

Pracademics at the Intersection of Multilingualism and Transculturalism



Pracademics, or individuals who “occupy significant positions as both academics and practitioners” (Posner, 2009, p. 16), play a pivotal role at the crosshairs of multilingualism—the knowledge and use of multiple languages (European Commission, 2007); translanguaging—the practice in which individuals engage in sense-making using all of the language varieties available to them (Castro, 2020); and transculturalism—the dynamic and fluid navigation across communities (WIDA, 2021, 2023). As we examine the diverse contexts in which pracademics work, such as schools, districts, policy offices, and governance institutions, their potential to engage meaningfully with varied cultural and linguistic groups becomes apparent. As pracademics navigate the complexities of their dual roles as both practitioners and scholars, they

Some pracademic voices from the field

We asked teachers from different parts of the world to reflect on their views of pracademics as the intersection of practice and research, as well as their views of themselves as pracademics, and this is what they shared. Note: the following quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

Pracademics—The people

Dario from Argentina/UK

“Pracademics recognize their research is in response to/driven by practice, both others’ as well as their own. It is a powerful way of enacting reflective practices and not losing sight of teaching outside of universities.”

Araceli from Mexico

“Pracademics acknowledge the development and evolution of their work as teachers and researchers. It supports new identity formation during transition times. The current demands of the field have given way to more specialized processes that pracademics can explore.”

become uniquely positioned to address and respond to the intricate challenges within the aforementioned environments. Through this research brief, we seek to explore how pracademics can contribute to the rich intersection of multilingualism, translanguaging, and transculturalism.

We acknowledge that pracademics' unique dual expertise prepares them to face pressing, real-world challenges in the diverse education settings they encounter. Their experiences, often enriched by their own multilingual and transcultural backgrounds as well as the richness of the diverse language varieties in which they are immersed, deeply influence multiple contexts and learning dynamics. As pracademics deepen their understanding of the diverse modes of communication and the role of language development shaped by interaction, collaboration, and mutual understanding (WIDA, 2023), they find themselves facing complexities that can both inspire and constrain their contributions to the field. While some settings may readily support their initiatives, these are often hindered by systemic barriers including excessive workloads, limited funding, and insufficient research literacy—issues underscored in the [2024 TESOL Research Directions Report](#).

The intersection of multilingualism, translanguaging, and transculturalism offers a rich landscape for pracademics to examine the nuances of overlapping linguistic and cultural identities. This intersectionality provides a unique space where different identities and experiences emerge and must be understood in context, rather than in isolation (Varsik & Gorochovskij, 2023). This is further influenced by different movements exploring intersectionality and its influence on pedagogy (Crenshaw, 2016; Kwak, 2021). Supporting pracademics in teaching and learning spaces becomes essential, as their contributions extend beyond common instructional approaches to advanced practices that reduce linguistic exclusion and enhance the formation of learner identity (Edwards, 2009). Pracademics' unique perspectives also enable them to implement impactful strategies in language classrooms, emphasizing the linguistic and cultural assets of learners to foster language skills and cultural awareness. This is particularly relevant and significant in multilingual and transcultural classrooms where pracademics are instrumental to supporting positive identity formation and academic success among multilingual learners (Cummins, 2000). Finally, pracademics also play a vital role in building an evidence base that informs equitable instruction, promotes culturally responsive pedagogies, and demonstrates the integration of standards in ways that resonate with diverse learners.

Pracademics—The people

Ruth from Nigeria

"In 2019, I joined the Africa ELTA research mentoring program to tackle a persistent challenge in my classroom. Over the years, I have tried various methods to address this issue, but none seemed to offer lasting results. This experience reinforced the importance of research in teaching. I became more reflective and adaptive, using evidence-based strategies that were tailored to my students' needs. This not only improved my effectiveness as a teacher but also deepened my understanding of how to address classroom challenges. Engaging in research allowed me to explore innovative approaches, foster a mindset of lifelong learning, and create a dynamic classroom environment where both I and my students thrive."

Pracademics in Global and Local Multilingual and Transcultural Contexts

Across the globe, pracademics experience firsthand how multilingualism manifests in the classroom, offering not only learning opportunities, but also avenues to drive transformative views of language development influenced by sound teaching practices. In Europe, for instance, pracademics contribute valuable insights into the educational needs of immigrant and refugee learners, who often face challenges in language acquisition and academic adaptation (Sedmak et al., 2021). Similarly, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the coexistence of multiple languages and cultures, including Indigenous languages, provides pracademics with a valuable opportunity to study the complex dynamics of multilingualism and transculturalism. In Africa, pracademics' roles have become even more crucial, making professional learning a contextualized need of utmost relevance to teachers (Kuchah & Salama, 2022). As highlighted by Mendoza-Chirinos and Salas (2024), organizations like Africa ELTA foster pracademic roles by providing professional development and research initiatives that directly engage multilingual and transcultural educators. Meanwhile, in Asia, pracademics influence national language planning that seeks to balance local, regional, and national official languages with Indigenous and world languages, contributing to a robust and culturally informed educational framework (Sun & Rong, 2018). Within the United States, WIDA at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) provides pracademics—such as interns, WIDA fellows, and consultant teachers—with opportunities to directly impact the development of standards, assessments, and ongoing professional learning initiatives. These initiatives from around the world show a few of the many ways pracademics can and should engage in their communities to contribute knowledge, best practices, and valuable insights gained through their dual roles.

Pracademics—The field

Christelle from Cameroon

“In a world that is continuously evolving, I feel like I must stay on track. Engaging in professional activities outside the classroom makes me feel more than enough. Teaching goes beyond the classroom; it is a dynamic process and when you engage in professional activities, it makes you rethink your classroom activities and even rethink your professional goals. These activities make you gain confidence; they enhance your professional skills, broaden your horizons, and help you become a better person and teacher. These activities can sometimes help you meet people who were out of your reach, they can help you discover new places and have an impact on many people. It brings out the best in you.”

Ljerka from Croatia

“The job of the teacher in the classroom depends on several decisions taken while preparing lessons for the teaching process. Research fills the void by letting us look deeper into teaching and learning issues and get proper insights into the effect of our decisions on the overall outcome of our teaching.”

Advancing Pracademics' Impact

Our reflections underscore that pracademics are instrumental in equipping educators to address the challenges faced by multilingual and transcultural learners. As professional transcultural leaders ourselves, working in multilingual contexts and with multilingual colleagues, we are continuously involved in multiple local and global education spaces, and our lived experiences shape the views we introduce in this research brief. We also share views from pracademics working in other multilingual contexts, thus celebrating the diversity of voices in our teaching and learning spaces and bringing the experiences of transcultural and multilingual pracademics to the forefront.

We believe that by integrating a practitioner's lens with research-informed strategies, pracademics empowers teachers to create meaningful and culturally sensitive learning spaces where linguistic diversity is celebrated, and learners' backgrounds are recognized and valued every day. What can pracademics do to continue advancing their impact in the field? They should

- Collaborate with fellow local and global pracademics working to align theory and practice
- Develop and implement frameworks that provide field-based insights into multilingualism and transculturalism
- Utilize resources that blend practical and research-based approaches and share them in collaborative settings to enhance classroom practice
- Foster communities of pracademics that empower teachers to expand their own academic and practitioner identities

Promoting the organization of a dedicated space that fosters collaboration, the exchange of ideas, and advancement in the field is crucial for pracademics to thrive alongside other practitioners and researchers. Their unique transcultural and multilingual identities are vital to shaping inclusive, effective practices that address current and future education challenges. We advocate for those interested in joining us to create these thriving communities where pracademics lead the way in advancing language education!

Pracademics—The field

Graciela from Argentina

"A virtuous encounter that lets us test theories, ask new questions, push boundaries, and improve our understanding and our work by learning from each other. It is a dynamic space where theories and real classroom needs come together. It's a win-win: education is elevated, which benefits our learners."

Valentina from Paraguay

"Pracademics is crucial to bridging the worlds of professional practice and academia. It provides invaluable support to both communities."

Miguel from El Salvador

"Pracademics in its combination of practical experience and research addresses critical issues in the academic education field."

About the Authors

As researcher for WIDA Español, **Grazzia Maria Mendoza Chirinos** facilitates research processes. In addition, she contributes to the design of professional development resources through innovation, contextualization during implementation, and the promotion of complex, consistent, and quality research.

As a researcher and Chair of the TESOL International Association Research Professional Council, **Amira Salama** from the American University Cairo, in Egypt, facilitates and enables research directions. In addition, she contributes to the understanding of inclusive professional and educational settings.

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