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Forging a Path for Diverse Identities and Voices: Multilingual Educators' Reflective Stories

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Abstract: Shifting attitudes and requirements for refugee and visa applications in Canada, executive orders on immigration and language policies in the United States, and legislation against Critical Race Theory have contributed to changing the educational landscape of North America (Banerjee et al., 2025; Bumgardner et al., 2025; Government of Canada, 2025; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2024; The White House, 2025; World Population Review, 2025). This paper draws on four multilingual educators' personal stories, narratives, and reflective inquiries as language learners to explore layered identities in education. Shelley K. Taylor introduces how linking race, language and identity work through stories help us relate, learn, and change (Wink, 2017). Next, her four co-authors share their individual stories, beginning with Ryan Pontier. He shares his bilingual journey in which he contrasts his situated experiences with those of his students while highlighting the importance of translanguaging and equitable educational practices for multilingual students. Ryuko Kubota challenges normative expectations of "native-like" proficiency and advocates for justice-affirming education. David Schwarzer examines the historical use of languages in English Language Teaching, evolving

attitudes towards multilingualism, and making space for translingualism as a linguistic phenomenon, a pedagogy, and an ideology. Lastly, Melissa Rivera Screven discusses the fluidity and hybridity of language use among multiply-marginalized multilingual families, showcasing a translingual-vision approach for the future of English language teaching. These narratives provide insights into how race, languaging and identities shape educational experiences, and emphasize the importance of a gradient array of diverse perspectives. This paper situates the critical need to prepare teachers to persevere in the profession and envision a more inclusive, equitable future for all learners.

Keywords: *multilingualism, languaging, layered identities, justice-affirming, education*

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Introduction

We capture Tipsuda Chaomuangkhong and Jaclyn Naster's focus on gradient voices on race, language, and identity in education in this special issue of the journal through life stories, personal narratives, and dialogue. Wink (2017) informs us that stories break down barriers between people. One advantage of embedding lived personal/professional experiences in stories is that it helps people understand complex constructs and others. While not everyone may have empathetic responses to certain issues or remember all the lectures they have heard, they do relate to and remember characters in stories. When we read about people whose lived experiences differ from our own, we reflect on their experiences and empathize with the characters' stories. By imagining that we are sharing an experience with them, we connect with 'the Other' (Macapugay & Nakamura, 2024). Our storied approach to race, language, and identity in education problematizes binary views, and focuses on preparing and supporting educator understanding of learners' diverse voices and layered identities across the career span.

Clandinin (2020) informs us that gradient layering of our images of past experiences crystalizes into knowledge. For educators, images generated by reflecting on the experiential knowledge we acquire across domains – be they the personal (school / home / community), public (professional) or educational (pedagogical background) domain - engender theories of how to teach. The dialectical flow between personal/professional knowledge and theories of 'best' pedagogical approaches, how to enact them in practice, and how to pass them on to new generations of educators varies with time. In this paper, we highlight images of our past experiences that currently underpin how we structure our teaching practices, and inform the inclusive, equitable future stories we envision for our learners.

Like Darvin and Norton's (2015) notion of investment, Clandinin (2020) views personal practical knowledge as subject to change, rather than fixed. Educators' images and personal/professional stories are embodied in pedagogical approaches and enacted in practice.

Included are stories of 'becoming' and 'unbecoming' that the same individual can experience over time (life stages) and space (national contexts). Shifts may occur due to experiencing deficit-based attitudes toward 'non-native-English-speaking teachers' or asset-based appreciation of multilingualism and multiculturalism (Guo & Sidhu, 2024).

In our paper, we explore personal theories generated by our stories that connect our gradient journeys from past experiences to present teaching practices and how we view our futures. We do so by drawing on our life stories and personal narratives individually and in dialogue with each other, exploring gradient experiences along various stages of our personal/professional paths and our knowledge generation. We acknowledge our positionality as critical applied linguists who espouse theories of social justice to bring about societal transformation (Freire, 1990; Goundar, 2025). This same positionality is evident in our choice of a dialogic approach to narrative research that involves storying, reflecting, dialoguing, and writing. Furthermore, our dialogic approach links our individual experiences to broader social, cultural, and institutional narratives in which our experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted (Guo & Sidhu, 2024; Vigneau, et al., 2024).

We initially collaborated in Shelley's Presidential Address at the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) 2024 convention (Taylor, Kubota, Pontier, Schwarzer & Screven, 2024), by contrasting our experiences and stories as researchers and educators along a novice/more established other continuum. For purposes of this paper, we adopted a similar rationale for comparing our experiences along that same continuum, but altering the pairings by matching Ryan and Ryuko, and Melissa and David. We also delved deeper into a dialogic approach to narrative research, exploring the images engendered by our varied experiences that crystallized into our operating theories. These theories guide how we view different aspects of our roles in preparing teachers to be efficacious across the career span:

(a) novice teachers capable of meeting the challenges of a new profession while also advocating for diverse learners;
(b) mid-career teachers with the competences and fortitude needed to persevere, and provide asset-affirming pedagogical structures for all learners, and
(c) seasoned Master teachers willing to take on leadership roles and research positions in a profession fraught with challenges.

The backdrop to our conversations is the shifting socio-educational landscape across North America. Our stories and operating theories are informed by concern for educators whose teaching conditions and roles are shaped by factors such as changing attitudes and requirements for refugee and international student visa applications in Canada, and legislation against Critical Race Theory in the United States (Banerjee et al., 2025; Bumgardner et al., 2025; Government of Canada, 2025; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2024; World Population Review, 2025). These considerations informed our reflective dialogues about the pedagogical approaches and professional practices needed to guide current and future educators and researchers towards and/or along fulfilling, productive pathways.

The data presented connect our lived experiences, images, practices and understanding of the role race, language and identity (should) play in education. As explained in the following sections, our personal/professional experiences have informed our identity formation, teaching orientations, challenges and opportunities. As such, our stories have become operating theories that frame our work as teacher-educators, applied linguists, researchers and as plurilingual/pluricultural members of glocal communities, and we discuss them in dialogue with one another (Cummins, 2021; Early & Morgan, accepted).

This paper begins by delving into four multilingual authors' reflections on our personal and professional experiences through narrative research that highlights the intersectionality of race, languaging, and layered identities in education, and draws on personal stories, narratives and reflective dialogue both as language learners and teachers to explore how layered identities impact education. Ryan Pontier shares his bilingual journey, contrasting his experiences with those of his students, and highlighting the importance of translanguaging and equitable educational practices for multilingual students. Ryuko Kubota challenges normative expectations of native-like proficiency, advocating instead for justice-affirming education examines the historical use of languages in English language teaching (ELT), evolving attitudes towards multilingualism, and making space for translingualism as a linguistic phenomenon, a pedagogy and an ideology. David Schwarzer examines evolving images of linguistic phenomena, pedagogy and ideology beginning with views rooted in monolingualism, then multilingualism and finally moving towards creating space for translingualism. Melissa Rivera Screven discusses the fluidity and hybridity of language use among multiply marginalized multilingual families, showcasing a translingual-vision of ELT for the future. Following Ryan's and Ryuko's individual stories, they engage in dialogue that explores shared tensions, reflections, and evolving understandings. David and Melissa follow a similar structure, each offering their individual stories before entering into dialogue. These paired exchanges culminate in a tentative conclusion with implications toward future directions in multilingual education. The individual stories and dialogical reflections from each dyad follow next.

Bilingualism as a journey: Translanguaging and equity for multilingual students – Ryan Pontier

My advisor in graduate school had the quote "monolingualism is a curable disease" attributed to Mexican author Carlos Fuentes as part of her email signature line, and it's always stuck with me. I think a big reason why is the vast difference between my own experiences becoming bilingual and those of the 2nd and 3rd grade students and pre-service teachers I have encountered as a teacher educator and researcher. I am a former 2nd and 3rd grade teacher and currently an assistant professor of bilingual education and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at Florida International University in Miami. I am a white male, my pronouns are he/him, and I began developing my bilingualism in 7th grade in upper-middle class rural New Jersey. In contrast, most of my students were born in South Texas, Mexico, or Miami (some in other countries), identify as Latina/o, and began developing their bilingualism from a very early age in working class families.

My nascent bilingualism, which included learning Spanish as a "foreign" language in school, was celebrated much like that of a toddler who is cheered when they learn a new word or phrase. I felt encouraged by the support. Mind you, I am certain that I was making plenty of mistakes, while many of my 2nd and 3rd grade students in South Texas and Miami were ridiculed for their developing bilingualism, which included learning English in school. The pre-service teachers with whom I get to work have often reported being admonished for using Spanish, Spanglish, or so-called "improper English." Many also describe being corrected for using "improper Spanish" as well, revealing how multilayered challenges with language expectations. Yet, they were likely communicating more effectively than I was with my Spanish. My bilingualism (and my privilege) allowed me to study in Madrid, Spain and teach in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. While I have lived in four states, two countries, and earned a Ph.D., I

distinctly remember a former pre-service teacher sharing her own path. By the same age, she had a child just after high school, had not traveled, and was working on her undergraduate degree. I continue to ask why one of these sets of experiences is more valued than the other, though I am acutely aware of the role that raciolinguistic ideologies play in these discriminatory contexts.

As I continue to work in teacher education, I have chosen to focus my research on teachers' instructional practices supporting multilingual students, teachers' language ideologies (especially when introducing translanguaging), and teacher training (perhaps the intersection of the first two foci) to better understand how policies, practices, and beliefs about language and bi/multilingualism inequitably shape our worlds.

I have explored pre- and in-service teachers' reactions to translanguaging, a transgressive theory, practice, and pedagogy that has been shown to honor and promote students' languaging while still supporting their acquisition of English. Perhaps because of my story—my experiences that have largely differed from those of my students—I have been surprised to learn that although my students tend to feel affirmed in their linguistic practices when they learn that there is a technical and strengths-based term for how they language, they are reticent to intentionally incorporate such languaging into their pedagogy. This hesitancy may reflect a deeper tension for pre- and in-service teachers—reflecting on the unintended consequences of institutional validation, while simultaneously reinforcing the policing of their languaging. At the same time, though, I have documented teachers as they recounted their traumatic experiences learning English. I recognize that as individuals, there is much to learn. As institutions, there is much policy and practice to be enacted to bring about equitable change and cure the disease of monolingualism—and of monolingual mindsets when it comes to learning another language or becoming bi/multilingual.

At Florida International University, based on what we have learned through teaching and research, we are re-envisioning teacher education through two grants we have from the U.S. Department of Education:

1. A 4-year $1.55M project to create a teacher residency-like model wherein we recruit, train, and help sustain multilingual teachers of color to serve in hard-to-staff schools in Miami.

2. A 5-year $2.5M project called Creating TLC (Translanguaging Classrooms) that supports PreK-2nd grade general education teachers in their work with young multilingual learners.

Through both grants, we get to work with teachers and paraprofessionals as we build on the rich knowledges and experiences of teachers, students, and families, while also using the language practices of students as foundational resources.

It is our hope that we can be part of the creation of teaching and learning contexts where teachers and students feel comfortable and confident as they work toward realistic bi/multilingualism. I also believe that these experiences have the potential to support educators in understanding and dismantling the monolingual mindset and accompanying policies and practices that permeate our language learning worlds. Perhaps we'll get just a little bit closer to ascribing similar value to our different stories and experiences.

Native-like proficiency as a construct: Justice-affirming approaches to language education – Ryuko Kubota

I am a scholar and teacher educator currently working in Canada. I consider myself a pioneer of critical approaches to language education and applied linguistics, working since the 1990s. But what do I mean by "critical"? It's not about developing "critical thinking" among students and teachers. It's about questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions and seeking more justice-affirming thinking and doing (Kubota & Miller, 2017; Pennycook, 2021).

For example, there is a persistent belief that the goal of learning English is to become like a "native speaker" of English. But "becoming like a native speaker" is often an illusion. I spent the first 25 years of my life in a monolingual family and social environment in Japan. My parents lived through World War II without opportunities to obtain higher education, not to mention learning another language. Growing up during the 1960s and 70s, English to me was a foreign language to learn from Grade 7 through my undergraduate study and to teach as a public junior high school in a rural town. To this date, I consider myself a nonnative speaker of English and a native speaker of Japanese.

I came to the United States when I was 30 years old to live permanently to teach Japanese as a foreign language (because I was negatively affected by native speakerism—I was a teacher of English for about six years in Japan but lost confidence in teaching English). Later, after obtaining a PhD in Canada, I became a professor of teacher education and applied linguistics in the United States and Canada. Even after so many years of using English professionally, a nonnative speaker of English is the identifier I chose.

In describing myself in this way, I am aware of the nomenclature debates among scholars. On the one hand, the term "nonnative speaker" has advanced research for highlighting the strengths of nonnative English-speaking teachers. On the other hand, researchers have argued that this identifier reinforces the binary description of individual linguistic profiles by describing either nonnative or native, perpetuates a deficit perspective attached to the prefix "non," and overlooks individual speakers' complex linguistic identities (Selvi et al., 2024). I remember feeling puzzled by a native English-speaking scholar's insistence on using "multilingual teachers" rather than "nonnative teachers" in describing linguistic discrimination that they faced in an educational context. While they may have indeed been multilingual, this potentially liberating term may distract attention from the cause of the problem. Personally, I don't want others to identify me as a "multilingual English user." Even though I can say "hello" in ten different languages, that alone cannot count as multilingual competency.

Professionals with a normative belief that the goal of learning English is to become like a "native speaker" of English may consider my case a failure. But from a critical perspective, it is not—I have achieved my position as a professor and have been actively publishing my research. I have also been serving professional associations as a leader: I served as a Convention Program Chair of TESOL in 2015 and the President of American Association for Applied Linguistics in 2025–26. I have been using my positionality as a point of departure for advancing criticality in language education, as an East Asian female nonnative speaker of English.

I also recognize my privilege. I grew up in a middle-class family. I have never been hungry or been in a life-threatening situation like what's happening in places affected by military violence. I belong to the majority group in terms of my physical ability and sexual/gender identity. At the same time, I still suffer from racist harassment at work. The racism I face is not only caused by my East Asian background but also entangled with my gender, nonnative speakerness, and being single, which makes me vulnerable. But my linguistic and racial marginality has driven me to share my lived experiences of struggles so that students and scholars in our field and wider society will raise their awareness of power inequity in social and

institutional structures and practices. My dream is to make our spaces—our classroom, school, university, community, and society— better places where the human dignity of every single member is respected and affirmed. This requires the protection of our rights to language, culture, identity, food, clean water, and the pursuit of happiness, all of which will be embraced by the value of diversity, equity, and justice. The questions that I would like to pose are:

- What should be the goal of language teaching and learning? Is it to become like a native speaker or a competent user who embraces mutual respect, humanity, and unity?
- How can we transform the entrenched belief that native speakers of English are white people and that they are superior to nonnative speakers or people of color?
- How can we recognize our own privileges and exercise humility?
- How can we advocate for greater equity and justice for all people?
- How can we build a more peaceful and sustainable society free of violence, hunger, and fear? What is the role of teaching English in pursuing this goal?

I believe that the key to criticality is always questioning. There is no end to this journey, even though one has become an experienced professional. I am still learning every day. I hope I will continue to question and explore with others who believe in transformational hope.

Questions Explored in Ryan and Ryuko's Dialogical Discussion

Shelly K. Taylor as Moderator: Ryan and Ryuko pose three questions. Let's hear their questions, answers, how they negotiate the discussion and learn from each other's reflections and insights, and how sharing their stories and gradient experiences expands their operating theories!

- Why do many people still believe that native speakers of English are white people and that they are superior to nonnative speakers or people of color? How can we transform these beliefs?

Ryan (RP):

> When we hear the term "native" speakers of English, we are usually presented with pictures of people who are white. Moreover, examples of what "native" English sounds like correspond with middle-upper class white people. It is rare to see a person that identifies as Black, Asian, or Native American portrayed as a native English speaker, though they may only speak English. This leads to the term "native" masquerading as cloaked racism. As I was growing up, I was told that to speak "proper" English, I should avoid using words like *ain't* or expressions like *he don't know nothing*. For the first part of my life, I wasn't around people who leveraged those words or expressions. I was also praised for the way that I spoke and wrote, though I was largely only exposed to one type of English since I grew up in a monolingual, monocultural area. I observed that the few people in my life who *did* use such words and phrases were viewed as less intelligent. Not coincidentally, they were all people of color and some of them were multilingual. When our experiences reward us for who we are, we often lean into them. I did just that until graduate school. I was proud of "correcting" people's English, modeling apparently proper ways to use English, and "helping" others adapt. It wasn't until later I learned that I was promulgating racist practices.

Ryuko (RK):

Your experiences resonate with mine. Many of us internalize the normative ideology of race and language. But my situation was different contextually because I was socialized in racial and linguistic biases in Japan as a learner of English as a foreign language and a teacher later. There were no images of racialized people in the secondary school English textbooks or other resources. Also, the linguistic model was standardized American English. Naturally, I was made to believe that native speakers of English were white people. But the situation has been changing to some extent. There is more racial diversity represented in more recent textbooks and more racialized people are teaching English. Yet, the linguistic model continues to be standardized English. Since racialized teachers are expected to use standardized English, the linguistic norm and the racial norm, by extension, are perpetuated. It's interesting to think about the media too. On TV or radio, we see/hear more racialized reporters than before. But it's rare to hear ethnic accents being used. So even if we paint the screen with colors, white sound remains. What seems necessary is to valorize not just racial diversity but also linguistic heterogeneity. So, questioning our practice of error correction, as you mention, seems to be one of the first steps toward transformation.

- How can we recognize our own privileges?

RP:

For those who come from privileged backgrounds, moving beyond our comfort zones is imperative. Engaging in experiences where language is used (and valued!) in ways that differ from our own provides opportunities to see that there are numerous effective ways to enact language that leads to effective communication. Ongoing exposure to and interaction with people who use language in a variety of ways helps develop deeper understanding, compassion, and sometimes desire to change the status quo. My time in South Texas and Miami sure have shown me that how I use English is often *not* the most effective way to communicate with others, even if it is still valued in my work environment.

RK:

Ongoing exposure to and interaction with diverse speakers is so important and useful. But some people may say, "My community is homogeneous. Everyone looks the same and speaks the same language." What can they do? First of all, there are always differences within a community even if it seems homogeneous. Take gender, class, age, disability, sexuality, occupation, family background, and more. Recognizing differences and a hierarchy of power that exists within the category (for example, the power differential between men and women) is the first step. Then, one should try to understand why the pecking order exists and how it affects the lives of people who are less privileged. Ultimately, transformation rests in how much we are committed to valuing the human dignity of every individual.

- How can we advocate for greater equity and justice for all people?

RK:

This is a hard question. Perhaps humans have been exploring this question for thousands of years, which implies the impossibility of achieving equity and justice for all people.

> But there are always phases of progress and setbacks. Historical shifts in the political situation in the United States demonstrate that. Given this situation, what we, as justice-affirming language professionals, need is persistence in advocating for equity and justice. In this work, we need to exercise what Paulo Freire (1990) referred to as *praxis*—committed reflection and action for transformation. Critical reflection on our pedagogical practices and everyday interactions to notice privilege, marginality, and injustice should accompany concrete actions for transformation. Each performed action should be critically reflected upon to lead to another action for transformation. It's important to remember that this cycle of *praxis* is sustained with hope and solidarity. RP:
> I agree that critical reflection and transformative action have the potential to lead to greater equity and justice for all people. I think about the agency that we each have as individuals and know that many of us do/can do/will do this work. However, working individually is unlikely to create real, meaningful, and lasting change. Perhaps our praxis needs more modeling both in education and beyond. This may cause more of a ripple effect that is taken up by greater numbers of people while simultaneously forging critical connections among people.

From monolingual to multilingual and translingual images of linguistic phenomena, pedagogy and ideology

This section looks at the perspectives of David Schwarzer, a senior teacher-researcher and Melissa Rivera Screven, a novice teacher-researcher, on the past, present and future of language practices in multilingual settings – from separation to inclusion – from rigidity to fluidity etc. – proposing translingual ideologies as a possible solution. Schwarzer et al. (2009) defines translingualism as the "development of several languages and literacies in a dynamic and fluid way across the lifespan, while moving back and forth between real and imagined borders and transacting with different cultural identities within a unified self" (p. 210). Translingualism holds significant applicability across diverse interdisciplinary fields including family sciences, human development, counseling, teacher education and broader multilingual and multicultural scholarly contexts. The authors offer practical implications for researchers and practitioners in multilingual contexts. Lastly, David and Melissa include a dialogical discussion about their experiences with language practices.

Translingualism as practice and ideology: Past, present and future of multilingual education – David Schwarzer

I was born in Argentina, moved to Israel where I studied my BA and MA at Tel-Aviv University and obtained my PhD in Language, Reading and Culture from the University of Arizona. I am currently a Full Professor at Montclair State University in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the College for Education and Engaged Learning. In this reflective piece, I trace my professional journey with teacher education practices across three stages: 1984, during my early academic experience; back to 2024, in the near-present landscape when I participated in the presidential address at the TESOL International Convention; and in 2044, a projected future with translingualism as practice and ideology. The inclusion of 2044 reflects the presidential address which called for envisioning the future in teacher education. I compared the inclusion of LQBTQ + experiences and multilingual language practices as a central part of curriculum development in my professional education journey.

Teacher Education Practices in 1984

When I was receiving my teaching certification, LGBTQ + issues were not even mentioned in the mainstream educational arena. If they were presented, they were connected to a psychological disorder or something that needs to be dealt with in educational counseling and/or psychological disorders. Discussions about same gender parents, inclusive language in lesson planning, conversations about safe spaces in the curriculum were not addressed. The only conversations I remembered having at the time involved avoiding stereotypical gender-related professions (e.g., boys are supposed to be firefighters while girls are supposed to be teachers and nurses). Gender, sexual orientation and sexual identity were mostly understood as one – and it was understood as a dichotomy between male and female worlds. It was explained that if we create too many choices for children, they will be confused by the options provided to them. Therefore, boys were encouraged to take on "masculine" roles within the class and girls were encouraged to take more "feminine" roles within the class (mother Shabbat and father Shabbat was a common practice in kindergarten education at the time).

Similarly, in terms of multilingual language instruction, the bilingual and multilingual curriculum was starting to gain popularity and was addressed in different classes – however, it was always discussed in a rigid and separate way – one language in the morning and another in the afternoon. Assignments ONLY in the native language or ONLY in English. Language teachers should ONLY use their target language.

Teacher Education Practices in the Present

When I am now preparing student teachers, issues related to LGBTQ+ are front and center in all aspects of curriculum development and evaluation. Lesson planning is required to include inclusive language (the use of pronouns, the use of non-gendered language, the use of inclusive examples, etc.). Materials including examples of diverse family structures, diverse genders and sexual orientations as well as the creation and encouragement for teachers to create safe spaces where their students can freely express themselves are central to any curriculum development process. This change is based on the much-nuanced understanding of gender, sexual orientation and sexual identity. Today it is quite common to conceptualize these issues as a spectrum or as a fluid phenomenon – parents understand that students may fluctuate and change their understanding of themselves as they grow older. Schools are encouraging the exploration of gender identity as part of their curriculum. It is not unusual to discuss scenarios in which children have same sex parents, and/or students that are transitioning from one gender to the other within the school year, and/or schools that are creating non-gender specific bathrooms in their campus.

However, in terms of language teaching in multilingual environments, we are still today conceptualizing languages as dichotomies that should not mix because it will confuse the child. Therefore, we create lesson plans in English and then we translate to Spanish; or we have a bilingual teacher that uses Spanish in Geography and English in Math. Moreover, there is a more nuanced conceptualization of languages (not much different than gender) as a much more fluid phenomenon in which languages interact with each other, and they flourish in that "in between-ness" situation. At this point, translingual approaches to curriculum development, a situation in which all teachers develop their curriculum and assessment encouraging and celebrating the interaction and intersection of languages is still viewed as cutting edge and even confusing for some of our teachers. It is important to note that I have witnessed bilingual teachers that hold

monolingual ideologies about language teaching, while monolingual teachers can hold a translingual ideology and promote the fluid use of languages that they do not speak or use in their classrooms.

Teacher Education Practices in 2044

I view it as self-evident that the same flexibility and fluidity that we are accustomed to developing in terms of curriculum development as it pertains to gender identity, sexual orientation, family structures, etc. to include a more fluid understanding of the phenomenon, will be commonplace in the language classroom curriculum of the future. No more English as a Second Language (ESL) or Foreign Language teachers will be worried about mixing the languages in the classroom - they will not worry about this trans-lingual[1] practice to be confusing for their students.

Moreover, teachers will be able to foster and celebrate translingualism as a linguistic phenomenon, as an ideology, and as an intentional pedagogy. Translingualism as a codeswitching, codemixing, code meshing linguistic phenomenon will be present in every classroom. Moreover, even monolingual-monocultural teachers will be encouraged to develop a more sophisticated ideology about language development as a fluid and dynamic experience. Finally, teachers will be encouraged to develop translingual activities, curriculum, assessment to foster an intentional translingual pedagogy to better serve the needs and linguistic repertoires of their students, families and communities. In conclusion, like the ways that LGBTQ+ issues have permeated the curriculum development process today to better understand and address the fluid and dynamic understanding of gender, sexuality and family structures, I believe that translingualism has the promise of becoming a centerpiece for curriculum development for language teachers soon. Let's start the discussion today!

Hybridity as lived practice: Translingual futures in ELT for multiply-marginalized multilingual families – Melissa Rivera Screven

For the TESOL International 2024 presidential address, I shared my personal story toward envisioning new futures for ELT through a translingual education. My narrative was fully presented in American Sign Language and accompanied by multimedia features such as voice-over audio incorporating a mixture of written and spoken Spanishes and Englishes. This intentional demonstration of linguistic fluidity illustrated the practicality of translingualism and highlighted the importance of inclusivity within the field of English language teaching. I addressed two key points related to a translingual education: 1) naming practices among multilingual interpreters- positioning them as models of "translingual-vision" despite persistent monolingual ideologies; and 2) highlighting culturally diverse multilingual communities as translingual learners. The presentation concluded by asking how we can work towards "translingual-vision" to maximize possibilities for learners and provided reasons to adopt a translingual ideology for the future of English language teaching. These personal insights highlighted the essential role of translingualism and demonstrated how multilingual educators can pave the way for diverse identities and voices.

[1] I use the hyphen here intentionally to reflect the fluidity of identities and language—much like how gender is experienced and expressed.

My early academic experiences as a Latina in New York City reflected a common story of institutions (e.g., schools) diminishing the use of my Puerto Rican Spanish while situating a standard English as the dominant societal language. This compartmentalized use of Spanish at home and standard English in all other linguistic spaces shaped my early interactions within systems of power. Years later, discovering a familial genetic trait for deafness expanded my linguistic identity and communicative repertoires, introducing sign language into daily interactions and reshaping my identity as a multilingual individual. At this point, my language experiences were influenced by societal perspectives on "bounded" languages (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987; Goldfarb, 1998) and by the complex interactions among standard English as the dominant language, my Puerto Rican Spanish as a minoritized languages, and American Sign Language (ASL) as a communication system often viewed as disordered and largely used by a marginalized population (Henner & Robinson, 2023).

As an ASL/English interpreter, I pursued a graduate degree in Foreign Language Pedagogy and ESL certification. I taught ESL to Deaf and hearing children from immigrant and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families. My approach to language perspectives was initially shaped by Eurocentric, monolingual whiteness. However, my perspectives shifted through sustained dialogue with multiply-marginalized multilingual communities, including Deaf individuals from immigrant and racialized backgrounds. My languaging ideologies evolved to reflect dynamic language practices. I immersed myself in translingual practices, blending multiple languages and adapting communication repertoires in everyday interactions. My language learning experiences have informed my research on languaging—the flexible and evolving strategies we use to understand, make sense of our surroundings, and engage in meaningful interactions (Becker, 1988; García & Li, 2014; Gort, 2015; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Shohamy, 2006; Swain, 2006). My work reaffirms the importance of educational spaces forging a path for diverse voices and diverse ways of being.

Naming Practices Among Multilingual Interpreters

Upon starting my PhD journey, I found scant research on multiply marginalized multilinguals who, like myself, navigate dominant languages, minoritized languages, and other marginalized languages such as Sign Language Varieties in the Americas (SLVA), as described in Screven (2024). As I delved deeper, I identified missed opportunities in studying translingual practices used by multiply marginalized multilinguals. My research began to highlight areas of translingual study, such as the importance of naming practices and orthographic practices for Latine/x Deaf[2] individuals with names of Spanish origin. As my first key point in the TESOL International 2024 presidential address related to a translingual education, I shared the story of María Peña, a Deaf Latina. This story highlighted the importance of students having control over how their names are written and pronounced, regardless of their hearing ability.

Naming practices significantly impact the pronunciation and identity of students, including those who are Deaf. Historically, names with a "non-standard American" appearance have often been modified to be more palatable for monolingual speakers, especially in institutions of power. At present, there is greater awareness of student inclusivity and the cultural significance of names. However, multilingual interpreters and English teachers may still face

[2] In this article, I adopt the convention of distinguishing "Deaf" as a marker of cultural identity from "deaf" as a descriptor of hearing loss, following Leigh (2009).

challenges with a “translingual-vision.” Despite their training in linguistic and cultural responsiveness, many still privilege monolingual ideologies in practice. They might omit the accent in María, affecting its pronunciation, or miss the tilde, ñ, in Peña, changing it to Pena. Diacritics are often omitted in English orthography and are absent in American Sign Language. Englishes and ASL may not have the cultural and linguistic capacity to be inclusive of some Spanish-origin names (Screven, 2024). Instead, translingual strategies involving the mixing of SLVA and Spanishes with ASL are best suited for names with orthographic differences. María Peña's story exemplifies the importance of preserving the integrity of names to honor students' identities through translingual practices.

Multilingual Latinx Communities as Translingual Learners

My second key point in my TESOL presentation addressed multilingual Latinx communities who use Spanishes, Englishes, and SLVAs. Historically, English was considered the "official language" in the U.S., even for Deaf individuals, with a preference for English over other languages. At present, we recognize the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism. Research on Spanishes and Englishes in the U.S. is expanding, and ASL is increasingly used to promote language access and inclusivity. However, future multilingual communities may include trilingual or multilingual Latinx families using Spanishes, Englishes, and sign language varieties. For example, a student like María Peña might use translingual strategies, combining spoken, written, and sign language varieties. This point highlights the linguistic power of translingualism and emphasizes the importance of recognizing multilingual Latinx communities as translingual learners, rather than favoring monolingual ideologies.

A Translingual Ideology for the Future of ELT

As someone who embodies multiple minoritized languages and cultures, I have unsubscribed from dichotomous notions of languaging (García & Solorza, 2020). I now celebrate how multiply marginalized BIPOC multilinguals engage in translingualism, defying dominant cultural perspectives and transcending sociolinguistic hierarchies. My personal narrative and advocacy for translingualism demonstrate the transformative potential of embracing linguistic diversity and the potential for educators to create more inclusive and empowering learning environments. Researchers and practitioners in multilingual contexts can continue to challenge monolingual ideologies and advance translingual practices, ensuring that all students can thrive.

Implications for Practitioners

1. There will be an overall increase in multilingual populations immigrating to the U.S., including multilingual Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing communities (Golos et al., 2024)
2. By 2040, culturally and linguistically diverse families using sign and spoken languages will represent a growing segment of students in U.S. schools (Pichler et al., 2019).
3. There are a growing number of multilingual BIPOC hearing children, with Deaf parents, receiving ESL instruction (Chavez-Hart, 2024). These children will be users of a dominant language, a minoritized language, and a Sign Language Variety used in the Americas.

4. American Sign Language is a growing trend for second-generation immigrant families as part of dynamic, multimodal communication strategies in the United States (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2013).

5. The field of education in the United States will continue to diversify at a rapid pace.

Questions Explored in David's and Melissa's Dialogical Discussion

Shelly K. Taylor as Moderator: David Schwarzer and Melissa Rivera Screven also pose three questions. Let's hear their questions, answers, how they negotiate the discussion and learn from each other's reflections and insights, and how sharing their stories and gradient experiences expands their operating theories!

- Why should we consider a translingual ideology for the future of education?

Melissa (M):

A translingual ideology acknowledges the dynamic ways multilingual students navigate language. To work toward this, I recommend educators and policymakers consider linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a limitation. By implementing inclusive curricula and adopting flexible languaging policies, schools can create spaces where students, especially multiply marginalized multilinguals, feel empowered to use their full linguistic repertoire as they engage in learning.

David (D):

Absolutely! The idea that languages are distinct entities and that they need to be used, taught, explained in a separate way to avoid confusion is a very well-established fallacy… I believe that white middle class monolingual teachers are still in 2044 to be the driving force of the teaching profession. Adopting a translingual ideology in which different languages and a variety of languaging practices are explored in the classroom seem to me like an important discussion to have with the language teachers and its communities.

- How can we work toward a translingual ideology to provide our learners with maximum possibilities?

M:

Advancing a translingual ideology means reshaping both educational systems and cultural perspectives. Schools can embrace multilingualism through inclusive teaching practices, allowing students to language in ways that reflect their experiences. This requires revising assessments to support translingual writing, improving teacher training to foster linguistic inclusivity, and making translingual practices a standard part of classroom learning rather than an exception. I know these ideas are easier said than done, but it can lead to maximum possibilities for students within and beyond the classroom.

D:

Also, creating innovative activities as part of the teacher education programs is key! As you know, I have explored the idea of using Linguistic Landscapes (LL) as one way to explore how real languages interact and behave in real life. Much more important is that when looking at multilingual urban communities, teacher candidates may come with their

own pre-conceived ideologies about language and languaging. While conducting an activity like LL they will start seeing the possibilities and not only the challenges associated with low-income multilingual urban communities. For example, by researching local menus and their language choices; taking pictures of the marquis of local shops; understanding the fluid and dynamic way in which languages are present provides good data for classroom conversations about a translingual ideology as it appears in the local community.

- What pedagogical strategies would a translingual teacher adopt in their classroom?

D:

I believe that the most important consideration for all of us is to re-think the "typical" classroom practices in which monolingual teachers feel they have nothing to contribute to students' multilingual development. Do we need to be bilingual to conduct a bilingual classroom? I believe that monolingual teachers could create successful translingual activities for their students. I also believe that bilingual/multilingual teachers may create activities in their classrooms that could be counter-productive for the implementation of a translingual approach. Using the linguistic repertoire that students bring to classroom is almost like directing a jazz band orchestra: the jazz band director does not need to be able to play all the instruments in the band but should orchestrate their usage - moreover, the jazz musicians are improvising as they play in the band and each one of the participants will respond to the other. I believe this is a metaphor worth exploring with teachers for the future.

M:

Best practices in pedagogy provide the foundation for effective teaching, and translingual strategies can build upon them while recognizing that language is dynamic rather than fixed. In a translingual classroom, language is not just a tool for communication but a resource for learning. Although educators should maintain clear developmental goals, I believe it is important to also acknowledge the power dynamics in the classroom. A teacher's linguistic ideologies, whether intentional or not, influence how students use language and shape their perceptions of what is expected. Because students often adjust their languaging based on these expectations, teachers must foster an environment where linguistic diversity is valued as a tool for learning.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion in both dyads raised key themes in the literature review that were related to our stories. Ryan and Ryuko draw on personal practical knowledge to point out how binary descriptions can veil nuances and the richness of complex linguistic identities. David and Melissa discuss how educators' personal practical knowledge is manifest through their linguistic ideologies and can influence student interpretations of whether translingual spaces are open or closed, which in turn impacts the development of a gradient view of how race, language and identity work in education.

Both dialogues attest to the interrelationship between personal/professional experiences, and the need to share stories to make connections between contexts and across conditions, and support educators and learners by bridging 'Othered' images. Ideally, stories are a segue to developing empathy, considering other points of view and heeding gradient messaging about race, language and identity in education.

To conclude, in today's increasingly populist educational landscapes - in North America, Europe and India, to name but a few locales - images are increasingly marked more by dualisms than gradience, by misinformation and anti-Critical Race Theory campaigns than equitable education (Gillborn, 2024), and by legislation framed in Manichean terms (good/bad; il/legitimate). Executive orders proclaimed on personal practical knowledge on immigration and "English Only" in the United States, for example, have reflected one-sided representations rather than intersectionality or gradience (The White House, 2025). In that, they are not alone (Gillborn, 2024), leaving educators at a juncture when it is crucial to amplify diverse voices in educational spaces.

The goal of our paper was to explore the stories and operating images (or personal theories) connecting our own gradient journeys from lived experiences to teaching practices, and views of the future. Through our narratives, we have illustrated insights we have gained on how race, languaging, and identities have shaped our educational experiences and priorities as teacher-educators. We have also emphasized the critical need to prepare teachers across all stages of the experiential spectrum to persevere in the profession and envision a more inclusive, equitable future that includes all learners' diverse identities and voices.

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