

Towards a Unified Theory of Language Development: Weaving a Transdisciplinary Tapestry

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As applied linguistics becomes increasingly diverse in the topics, methods, and theories within its scope, the field has more potential than ever to reach a truly holistic and integrated understanding of language development and meaning-making across the lifespan. Perhaps the greatest challenge to attaining this goal is the building of knowledge in parallel across respective areas of specialization without a mechanism for connecting the parts to form a whole. As individual scholars, we have deep insight into the components on which we focus. As a field, our grasp of how the components form a system is only beginning to emerge. Building upon work by the Douglas Fir Group, which proposes a transdisciplinary approach to thinking about the multidimensional nature of language development, I put forward nexus analysis as a useful mechanism to explain connections among components of the system. Nexus analysis, originally developed by Ron Scollon and Suzie Wong Scollon, is a conceptual orientation that is specifically designed to identify and map connections. I present the core elements of nexus analysis, rendering them in broad strokes, with a focus on how they might serve generally as a way to conceptualize the processes through which different dimensions of language teaching and learning integrate. I posit ways in which nexus analysis, with its emphasis on social action and the factors that mediate it, can facilitate links across cognitive and sociocultural perspectives on language development.

Francis M. Hult works at the crossroads of education, sociolinguistics, and discourse studies. He is known for his discourse analytic research about the sociopolitics of national language policies, language teacher engagement with educational policies, and the visual use of language in multilingual communities. Professor Hult has lectured widely on these topics in Asia, Europe, and North America. He is currently a professor at the Jönköping University School of Education and Communication as well as director of studies for English at Lund University where he also coordinates the English teacher education program. His recent books include *Research Methods in Language Policy and Planning* (with Johnson) and *Language Policy and Language Acquisition Planning* (with Siiner and Kupisch).

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