
Professionals and Research in Applied Linguistics: A Transdisciplinarity Perspective

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Résumé

How to deal with the theoretical and ethical problems researchers face when they transform knowledge into action? Since the early 1970s, this key question at the interface of theory and practice has been discussed in transdisciplinary research (TD). In my presentation, I make the point that the answers found in "transdisciplinary processes" (Scholz & Steiner, 2015b) matter for applied linguistics (AL). By doing so, I draw on practical examples from two decades of text production research in professional settings.

In the first part, I outline the core idea of TD, which is to bring together epistemes in participative discourse across and beyond social institutions (including, but not limited to academic disciplines) in order to develop innovative, emergent, and sustainable solutions to socially relevant problems. In an elaborated variant, TD includes non-academic experts, often referred to as *practitioners*, from the very beginning of its research projects (Perrin&Kramersch, 2018).

In the second part, I explain two strong reasons for seeing TD and AL as intrinsically connected. On an object level, "[it] is hard to think of any 'real-world' problems – from global warming to refugees to generic counselling to outsourced call centres to AIDS/HIV to military intelligence – that do not have a crucial component of language use" (Myers, 2005, 527). On a meta level, TD, in whatever field, needs applied linguists in action who mediate between the epistemes and languages of the parties involved.

In the third part, I focus on these mediation and translation aspects of TD and its "multi-stakeholder discourses" (Padmanabhan, 2018, 8), which require "a kind of multilingualism" (Wertsch, Del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995, 3). TD is impossible if any of the project participants lack the ability to understand each other or to make themselves understood in such a multilingual environment. I discuss three principles of practicing this "multilingualism" in a theoretically and ethically reflected way.

I conclude by summarizing that doing TD means developing, learning, and using shared languages. AL scholars in TD teams, in addition to contributing their knowledge *about* practices of language use, are in demand because of their expertise *in* such practices. In TD projects, AL experts apply their – theoretically and ethically reflected – knowledge of language, language teaching, and language use to enable the project participants' multilingual communication, which is needed for mutual learning.

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