

Exploring the “4-trans” in Bi/Multilingual Teacher Education: Introduction to the Special Issue

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ABSTRACT: In this introductory essay, the editors of the special issue on the 4-trans in bi/multilingual teacher education, highlight the contributions of one or more of the “4-trans” lenses—transnationalism, transculturalism, translanguaging, and transdisciplinarity—to explain, question, challenge, or propose new ways of understanding bi/multilingual teacher education. Eight articles that challenge monolithic perspectives of teacher education are presented.

Keywords: 4-trans, translanguaging, transnationalism, transculturalism, transdisciplinarity

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Education, today and always, reflects the complex, dynamic, and often contradictory multidimensionality of the sociohistorical and political realities in which it is situated and to which it responds. Political, social, and economic forces are shaping a world where individuals maintain multiple relationships and interactions across two or more nations, bridging nationalities, cultures, languages, and belief systems (O'Connor, 2018; Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009). These forces call for and promote a more holistic and inclusive educational approach—one that challenges traditional nationalistic viewpoints, fosters global citizenship, and emphasizes intersectionality and integration without separation, highlighting the flexibility and multidimensionality of social processes. New theoretical lenses

and pedagogies that embrace the fluidity, complexity, and interconnectedness of a multicultural, multinational, and multilingual world are urgently needed (Donahue, 2016). As teacher educators and researchers, we felt compelled to explore and address the ways bi/multilingual teacher preparation can respond to these evolving realities. Moreover, our own thinking, inquiry, and approaches to teacher education have been impacted by recent explorations and conceptualizations of translanguaging (Andrei et al., 2020; Li Wei, 2018), transnationalism (Kasun & Mora-Pablo, 2022; Niblock, 2018), transculturalism (Loh, 2022), and transdisciplinarity (Gibbs, 2017).

We envisioned this special issue as a hub for bringing together scholars whose research and practice engage with theoretical and disruptive approaches to transcultural, transnational, translingual, and/or transdisciplinary perspectives. Our goal was to challenge and expand current mainstream discourses in multilingual education. We were committed to creating a space where we could collectively contribute to and amplify understandings of the multidimensionality and complexity of individuals and communities beyond national boundaries, with teacher preparation placed at the center of our conversations and transdisciplinary explorations.

As a result, this special issue assembles eight articles that include a diverse range of scholars whose work explores the complexities of bilingual/multilingual teacher education frameworks and practices. Through one or more of the “4-trans” lenses—transnationalism, transculturalism, translanguaging, and transdisciplinarity—the authors explain, question, challenge, or propose new ways of understanding teacher education. A common thread across these articles is the challenge to monolithic conceptions of bilingual/multilingual teacher education. Together, they offer perspectives and explorations that transcend monoglossic, monocultural, monodisciplinary, and other fixed notions of national identity in the preparation and development of bilingual/multilingual educators.

Overview of the Articles

The issue begins with Martínez-Prieto’s, Musanti’s, and Zhou’s discussion of the “4-trans” framework, which was created as a systematic and ad hoc framework to understand the intersectionalities and dynamics of multilingual pre-service teachers situated in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Based on Freirean, Vygotskian, and Bakhtinian notions of dialogue, the authors propose a framework which considers the intersectional spaces of transnationalism, transculturalism, transdisciplinarity, and translanguaging as complementary and pivotal for analyzing the complexities of multilingual teacher education.

Lee’s qualitative study contributes to the issue with an examination of how teachers in a predominantly white institution in the U.S. Southwest region grappled with translanguaging, transnationalism, and transculturalism as they designed and implemented pedagogical practices for elementary-aged bi/multilingual students. Specifically, the study shows how teachers used translanguaging to redefine their

mindset about students' learning, integrating a "trans" approach to lesson planning that allowed them to challenge predominant monolingual ideologies.

Han and Yu draw from historical activity theory and employ third space as a conceptual framework to explore how two English language teachers in South Korea and Taiwan engaged in a transdisciplinary virtual professional development program formed transcultural dispositions (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). The qualitative case study reveals how teachers' engagement in a transnational and transdisciplinary partnership – third space – transcended static notions of culture and language, exhibited cultural and linguistic hybridity that shaped their perspectives on English language teaching, and helped them to construct more fluid, context-dependent identities and teaching philosophies.

Solís, Howard, Mosqueda, and Bravo share a case study of in-service STEM teachers from Texas and California participating in Project Leverage, an asset-based professional development initiative. The study examines how teachers engaged with translanguaging, transdisciplinarity, and transcultural repositioning through critical reflections and course discussions. The authors argue that these interrelated trans-perspectives were integral to uncovering how bilingual in-service STEM teachers promoted critical consciousness and how they contested and rethought what it means to integrate culture, literacy, and language in STEM contexts.

Morales, Catalano, and Thiessen's article utilizes Boal's Forum Theater, or the Theater of the Oppressed, as a tool to promote a "4-trans+" approach to bi/multilingual teacher preparation and development at a Midwestern public university in the United States. The authors draw on the 4-trans approach proposed by the special issue, amplifying it with the integration of the concept of transmediation (Klecker & Phinney, 2019), which is integral to an arts-based approach and the art-making process. The findings suggest that this interdisciplinary approach can help reduce teacher candidates' fears and anxieties about challenging stereotypes, fostering critical intercultural awareness, and promoting a sense of belonging and empowerment.

McCreight draws from Bhabha's (1994) conceptualization of third space to explore how a white, middle-class instructor, who grew up speaking Standardized English in the rural U.S. Midwest incorporated translanguaging pedagogy into a preservice teacher preparation literacy course with monolingual students. The study shares in-depth discussion of activities designed to help preservice teachers create instruction that intentionally opens translanguaging spaces for linguistically diverse students in elementary classrooms. The outcomes show how preservice teachers embraced linguistic diversity and reflected on using linguistically diverse texts and incorporating multiple languages and dialects into classrooms. However, racialized views of language emerged as they grappled with how to operationalize such beliefs in classroom practice.

Sarmiento-Quezada's and Solís's study examines how bilingual teacher candidates in a South Texas dual language teacher preparation program reflected

on their experiences teaching mathematics through a translingual, transcultural, and transdisciplinary perspective. By studying bilingual teacher narratives, the authors explored how translanguaging and reported speech influenced the professional identities and teaching practices of teacher candidates.

Finally, Ynostroza-Ochoa, Celedón-Pattichis, Pattichis, Tovar, and Ibarra's article draws from sociocultural theories of learning to explore the use of translanguaging in the Advancing Out-of-School Learning in Mathematics and Engineering (AOLME) project. Specifically, the study focused on documenting how translanguaging practices fostered interactions among facilitators and bilingual middle school students and promoted understanding of mathematics and Python, a computer programming language that is text-based and written in English. Findings show that translanguaging practices supported meaning-making and complex concept comprehension using students' Spanish and English linguistic repertoires, language deciphering, and language brokering.

As the articles in this special issue show, reimagining bi/multilingual teacher preparation through transnational, transcultural, translingual, and transdisciplinary perspectives not only challenges traditional frameworks and monolithic ideologies, but also opens new space for more inclusive and humanizing educational practices. We hope that the scholarship presented here sparks new conversations and actions toward re-envisioning teacher education—ones that embrace complexity, nurture critical global citizenship, and center the lived realities of multilingual and multicultural communities.

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