

Bilingualism Matters Chicago

Membership Meeting – October 17, 9-10am central

Meeting minutes

Attendees: Nicole Russo-Ponsaran, Lillian Ardell, Viorica Marian, Matt Goldrick, Jen Cabrelli, Sunny Park-Johnson, Jili Sun, Kara Morgan-Short, Brad Hoot, Perla Gamez, Mariana Glusman, Sylvia Ibarra, Tatiana Sazonova

1. Introductions and announcements

- a. Executive Committee Members: Tatiana Sazonova, City Colleges; Brad Hoot, DePaul; Perla Gamez, Loyola; Matt Goldrick, Northwestern; Nicole Russo-Ponsaran, Rush; Anastasia Giannakidou, U of C; Jen Cabrelli, UIC
- b. **Announcement – reminder of Bilingualism Matters Research Meeting (hybrid)** – can still register for the event through 10/19. Conference is 10/20-10/21. Details were sent via email earlier this month. Anyone who has difficulty registering should reach out to the email address listed in the announcement.
- c. BM reminded members that branch “contracts” are in effect through 2024. We collectively wondered if this meant that a new contract would be issued after the new year, but we have yet to receive word from the larger enterprise.

2. Discuss and vote on new bylaws and leadership structure – In order to reduce redundancy and streamline the functions of BMC, changes to the organizational structure were proposed. The proposal was sent via link in the meeting invitation. Briefly, Executive Committee and Program Committee would be collapsed into one, comprised of Chair, Volunteer Coordinator, Communication Director, and liaison leads from each of the working groups. Roles are described in detail in the by-laws. Working groups are recognized as the functional units of BMC (where the work gets done). Also reminded that BMC has no funding to support events/initiatives at this time. Changes are ratified by majority vote at annual meetings.

- a. A first vote was held to approve new by-laws; passed unanimously with 12/12 in attendance voting in favor of changes. (TS was not present during the voting period)
- b. We then took nominations for the leadership roles of Executive Committee Chair, Volunteer Coordinator, and Communications Director. While Matt was nominated, he deferred due to role already as a working group lead/liaison to the committee. Brad then volunteered for the position. Kara volunteered for Volunteer Coordinator. Lillian volunteered for Communications Director. All positions were approved with unanimous approval again.

3. Report on past year’s activities

- a. Matt reported on Accent Bias: a successful accent bias workshop was held in the spring; trainings to reduce accent bias have been met with mixed success. Implicit bias is difficult to address, but they are working to revise trainings based on feedback and a successful model from the UK.
- b. Sunny reported on Childhood Bilingualism: successfully developed a leaflet for service providers working with unaccompanied minors from Latin America and addressing the issue that not everyone from Latin America speaks Spanish; some speak indigenous languages and it is important to identify the home/heritage language for a sense of

identity, safety, and family. This group continued working on the material through the summer and finalized it. The goal is to develop similar tools for other stakeholders, (e.g., schools).

- c. Jili reported on Supporting Community Language Schools: successfully provided observations, facilitated discussions, and organized a workshop for a Chinese language school – was very well received by this cohort. Another group member is trying to partner with Spanish ESL programs in Chicago schools, but because the programming is more standardized within public schools, they have fewer training needs, so entry point is less obvious. Group is continuing next year and Jili may reach out to some new colleagues at Northwestern about joining/supporting future efforts. Lillian expressed interest in assisting with any related Spanish-language work with this group.
- d. Lillian reported on Community Building: difficult to get this new group off the ground; will not be continuing next year.

4. Planning projects for next year

- a. ***Reminder that working groups are the basic organizational element to being part of BMC*** – 3 of the current working groups will continue and are **open to new members** this year: Accent Bias (Matt Goldrick), Childhood Bilingualism (Sunny Park-Johnson & Ping Rochanavibhata), and Supporting Community Language Schools (Jili Sun).
 - i. Please reach out to either the working group lead or the Volunteer Coordinator, Kara Morgan-Short, to align with a group of interest.
- b. Suggestions for any new working group(s) – no new groups suggested to be formed at this time. *However, if anyone was unable to attend today, but has a working group idea, please reach out to Kara!*

5. General Discussion/Reminders

- a. Conversation around refugees and what work we can do in this area. Members are not certain what needs we could effectively meet. Some members had the impression that language-related needs were low on the list of priorities for agencies helping migrants and that volunteer opportunities related to language were limited, so that general volunteer efforts are needed but not BMC-specific programming. Lillian suggested we could reach out to state officials or other agencies to find out what's being done/what's working/what isn't, as a way to develop future programming, but this may not be an area where we can effectively help as an organization right now.
- b. Viorica Marian (Northwestern University); Perla Gamez (Loyola University Chicago); Lillian Ardell (Language Matters, LLC); Amanda Lucchetti (Rush University Medical Center); Jili Sun (Northwestern University) co-presented a panel "Working with Bilinguals and Multilinguals: Research, Practice, and Community" at the 2023 MPA meeting in Chicago earlier this year – was well-received; recommends considering this type of panel for other meetings.
- c. Mariana/Adriana/Antonella are writing a Policy Statement for AAP (Language and Literacy Program) for multilingual/bilingual individuals, along with a clinical report. While it is too late in the process for anyone else to formally participate, Mariana is interested in circulating the draft statement informally for comments later this year.
- d. Matt inquired about whether we should have a BMC in-person event to showcase the work we are doing among our group. While there was some interest, there was also

mention of existing forums that some BMC members may be interested in participating next year:

- i. UIC hosts a Bilingualism Forum ("BIL forum") annually; was suggested that perhaps a group submit a panel of BMC speakers for that events or submit individual papers. More information should be available within the next month.
 - ii. Chicago Language Consortium (language teaching & learning) will be held in April and may be more accessible/feasible for members to submit to because it is a smaller event.
 - e. UIC is hosting Nicole Wicha on Thursday, April 4
 - f. Viorica mentioned that she would be happy to increase visibility about BMC when she is promoting book or attending other events, but is not always sure of what to highlight. Matt suggested referring to the larger Bilingualism Matters network, rather than our local chapter specifically.
 - g. Lillian indicated that she did not know whether we appropriately tap into other BMC members' expertise when responding to inquiries that come in off the website. Nicole suggested the BMC website/expertise be reviewed/confirmed/updated this year (*members, please make sure your profiles/expertise are update on our site!*) and then that could guide future direction when inquiries are fielded.
6. New organizational structure is now in effect. Brad will set up future quarterly meetings for the Executive Committee. It's recommended that any working group lead who is unavailable for those meetings send a surrogate to ensure representation.
7. Meeting concluded 10:00am.