

An abstract painting featuring a profile of a face in shades of blue and purple. The face is surrounded by vibrant, textured brushstrokes in various colors including green, red, and orange. In the foreground, there are stylized pink and red flowers on a brown stem. The overall style is expressive and colorful.

Edited by
Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer
Vander Tavares

Language Teacher Identity

Confronting Ideologies of
Language, Race, and Ethnicity

WILEY Blackwell

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and Ethnicity

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Foreword

Filling the Gaps in Language Teacher Education: A Prologue

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In the last decade, dominant ideologies about language and language education have been questioned. Critical scholars have shown how the idea that “native speakers” have only one named language is false. The language education field has, for the most part, moved past a monolingual/monoglossic ideology, making more room for the complexity of language practices and of speakers. However, the focus and more inclusive views on students and their languaging have not impacted much the ideologies surrounding language teachers and their preparation. By foregrounding the experiences of language teachers of more than one language, as well as racialized language teachers, this volume by *Silvia Melo-Pfeifer* and *Vander Tavares* clearly shows how the language taught continues to be closely linked to one nation, one culture, one people, one dominant racial group, leaving teachers of multiple languages and identities behind.

Much research has focused on the learning context of the classroom and students, but little has focused on the main actor in the classroom—the language teacher and the ways they are impacted by sociopolitical ideologies about language. The multilingualism of learners, and multilingualism as a goal, is often recognized, but rarely are the multilingual/multiracial/multiethnic identities of language teachers acknowledged or valued. In fact, the paradigm of a “good” language teacher continues to be that of a “monolingual” “native speaker” of the “target language.” We continue to prefer to have one teacher teach one language, and we assign these teachers one language identity even when they are plurilingual. This volume brings into view this contradiction. It reminds us of the capacities of plurilingual and racialized language teachers whether they are teaching one language, two,

or more. And at the same time, the contributions in this book often highlight these teachers' anxieties about their own complex identities and languaging. Some chapters describe the ways in which these teachers are "othered" because they do not "fit" the traditional mold of what a "foreign" language teacher should be.

In many ways, and despite the advances in the applied linguistic and sociolinguistic fields, we have not broken free from the monolingual "othered" ideology in foreign language education. The language taught is made to be for "foreign" lands and cultures, taught preferably by someone who learned the language in that "foreign" land. For example, in the United States, Spanish-speaking teachers in the Southwest were not allowed to be teachers of Spanish until 1965. Instead, teachers of Spanish were required to be those who learned "Castilian Spanish" in Spain and studied the literary texts of Cervantes and others. The Spanish of racialized Mexican American teachers was considered a "jargon," unsuitable for literary pursuits and specially so to teach White Americans. It wasn't until the second half of the 20th century that it was possible to even hire US Latinx teachers to teach Spanish (García & Alonso, 2021).

Although language teachers are supposed to advance the bilingualism of students, they are caught in bilingualism as an ideology (Heller, 2007), an ideologically constructed understanding as simply L1 + L2 produced by a monolingual who has learned the two languages sequentially and separately. That is, in most of the world, bilingualism is understood as simply what monolinguals acquire, not based on the complexity of local and Indigenous language practices. Thus, even teachers hired to be bilingual teachers most often cannot perform their duties as bilingual individuals.

Today, bilingual programs in the United States readily hire bilingual Latinx teachers from racialized groups. But for the most part, they are not allowed to behave as bilinguals themselves. That is, they often teach what is called "the Spanish side" of the instruction, leaving the "English side" to an English monolingual speaker. It is often said that to teach a language one has to behave monolingually. This is rampant in the scholarly literature, even when thinking of family language policy. One parent, one language is the common advice. The same for teachers. One teacher, one language is what works, creating the conditions for monolingual immersion and for subjectivities of inferiority among teachers who are themselves bilingual.

The common notion that speakers should always behave monolingually is what causes the insecurity, fear, and burnout among teachers whose multiple identities and complex language practices are not in any way valued. The concept of plurilingualism, which has opened up spaces in our understanding of complex multilingual practices, has also done little to challenge

the ideologies about who language teachers should be. The European Union has adopted plurilingualism as a value, but language teachers continue to be expected to perform monolingually according to standards that have emerged from the way that White-dominant monolingual teachers “do” language. Thus, the teachers’ plurilingualism is seldom acknowledged.

Even though the concept of translanguaging has also advanced our thinking about the value of local language practices in the development of bi/multilingualism, it is taken up more easily when the teacher herself has met monolingual standards and can be trusted to teach the named language according to external standards. That is, plurilingual teachers’ translanguaging lesson designs are seldom valued for leveraging the language practices of the local community. Instead, they are judged to be the result of the bilingual teachers’ “jargon,” their confusion, their mixing of languages, and their code-switching. These chapters make clear that unless teacher education programs raise the teachers’ critical consciousness of the bilingual ideologies that are operating, White monolingual teachers of one language will continue to be more valued than others, despite the fact that these “other” teachers are able to connect to the local communities of linguistic and cultural practices more easily. Teachers who have been socialized into language through translanguaging practices can better understand the “academic” value of translanguaging, as well as how to use it to engage students in learning what is considered an additional language. Because these teachers often share histories of oppression and racialization with many of the students they teach, they are also able to enact care, *cariño*, and trust in ways that transform the students’ potential for learning.

Overall, these chapters make evident what the editors call “the pervasiveness of native-speakerism, the monolingual mindset, the White listener-observer norms, and blatant (linguistic) racism” (Introduction). It makes us notice the teachers and their lack of preparation to behave in ways that leverage the community’s translanguaging practices. It warns us that these monoglossic ideologies of bilingualism are actually doing us harm. By focusing on what Vijay Ramjattan (in this volume) calls “the esthetic qualities of teachers,” that is, their race, gender, and ways of speaking a monolingual standard, we are missing out. Speaking about English language teaching, Ramjattan warns of the “deskilling of the ELT profession,” since these teacher qualities are considered better “credentials” than actual teaching experience.

This last statement is the most important. What is real in language education? Is it to ensure that students acquire another language and become truly plurilingual? Or is that language education inculcates the values of monolingualism and Whiteness, resisting and forgetting processes of

colonization and nation-building that continue to operate today? It is this latter proposition that has operated in the education of language teachers in the past and that continues to work today.

Melo-Pfeifer and Tavares' volume is important because it brings to our consciousness how we are wasting an important resource, the resource of people, of teachers who have themselves experienced linguistic and social discrimination. These teachers can help students learn another language without othering, doing so with and alongside local communities, and ensuring their inclusion. It is time that we question our ideologies of who the "good" teachers of languages are and delink languages from the concepts with which they have operated—spoken homogeneously by one people, a symbol of one nation without social class, gender, racial, or linguistic differences. Only when we recognize the messiness of the language education enterprise would we be able to acknowledge the great asset of teachers whose identity is not wrapped up in one language, one culture, one nation, but who push these boundaries, as they have for centuries, and as they continue to do today.

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Language Teacher Identity and Education in the Crossfire of Evolving Raciolinguistic and Monolingual Ideologies

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1.1 Introduction: How and Why Did We Get Here?

It is always difficult to explain how a volume is born or what moved the editors toward an editorial project around a specific theme. We would like to start this introduction by explaining the genesis of the present publication, which began at a time when in-person activities were still significantly impacted by the global pandemic. Sílvia and Vander had never met in person before they decided to work together. And still up to this day, they have only met virtually. They had heard about each other's work, they have a friend in common (who is also a common co-author, Inês Cardoso), and they knew something about each other: that they both speak Portuguese and taught or were teaching (in) languages that do not happen to be their first languages.

Sílvia is Portuguese, and completed her entire education, from primary to higher education, including her PhD, in Portugal, where she studied to become a French and Portuguese language teacher. Her parents are the so-called *retornados* from Angola, a country where they had lived in for more than 15 years before it regained its independence. During her PhD, she met “the one” in Spanish classes in Spain and moved to Germany some years later (in 2016), a country whose official language she never dreamed of learning before. She then became a full professor at a German university,

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being involved in French and Spanish language teacher education programs. She is a happy mother of two multilingual children, who are happy to know and speak the language of their “*mãe maluca*.” She, as a Portuguese speaker, usually teaches French and Spanish teacher candidates mostly in German or through translanguaging using German and one of the other two languages according to the audience. When she met Vander, she used to tell him how difficult and sometimes frustrating it was to adjust to another language and academic culture. She laughed about the “linguistic” incidents she caused (and still causes) during her teaching in German. Of course, humor and playfulness are great ways to get to know ourselves, express our fears and frustrations, and expose our emotional precarity (Dovchin, 2022).

Vander is Canadian–Brazilian with schooling experiences in both Canada and Brazil. Following his graduation from the PhD program in linguistics and applied linguistics at York University in Toronto, he moved to Norway, initially to take up a position of postdoctoral researcher to develop and conduct a research project on language teacher education and identity development. As part of the preparation for his upcoming position of associate professor at the same institution, he has been learning Norwegian as an additional language. Like *Silvia*, Vander has also learned French and Spanish, but it has been the journey of now learning Norwegian—for a different purpose (work), under different life circumstances (as an adult immigrant worker), within a prescribed time frame of two years, and in a new country—which has been the most challenging for him, both linguistically and emotionally. Indeed, in conversations with *Silvia*, Vander shared his feelings of frustration, anxiety, and also embarrassment considering his numerous linguistic and social faux-pas in Norwegian. In conversation about these experiences, Vander and *Silvia* became even more aware about how ideologies of language manifest themselves in each other’s contexts (Norway and Germany) and how they navigate them while being the *other*.

So, when the two of us met online, it was academic love at first sight! We engaged in conversations that helped us better understand our own academic multilingual lives, and dig deep(er) into our memories to understand our fears, anxieties, coping strategies, and more or less humorous ways of dealing with all of the above. In that meeting, we also discovered that we were both teachers (or teacher educators) of two languages, expatriates, and invested in learning the language of the countries that are now included in our repertoire of home: German and Norwegian. While this narrative is being constructed about our origins and languages, we should acknowledge that, as time went by, we started crisscrossing our narratives with others putting forward issues related to race, ethnicity, nationality, and accent.

And we discovered ourselves being multilingual expatriate White academics, both based in the so-called Global North.

When Rachel Greenberg, the commissioning editor, reached out to Sílvia with an invitation to propose a volume to Wiley Blackwell, the book was sort of already instilled in our minds! We invited those authors we knew personally (or whom we received advice about through colleagues) who have worked to address different aspects of multilingual identities of language teachers, raciolinguistic ideologies, and teachers' agency in disrupting raciolinguistic ideologies. The first title we proposed for the book was *Foreign Language Teacher Identity: Confronting Ideologies of Language, Race, and Ethnicity*.

We did not think about the name of the book too much until January 2023, when Ofelia García agreed to write the Foreword. Her first question was as simple as it was disruptive: “Do you really want to call it *foreign* languages?” (email exchange). She was challenging us to become more “accurate” and “inclusive” (her words), exactly as we wanted to be from the very beginning, but we needed the cognitive scaffolding to really become. It was not just that some chapters were not directly connected to the so-called foreign language education: it was about misrepresenting the speakers and the relationship they establish with their languages. It was misrepresenting the teaching practices of teacher educators and practitioners represented in the volume, and equally important, it was an act of othering toward a research field that so intimately connects to others. “Foreign” was dividing, unequally, teachers (and their students), languages, contexts, and practices where flexibility, complexity, and fluidity have been the norm, but hardly recognized as such.

Following our biographical accounts, the spontaneous meeting of the two editors, and the encounters with experts we had along the way, this volume has emerged to address language teacher identity and professional development at the intersection of ideologies of language, race, and ethnicity—concepts which we will address in the next section. In this sense, our research says as much about us as it does about the object being researched. The same can be said of this project, though not only in relation to the two editors but also and together with all contributing authors.

Language Teacher Identity: Confronting Ideologies of Language, Race, and Ethnicity covers issues and gaps in connection with the latest developments in research about language teacher education, particularly around language teacher identity. The field of language (teacher) education has been struggling with issues related to monolingualism and native-speakerism (Holliday, 2015; Slavkov et al., 2022), perceptions of what counts as competence and authenticity in the classroom, and the accommodation of

diversity in school systems. So, while the multilingual turn in (language) education has been announced (May, 2014), the pervasiveness of monolingual constructs prevails, through which the language teacher being characterized as native speaker still holds currency over terms that reflect the world's reality, such as the multicompetent speaker (Cook, 1992; see also Ortega, 2014, for a critique).

In the broader field of teacher education, the “place” of teachers with a transnational background has been acknowledged and their professional paths have received growing attention (Bräu et al., 2014; Georgi et al., 2011; Lengyel and Rosen, 2015; Rosen and Lengyel, 2023). However, in the field of language teacher education, in general, the study of those issues is still to be developed, with particular emphasis on *linguistically, ethnically, and racially minoritized* teachers. Additionally, despite the recognition that language teachers draw on their multilingual repertoires to teach and construct their professional identities, a significant gap remains in relation to exploring the experiences of *teachers who teach two or more languages*. In other words, our knowledge of language teacher experiences has relied primarily on associating one teacher with one language in the context of instruction and identity development, despite the boundary-breaking complexities within experiences of identity construction for language teachers acknowledged in recent research. This volume contributes to bridging some of these gaps with investigations that critically discuss ideologies of race, ethnicity, language/accent, (im)migration, and their impact on language teacher identity, aiming at empowering minority and minoritized language teachers from the earlier years of their careers onward.

1.2 Addressing the Key Concepts of This Volume

When defining the scope of this volume, the first compositum we needed to disentangle was “language teacher identity,” once we had agreed to remove the qualifier “foreign.” “Language teacher identity” is made of three complex concepts, each adding a new intricate layer of interpretation to the other(s) and leading to a transformation of each and all of them simultaneously: “language,” “teacher,” and “identity.” Each of these terms is complex per se: what is a language? What can be defined as a language? What makes a teacher? What constitutes our identity? Or, in partially combined duets, what is language identity? What makes a language teacher?

At a glance, recent discussions inspired by postcolonial and decolonial theories (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006) and others focused on translanguaging (García and Li Wei, 2013) have exposed the need to rethink the

founding concept of “language” itself: one that has been embedded in Eurocentric and colonial nation-building ideologies that tend to associate one set of grammar features—that spoken by the majority—exclusively to one country and to one people. Such construction of languages is therefore more political than it is linguistic as it fuels and reproduces (mono)normative ideologies at the expense of linguistic diversity, especially that which is reflective of minoritized speakers. In studies based on translanguaging within bilingual education, the argument put forward against named languages rests on the fact that such labels misrepresent the real, multilayered, and multisemiotic repertoires of bilingual (and often minoritized) individuals. In this context, the languages of bilinguals are not only categorized hierarchically but also viewed as two distinct (monolingual) meaning-making systems that follow strict social conventions of language use.

Taking this issue into account, our conception of language is that of a social practice of its users (Ortega, 2014), rather than a decontextualized set of pre-given rules (phonological, morphological, and so on). If we think of pedagogical approaches, chapters included in Macedo (2019) have already vastly illustrated how colonial languages are still mistaught, underlying the need to decolonize the (language) curriculum, by which we mean resisting epistemic monoculture and hegemonic language ideologies that delegitimize the multilingual speaker and their language use in everyday social practices. One way of resisting such ideologies is through translanguaging in the classroom, as a way to co-construct meaning and legitimize students’ and teachers’ repertoires (reminder: teachers are multilingual too!), and by including translanguaging in language teacher education programs (Prada, 2019). The chapters by Seltzer, Espinosa and colleagues, and Espinet all depart from such a perspective and demonstrate, both critically and creatively, what translanguaging in (language) teacher education programs can look like, being transformative for both teachers and their (future) students alike.

As for “teacher,” the discussion is just apparently simple. Is being a teacher a career, a profession, a *métier*, a passion? What makes the specificity of a teacher as a “professional” in comparison to other professionals? Teachers are said to be responsible for educating the future generations, but this assertion should be taken carefully because they are not the only agents at play within the school system. They can enact linguistic and educational policies, but also resist them (independently of their scope and their expected outcomes). As Menken and García (2020) recalled, teachers, regardless of being teachers of languages or other school subjects, are agentic actors that can turn out to be policymakers in the classroom and the school at large. Nevertheless, teachers are also victims of worsening

working conditions, both material and social; are deprived of voices in some teaching contexts; and/or have to cope with increasing mental health issues, such as burnout, insecurity, and fear.

And then we arrive at the third concept of the formula: identity. Post-structuralist perspectives reject identity as stable, fixed, and unidimensional, characterized by a single character trait (Ayres-Bennett and Fisher, 2022). Reducing identity to underscore a language, a nationality, or a religion, as Maalouf (1998) warned, is the shortcut to extremist positions. Now that we have foregrounded what identity is not, it is then possible to assert that identity is multifaceted, negotiated, co-constructed, and reconstructed in social (inter)action, which considers the aims and needs of the individual as well as the features of the surrounding social context. This is the position espoused in this introduction. This explains why one might choose to make salient (and even assert) a facet of what they understand to be their identity on one occasion, but enact other facets more prominently on another. Some characteristics involved in the enactment of one's identity might be denied, claimed, or auto- and hetero-assigned at different points in time and space. Identity, Block and Corona (2016) claimed, is an assemblage of units such as age, gender, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, and a constellation of affiliations, such as religious, linguistic, familial, or professional affiliation. Identity is intersectional, meaning that each characteristic enriches, alters, and adds to the dynamics between the others.

In line with the complexity we have delineated in relation to the three concepts aforementioned, the identity of a language teacher is not stable or determined by the fact that he or she teaches a (specific) language, as some literature have us believe by describing the identity of ESL, French, or Portuguese teachers. It is fluid (Neokleous and Krulatz, 2020) and influenced by sociological aspects such as gender, age, class, race, ethnic origin(s), accent, among others. And it is also influenced, and sometimes determined, by one's linguistic profile, including the language(s) one teaches, the languages learned previously, and which beliefs one holds regarding language education: the reasons why they believe that learning a specific language is (or is not) useful for a specific target audience in a particular sociolinguistic context. On a more macro, historical, and geopolitical level, the identity of a language teacher is also determined by their position in the local society and the value this society attributes to (being) a teacher, in general, and to a *language* teacher, more specifically.

This volume focuses on two groups who remain underrepresented in the literature and consequently deserve more recognition, because of the hyperdiversity of our societies at the very least: teachers of two or more languages and racialized language teachers. While these two categories are not