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# Deconstructing the Academic Cover Letter

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University of Colorado-Boulder

# Overview

- ▶ The Academic Cover Letter (research institution)
- ▶ Tailoring your Cover Letter
- ▶ Tips & Tricks
- ▶ Resources

# Cover Letter: Research Institution

- ▶ Paragraph 1: Setting the Stage (What, Who, Why)
- ▶ Paragraphs 2-3: Your Research
- ▶ Paragraphs 4-5: Potential for Scholarly Productivity
- ▶ Paragraph 6: Teaching
- ▶ Paragraph 7: Why this Job/Department

# Paragraph 1: Setting the Stage: What, Who, and Why

I am writing in application for the position of Assistant Professor in XXXX in the Department of XXXX at the University of XXXX. I am currently finishing my Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with a focus on bilingual education and ESL, and will defend in May 2018. I also hold a position as an instructor in the English as a New Language Program at the University of Notre Dame. My research focuses on language and literacy practices of emergent bilinguals in two-way learning contexts and seeks to understand how classroom practices, policies, and ideologies shape students' bilingualism. **My scholarly interest in equity-oriented bilingual education, research experience in discourse analytic and arts-based methods, and success in university teaching align well with the responsibilities of the Assistant Professor position.**

What:

-Position you are seeking

Who:

-Your current position  
-Your research focus

Why:

-Identify "fit" between you and position

# Paragraphs 2-3: Research Overview of Research

My dissertation examines how young emergent bilinguals experience be(com)ing bilingual in a two-way immersion (TWI) classroom. Two-way programs are rapidly expanding across the nation, yet scholars know little of how young learners are making sense of them, despite substantial evidence that student investment in language learning shapes program outcomes. Drawing upon ethnographic and critical discourse analytic methods, my study reveals how classroom language and literacy practices shape students' emerging bilingualism and broadens our understanding of how two-way spaces function to both resist and reinforce hegemonic ideologies. I argue that TWI classrooms engender unity around bilingualism and affirm Spanish speakers but often fall short of critical engagement with dominant ideologies of language and power.

One sentence summary of research

The “gap”

Central findings and argument

# Paragraphs 2-3: Research Significance of Research

While extant scholarship has documented classroom discourse in bilingual spaces, most studies of TWI classrooms have relied on analyses of student interactions—rarely are children’s perspectives made central. My study privileges the experiences of students, revealing how they, too, act as de facto policymakers. Moreover, through its critical lens on the affordances and consequences of translanguaging in TWI, my research provides an important contribution to the current debate between two-way program implementers (who largely support language separation) and leading scholars in language education (who largely resist monoglossic understandings of bilingualism). In sum, my project informs research, policy, and practice by providing deeper understanding of the intersecting factors that shape students’ bilingualism and revealing the need for contextual considerations of translanguaging to build more equitable bilingual programs.

Reiterate the “gap”

Significance of study /  
research

## Paragraph 4: Potential for Scholarly Productivity Publications (Past, Present, Future)

I have an article published in *Language and Education* that examines how translanguaging in two-way programs expands meaning-making opportunities while, at the same time, contributes to problematic power differentials in the classroom. I also have a forthcoming chapter in the TIRF Routledge volume *Global Perspectives on Educational Language Policies*, which reveals the ideological tensions surrounding the equity-minded TWI program that I researched for my dissertation. I have forthcoming presentations on each of the three analytic chapters of my dissertation for the 2018 conferences of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Following these presentations, I will adapt these manuscripts for publication in the *Modern Language Journal*, *Bilingual Research Journal*, and *Journal of Literacy Research*, respectively.

Past, present, future publications

Conference presentations and concrete plans for future publications

# Paragraph 5: Potential for Scholarly Productivity

## What's Next?

The next project I am planning continues my research into the language and literacy practices of bi/multilingual classrooms, focusing specifically on how to open up flexible, dialogic spaces for promoting cross-cultural understanding with culturally and linguistically diverse students. In my dissertation, I found that collaborative bilingual identity text-making with diverse learners provided an avenue for critical discussions about language, culture, and identity. Expanding upon this single case study, I plan to work with educators across grade levels and program models to analyze how bi/multilingual identity text-making and other critical, arts-based pedagogies might foster students' cross-cultural understanding and critical language awareness across different learning contexts.

What is your next project?

How does it connect to your earlier work?  
(mapping your scholarly trajectory)

# Paragraph 6: Teaching

My teaching is informed by my previous experiences as a K-12 educator in the U.S. and Chile and grounded in critical and sociocultural theories of learning. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Notre Dame, I have taught undergraduate and graduate courses in face-to-face and online formats, covering topics such as ESL methods, educational linguistics, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). I strive to make my courses engaging and to bridge theory and practice. For example, in *Language Use & Acquisition in Early Childhood*, undergraduates conduct linguistic case studies of emergent bilinguals in their practicum classrooms, documenting students' (trans)linguaging practices and analyzing how classroom discourse patterns shape opportunities for learning. This approach brings SLA theory to life by engaging students in critical analysis of the relationship between language and education in real-life contexts. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, students nominated me for TEACH Academy, an organization that recognizes excellence in undergraduate teaching, and I was accepted into the organization in 2015. Recent feedback from students at Notre Dame rated my course an overall 4.8/5, with particularly high marks in effectiveness of teaching (4.9/5) and course organization (5/5).

If relevant, mention experiences that inform your teaching

Areas of expertise

Example of innovative teaching practices

Example of teaching excellence (show, don't tell!)

# Paragraph 7: Why this Job/Department

At UW-Madison, I have served on the Graduate Program Committee, and I am currently the co-chair of the Graduate Student Council of AAAL and the secretary of the Graduate Student Council of AERA. I welcome new leadership roles in the Department of XXXX, and would look forward to contributing an educational linguistic perspective to interdisciplinary conversations across the School of Education. Your department's commitment to social justice and university/school partnerships is particularly attractive to me. I can envision collaborating with XXXX and XXXX on projects related to equity-oriented pedagogies and with XXXX on work related to arts-based methods and new literacies. I would also welcome the opportunity to participate in research initiatives within the XXXX and to lead professional development workshops on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching.

Make link between your experiences/skills and department

Why this position?  
How will you contribute?

# Closing Statement

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Short and sweet

# Tailoring Your Cover Letter

## RESEARCH INSTITUTION

- ▶ Paragraph 1: Setting the Stage
- ▶ Paragraphs 2-3: Your Research
- ▶ Paragraphs 4-5: Potential for Scholarly Productivity
- ▶ Paragraph 6: Teaching
- ▶ Paragraph 7: Why this Job/Department

## TEACHING INSTITUTION

- ▶ Paragraph 1: Setting the Stage
- ▶ Paragraphs 2-3: Teaching
- ▶ Paragraphs 4-5: Research
- ▶ Paragraph 6-7: Potential for Scholarly Productivity
- ▶ Paragraph 8: Why this Job/Department

# Tips & Tricks

- ▶ Show, don't tell
- ▶ Tailor your cover letter to the specific job/department
- ▶ Write a formal letter (university letter head, formal greeting/closing)

27 October 2017

Dr. XXXX, Search Chair  
Department of XXXX  
School of Education  
University of XXXX

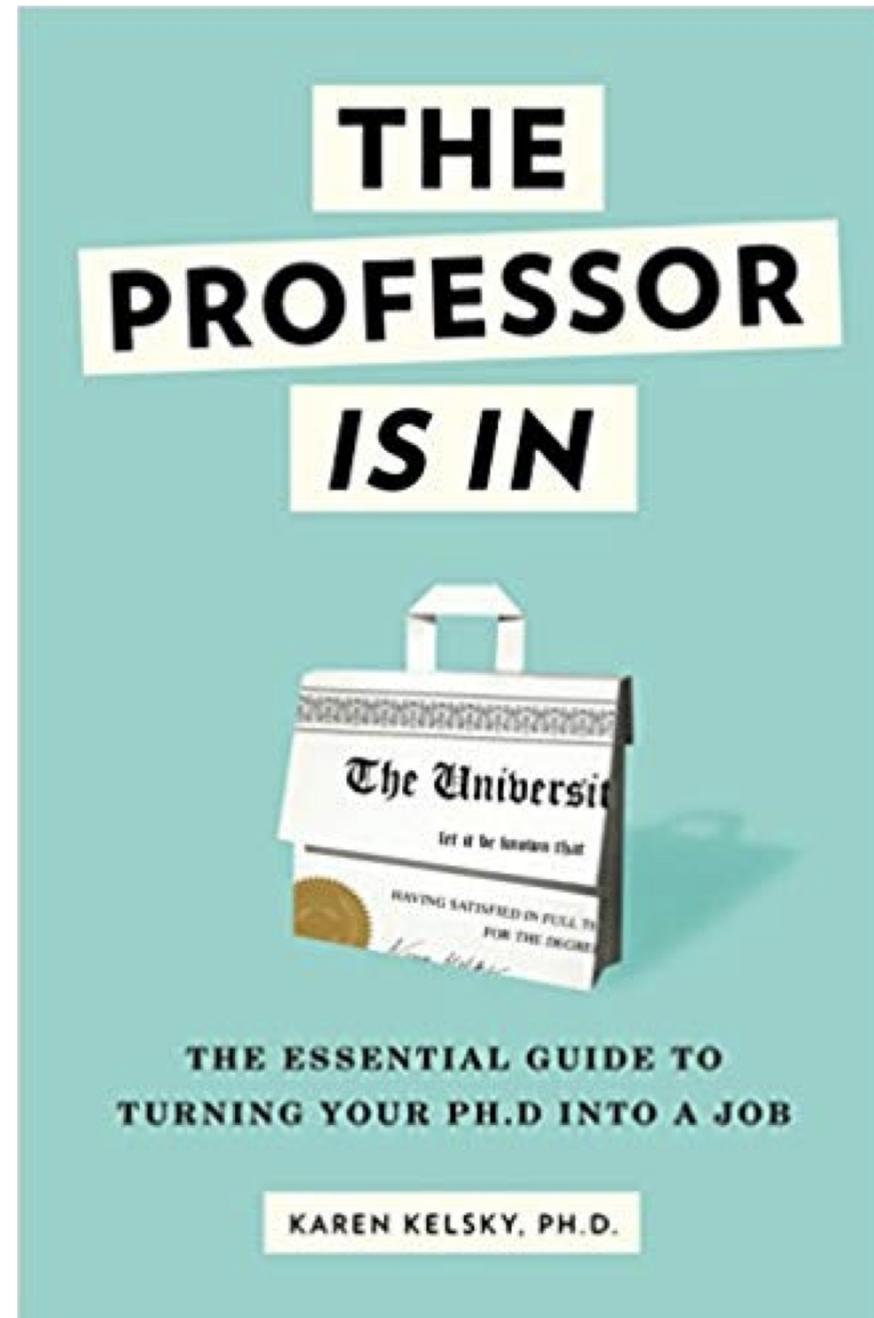
Dear Members of the Search Committee:

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Sincerely,

- ▶ Start early and seek out critical feedback

# Resources



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# Thank you!

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