

Rationale: Contributing to Sustainably Solving Wicked Real-World Problems Applied Linguistics and Transdisciplinarity

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Applied Linguistics (AL) has long considered itself a field that bridges the theory and practice of language learning and language use. Moreover, the last two decades have seen an explicit interest in so-called trans-perspectives (Hawkins & Mori, 2018). In our seminar, we focus on this transdisciplinary interplay of theory and practice, on transgressing and overcoming boundaries between domains and epistemes, and on collaboration with practitioners as real-world experts throughout research projects. Based on examples from complementary application fields, the presentation explains how and why such transdisciplinarity has driven and, most probably, will drive the development of AL (Perrin & Kramersch, 2018).

From the early 1970s, transdisciplinarity has been conceived of as a research framework in which existing epistemologies are combined and coordinated in order to generate new epistemologies on higher levels. It is mainly through this emergent outcome that research can be expected to contribute to solving “wicked” (Brown, Harris, & Russell, 2010) real-world problems. Such problems are densely interwoven with other problems and tend to persist because measures to solve them generate new problems. Sustainable solutions require creative, “innovative ways” of investigation, decision making, and implementation (Morales, 2017, 37).

Transdisciplinarity calls for applied linguists on two levels. First, on the object level of research, “[it] is hard to think of any ‘real-world’ problems – from global warming [...] to military intelligence – that do not have a crucial component of language use” (Myers, 2005, 527). Second, on the meta level of research, the “multi-stakeholder discourses” (Padmanabhan, 2018, 8) of real-world research always require “a kind of multilingualism” (Wertsch, Del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995, 3) enabled by applied linguists as mediators and translators. These are two good reasons to leverage insights from transdisciplinarity when developing projects in Applied Linguistics that matter for and in the future.

Brown, Valerie A., Harris, John A., & Russell, Jacqueline (2010). Tackling wicked problems through the transdisciplinary imagination. London: Earthscan.

Hawkins, Margaret R., & Mori, Junko (2018). Considering ‘trans-’ perspectives in language theories and practices. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 1–8.

Morales, Melita M. (2017). Creating the transdisciplinary individual. Guiding principles rooted in studio pedagogy. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, 6(1), 28–42.

Myers, Greg (2005). Applied linguists and institutions of opinion. *Applied Linguistics*, 26(4), 527–544.

Padmanabhan, Martina (2018). Introduction. Transdisciplinarity for sustainability. In Martina Padmanabhan (Ed.), *Transdisciplinary research and sustainability. Collaboration, innovation and transformation* (pp. 1–32). London: Routledge.

Perrin, Daniel, & Kramersch, Claire (2018). Transdisciplinarity in applied linguistics. Introduction to the special issue. *AILA Review*, 31.

Wertsch, James V., Del Rio, Pablo, & Alvarez, Amelia (1995). *Sociocultural studies of mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Objectives: Contributing to Sustainably Solving Wicked Real-World Problems Applied Linguistics and Transdisciplinarity

1. Theoretical knowledge

Based on theoretical insights in the field of Applied Linguistics and the research framework of transdisciplinarity, you are able to explain three main advantages and three main disadvantages of transdisciplinary approaches to investigating language use and communication in your field.

2. Practical skills

Based on knowledge transformation assignments as accomplished in our class, you are able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and risks of research scenarios (to be) developed in your PhD work and to decide for the most appropriate research strategy.

3. Scientific attitude

Based on your experience as a reflective research practitioner and our discussions in class, you are able to position yourself in the three-dimensional space of disciplinary depth, multidisciplinary breadth, and transdisciplinary integration and competencies – and to foreshadow consequences for your research career.