

Special Issue

Transdisciplinary Approaches to Language Learning and Teaching in Transnational Times

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

It is with great satisfaction that *L2 Journal* presents to you this special issue on “Transdisciplinary approaches to language learning and teaching in transnational times,” guest edited by Julie Byrd Clark from the University of Western Ontario, Canada. I knew Julie from her monograph *Multilingualism, citizenship, and identity: Voices of youth and symbolic investments in a globalized world* (2009), and from the volume she edited with Fred Dervin on *Reflexivity in language and intercultural education* (2014). So when she organized a colloquium at the AILA 2014 World Congress in Brisbane, Australia on “Interdisciplinary approaches for language teaching and learning in contemporary and transnational spaces,” I invited her to put together a special issue of *L2 Journal* on the topic.

The switch from inter- to trans-disciplinary is a sign of the times. In the past two years, transdisciplinarity has become a popular concept in Applied Linguistics. It is featured prominently in the lead article of the 100th anniversary issue of the *Modern Language Journal*, co-authored by the Douglas Fir Group, under the title “A transdisciplinary framework for SLA in a multilingual world” (*MLJ*, 100(S1), 19–47). It is the theme of the next annual meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics in Portland, Oregon in March 2017, and it will be featured there at a joint AAAL/AILA colloquium on “Transdisciplinarity in Applied Linguistics.” So what is transdisciplinarity?

Julie has to be commended for putting together an exciting special issue that tries to embrace a slippery concept as tantalizingly fruitful as it is difficult to pinpoint. For the term ‘transdisciplinarity,’ as Julie recognizes, means different things to different people. In this issue, it can mean the crossing of disciplines and is in this sense synonymous with ‘interdisciplinarity,’ but it can also mean the crossing of linguistic codes, and it is then synonymous with ‘translation’ and ‘translanguaging.’ It can mean the crossing of culture-specific pedagogies or representations of self, and it is then synonymous with ‘interculturality’; or the crossing over from the classroom to the real world outside, and in this sense it is synonymous with ‘transmodality,’ ‘multilingualism,’ and ‘heteroglossia.’ What all these definitions have in common is an attempt to capture the diverse, hybrid, and in-between condition of language learners in today’s globalized world and the multidimensional uses of language that they will encounter both in and outside the classroom. Transdisciplinarity, then, one could say, is multidimensionality itself. The papers in this

special issue challenge us to think of the classroom, students, and teachers in multidimensional ways, despite the unidimensional pressure exerted by institutions, administrations, and academic tests. Transdisciplinarity thus conceived is a call for what has been recently termed ‘the entrepreneurship of the imagination’ (Adler, 2011; cited in Brodsky, 2016, p. 251). This special issue gives us an inkling of what such an entrepreneurship might entail.

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