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Advancing language teacher education: A Multi-Book Review

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Interdisciplinary Research and Innovation in Bilingual and Second Language Teacher Education by M. Dolores Ramírez-Verdugo, Routledge, 2024, 316pp, $190 (Hardback) $39.99 (eBook). ISBN 9781032395425

International Perspectives on Critical English Language Teacher Education by Ali Fuad Selvi and Ceren Kocaman, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024, 312pp, $120 (Harback) $108 (eBook). ISBN 9781350400320

Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education: Perspectives on Professional Learning, Identity, and Agency by Manuel Jiménez Raya, Borja Manzano Vázquez, and Flávia Vieira, Routledge, 2024, 222pp, $190 (Hardback) $39.99 (eBook). ISBN 9781032532035

Language Teacher Identity Tensions: Nexus of Agency, Emotion, and Investment by Zia Tajeddin and Bedrettin Yazan, Routledge, 2024, 292pp, $190 (Hardback) $39.99 (eBook). ISBN 9781003402411

Introduction

Language teacher education is at a critical juncture and requires a profound transformation. As the landscape of language teaching continues to evolve, driven by the tension between globalisation and deglobalisation, technological advancements, and shifting socio-political paradigms, the need for innovative and responsive teacher education has never been greater (Ying et al., 2025). Educators today must navigate increasingly diverse classrooms, harness digital tools effectively, and engage with complex pedagogical challenges that extend beyond traditional teaching methodologies (East, 2022; Lee et al., 2024). Additionally, the growing emphasis on equity, social justice, and critical approaches to language education demands a re-evaluation of how teachers are trained and supported in their professional journeys (Banegas et al., 2024).

Language teacher education is a vital and dynamic field that needs to continuously adapt to meet the needs of multilingual and multicultural classrooms (Morea & Fisher, 2023). In acknowledgement of this idea, the four edited volumes reviewed in this article provide a

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comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of contemporary language teacher education, addressing both its theoretical underpinnings and practical implications. These works examine essential issues such as teacher autonomy, bilingual and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) pedagogies, digital innovation, identity formation, and critical perspectives on language teaching.

After outlining the content and implications of each one, this article assesses the key themes that can be distilled from the four books. These themes underline the significance of advancing language teacher education so as to equip educators with the pedagogical expertise, technological proficiency, and critical awareness needed to navigate diverse classrooms, foster inclusive and equitable learning environments, and effectively respond to the evolving linguistic and sociocultural demands of the 21st century.

Interdisciplinary Research and Innovation in Bilingual and Second Language Teacher Education

Acting as a research-driven examination of contemporary bilingual and second language teacher education, Ramírez-Verdugo's edited collection offers a vital overview of pedagogical approaches, digital innovations, storytelling techniques, CLIL, and quality assessment. It underscores the necessity of an interconnected, interdisciplinary framework to effectively prepare teachers for bilingual, plurilingual, and CLIL-based educational settings. By featuring empirical research, case studies, and innovative methodologies, the volume aims to enhance bilingual teacher education programmes and provides practical applications of digital tools, storytelling, and blended learning approaches.

The book is structured into five thematic parts, each delving into critical aspects of bilingual and second language teacher education. Part 1 begins with an introduction by Ramírez-Verdugo, emphasising the need for innovative methodologies and global collaboration. Genesee further explores the effectiveness of dual language programmes, highlighting their benefits across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, and stressing the importance of integrating content and language instruction. Part 2 showcases the use of digital tools to enhance bilingual learning. It introduces Itero, a digital writing revision analytics tool, and examines the use of various digital tools for English language learners during the transition to online learning. Case studies demonstrate the effectiveness of technology-enhanced personalised learning plans and the development of CLIL-based digital projects by pre-service teachers.

Part 3 focuses on the power of storytelling as a research, assessment, and teaching tool. It explores how digital narratives can enhance bilingual teacher education, promote empathy and global awareness, and enhance cross-curricular learning, particularly in environmental science. Part 4 analyses theoretical models for online and blended language learning, presenting the AGORA research project, which supports bilingual teacher education in rural areas. It also examines the fluctuations in teacher trainees' motivation and anxiety in online learning settings, highlighting the benefits of blended learning models. Finally, Part 5 advocates for multilingual STEM/STEAM education in museums, develops game-based learning strategies for science education, and proposes a CLIL-STEM quality checklist for evaluating bilingual science education programmes. The book concludes with reflections on the challenges and opportunities in bilingual education, emphasising the role of technology, storytelling, and interdisciplinary collaboration in shaping future policies.

One of the book's main shortcomings is the lack of a broad geographical and cultural spread, with several chapters being authored by Spanish academics. Nonetheless, there are some significant takeaways, including the proven effectiveness of bilingual education, the significant enhancements offered by digital tools and storytelling techniques, and the crucial role

of crosslinguistic and translanguaging strategies. The volume underscores the necessity for teacher education to integrate digital methodologies, interdisciplinary approaches, and inclusive practices. Furthermore, it highlights how CLIL and STEM-based quality frameworks can significantly improve bilingual curriculum design.

International Perspectives on Critical English Language Teacher Education

Seeking to present a major shift in English language teacher education, Selvi and Kocaman's edited volume champions critical pedagogies, social justice frameworks, and innovative methodologies. By challenging traditional, standardised English Language Teaching (ELT) practices, it positions teachers as active social agents, and advocates for linguistic equity, inclusivity, and social transformation. The book aims to disrupt conventional teacher education paradigms and foster change in global educational contexts.

Structured into 10 parts, the volume explores key aspects of critical English language teacher education. From teaching methodologies and second-language assessment to young learners, curriculum development, and intercultural education, it offers a multidimensional perspective on teacher education. Drawing insights from a diverse group of scholars and practitioners, including contributions from Türkiye, Brazil, Germany, Sweden, the United States, and New Zealand, the book provides both theoretical discussions and practical applications. It advocates for critical reflection, decoloniality, antiracist pedagogy, social justice, and Global Englishes, positioning teachers as transformative intellectuals who can reshape language education for a more just world.

The relative brevity of each of the book's 34 chapters means that a wide range of critical aspects of English language teacher education are discussed in each section, albeit without adequate depth in a few cases. Some examples of these aspects are mentioned below. Part 1 introduces the concept of criticality in teacher education, emphasising the role of teachers in dismantling oppressive language ideologies. Part 2 challenges the 'methods fetish' in ELT, proposing instead context-sensitive, socially responsive teaching approaches and promoting critical language awareness. Part 3 critiques the dominance of corporate-produced coursebooks, calling for teacher autonomy in material selection and development. Part 4 critically examines power dynamics in classroom management and observation, highlighting the value of reflection-based, democratic classroom environments. Part 5 problematises standardised English language testing, exposing its racialised, colonial underpinnings and advocating for alternative assessment models. Part 6 celebrates translanguaging and transknowledging as foundational principles for inclusive ELT curricula. Part 7 challenges certain traditional Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, integrating raciolinguistics and disability studies to critique deficit-based models. Part 8 counters monolingual biases in Teaching English to Young Learners, underlining the significance of multilingual and decolonial approaches. Part 9 proposes a critical intercultural communication framework, shifting from essentialist models of culture to dynamic, interaction-based approaches. Lastly, Part 10 foregrounds Global Englishes as an alternative to standardised, native-speaker norms in ELT.

Kubota's afterword synthesises the book's key insights, emphasising that critical English language teacher education is an evolving, reflexive practice. She argues that "The scope of critical English language teacher education is limitless, and educational practices that promote decolonial, anti-oppressive, and justice-oriented values and praxis should continue to be sought" (p. 269). This implies that teacher educators need to continually critique their own practices, ensuring that criticality remains dynamic and responsive to changing global challenges. The book serves as a call for transformative change, empowering teachers to become agents of social justice and linguistic equity in the global educational landscape.

Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education

Providing a comprehensive exploration of pedagogies for autonomy in language teacher education, the edited book by Jiménez Raya, Manzano Vázquez and Vieira emphasises the crucial link between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy, and builds on theoretical frameworks and empirical research to bridge the gap between theory and practice in teacher education. The book covers both initial and in-service teacher education programmes, focusing on teacher identity, reflective practice, agency, and professional learning. It presents case studies from several educational contexts, albeit predominantly European ones. In all cases, there are practical strategies for implementing autonomy-supportive pedagogies.

The book's 13 chapters address different aspects of autonomy with respect to language teacher education. Unfortunately, these chapters are not grouped into thematic parts. The volume begins by briefly addressing the theoretical foundations of autonomy in language teaching and learning, highlighting the persistent gap between theory and practice in teacher education. Chapter 2 provides an analysis of various teacher education initiatives aimed at fostering autonomy, illustrating how pedagogical inquiry, reflective practice, and experiential learning contribute to professional development. Subsequent chapters (3–6) delve into teacher identity and autonomy development, examining the role of cognitive and emotional dissonance, the benefits of case-based pedagogy, and how inquiry-based practicum experiences promote learner-centred teaching approaches. These studies underscore the importance of reflective engagement and self-directed learning in preparing teachers for autonomy-supportive educational environments.

The middle and later chapters (7–12) offer case studies that demonstrate innovative approaches to fostering autonomy in language teacher education. Topics include collaborative teacher autonomy for English language teaching (Chapter 7), post-observation feedback discussions as a tool for professional growth (Chapter 8), and the implications of teachers becoming learners again to refine their professional practice (Chapter 9). Other contributions explore novice teachers' insights into teacher autonomy, the role of self-reflective instruments in pre-service teacher training, and the integration of digital technologies to enhance agency and social transformation (Chapters 10–12). In the final chapter, the editors synthesise the critical issues with respect to the book's cases and outline possible pathways for future research and practice in language teacher education.

Overall, the book highlights the transformative power of autonomy-driven pedagogies in shaping reflective, adaptable, and self-determined educators. Its key implications are that teacher autonomy is foundational to fostering learner autonomy, that bridging the gap between theory and practice is essential, that emotion and identity play crucial roles in professional learning, and that digital technologies can support reflective practice. The volume underscores the importance of creating environments where teachers can exercise control over their professional development, enabling them to more effectively foster autonomy in their learners.

Language Teacher Identity Tensions: Nexus of Agency, Emotion, and Investment

While not exclusively dealing with language teacher education, the volume edited by Tajeddin and Yazan offers a deep dive into the intricate and often conflicting identity tensions experienced by language teachers, something that is highly relevant to anyone involved in teacher education. The book underscores how teacher identity is shaped by agency, emotion, and investment, revealing the internal struggles educators face when navigating institutional expectations, personal beliefs, and professional aspirations. Through empirical research conducted in a range of educational settings across Australia, Kuwait, Iran, Hong Kong, the United States, Finland,

Türkiye, and Japan, the book utilises theoretical frameworks like sociocultural theory, activity theory, critical autoethnography, and narrative inquiry to explore the role of identity tensions in professional development, teacher agency, and instructional practices.

The book is structured into three distinct sections, each addressing different dimensions of teacher identity tensions. Part 1 examines how teachers construct and negotiate their identities amidst systemic pressures, personal aspirations, and professional constraints. It delves into critical autoethnographic narratives, systemic tensions in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher identity development, the negotiation of aspired versus practiced identities, and the impact of age, nationality, raciolinguistic ideologies, and barriers to entry for ethnic minority teachers. This section highlights the different ways in which external factors and internal conflicts shape teacher identity.

Part 2 focuses on how teacher education programmes influence identity tensions. It explores identity conflicts in teacher education programmes, the use of translingual pedagogies in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the identity struggles of a Yazidi American educator, and the challenges faced by TESOL graduate students. This section emphasises the role of language teacher education in either empowering or constraining teacher identity formation. The book's final part considers how identity tensions shape teaching practices, gender dynamics, well-being, and professional values. It examines gendered identity tensions in TESOL, the impact of workplace stress on teacher well-being, the negotiation of professional values in adult English as a Second Language (ESL), and the role of emotional reflexivity in navigating identity conflicts.

The book emphasises that identity is constantly negotiated and that tensions are both challenges and opportunities. It makes it clear that language teacher education must address identity work and that agency and investment matter. In fact, the editors maintain, "our initial suggestion is to integrate learning activities in teacher education programs in general or courses in particular to bring in identity tensions as explicit topics of learning" (p. 264). The volume provides critical insights into the complexities of language teacher identity formation, highlighting the emotional labour, agency, and socio-political constraints that shape teaching experiences worldwide.

Assessing the Books' Key Themes

These four volumes collectively highlight several key themes that are reshaping the landscape of language teacher education. As deglobalisation accelerates and linguistic diversity increases, the demands on language teachers have become more complex, requiring new competencies that go beyond traditional teaching methodologies (Mavridi & Xerri, 2020). Teachers today must be equipped not only with subject knowledge but also with the ability to navigate sociocultural dynamics, integrate emerging technologies, and critically engage with pedagogical innovations (Yuan & Liao, 2023). In response to these challenges, there is a growing recognition that language teacher education must be more adaptive, research-driven, and interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from applied linguistics, psychology, digital literacy, and social justice education.

A central thread running through these books is the need to move beyond traditional, standardised approaches (Korthagen, 2016). There is a strong call for more interdisciplinary and research-driven teacher education that equips language educators with the skills and knowledge to thrive in complex educational contexts (Zolin Vesz et al., 2024). This includes a focus on innovative methodologies, the effective integration of digital tools, and the development of pedagogical practices that support bilingualism, plurilingualism, and CLIL.

Furthermore, these books emphasise the importance of criticality, social justice, and equity in teacher education (Wooten et al., 2022). Language teacher education programmes are urged to foster critical language awareness, challenge oppressive language ideologies, and prepare teachers to be agents of social change. This involves addressing issues of linguistic equity, inclusivity, and antiracist pedagogy, and recognising the role of Global Englishes in diverse communicative contexts.

Another key theme is the recognition of the complexities of teacher identity (Moonthiya & Stevenson, 2024). These volumes highlight the identity tensions that language teachers face as they interact with institutional expectations, personal beliefs, and professional aspirations. Language teacher education programmes are encouraged to support teachers in the ongoing negotiation of their identities, fostering agency, emotional resilience, and a strong sense of professional investment.

Finally, there is a strong emphasis on the development of teacher autonomy as a cornerstone of effective language teaching (Ural & Dikilitaş, 2025). These works advocate for pedagogies for autonomy that empower language teachers to take control of their professional development, engage in reflective practice, and create autonomy-supportive learning environments for their students. This involves bridging the gap between theory and practice, fostering agency, and utilising digital technologies to support reflective learning.

In essence, these volumes paint a compelling picture of the challenges and opportunities within language teacher education today. They highlight the need for teacher preparation programmes that are research-driven, critically engaged, and responsive to the evolving demands of global (or glocal) education. By integrating interdisciplinary approaches, promoting teacher agency, and embracing technological and pedagogical innovations, these books contribute to a more subtle understanding of what it means to prepare effective, reflective, and socially responsible language educators. In the process, each volume helps advance language teacher education.

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