

The Role of Teachers' Language Ideologies and Identities in Shaping Translanguaging Practices in Multilingual Classrooms

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1. INTRODUCTION

As translanguaging gains global traction, there has been a marked proliferation of studies documenting its benefits for language learning, cognitive development, and socio-emotional well-being among multilingual learners (García & Li, 2014; García et al., 2017; Hamman-Ortiz et al., 2025; Tian et al., 2020). Despite these promising outcomes, recent scholarly critiques highlight limitations regarding the extent to which translanguaging practices realize their transformative potential. Scholars caution that translanguaging is frequently implemented superficially, often merely repurposing traditional pedagogical methods without fundamentally challenging entrenched linguistic hierarchies or addressing systemic inequities (Jaspers, 2018; Mendoza et al., 2024; Poza, 2017). These superficial implementations risk reinforcing, rather than dismantling, existing power imbalances within educational contexts. Moreover, translanguaging is often employed temporarily as a scaffold towards English-only or monolingual outcomes or positioned as a remedial strategy targeting students with lower language proficiency levels (Burton et al., 2024; Rajendram et al., 2022). Consequently, translanguaging is diminished to a provisional or tokenistic intervention rather than a sustained, equity-oriented pedagogical approach.

Furthermore, the uncritical adoption of translanguaging can perpetuate unequal translanguaging practices, privileging English or dominant local languages while marginalizing minoritized or Indigenous languages (Rajendram, 2022, 2023; Sah & Kubota, 2022; Sah & Li, 2022). Classroom language choices frequently become entangled with political agendas, ethnic tensions, and neoliberal frameworks, aligning more closely with institutional or state interests rather than authentically addressing students' linguistic and cultural needs. For translanguaging to genuinely fulfill its transformative promise, educators must critically engage with and actively challenge the structural and ideological foundations of linguistic inequities. This necessitates a shift

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from mere linguistic tolerance to deliberate disruption and reconstruction of dominant linguistic norms and hierarchies (Flores & Rosa, 2015; García et al., 2021). A transformative translanguaging pedagogy, therefore, requires educators to explicitly acknowledge and address the societal power dynamics embedded within language policies and classroom interactions. It is at this juncture that teachers' beliefs, identities, and pedagogical practices become pivotal, influencing whether translanguaging reproduces existing hierarchies or opens up transformative spaces. This Special Issue foregrounds the role of teachers' language ideologies and identities, examining how they shape translanguaging practices in multilingual classrooms and the extent to which translanguaging can be enacted as a critical and transformative pedagogy.

2. TEACHERS' LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND IDENTITIES

Central to understanding and addressing the limitations in translanguaging practices is recognizing the pivotal role that educators' language ideologies and identities play in shaping these practices. Research highlights the need for alignment between teachers' personal language ideologies and the equity-oriented goals foundational to translanguaging pedagogy (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Mahalingappa et al., 2022). Although substantial research has explored practical applications of translanguaging pedagogy in classrooms, comparatively less attention has been dedicated to examining how teachers' language ideologies and identities form, evolve, and ultimately shape their pedagogical choices. Varghese et al. (2005) emphasize that teacher identity is not “a fixed, stable, unitary, and internally coherent phenomenon but is multiple, shifting, and in conflict,” and that “by the same token it is transformational and transformative” (pp. 22-23). Furthermore, while considerable scholarship has emphasized multilingual students' linguistic identities, the equally crucial role of teachers' own identities in mediating translanguaging practices remains relatively underexplored. Translanguaging is not merely pedagogical or professional; it is deeply personal, intricately connected to teachers' emotions, self-perceptions, and intersecting identities.

Teachers' language ideologies significantly influence their attitudes towards multilingualism and translanguaging practices. Ideologies encompass deeply embedded beliefs and feelings regarding languages as they are used in their social worlds, and the perceived value, legitimacy, and utility of these languages (Henderson, 2017). Reflecting broader societal discourses, teachers' ideologies can inadvertently perpetuate monolingual norms and marginalize multilingual learners. For example, research demonstrates that teachers' language ideologies often constrain their strategies for incorporating students' languages, limiting translanguaging to scaffolding English acquisition through predominantly teacher-centered approaches (Bale et al., 2023; Burton et al., 2024; Mendoza et al., 2024). Additionally, translanguaging is frequently misunderstood as merely recognizing multiple named languages in the classroom without actively disrupting Whiteness and Standardized English practices (Bale et al.,

2023; Burton et al., 2024; Li, 2023; Rajendram et al., 2022). Such practices fall short of achieving the intended social justice aims of translanguaging.

Teachers' identities are deeply intertwined with their language ideologies. Henderson (2017) suggests that "language ideologies mediate how a person can use language to perform a certain identity... and identities are imposed on individuals, including students, based on their language performances" (p. 22). Language teacher identity is an individual and psychological matter (Varghese et al., 2005) because it is shaped by teachers' personal linguistic histories, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences. At the same time, teacher identity is a social matter because the formation, growth, and negotiation of teachers' identities are social processes that occur in institutional settings, such as schools and teacher education programs (Varghese et al., 2005). Like ideologies, teachers' identities profoundly inform teachers' pedagogical decisions, influencing how they interpret, enact, and sustain language teaching practices in the classroom. For instance, Burton et al. (2024) found that pre-service teacher candidates' linguistic backgrounds and personal experiences with language significantly contributed to their adoption of a translanguaging stance. Teacher candidates who identified as multilingual were able to draw upon shared language learning experiences and struggles to support their multilingual learners. Their personal journeys of acquiring additional languages as newcomers and refugees provided deeper insights into their students' experiences and challenges.

3. SHAPING LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND IDENTITIES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Research in teacher education highlights this ideological complexity, noting that even when pre-service teachers theoretically support translanguaging, institutional pressures and entrenched monolingual norms frequently hinder implementation (Bale et al., 2023; Burton et al., 2024). Therefore, teacher education programs play an essential role in shaping educators' language ideologies and identities. Effective teacher education integrates critical multilingual language awareness, reflective practices, and explicit instruction to help educators recognize and challenge linguistic inequities (Burton et al., 2024; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Tian & King, 2023; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023). Such programs prompt educators to critically reflect on their assumptions about language, identity, and power; engage deeply with diverse linguistic experiences; and develop proactive strategies to counter monolingual ideologies in their teaching (McConnell et al., 2022, 2023; Menken & Sánchez, 2019). Additionally, teacher education must create spaces for educators to meaningfully connect their personal linguistic backgrounds and histories to their professional identities, empowering them to embrace pedagogies that affirm linguistic diversity and promote educational equity.

Ultimately, teachers' effectiveness in supporting multilingual learners is significantly enhanced when their identities align meaningfully with their students' linguistic

realities. Teachers who actively reflect upon and draw from their linguistic identities and experiences can better relate to their students and cultivate genuinely transformative translanguaging environments (Burton et al., 2024). Indeed, educators' identities profoundly shape pedagogical choices, impacting how they navigate linguistic diversity and implement translanguaging in their classrooms.

4. ABOUT THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

This Special Issue critically examines how teachers' language ideologies and identities shape translanguaging practices in multilingual educational contexts. Responding to the pressing need to challenge deficit-oriented discourses that marginalize multilingual learners, the issue explores how teachers' beliefs, self-perceptions, and personal linguistic experiences inform their pedagogical decisions and interactions with students. Central to this Special Issue is the recognition that teachers' reflective engagement with their language ideologies and lived experiences is foundational to fostering transformative translanguaging pedagogies capable of dismantling linguistic inequities and promoting inclusive education (Aghai et al., 2020; Marshall et al., 2023; Paulsrud & Rosén, 2019).

The contributions within this issue collectively address several key themes:

- Teachers' evolving ideologies and shifts in their perceptions about multilingual learners, and how these shifts influence their classroom translanguaging practices.
- How teachers' personal experiences and histories with language and race shape their language ideologies and instructional approaches towards racialized learners.
- How teachers can be encouraged to develop a critical or political stance toward translanguaging when they encounter deficit frameworks in language ideologies and policies.
- How teacher education programs can integrate translanguaging pedagogies and critical identity work to counter raciolinguistic and monoglossic ideologies.

5. ARTICLES IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE

This Special Issue comprises eight contributions: four research articles, two interviews with prominent scholars, and two insightful book reviews, all of which converge around the intersections of teachers' ideologies, identities, and translanguaging practices. These articles collectively demonstrate how teachers' personal linguistic journeys and

ideological reflections profoundly shape their pedagogical choices, enabling them to foster inclusive, equity-driven educational environments for multilingual learners.

In the first research article, *From Linguistic Trauma to Bridging: Dual Language Teachers Testimoniando Borderlands Translanguaging Pedagogies*, Suzanne García, Christian E. Zúñiga, and Idalia Nuñez report on a multi-site case study exploring the testimonios (testimonies) of two dual language teachers from the Texas-Mexico borderlands Chicane/x communities borderlands and their experiences with language, and how it shaped their translanguaging instruction. This work compellingly integrates translanguaging theory with Anzaldúa's (2009) concept of bridging, which highlights how an individual can mediate between self and their community as a way to negotiate one's identity and stand their ground or risk losing themselves in the dualities and complexities of the borderlands. The findings revealed the trauma rooted in teachers' experiences with language on the borderlands, and how their translanguaging pedagogies were efforts to move away from linguistic trauma by creating bridges that supported their bilingual students.

In the second research article, *Reconnecting Social Justice in Translanguaging: A Conversation Across Top-Down Constraints and Bottom-Up Resistance*, Daniela Tîrnovan, Anel V. Rivera Guerrero, and Michael J. Bossé investigate how the institutional positioning of administrators and teachers shapes their translanguaging ideologies, support for classroom translanguaging, and linguistic identities. By juxtaposing interviews with K-12 administrators in New Jersey with data from an online autoethnographic workshop involving PK-12 educators teaching emergent multilingual learners in the Northeastern United States, the authors demonstrate that teachers' reflective engagement with their identities and linguistic histories can help to foster resistance to oppressive institutional narratives and policies, thereby advancing social justice-oriented translanguaging practices.

Elena Tkachenko and Mona Evelyn Flognfeldt's article, *Language Ideologies in Norwegian Teachers' Narratives of Practice: Orientations to Translanguaging and Socially Just Education*, examines teachers' narratives from multilingual classrooms in Norway to uncover ideological tensions surrounding translanguaging practices. The authors take up Alfaro's (2019) calls for developing ideological clarity in teacher education by analyzing teachers' narratives of practice in Norwegian multilingual classrooms to unravel their ideological stance with respect to translanguaging pedagogies and highlight potential ideological tensions. The findings show that even when teachers initiate learning activities involving multiple languages, it does not necessarily impact their translanguaging stance or their attitudes and language ideologies. Thus, the authors argue that it is not enough for teacher education to focus merely on diversity and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. Rather, there is a need to promote critical reflection and critical multilingual language awareness (García, 2017), which are essential tools in challenging prevailing monoglossic language ideologies.

The fourth research article, “*Can You Teach English? Hontou?*”: *A Trioethnography of “Freak” Teachers Translanguaging for Social Justice in Japan*, by Miso Kim, Yaya Yao, and Wan Jung Amy Lin, presents a collaborative autoethnography of three East Asian women educators in Japan. The authors use the concept of translangual identity-as-pedagogy (Jain, 2022; Motha et al., 2012) to explore how educators can draw on the epistemic affordances of marginalized identities to expand their students’ learning. The authors narrate how they turned their “freak” (i.e., invisibilized, non-normative, hybrid) identities into pedagogical translanguaging for social justice, such as by integrating topics related to diversity, practicing art-based pedagogy to create a collaborative and trusting environment, and questioning native-speakerism and the myth of “perfect” English.

Complementing the research articles are two insightful interviews with leading scholars. Jiadi Zhang interviews Dr. Manka Varghese, who discusses how race, language, and political consciousness intersect to inform teachers’ identities and ideologies, and how teacher education programs can support teachers in implementing a translanguaging pedagogy through critical and ongoing self-reflections, practices, and discussions. Lisa Lackner interviews Dr. Suhanthie Motha, who highlights the importance of fostering community and collaboration within teacher education cohorts that allow teacher candidates to explore their own language ideologies as well as critically reflect on how colonialism and racism are intertwined in their language teaching.

Our Special Issue also includes two book reviews. Tin Yuet (Tiffany) Tam reviews *New Perspectives on Translanguaging and Education* (2017), which is an edited collection by BethAnne Paulsrud, Jenny Rosén, Boglárka Straszer, and Åsa Wedin that explores the potential of translanguaging across educational settings, and highlights teachers and students negotiating language ideologies in their everyday communicative practices. Luqing Zang reviews *Questioning the Native Speaker Construct in Teacher Education: Enabling Multilingual Identities and Decolonial Language Pedagogies* (2024) by Julie Waddington, which offers a critical engagement with research problematizing notions of “nativeness,” while emphasizing the interactional and ongoing process of identity construction, and challenging language ideologies that underpin and perpetuate systemic inequalities.

In conclusion, by highlighting the intricate relationship between teachers’ language ideologies, identities, and translanguaging practices, this Special Issue emphasizes the transformative potential of critically reflective teaching and teacher education. Drawing on diverse educational contexts including the United States, Norway and Japan, these contributions demonstrate how ideologically informed and identity-conscious pedagogical practices can cultivate inclusive, equitable learning environments for multilingual learners. Across these varied sociopolitical landscapes, the articles illuminate how teachers’ lived experiences, racialized and linguistic identities, and affective commitments shape the enactment, and at times, the contestation of translanguaging practices in classrooms. By situating translanguaging within teachers’

personal and professional journeys, this Special Issue foregrounds it as a pedagogical praxis rooted in lived experience, reflective inquiry, and the ongoing negotiation of power, identity, and language.

Collectively, the pieces align with JELI's mission to advance both theoretical insight and transformative practice in multilingual education. At the same time, they point toward critical directions for future inquiry. We call on researchers to undertake longitudinal and critical studies that examine how teachers' ideologies and identities evolve over time, particularly in response to shifting policies, institutional constraints, and increasingly diverse student populations. We urge teacher educators to create programs that foreground critical multilingual language awareness and identity work, supporting educators in examining their own linguistic and cultural histories. And we encourage practitioners to embrace translanguaging not as a temporary scaffold or strategy, but as a sustained pedagogical stance that affirms students' full linguistic repertoires and actively challenges dominant ideologies.

At its core, realizing translanguaging's transformative promise requires collective, courageous, and critically engaged efforts. By recognizing teachers not simply as implementers of pedagogy but as ideological and identity-bearing agents of change, we can reimagine multilingual education as a space of resistance, solidarity, and possibility.

THE AUTHORS

Shakina Rajendram is an Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Language and Literacies Education program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada. Her research focuses on the intersection of anti-racist, translanguaging and multiliteracies pedagogies in teacher education, with a focus on preparing teacher candidates to support linguistically and racially minoritized multilingual learners in K-12 classrooms in Canada and Malaysia. Drawing from her experiences as an educator and researcher in Malaysia, her work includes a focus on decolonial critical perspectives stemming from the Global South. Dr. Rajendram brings a diverse background in teaching and curriculum design, having served as a K-12 teacher, ESL and EAP instructor, and English language and literature curriculum developer. She is the co-author of *Centering Multilingual Learners and Countering Raciolinguistic Ideologies in Teacher Education: Principles, Policies and Practices* (Multilingual Matters, 2023).

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