

Book Review

Language Teacher Identity: Confronting Ideologies of Language, Race, and Ethnicity, by Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer and Vander Tavares. Wiley-Blackwell, 2024, 300 pp., USD 32.00 (ebk), ISBN 978-1-394-15455-5

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Despite a long-standing interest in language teacher identity, the impact of intersecting identities, such as ethnicity, race, and language, has not been studied sufficiently. To fill this gap, Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer and Vander Tavares make a timely contribution to the discourse by editing this phenomenal book, “Language Teacher Identity: Confronting Ideologies of Language, Race, and Ethnicity.” Offering a global perspective on the challenges language teachers face in diverse educational environments, the book is a valuable resource for teachers, educational researchers, and policymakers who want to understand how the intersectionality of language, race, and ethnicity impact shape language teachers’ (troubled) identities. The book is divided into four parts and 14 chapters in total. Chapter 1, “Language Teacher Identity and Education in the Crossfire of Evolving Raciolinguistic and Monolingual ideologies,” sets the stage for the book by introducing the central themes of language, race, ethnicity, and accent in relation to language teacher identity. In this opening chapter, the editors share their personal journeys as multilingual academics, reflecting on the challenges they faced while navigating new linguistic and academic landscapes in Germany and Norway.

In Part 1, Chapter 2, “Introduction: Moving Beyond the Dichotomy of Native/Non-native Foreign Language Teachers in the Study of Professional Knowledge and Teaching Anxiety,” discusses the prevalent ideologies of native-speakerism and monolingualism. Native-speakerism refers to a belief that native speakers are superior teachers, which results in the marginalization of non-native teachers. Monolingualism, on the other hand, refers to a preference for single-language use, which puts plurilingual individuals at a disadvantage. The authors argue that the discrimination associated with the ideologies of native-speakerism and monolingualism affects the professional identities of teachers and has broader implications for educational equity. Similarly, in Chapter 3, “Exploring Identities and Emotions of a Teacher of Multiple Languages: An Arts-based Narrative Inquiry Using Clay Work,” Ku employs an arts-based narrative inquiry to investigate the emotional aspects of a teacher who speaks multiple languages and demonstrates how multilingual teachers navigate the complexities of their professional identity. In Chapter 4, “Emotional Geographies of Teaching Two Languages,” Tavares

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likewise explores emotions impacting the professional identities of teachers teaching multiple languages (e.g., Portuguese and English) through a personal narrative in Canada. The author emphasizes the need for incorporative emotional support mechanisms in professional development programs by illustrating how empathy, frustration, and pride can intersect with instructional practices. In Chapter 5, “Teaching Languages in the Linguistic Marketplace,” Iversen investigates how neoliberal language policies impact teacher identity in Norway through linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, 1991), a concept that recognizes languages based on their social and economic values. The chapter discusses how these market-driven policies create hierarchies that result in the marginalization of the speakers of non-dominant languages.

In Part 2, Chapter 6, “Cultivating the Critical: Professional Development as Ideological Development for Teachers of Racialized Bi/Multilingual Students,” presents a translingual approach to professional development that values teachers’ ideological development. In this chapter, Seltzer engages more ideologically aware teachers in critical dialogue about language ideologies and their impact on instructional practices. In Chapter 7, “The Words Flowed Like a River: Taking up Translanguaging in a Teacher Education Program,” Espinosa and her colleagues also investigate how implementing translanguaging as a pedagogical approach that leverages students’ entire linguistic repertoire impacts teacher education programs. The author highlights the opportunities and challenges of using multiple languages in educational settings. They offer practical insights for teachers, educators, policymakers, and researchers. The author explains how using multiple languages can create fair and inclusive learning environments by appreciating students’ linguistic diversity. Analogously, in Chapter 8, “Linguistic Journeys: Interrogating Linguistic Ideologies in a Teacher Preparation Setting,” Espinet discusses how pre-service teachers navigate the challenges they face while encountering various language ideologies. By providing practical strategies, the author argues that critical pedagogy raises awareness of linguistic ideologies in future teachers and calls for explicitly addressing these ideologies in teacher education to promote critical language awareness.

In Part 3, Patrocínio and de Freitas, in Chapter 9 (Racialization of the Japanese Language in the Narratives of Brazilian Undergraduate Students), investigate how racial identities impact the language learning experiences of Brazilian students. The chapter advocates that language education policies should value the diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds of learners to promote more equitable and inclusive educational outcomes. Similarly, in Chapter 10 (Ethnic Accent Bullying: EFL Teaching and Learning Practices in Mongolia), Shinjee and Dovchin investigate the impact of ethnic accent bullying on EFL instructional practices in Mongolia. The authors discuss the negative effects of ethnic accent bullying on the mental well-being of Mongolian students and teachers with practical and real-life examples. They suggest some measures to address this issue, such as inclusive professional development programs for teachers and reevaluation of policies to ensure they promote a supportive academic environment.

In Part 4, In Chapter 11, “Englishes as a Site of Colonial Conflict: Nuances in Teacher Enactment of a Transraciolinguistic Approach,” Smith, Rose, and Karkar-Esperat investigate language teachers' ideological tensions while leveraging multiple Englishes in diverse educational environments. The authors critically draw on cross-cultural insights and personal narratives of seven former teachers from diverse linguistic backgrounds to understand how these teachers navigate colonial and raciolinguistic ideologies in their professional practices both in their countries of origin and in the US. The chapter emphasizes addressing colonial and raciolinguistic ideologies in language education and calls for a blending of translanguaging with Global Englishes Language Teaching to ensure that English language practices are inclusive and reflective of the diverse linguistic repertoires of bilingual and multilingual communities. Likewise, Ramjattan, in Chapter 12 (The Raciolinguistic Enregisterment and Aestheticization of ELT Labor), explores the intersection of language and race in the ELT settings and argues that the ELT industry heavily relies on aesthetic labor, which privileges those who embody whiteness and the notion of nativeness in English and marginalizes non-white speakers of English.

Similarly, Chapter 13, “Issues of Legitimization, Authority, and Acceptance: Pakistani English Language Teachers and Their Confrontation of Raciolinguistic Ideologies in ELT/TESOL Classrooms,” investigates the raciolinguistic ideologies faced by Pakistani ELT teachers related to legitimization and acceptance for Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs). Raza recounts an incident that involved an English language learner who expressed concerns about her daughter's adoption of a Pakistani English accent from her kindergarten teacher in Pakistan. This incident shows the raciolinguistic nature that devalues the linguistic capabilities of NNESTs based on their racial identities and accents. In Chapter 14, “Language Student-Teachers of a Racialized Background: The Transracial Construction of the Competent Language Teacher,” Melo-Pfeifer explores how pre-service plurilingual teachers with racialized backgrounds in Germany narratively reconstruct their coping strategies regarding their racialized hyper-visibility in initial teacher education scenarios. Through discourse analysis of self-reported instances of multilingual performances, the study reveals that the student-teachers' experiences are deeply intertwined with raciolinguistic ideologies.

Overall, this book makes a timely contribution to the field of language education by presenting a thorough analysis of how language, race, and ethnicity shape the professional identities of language teachers worldwide. The interdisciplinary nature of the book enhances its relevance and applicability for teachers and researchers across various domains. This book does a phenomenal job of criticizing native-speakerism and monolingualism in language teaching across contexts. These ideologies create a bias in language education by promoting single-language communication and native-speaking teachers while marginalizing multilingual English-speaking teachers.

Another notable contribution of the book is its emphasis on the emotional aspects of language teachers. For example, Ku's chapter employs personal narratives to highlight

the emotional labor involved in developing professional identities and teaching different language groups. The third significant contribution of the book is its analysis of neoliberal language policies and the linguistic marketplace, which refers to market-driven policies that contribute to the creation of linguistic inequalities by favoring dominant languages and marginalizing non-dominant ones.

Despite its many strengths, the book is not free from limitations. The first limitation of the book is the dense academic prose and complex theoretical discussions. This theoretical rigor and empirical depth might limit the accessibility of the book to a broader audience, particularly practitioners who could benefit from its insights. This book could have been more helpful if there were more practical examples to implement its recommendations in classroom settings. While the interdisciplinary nature of the book is a strength, it also presents a challenge of coherence. Diverse methodological approaches and perspectives can sometimes result in a fragmented reading experience. Therefore, a more unified narrative that weaves together the various threads of the book would help readers, especially novices, better navigate the complex interplay of factors influencing language teachers' identities.

THE AUTHOR

Aakash Kumar is a third-year doctoral student in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. His current research focuses on integration of AI in writing instruction and assessment, translanguaging practices, and teacher education. Originally from Pakistan, Aakash has a background in education, having served as one of the youngest teacher trainers in Pakistan from 2018 to 2022. He has conducted research on the assessment system in Pakistan and has presented his work internationally. Aakash's work has been recognized with several awards and fellowships. He has worked with Sukkur IBA University, the Regional English Language Office at the U.S. Embassy Islamabad, and UNICEF.

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