

The Critical-Dynamic Paradigm: Synthesis and Contention in Bi/Multilingual Education, 2022-2025

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Abstract

This review synthesizes and interrogates contemporary scholarships in bi/multilingual education published between 2022 and 2025. It argues that the field is currently defined by a "Critical-Dynamic Paradigm," a central and productive tension between two competing yet interconnected forces. On one hand, there is a consolidation of dynamic, asset-based models of language, with translanguaging institutionalized as a core theoretical and pedagogical framework. On the other, there is a resolute critical turn, marked by a systematic reckoning with the enduring structures of power and social injustice that mediate the educational experiences of multilingual learners. This critical axis is most evident in the mainstreaming of Racio linguistics as an analytical lens, the scholarly preoccupation with the gentrification of dual-language education (DLE), and the study of practitioner agency in resisting restrictive language policies. This review maps this paradigm across theoretical shifts, sociopolitical contestations, and pedagogical innovations. It concludes that the central challenge and future direction of the field lie in resolving the dialectic between promoting holistic, progressive pedagogies and dismantling the systemic inequities that threaten to neutralize them.

Keywords: bilingual education, multilingualism, translanguaging, Racio linguistics, dual language education, language policy, social justice, Critical-Dynamic Paradigm

Introduction: The Maturation of the Multilingual Turn

The field of bi/multilingual education has transcended the initial celebratory phase of the "multilingual turn." The scholarship published and forthcoming between 2022 and 2025 signifies a new stage of maturity, characterized by profound theoretical consolidation and sharp critical self-examination. Literature no longer merely advocates for the cognitive and social benefits of bilingualism but instead engages in a more complex and contentious project. This review posits that the current state of the art is best understood through the lens of a "**Critical-Dynamic Paradigm.**"

This paradigm is defined by a fundamental dialectic. The "**dynamic**" pole represents the widespread adoption of fluid, holistic, and asset-based models of linguistic practice. Concepts like translanguaging, which honor the integrated linguistic repertoires of multilingual individuals, have moved from the theoretical vanguard to the pedagogical mainstream. The "**critical**" pole, however, represents an equally robust and urgent reckoning with the sociopolitical realities that constrain and racialize multilingual learners. This involves direct confrontation with systemic forces such as Racio linguistic ideologies, the

gentrification of bilingual programs, and the persistent legacy of colonial and assimilationist language policies.

This review will chart the contours of this Critical-Dynamic Paradigm across the key domains of contemporary scholarship. First, it examines the evolving theoretical landscape, showing how dynamic models of language are being institutionalized while simultaneously being sharpened by critical theories. Second, it delves into the primary sites of political and pedagogical contestation, focusing on dual language education and teacher preparation. Third, it analyzes key innovations in practice—particularly in assessment and technology as attempts to operationalize this new paradigm. Finally, it synthesizes these trends, analyzes their manifestation in global policy contexts, and proposes a future research agenda designed to bridge the chasm between the field's progressive ideals and the structural inequities of educational systems.

Theorizing the Critical-Dynamic: Translanguaging, Racio linguistics, and New Conceptual Models

The theoretical foundations of bi/multilingual education are undergoing a decisive consolidation. The scholarship of 2022-2025 demonstrates a clear consensus around dynamic, critically aware frameworks that seek to reflect the lived realities of multilingualism. This evolution is characterized by the institutionalization of translanguaging, the ascendancy of Racio linguistics as a core analytical tool, and the development of new holistic models.

Institutionalizing the Paradigm: Foundational Shifts

The forthcoming eighth edition of *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Wright & Baker, 2025) serves as a barometer for the field's intellectual center of gravity. Its comprehensive integration of **translanguaging pedagogy, Racio linguistics, and anti-racist education** signals that these concepts are no longer emergent but have been codified as core disciplinary knowledge. This revision confirms that a rigorous understanding of bilingual education is now inseparable from an analysis of how language is intertwined with racial hierarchies and how multilinguals dynamically deploy their full linguistic resources. This institutionalization is also evident in major reference works like *The Handbook of Dual Language Bilingual Education* (Freire et al., 2023), which situates these critical and dynamic perspectives as foundational to the design and analysis of DLE programs.

Translanguaging: The Pedagogical Axis of the Dynamic Turn

Translanguaging has evolved from a descriptive concept into the primary pedagogical manifestation of the dynamic pole of the paradigm. Current scholarship frames it not merely as a linguistic practice but as an act of **social justice** that directly challenges the Monoglossic ideologies embedded in traditional schooling (García, as cited in Freire et al., 2023; Poza, 2017). Recent volumes focus on operationalizing this theory for transformative practice. For example, Ramírez-Verdugo's (2024) work on transnational teacher education offers concrete strategies for integrating multimodal tools within a translanguaging framework. Concurrently, translanguaging is theorized as a form of **political resistance** as a means for agentive actors to challenge hegemonic language policies from the ground up (Manan & Hajar, 2025).

Racio linguistics: The Analytical Axis of the Critical Turn

Concurrent with the rise of dynamic models is the intensified application of **Racio linguistics**, which examines how language and race are co-constructed to create and sustain social hierarchies (Rosa &

Flores, 2017). This framework provides the analytical toolkit for the paradigm's critical pole. It is now being applied to interrogate mainstream educational models, most notably DLE, where scholars are calling for a more explicit accounting of how racialization operates within programs that are nominally designed for equity (Freire et al., 2023). This critical orientation reframes bilingual education as a crucial site for the decolonization of schooling and the struggle for social justice, a theme central to the festschrift honoring Terrence G. Wiley (Rolstad et al., 2025).

Emerging Holistic Frameworks

To capture the complexity of the Critical-Dynamic paradigm, scholars are proposing new conceptual models. Babatsouli's (2024) "ecosystemic" view theorizes language acquisition as a process embedded within a sociobiological ecosystem, demanding holistic assessments that integrate cognitive and environmental factors. On a more pedagogical level, the "Dominant Language Constellation" (DLC) model (Aronin et al., 2025) offers teachers a practical framework for visualizing and leveraging the specific, functional set of languages students actively use. These models represent attempts to create a unified praxis that is both critically aware and dynamically responsive.

Table 1: Key Recent and Forthcoming Monographs and Edited Volumes in Bi/Multilingual Education (2022-2025)

Title and Subtitle	Author(s)/Editor(s)	Publisher	Publication Year	Core Contribution to the Field
Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (8th Edition)	Wayne E. Wright & Colin Baker	Multilingual Matters	2025	A comprehensive update of the field's foundational textbook, institutionalizing contemporary concepts like translanguaging, Racio linguistics, and anti-racist education as core disciplinary knowledge.
The Handbook of Dual Language Bilingual Education	Juan A. Freire, Cristina Alfaro, & Ester J. de Jong (Eds.)	Routledge	2023	A state-of-the-art overview of Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE), integrating theoretical foundations with critical analyses of social justice issues like gentrification

				and Racio linguistics.
Overcoming the Gentrification of Dual Language, Bilingual and Immersion Education: Solution-Oriented Research and Stakeholder Resources for Real Integration	M. Garrett Delavan, Juan A. Freire, & Kate Menken (Eds.)	Multilingual Matters	2024	Moves beyond critique offer practical, solution-oriented strategies for educators and communities to resist the gentrification of DLE programs and recenter equity.
Agency in Multilingual Education Policy and Planning in Asia	Syed Abdul Manan & Anas Hajar (Eds.)	Routledge	2025	Explores how micro-level actors (teachers, students, administrators) in various Asian contexts navigate and resist top-down, often Anglo normative, language policies to create spaces for multilingualism.
Transnational Approaches to Bilingual and Second Language Teacher Education	M. Dolores Ramírez-Verdugo (Ed.)	Routledge	2024	Examine the challenges and opportunities of bilingual teacher education in globalized contexts, offering transnational frameworks for CLIL, translanguaging, and intercultural pedagogy.
The Assessment of Multilingual Learners: Supporting	Kate Mahoney	Multilingual Matters	2024	Provides a practical, asset-based framework (PUMI) for the equitable

English Language Learners (2nd Edition)				assessment of multilingual learners, challenging deficit-oriented practices and incorporating translanguaging.
Language Diversity, Policy and Social Justice: In Honor of Terrence G. Wiley	Kellie Rolstad, Wayne E. Wright, Na Liu, & Jeff MacSwan (Eds.)	Multilingual Matters	2025	A festschrift that encapsulates the critical turn in the field, focusing on heritage languages, language ideologies, and policy as sites for advancing social justice for minoritized populations.
Multilingual Acquisition and Learning: An Ecosystemic View to Diversity	Elena Babatsouli (Ed.)	John Benjamins	2024	Proposes a holistic, sociobiological "ecosystemic" model of language acquisition that integrates system-internal (cognitive) and system-external (social, environmental) factors.
Dominant Language Constellations for Teachers: A Practical Dimension	Larissa Aronin, Eva Vetter, & Nayr C. Ibrahim (Eds.)	Springer	2025	Introduces the "Dominant Language Constellation" (DLC) as a practical framework for teachers to understand and leverage the active, functional set of languages students use in multilingual environments.

Dual Language Education in the US: Rethinking Pedagogy, Curricula, and Teacher Education to Support Dual Language Learning for All	Pablo C. Ramírez & Christian J. Faltis (Eds.)	Routledge	2022	Focuses on innovative practices in DLE, with a strong emphasis on preparing "critically conscious" teachers who can promote social justice and harness multilingualism for academic success.
Language Teacher Identity Tensions: Nexus of Agency, Emotion, and Investment	Zia Tajeddin & Bedrettin Yazan (Eds.)	Routledge	2025	Addresses the socio-emotional dimensions of teaching in multilingual contexts, examining how teachers navigate tensions between their beliefs and institutional constraints to avoid burnout.
Social media and Language Learning: Using TikTok and Instagram	Yeong-Ju Lee	Routledge	2025	Investigates the underexplored area of informal language learning through multimodal social media platforms, applying an ecological perspective to understand these new learning environments.

Praxis and Contention: The Politics of the Multilingual Classroom

The translation of theory into practice is fraught with sociopolitical tension. Recent scholarship intensely focuses on the battlegrounds where asset-based pedagogies confront systemic inequities, revealing the profound challenges of implementing equitable models in inequitable systems.

The Gentrification of Dual Language Education: A Case Study in the Central Tension

The gentrification of DLE programs has emerged as a central preoccupation of the field, serving as a pri-

mary case study of the Critical-Dynamic paradigm in action. This phenomenon—whereby programs designed for language-minoritized students become co-opted by more privileged, English-dominant populations—epitomizes the clash between the promise of dynamic bilingualism and the peril of structural inequity. The volume *Overcoming the Gentrification of Dual Language, Bilingual and Immersion Education* (Delavan et al., 2024) moves beyond critique to offer **solution-oriented frameworks** for resisting these trends. By linking gentrification to broader struggles for racial and educational justice, the literature cements this issue as a primary site of contention and scholarly intervention (see also Freire et al., 2023; Ramírez & Faltis, 2022).

Teacher Education and Agency: Navigating Paradigm's Tensions

The challenges of inequity necessitate a profound shift in teacher education. A clear consensus has emerged that effective preparation must cultivate **critical consciousness** alongside pedagogical skill (Ramírez & Faltis, 2022; Ramírez-Verdugo, 2024). A significant new focus is the socio-emotional dimension of this work. *Language Teacher Identity Tensions* (Tajeddin & Yazan, 2025) directly addresses the professional and emotional conflicts that arise when educators' asset-based beliefs clash with deficit-oriented institutional constraints, exploring how agency is crucial for avoiding burnout and sustaining transformative practice. This scholarship on teacher agency, particularly in non-Western contexts (Manan & Hajar, 2025), provides a powerful counternarrative to policy determinism, illustrating the "Implementation-Resistance Dialectic" through which practitioners carve out spaces for multilingual pedagogies.

Innovations in Practice: Forging Tools for a New Paradigm

The field's theoretical and political shifts are spurring practical innovations in assessment, technology, and pedagogy, all aimed at translating the Critical-Dynamic paradigm into classroom reality.

Re-envisioning Assessment for Equity

Assessment constitutes a critical site of innovation, with a decisive movement away from monolingual-normed tests that perpetuate deficit views. Kate Mahoney's (2024) second edition of *The Assessment of Multilingual Learners* is a central text driving this shift. Its **PUMI framework (Purpose, Use, Method, Instrument)** offers a practical tool for ethical decision-making. By explicitly integrating translanguaging into assessment practices and providing concrete, asset-based rubrics, this work seeks to bridge the gap between progressive pedagogy and the rigid demands of accountability systems.

The Digital and Multimodal Turn

Technology is a new frontier where the paradigm's tensions are playing out. Scholarship is now exploring informal language learning in the complex digital ecosystems of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram (Lee, 2025). This focus on multimodality is also being integrated into formal teacher education (Ramírez-Verdugo, 2024). The nascent discussion around AI and VR in language learning is tempered by a call for **critical AI literacy**, recognizing that technology can either amplify asset-based practices or deepen existing inequities through algorithmic bias.

Synthesis and A Research Agenda for a Field in Tension

This review demonstrates that bi/multilingual education is animated by the "Critical-Dynamic Paradigm"

a foundational tension between the advancement of dynamic linguistic theories and a critical confrontation with the structures of power that racialize and marginalize learners. This paradigm manifests in a series of core dialectics. The first is the **Theory-Policy Chasm**, a gulf between the scholarly consensus on dynamism like translanguaging and the monoglossic, static ideologies underpinning most official education policies. A second dialectic is found in the **Promise and Peril of DLE**, a conflict between its potential as a tool for equity and its vulnerability to gentrification, which threatens to reinscribe elitism. Finally, the field is defined by the **Agency-Structure Struggle**, a continuous negotiation between the agentive capacity of educators and communities to create multilingual spaces and the overwhelming force of institutional and ideological constraints.

Globalizing the Paradigm: A Comparative Analysis

This central tension is not monolithic but manifests differently across global contexts. In **Europe**, the official EU policy of "plurilingualism" clashes with the nationalist, assimilationist politics of member-states like France or the anti-migrant rhetoric in Hungary, creating a chasm between pan-European ideals and national realities (Hélot, 2020). In **Asia**, state-managed multilingualism in Singapore creates rigid hierarchies, while in Malaysia, language-in-education policy remains a proxy for unresolved ethno-political tensions (Cavallaro & Serwe, 2019; Manan & Hajar, 2025). In **Africa**, the legacy of colonialism perpetuates the dominance of European languages, constituting a form of linguistic imperialism. Counter-movements, as seen in South Africa's 11 official languages, highlight the immense gap between de jure policy and de facto practice (Adekunle, 2025). In **Latin America**, the constitutional recognition of indigenous languages in plurinational states like Bolivia and Ecuador represents a monumental ideological victory, yet implementation is severely hampered by a lack of resources and the enduring prestige of Spanish, showcasing a profound implementation gap (Mendoza & Rios, 2024). This global landscape reveals that dynamic, asset-based theories are advancing precisely as nationalist, monolingual ideologies are gaining political traction. This renders the critical turn in bilingual education a necessary political and intellectual intervention.

An Intersectional Research Agenda for the Future

To advance the field and resolve its core tensions, future research must move beyond description toward a targeted, multi-stakeholder agenda. A paramount imperative is to prioritize epistemic justice and amplify Global South perspectives. The theoretical architecture of the field remains dominated by Northern scholarship. Future work must foster genuine North-South and South-South collaborations, empowering scholars and communities in linguistically hyper-diverse regions like Africa and Oceania to generate theory from their own contexts. This requires moving beyond applying Western models like "gentrification" to post-colonial contexts and instead developing frameworks that account for distinct local histories and political economies.

Concurrent with this geographic reorientation is the urgent need for longitudinal studies of critical pedagogy. To bridge the theory-policy chasm, the field urgently needs large-scale, longitudinal, mixed-methods research. Such studies must track student cohorts over their educational careers to correlate the implementation of translanguaging and anti-racist pedagogies with quantitative outcomes like test scores and graduation rates, as well as qualitative measures such as socio-emotional well-being and critical consciousness. This is essential for providing the robust evidence needed to influence policy and resource allocation.

Furthermore, future research must be guided by a more sophisticated understanding of intersectionality. The category "multilingual learner" must be disaggregated. A critical gap exists at the intersection of multilingualism and disability, where misidentification remains rampant. Future research must develop asset-based frameworks that integrate support for multilingualism and neurodiversity. Similarly, analyses must more rigorously examine how race, class, and gender intersect to shape the distinct experiences and valuation of multilingualism.

Finally, the field must confront the dual challenges of critical technology and implementation of science. Research must critically examine how digital technologies, particularly AI, may replicate or exacerbate linguistic inequities through algorithmic bias. Simultaneously, the "implementation gap" between progressive policy and classroom reality demands rigorous comparative analysis. Research must identify the material, institutional, and cultural factors that enable or obstruct the successful implementation of equitable language policies, providing a roadmap for administrators to move from symbolic gestures to systemic change.

In conclusion, propelling the field forward requires a symbiotic effort. Researchers must generate more geographically diverse and intersectional knowledge; teacher educators must use it to cultivate critically conscious practitioners; and policymakers must be held accountable for creating the structural conditions in which an equitable, dynamic, and multilingual education can finally flourish for all learners.

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