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LANGUAGE AS BARRIER AND BRIDGE: SUPPORTING MINORITY PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN MAJORITY-LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

This presentation explores the role of language in minority pre-service teachers' experiences within majority-language school placements. While grounded in a qualitative case study of Bedouin pre-service teachers completing practical training in Hebrew-speaking Jewish elementary schools in Israel, the presentation uses this local case as a lens for examining a broader global challenge: how multilingual, migrant, international, and culturally minoritized student-teachers navigate professional learning in educational environments where the dominant language is not their first language. Framed by perspectives on superdiversity, interculturality, and translanguaging (Vertovec, 2007; Dervin, 2016; García & Wei, 2014; García & Lin, 2017), the study examines language not only as a communicative tool, but also as a marker of belonging, participation, and professional legitimacy. The research objectives are to explore how language shapes classroom communication, relationship-building, classroom management, professional confidence, and identity negotiation, and to consider how teacher education programs can better

support pre-service teachers in linguistically and culturally complex practicum settings. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with eight minority pre-service teachers. Data were analyzed thematically, with particular attention to narratives of linguistic challenge, adaptation, intercultural interaction, and professional identity development. The findings indicate that language functioned both as a barrier and as a bridge. Limited proficiency in the dominant school language initially restricted participants' ability to communicate with pupils and staff, manage classrooms, and express professional competence. At the same time, sustained interaction, mentor support, and daily classroom practice supported linguistic growth and helped transform language into a resource for connection, confidence, and belonging. The study suggests that linguistic confidence is central to professional inclusion in intercultural teacher education. It calls for structured language support, mentoring, and intercultural preparation before and during practicum placements, and invites comparative research across global teacher education contexts.

Keywords:

Intercultural Teacher Education, Minority Pre-Service Teachers, Language and Belonging, Translanguaging, Professional Identity