter 17, Esther Ntuli and Anold Nyarambi explore the possible technologies available to mitigate the threats and challenges that continue to affect the gathering of effective assessment data from young learners who are immigrants.

Our hope is that each of these scholarly manuscripts will help to facilitate culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and enhance better understanding of developmentally appropriate instructional models for immigrant learners. This collection of excellent research chapters also highlights cross-cultural perspectives, challenges, and opportunities pertaining to educating young immigrant learners. Further, active strategies that would assist teachers and other individuals to identify and address various cross-cultural needs of young immigrant learners in schools, family, and community settings are provided. Finally, this book is an invaluable information for teachers who work with young immigrant learners, early childhood and elementary educators and practitioners, faculty, school administrators, and other stakeholders interested in educational and/or socio-cultural issues and perspectives of young immigrant learners.

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I would specially acknowledge the unconditional love of my parents (they taught me life's most valuable lessons: to smile, laugh, and stay positive) and close pals whose friendship and moral support have been priceless during the editing process of this great book. I am forever indebted to my close family members who are my constant inspiration. Specifically, I appreciate that YOU BELIEVE IN ME and you believe that I can always successfully accomplish any writing project.

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*Jared Keengwe*  
*University of North Dakota, USA*

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This chapter presents a case study of a kindergarten classroom and examines how a kindergarten teacher uses scaffolding to diversify instruction in the classroom to support ELLs. The authors focus on the scaffolding resources used to support learning and describe the kinds of support provided and opportunities for students created so they can use their developing language in class with the teacher and classmates. The authors identify planned and interactional scaffolding resources used in the classroom.

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Lagging high school graduation rates for English Learners remains a priority concern for states across the nation, and educators under pressure from federal and state accountability measures and tight local budgets are struggling to find solutions for strengthening academic achievement for English Learners and ultimately improving their chances of achieving high school graduation and moving on to postsecondary levels. Educators can look to their own communities for sustainable, low-cost tutoring and mentoring. This chapter describes a community collaboration between a high school and its feeder elementary school that facilitates high school students' volunteering as tutors and mentors to elementary English learners in a suburban school district in the Southeast. The background for the benefits of tutoring and mentoring for English Learners, a description of the program benefits for the various stakeholders, detailed steps for creating a multi-age, community tutoring and mentoring program, and resources for educators are included.