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Breaking deficit views through a "language as resource" orientation: One teacher's journey of shifting lenses

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Abstract

In this paper, we illuminate the powerful shift in one teacher's understanding of "language as a problem" to "language as a resource". Drawing on the concepts of "language as resource" (Ruiz, 1984), "multilingual resources" (French, 2016), and "acts of reciprocity" (Windle et al., 2023), we analyse critical events shaping one teacher's development of the LAR orientation across a seven-year period from initial teacher education into the early career years of teaching. Our findings show how the LAR orientation can be a productive starting point to help teachers develop an asset-based orientation towards language. We conclude by calling attention to the significant need in teacher education for initiatives and practices that foster "collaborative creations of power" (Cummins, 2000). Given the centrality of multilingual realities in the classroom, supporting a new generation of teachers to leverage language as a resource is essential to engage in responsive teaching in an increasingly diverse and inequitable world.

Keywords: *Acts of reciprocity; language as resource; multilingual pedagogies; multilingual resources; teacher education.*

Introduction

In Australia, initial teacher education (ITE) programs are under pressure to equip pre-service teachers with responsive teaching practices (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2022). With over 600,000 students across all year levels of schooling who are learning English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) from various backgrounds (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2022), the superdiversity characterising Australian classrooms has seen multilingualism increasingly become the norm rather than the exception (Cross et al., 2022). This has seen calls for all teachers to enact multilingual pedagogies that recognise and leverage students' linguistic resources as vital for learning (Catalano & Hamann, 2016; de Jong & Gao, 2022). However, the ability of teachers to respond to this mandate remains challenging. One challenge is the dominance of monolingual ideologies within the Australian school system, which tends to overlook and undervalue students' languages as a valuable resource for learning (D'warte, 2024). These entrenched ideologies make it difficult for teachers to embrace multilingual pedagogies in monolingual environments. Even for teachers who reject the monolingual mindset, a compounding challenge is the lack of explicit guidance showing teachers how to enact multilingual pedagogies that leverage students' cultural and linguistic resources for learning. To address these challenges, our study seeks to show how teachers can reframe deficit ideologies and enact multilingual practices that draw on students' linguistic and cultural resources through the 'language-as-a-resource' (LAR) orientation. Based on Richard Ruiz's (1984) orientations to language planning, an LAR orientation emphasises that all students and teachers "bring all kinds of developed skills and capacities to classrooms that are assets to those learners and their classmates if we enable them to function as such" (Catalano & Hamann, 2016, p. 275). Recognition of these resources is vital to equipping teachers to address both the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' dimensions of multilingualism necessary for learning (Heugh, 2018). Horizontal multilingual practices, where speakers engage their entire linguistic repertoire to negotiate meaning-making, serve as a crucial bridge to vertical multilingual practices involving the more formal, outcome-based domains that support students' development of school literacies and academic English (Heugh, 2018).

Efforts to prepare teachers in Australia to fully realise the potential of LAR has seen educators build teachers' understandings through explicit training in translanguaging pedagogy (Dutton & Rushton, 2021; Ollerhead, 2019), embedding a multilingual stance in teacher education programs (Turner et al., 2022) and implementing pedagogical interventions in the classroom. Examples of these interventions include language mapping (D'warte et al., 2021; Slaughter & Cross, 2021), language portraits (Dutton & Rushton, 2021), and language trajectory grids (Choi & Slaughter, 2021), which seek to build teachers' understandings of how students' linguistic resources can be leveraged for learning. However, an emerging body of research in Australia shows the difficulties of pre-service and in-service teachers shifting away from monolingual ideologies and practices to recognise and leverage students' language resources for learning (French, 2016; Ollerhead, 2019; Turner et al., 2022). In the first study conducted by French (2016), it was found that in-service teachers' rejection of students' multilingual resources was linked to dominant monolingual ideologies, where teachers failed to acknowledge the

legitimacy of students' multilingual identities and language practices. The common response to students' multilingual practices was passive acceptance, where teachers would accept their use of multilingual resources but felt like they were unable to convert this attitude into purposeful pedagogy. Similarly, in Ollerhead's (2019) study, pre-service teachers trained in elements of translanguaging pedagogy across a 9-week course noted challenges in implementing language-based pedagogical strategies. It was found that up until students' engagement in translanguaging in their coursework, pre-service teachers who had been educated in a monolingual education system did not consider connecting and leveraging students' language resources in the classroom for learning. Despite this, Ollerhead's (2019) study showed how teacher educators could foster asset-based approaches to language. This included creating pedagogical opportunities for meaning-making and modelling how teachers can draw upon learners' semiotic resources. In Turner et al.'s (2022) study, these pedagogical opportunities were explicitly embedded in an elective unit focused on building a multilingual stance. Whilst pre-service teachers were able to develop a positive attitude towards students' linguistic diversity, it was found that this was not necessarily sufficient for pre-service teachers to view language as a resource for learning. Pre-service teachers still needed to be convinced that an asset-based approach to language was beneficial. These findings suggest that although teacher education programs in Australia are working to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to challenge deficit language ideologies and enact multilingual pedagogies, a gap remains in the literature understanding how teachers can fully realise the value in "language as a resource" for learning.

As Catalano and Hamann (2016) remind us, teachers need more than appropriate tools—they need "a change in mindset so that they are able to face the challenges of the multilingual classroom with more resources both professionally and personally" (Mejía & Hélot, 2015, p. 278). Until teachers can see how dominant deficit ideologies can be countered with resource-oriented approaches that meaningfully leverage students' funds of knowledge for learning, we can expect them to be ill equipped to respond to students' multilingualism and default to prevailing monolingual practices. The LAR orientation offers an approach yet to be fully realised in how teachers can challenge deficit language ideologies and be equipped with multilingual pedagogies to respond to the needs of multilingual learners. Our aim in this study is to consider the value of the LAR orientation for language and literacy teachers and how this can be developed with pedagogical implications in mind for teacher education. We draw on the concepts of "language as resource" (Ruiz, 1984), "multilingual resources" (French, 2016), and "acts of reciprocity" (Windle et al., 2023) to analyse how one teacher was able to see the value of the LAR orientation and embrace this over the period of her training and in schools. Through various artefacts and dialogic reflections between this teacher and her former university teacher educator, we examine the value and development of the LAR orientation for language and literacy teachers and conclude with pedagogical implications for teacher development in the space of ITE. Our work seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What is the value of the LAR orientation for language and literacy teachers to engage in responsive teaching?
- How can language and literacy teachers develop a "language as resource" orientation?

- What pedagogical considerations are helpful in ITE and the early career years for teachers to build and sustain the LAR orientation?

Conceptual framework

This study is grounded in the concepts of "language as resource", "multilingual resources", and "acts of reciprocity". The work of Ruiz (1984) remains influential in multilingual education for examining how language related ideologies influence educational practices and policies. Ruiz' framework distinguishes between three orientations — the *language-as-problem* orientation, which views linguistic diversity as a challenge to be managed; the *language-as-right* orientation, which focuses on the right to not be discriminated against on the basis of language and advocates for one's home language in schools; and the *language-as-resource* orientation, which seeks to reframe language away from deficit perceptions to being viewed as an asset. The LAR orientation offers a transformative lens for reshaping how teachers understand and respond to leveraging students' multilingualism in the classroom. Given how linguistic diversity is often seen as a problem in need of remediation within the Australian school system (D'warte, 2024), the LAR orientation can empower teachers to challenge and reframe deficit language ideologies to more expansive views of language. In recent years, the LAR orientation has been expanded to the "multilingualism as a resource" orientation (de Jong et al., 2019). This extension recognises that it is multilingualism rather than proficiency in one language that becomes a resource, not only for learning but across six other dimensions: intellectual, cultural, economic, social, citizenship and language rights (Lo Bianco, 2001). The LAR orientation therefore not only involves challenging deficit perspectives of language. It requires teachers to also recognise and build upon students' multilingual resources for what they already know and how this can be leveraged across the curriculum. In this paper, we draw on the work of French (2016) and how multilingual resources can be conceptualised expansively to include:

1. knowledge of linguistic features such as text structure, grammar and vocabulary in two or more languages;
2. the ability to compare and contrast linguistic features of different languages;
3. cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication skills including interpreting and translating;
4. an understanding of cultural practices;
5. conceptual knowledge learnt through different languages; and
6. multiple ways of learning and being a student. (p. 298)

This conceptualisation can empower teachers to engage in the LAR orientation by considering how dynamic linguistic, cultural connections and learning practices can be resources leveraged for learning. Especially for teachers who may have multilingual ties but do not necessarily see themselves as multilingual, it is important to facilitate deeper understandings of language that goes beyond restrictive, narrow views of 'proficiency' in standardised linguistic systems. An expansive understanding of 'multilingual resources' can help teachers fully realise the LAR

orientation, where they can recognise their own power and agency to challenge deficit language ideologies and leverage students' multilingual resources for learning.

We draw on the work of Windle et al. (2023) to understand how the LAR orientation can be developed through "acts of reciprocity". These acts involve two-way consensual conversations centred around the exchanging information, translating knowledge, building conviviality or expressing care and hope (Windle et al., 2023, p. 584). In creating an interactional, humanising space for relationship building and dialogic engagements, acts of reciprocity are significant to our research as they serve as the medium through which the LAR orientation can develop. As "shared knowledge is never void of relationships but always located in the development of them" (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017, p. 375S), we seek to understand how the LAR orientation emerges within these relational processes. Understanding the role of acts of reciprocity in the development of the LAR orientation can challenge the hierarchical dynamics of "coercive power relations" to generate "collaborative relations of power" (Cummins, 2000).

As mentioned earlier, it is important to help teachers counter dominant deficit ideologies through the LAR orientation and empower them with expansive conceptualisations of how students' multilingual resources can become resources for learning. In our study, we focus on how the LAR orientation can be developed through acts of reciprocity for teachers to be equipped to do this work.

Methodology

Dialogic restorying

Drawing upon the recent work of Rieker and Johnson (2023), "dialogic restorying" is a relational method focused on revisiting and reinterpreting past experiences through dialogue to inform present and future professional growth. This approach is well suited for exploring teachers' development of orientations such as LAR, as it allows for teachers' experiences to be revisited, reframed, and reconceptualised to offer longitudinal insights. Dialogic restorying involves continuous, iterative reflection. It involves a collaborative reconstruction of past experiences through structured dialogue between participants, which can allow for new interpretations and understandings to emerge.

Research context and participants

Author 1 (Cat) was a student in the TESOL specialisation of the Master of Teaching program and maintained an informal mentor–mentee relationship with an experienced educator, Author 2 (Julie) from 2018 to 2019 at a university in Australia. Their collaboration extended into Cat's employment at a secondary school in 2020. The dialogs presented are an amalgamation of various engagements across seven years (2018-2024), stemming from Cat's ITE to early career years (see Table 1). While many experiences in the relationship are included in the timeline to

highlight their impact on Cat's professional growth, some events were omitted from the dialogs to maintain focus on engagements relevant to the research questions.

Table 1

Timeline of key engagements in Cat's teaching journey from 2018 to 2024

Year	Key engagements
2018 Pre-service Year 1	• Completed Language Portrait 1 (see Figure 1) • Whiteboard incident: Arguments • Placement incident: Modals • Coffee catch up
2019 Pre-service Year 2	• Completed Language Portrait 2 (see Figure 2) • Placement Incident: "Dive" • *Volunteered in language & literacy workshops* • *Conference Presentation: Co-presented and collaborated on EAL/D presentation* • *Writing collaboration: Commenced planning for a co-authored paper*
2020 In-service Year 1	• Completed Language Portrait 3 (see Figure 3) • Informal mentor/mentee check ins • *In-school professional development workshops: Co-planned workshops for teachers*
2021 In-service Year 2	• *Supervised research: Commenced formal studies in research* • *Teacher Research Grant: Applied and won teacher research grant* • *Conference Presentation: Co-presentation of research at national and international conference*
2022 In-service Year 3	• Collaborative action research project on argumentative texts
2023 In-service Year 4	• Received modals note from student • Poster presentation: Created resource for TESOL students (see Figure 4)
2024 In-service Year 5	• Classroom collaboration: Writing activity & K-dramas activity • *Conference Presentation: Co-presentation of paper at international conference*

Note. Blue text refers to events referenced in dialogs; black text highlights excluded events.

Data collection and dialogic process

Our data consisted of email exchanges between Cat and Julie over the period of seven years (2018–2024), reflective notes from informal meetings, teaching artefacts such as classroom materials and language portraits, as well as documentation from collaborative projects.

The dialogic restorying process involved three phases:
1. Initial documentation: Cat and Julie first documented their remembered experiences and interactions in a shared online document, focusing on key moments in Cat's development as a teacher.
2. Collaborative dialogue: Through a series of structured conversations, Cat and Julie explored these experiences together. During these dialogues, Julie acted as a mediator, asking questions that helped surface new understandings about how Cat's orientation toward language as a resource evolved over time.

3. Narrative construction: We then crafted these dialogues into three narrative episodes that trace Cat's journey:
    - Reflecting on language portraits to see perceptions of 'language
    - Experiencing language as a resource in the classroom
    - Sharing precious moments together

These narratives represent a synthesis of multiple interactions, emails, and conversations, reconstructed through collaborative dialogue to illuminate key aspects of Cat's developing understanding of language as a resource.

Analytical approach

To maintain the richness of the dialogs and its relational aspects, we employed the dialogic restorying process itself as the analytical approach. This process began by identifying key moments in Cat's narrative episodes which illustrated a shift in her understandings of language. These moments subsequently were reviewed by through collaborative dialogue to trace changes in Cat's understandings over time, and the relational processes supporting this development. Through this process, we were guided by the conceptual framework to capture how Cat's understanding of the LAR orientation and multilingual resources evolved through various experiences and interactions to answer the research questions.

Restoried dialogs

Part 1: Reflecting on language portraits to see perceptions of "language"

In the exchanges below, Cat and Julie begin the process of dialogic restorying. It starts with an email where Cat reflects on her growing understandings of the LAR orientation. Cat then retraces critical incidents during her ITE period through her language portraits, analysing how her perceptions of language have shifted to come to new understandings of the LAR orientation.

> *(Extract of an email Cat sent to Julie on 6 Jun 2024 after doing a writing activity with her secondary students on their experiences with writing for an upcoming assessment)*
>
> "… As I work through our paper and deficit language ideologies, I'm reminded how I often think in deficit ways when reading my students' work. Leila sees her own vocabulary as limited, Sophie has been told that she 'sucks' at writing, Brett feels like he gets stuck in his words. Yet, my stance towards my students and their resources is crucial. I'm only just realising that I have agency to be creating tasks in this space. I need to find more opportunities to affirm what they have, leverage these funds of knowledge and equip them with the tools that they need to do this work. It's really weird – it's like this whole 'language as resource' orientation is really helping me think about my own students differently."

Julie: This activity and transformation are powerful Cat. We have worked on many projects over the past five years and it seems like it's all these ideas we've discussed are coming together for you and you're finally able to make classroom connections. I'm curious to learn more about 'agency' and 'drawing on students' funds of knowledge' that you seem to be realising.

Cat*:* It's been difficult realising my agency to draw on students' funds of knowledge, despite learning so much in TESOL about the importance of students' linguistic and cultural identities. I really didn't understand how to enact this work in the classroom, particularly when there was so much 'pushed out' in training and the transition into teaching was overwhelming (remember COVID?!). It was hard to know where to start. However, your concern for my wellbeing and limited professional development at the time channeled my frustrations into collaborative projects. Over time, this helped me see my agency to draw on students' funds of knowledge in the classroom. As I go back through different artefacts such as my language portraits, I've started to understand why it's taken me such a long time to make these classroom connections. In 2018, when you first asked me to complete the first language portrait in TESOL (see Figure 1), I remember being confused as to why I had to colour in languages instead of learning how to teach language. This seemed like a "fun-get to know you" activity but I couldn't see how students' cultural and linguistic knowledges related to learning. I started the portrait by shading my entire body blue as English was the only language I was proficient in. As I coloured, I noticed that everyone else's portrait looked lively and vibrant, yet my own felt so empty. I decided to represent the role of Vietnamese on my body by tracing an inner outline and shading it yellow. I thought of my Vietnamese as being too broken to be useful for anything so I wanted to keep it hidden. I coloured my ears and fingers in a darker blue to show the minimal Cantonese I heard at home from picking up the phone. When my classmates asked about the box, I told them it was nothing special – just the food I ate.
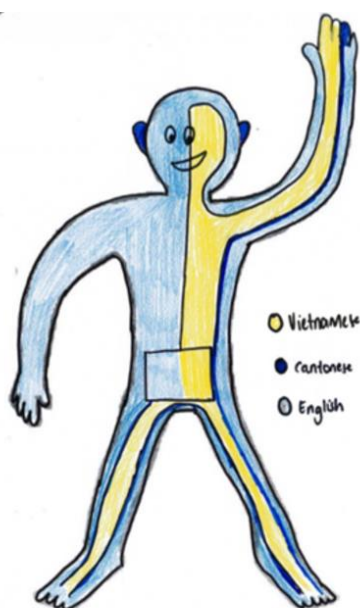

Figure 1
Cat's 2018 Language Portrait completed in TESOL class

After our classes ended, I read your book about all the ways in which your languages and identities were positioned. It made me think about my own positionings towards English and Vietnamese. I decided to use the language portrait as an opportunity to explore the role of Vietnamese in my own identity (see Figure 2). It was common for me to hide my Vietnamese background to others, including my own students as I felt like they would think less of me. In the portrait, I started to think about the different spaces in which I was positioned (Vietnamese: at home, church; English: university, work, and school). I then wrote comments as to how people would position me, such as elders "Oh, you speak Vietnamese so well!", school friends "You don't talk like most Asian girls… you sound wog", and my own students "Are you Thai? Cambodian? Filipino?; She's Asian so she must be smart!". I put a question mark around my heart as I didn't know what to do with all these positionings.
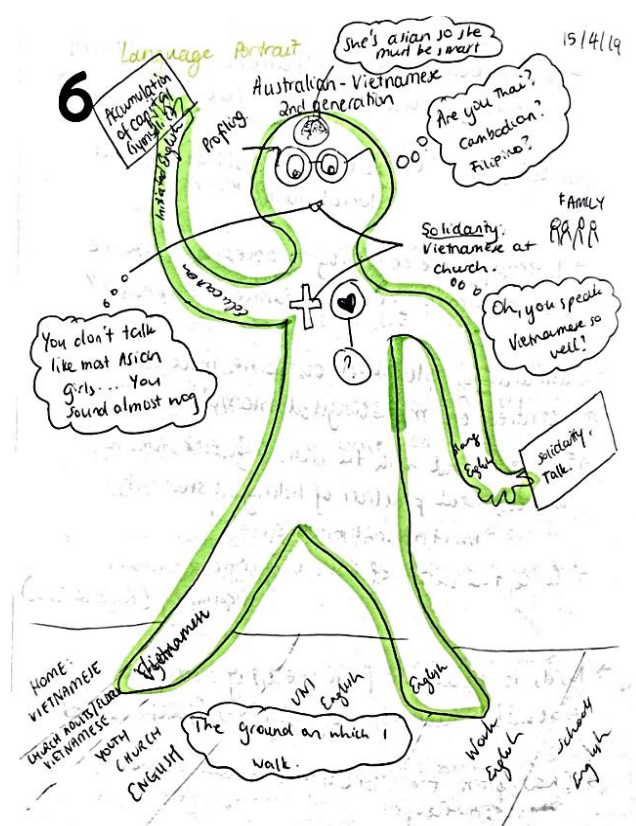

Figure 2
Cat's 2019 Language Portrait completed in personal journal

In my last portrait, when I tried to do this work with my own students (see Figure 3), I openly shared with them my Vietnamese background. They too poured out their lifeworlds to me. When you asked me what I'd end up doing with these portraits, it fell in the "too-hard" basket. Even though you provided me guidance on activities I could do with my students to reflect on their languages and identities, I struggled to build on their funds of knowledge as I was just so overwhelmed as a beginning teacher.

Figure 3
Cat's 2020 Language Portrait modelled to students

Our recent discussions on the LAR orientation have made me realise now how I couldn't see my own agency or draw on students' funds of knowledge without any conceptions of language. Up until my training, I've never been asked to wrestle with language and its relationship to identity, particularly given my education in a monolingual system. I can see now how I embodied the "language as problem" orientation unashamedly – the prominence of English stands in stark contrast to the non-English resources in my portrait (see Figure 1). Even though you challenged these deficit ideologies in our TESOL classes through concepts such as translanguaging and "taking a multilingual stance", I needed iterative opportunities for reflection to recognise how these perceptions of language have shaped me and how I see my students. In my second portrait (see Figure 2), I can now see just how internalised these "language as problem" positionings were. Whilst reading about your experiences served as a helpful prompter to think about language positionings at the time, our critical dialogic reflections have pushed me to interrogate the assimilationist and binary discourses around my multilingual resources. Through these reflections, I've started to challenge notions like "language as a system" to unlearn deficit ideologies, where I am now able recognise my own multilingual resources. As I look back on my language portraits (see Figure 1), even if I didn't understand "language", I could still draw on whatever multilingual resources I had at the time, such as the cultural practices (the "kinds of food" that one eats); or certain cross cultural and cross linguistic acts that I experienced such as ("picking up the phone"). Recognising these multilingual resources now makes me think how activities such as identity texts can be valuable for developing understandings of language, especially when expansive conceptualisations of language are made known. In my case, the concept of "multilingual resources" served as an entry point for me to see this explicitly. However, these activities weren't enough for me to develop agency and understandings of how to draw on students' funds of knowledge. As you can see, it involved sustaining our relationship over a lengthy period of time, multiple opportunities for iterative reflection and critical dialogs to eventually develop these realisations.

Part 2: Experiencing language as a resource in the classroom

In the next set of restoried experiences, Cat elaborates two critical incidents—one involving a student and the other involving a teacher during her placement. The first incident illustrates Cat's consciousness-raising of language as a *resource* in action, where Cat starts to recognise her own multilingual resources as a resource in supporting a student. The second incident relates to consciousness-raising of *language* itself, where Cat reflects on her struggle to grasp the concept of "language as a resource" in the absence of foundational language knowledge and difficulties connecting language to meaning-making.

Julie: I recall asking the TESOL students just before heading into placement to keep some notes on any multilingual encounters experienced. I remember you had a really interesting revelation. Can you remind me about that incident and how it impacted on your understanding of coming to see "language as a resource"?

Cat: I almost forgot you asked me to do that! After reading your book, I emailed you my reflections, and you suggested collaborating on a paper about what I was learning in the field. For my upcoming placement, you encouraged me to note anything interesting related to multilingualism. I happened to be assigned to an English class with many Vietnamese students, and one particular student struggled to understand a key event in a novel. He didn't know what the word "dive" meant. I had trouble explaining the term in English, so I thought I'd have a go at using Vietnamese. I didn't know what the Vietnamese word for dive was. I just put my hands together and uttered the word, "bơi" (which meant 'swim'). I will never forget his face lighting up as he immediately yelled out "lặn" (dive). I'd never heard that word before, but at that moment, I understood it. Through Vietnamese, the student and I reached a depth of understanding that wouldn't have been possible if we had just used English. When I told you about this incident at the time, you helped me see students' different levels of language and literacy knowledge, their "readiness" to use their home language in school, and my fear of helping students due to my lack of Vietnamese. But I didn't fully grasp this as leveraging students' "funds of knowledge" at the time; I simply saw it as an experience to use my non-English resources in a school context.

In coming back to this incident now with what I've learnt about language as a resource, I can see *how* Vietnamese can be a resource for students when used purposefully in the classroom. Even one Vietnamese word (and the wrong one) could help a student access key information. Revisiting these encounters now has helped me think differently about my own multilingual resources – what I believed to be this broken, fragmented language could actually help someone. I feel like I am able to now realise the depths of what you were trying to say back then about students' experiences, their readiness and knowledges as a starting point, especially when I can see more of how I understand language. As I look back at my second language portrait (see Figure 2), I questioned my heart because I didn't know how my broken Vietnamese could help anyone. Now, I know it can. I just don't think I could make these connections at the

time as a teacher candidate in training as I was actually more worried about my lack of language knowledge and fearful of being "caught out" during placement.

Julie: Oh tell me more about that sense of fear or imposture?

Cat: Do you remember that whiteboard incident in the first few weeks of class? You got us into groups and asked us to deconstruct the functions of an argument. We could only identify a conjunction. I left that day feeling quite upset that I was specialising as a language teacher without any language knowledge. Eventually, I got caught out. On placement, I had an embarrassing interaction with an English teacher I was about to observe.

> *Teacher: Cat, do you know what modals are?*
> *Cat: Umm… I'll be honest, I haven't heard the term before.*
> *Teacher: WHAT?! I can't believe you don't know what modals are. We're covering it with the Year 8's today, so hopefully you'll get it by the end of class.*

I was ashamed.

I considered dropping out of TESOL then, but I remembered your offer to the class that anyone could have coffee with you and discuss anything related to the subject. Students rarely had coffee with their lecturers but you felt friendly and approachable. In our chat, you unpacked these incidents, showing how my lack of linguistic knowledge could be traced back to my education in the Australian schooling system and its failure to teach language explicitly. You also gave me practical recommendations and readings to grow in language knowledge and I left our conversation feeling genuinely cared for, excited and committed to TESOL. Looking back, these incidents were significant for me to see what I didn't know — if I was to be a language teacher, I needed more than one conjunction.

Don't get me wrong, I still find language knowledge challenging. What really helped me grapple with it was when we collaborated on an action research project in 2022 to analyse students' writing in an argumentative text. I learnt so much about the passive/active voice, hedging and booster words, and modals in Legal Studies, yet teaching them at the time however felt so decontextualised. Lately, as we've spoken more about this 'language as resource' concept, I've started to realise why– it was because I couldn't connect language to meaning-making. It finally clicked how lawyers use modals, hedges and boosters to assert or leave room for doubt! A few weeks ago, when I shared with you this incident and my learnings about my own multilingual resources through this paper, you suggested that I consider drawing in texts from students' worlds such as K-dramas to show differences in argumentation across cultures. My students loved watching different court scenes to compare how different language features were used, and I could see them get excited about the power of language. I remember how you used to emphasise in TESOL about the importance of being able to communicate our "meaning" and the many ways we can do so, but it didn't really sink in then because I couldn't connect language to meaning-making.

This conceptual framework is helping me realise just how much time I needed to see "language as a resource". I needed to reflect on encounters that could shift my understandings of language from a deficit to an asset-based perspective. I needed a "knowledgeable other" to help me unpack incidents and realise language as my core expertise. I needed pedagogical guidance as to how language operated in my area before I could see it as a resource for meaning making. I couldn't have realised the depths of language as a resource and my agency to enact tasks that connect to students' lifeworlds without these foundations of trust, care and support from our relationship over time, Julie. It's been a key part in building my interest and commitment to "do more" to leverage students' lifeworlds and their resources, as noted in my opening email. I don't know if I've told you this, but when one of my former students graduated, they gave me a card that took me by surprise. They wrote, "Something that has stuck with me for some reason was when you taught us the importance of modality in writing." From having no idea what a modal was to learning so much about language and my own multilingual resources, I owe a lot to our relationship for what it has taught me about my agency to leverage students' funds of knowledge for learning.

Part 3: Sharing precious moments together

In this final set of restoried dialogs, the focus shifts to Julie reflecting on what she has learned from working closely with Cat over the years. Julie shares how closely working alongside an early career teacher has deepened her understanding of pre-service teachers' readiness to absorb orientations like LAR and the challenges teachers face enacting this orientation in schools.

Cat: I'm curious, Julie. What has this experience been like for you? You've been part of my journey over the past seven years watching me make these connections and eventually move this work into my own classroom. How has being alongside me shaped you and the way you train future teachers?

Julie: 🫨 Gosh, where do I start? I have learned so much about how idealistic academics/teacher educators can be when they aren't working closely with teachers or listening carefully to their learners. Allowing me in as a partner in your journey has given me so much insight into the time it takes, the need for a variety of opportunities, and ongoing support for graduate students and beginning teachers to understand the powerfulness of orientations like "language as a resource". Through big or little transformations from our projects, I often go back to my syllabus design adding in new readings that pre-service teachers can better relate to, create more nuanced tasks that draw out their understandings at different points in their journeys, and work on sequencing topics in ways that are more realistic for them to absorb. Being able to follow the becoming of a teacher's journey over five years through the many projects we have been involved in, is a rare opportunity. It allows me to understand what is realistic in terms of what new teachers can absorb, what actually matters to them, and to the field in these early years. I also really like examining students' writing samples you sometimes ask me to look at. With your students' permissions, as you know, I also turn these into tasks for

my pre-service teachers to analyse in class. I also ask you to help make posters for instance outlining the challenges of enacting "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies" in schools based on your experience (see Figure 4).
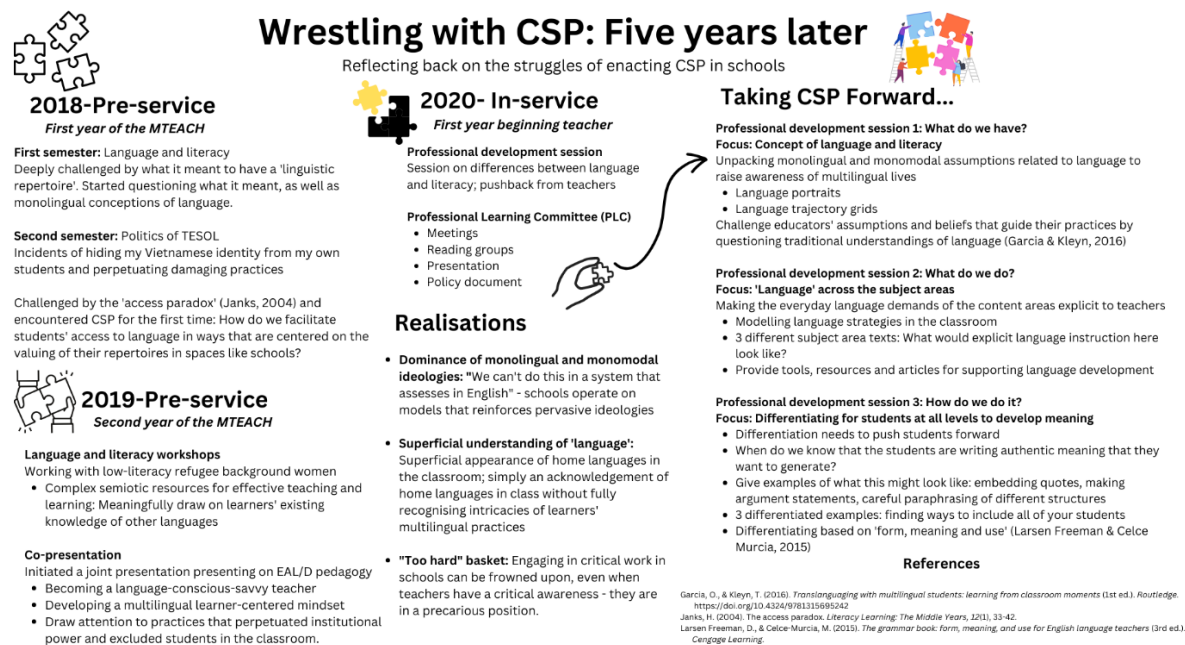

Figure 4

Cat's poster presentation reflecting on challenges implementing culturally sustaining pedagogies in schools

All of these materials are valuable teaching resources for pre-service teachers who gain a first-hand look into the challenges they are likely to face. Pre-service teachers like to hear directly from teachers in the field and in that sense I'm less of someone who has authority of what teachers need to understand about the realities of classrooms today and more of a bridge that links them to "real" teachers' concerns on the ground.

In the end, when teachers are looking back, it's things like "identity texts", critical moments with students, moments of fear and shame, as you pointed out in your reflections here, that "stick" with them. So you see, every dialog is valuable learning for me and opportunities for me to think about how to improve the learning experience for new teachers who may have similar experiences. Hearing about your history, what knowledge you feel you lack and your fears about for instance being "caught out" makes me more empathetic and non-judgemental towards my current students' starting points. I feel like I am becoming more "level-headed", a better listener, and these are valuable traits to develop if we are to try to build the kind of "collaborative relations of power" that Jim Cummins proposes for real transformations in language education. Even though I have known about this concept for many years now, I think I too am only coming to really understand the essence of what "collaborative relations of power"

means through our relationship building work over the years. I worry that I am gaining more than you are in our relationship but reading your reflections above, I can see we have been "co-learning, co-planning, and co-shifting" all along (Pontier & Tian, 2024). It's been a joyful learning experience for me and I'm excited about life after this paper! 😄

Discussion

In this section, we reflect on our findings to discuss our research questions which focus on the value and the development of the LAR orientation for teachers to engage in responsive teaching. We conclude with pedagogical considerations we believe are helpful in ITE and the early career years to sustain this orientation.

The value and development of the LAR orientation

In tracing Cat's seven-year journey through ITE into the early career years, this study reveals the value of the LAR orientation in expanding her understandings of language. This allowed Cat to discover her own histories of deficit discourses surrounding her multilingual resources. This raised awareness of both her own and students' multilingual resources as valuable funds of knowledge that could be leveraged in the classroom. Our analysis of Cat's journey shows how the development of an LAR orientation is a long and complex process. The process can be traced to various methods of iterative reflection, collaborative research projects, and critical dialogs, which made visible Cat's meaning-making resources, cultural experiences and identity negotiations over time. These dimensions played a fundamental role in Cat recognising the transformative potential of the LAR orientation in her own teaching and the lives of her students. Julie's support as Cat's mentor beyond her training was crucial to her developing understandings of the LAR orientation. In return, Cat deepened Julie's insights of pre-service teachers' readiness to absorb orientations such as LAR. At a time where information is being pushed out to pre-service teachers in the name being "classroom ready" (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2022; Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2015), our findings raise concern for what teachers are ready to absorb. Our study shows how teachers need sustained opportunities for reflection tackling deficit language ideologies and contextual challenges. At the heart of these opportunities are "acts of reciprocity"—expressions of care, trust, listening and dialoguing in interactional spaces where teacher educators listen and become learners with their own multilingual teachers, and for teachers to listen and learn from their own multilingual students (Windle et al., 2023). We conclude with pedagogical considerations for creating spaces within ITE and the early career years to build and sustain the LAR orientation.

Pedagogical considerations

Consideration 1: Provide a range of iterative opportunities for teachers to develop expansive conceptions of language.

For teachers like Cat who have been predominantly educated in a monolingual system, limited conceptions of language and internalised deficit language ideologies can hinder teachers' ability to see language as a resource. Providing iterative opportunities for teachers to build their understandings of language can open new contemplations and contingencies to help teachers recognise these resources in themselves and their students. Cat's ability to see her own multilingual resources served as a crucial entry point in this process. Through reflecting on artefacts such as language portraits and encounters on placement, Cat was able to question the linguistic boundaries of "language as a system" and experience an epistemological shift in her understandings of language through recognition of her own multilingual resources. This shift required iterative opportunities to document, reflect and critically dialog her understandings of language with a "more knowledgeable" other. It is important for teacher educators to understand students' linguistic identities and find ways to connect with these identities and histories, not just through language but through shared experiences. Sharing how one may perceive their own linguistic identities at a certain point in time and space can build teachers' conceptions of language and develop their "multilingual sensibilities"—the ability to appreciate and situate multilingual practices within different communicative contexts and recognise students' negotiations within these areas (Windle et al., 2023).

Consideration 2: Find moments to focus on language knowledge and the importance of meaning-making.

A TESOL specialisation is not necessarily an area where pre-service teachers bring subject matter knowledge about language. Bringing language knowledge explicitly to the attention of pre-service teachers, including the role of deficit language ideologies can play a significant role in developing teachers' understanding of language as their core expertise. To see language as a resource, teachers must understand how language is connected to meaning making. Without this understanding, teachers are at risk of defaulting to fragmented, prescriptive teaching (see Harper & Rennie, 2009) and reinforcing deficit views of language. As Cat's journey shows, when teachers enter the field, there may not be in-school professional development to help teachers develop language knowledge. Teachers need less top-down, checklist types of professional development and more implementation of infrastructures that allow for collaborative knowledge-building partnerships between initial teacher educators and teachers. When this focuses on unpacking deficit language ideologies, building teachers' explicit knowledge of language and how multilingual pedagogies can be incorporated in their practice, new possibilities will emerge for teachers to engage in responsive teaching.

Consideration 3: Building and sustaining collaborative relations of power through acts of reciprocity.

This study reveals how the LAR orientation was developed through acts of reciprocity between Cat and Julie, built on an assemblage of care, trust, support, both inside and outside the classrooms through storying, critical dialogs and collaborative research projects. Cat and Julie's dialogic restorying allow us to understand the depths of their interconnectedness, in

showing how their collaboration is woven with friendship connected to forces beyond the classroom walls. Considerations for how relational interactions can be built on "collaborative" not "coercive relations of power" are fundamental to decolonising approaches that build teachers' multilingual sensibilities to see "how language is a resource not just for instruction but for the lives students lead and for which our instruction is supposed to be an aid" (Catalano & Hamann, 2016, p. 272). These relational interactions are a pathway for "transformative praxis" (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017): where teachers and learners can find new ways of reflecting, questioning and reclaiming "the human" as they do critical work to leverage students' funds of knowledge in the classroom.

At a time where top-down interventions strip teachers of their agency to "make 'the machine' work better" (Savage, 2021), sustaining the human capacity to care, listen and dialog in an increasingly dehumanising environment is critical. Our work shows the power of meaningful dialogic relationships in creating humanising conditions for teachers to question dominant language ideologies, develop expansive understandings of language and implement asset-based pedagogical approaches for multilingual learners. This work needs to start with a careful understanding of teachers' realities and what they are ready to absorb, otherwise we will continue to see teachers ill-equipped to engage in responsive teaching.

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