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***Iranian Journal
of
Language Teaching Research***
BOOK REVIEW



Language Teacher Identity Tensions: Nexus of Agency, Emotion, and Investment, by Zia Tajeddin and Bedrettin Yazan, London, Routledge, 2024, 262pp., \$137.01(hardback), ISBN9781032514727

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In the research literature of language teacher identity (LTI), the process of becoming a teacher is often conceptualized as identity construction, where teacher agency, teacher emotion, and teacher investment play crucial roles. Throughout this construction, teachers inevitably encounter tensions coming from asymmetrical power relations shaped by ideological structures. While the literature on LTI explores teacher agency, emotion, and investment, a noticeable gap remains in the examination of identity tensions, which involves both the practice of teaching and learning to teach, as well as their relations to teacher agency, emotion and investment. *Language Teacher Identity Tensions: Nexus of Agency, Emotion, and Investment*, edited by Zia Tajeddin and Bedrettin Yazan, addresses this gap by drawing on empirical studies that investigate the identity tensions between teachers' instructional beliefs, values, and priorities, and the contextual constraints and requirements.

This book comprises five sections, including three main body parts, as well as an overview and an epilogue. The editors argue that identity tensions are a useful way to explore the complexities of language teaching. Then, theoretical connections are made between tensions and teachers' agency, emotion, and investment, which is based on the current situation of language teacher education research. The book defines identity tension as any tension that language teachers encounter and declare that language teachers cannot resolve all tensions to have a successful professional life. With the guide of this definition, the book examines the various ways that teachers use to navigate these tensions and highlights the ways in which their responses to these struggles provide valuable insights into their identity construction, particularly in terms of agency, emotion, and investment. By focusing on these tensions, the book offers a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in teachers' identity work and the multiple factors that influence its construction. The overview section introduces the theoretical basis and research context of LTI field, clarifying the research questions and main content of the book. This helps readers gain a basic understanding of this field and construct a cognitive framework for the book's content.

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doi 10.30466/ijltr.2025.56344.3078

Part I, titled “Tensions and Teacher Identity Construction,” consists of seven empirical studies, each presented in a separate chapter. This part examines identity tensions in LTI construction. Chapter 1 examines the second contributor’s identity tensions in his critical autoethnographic narrative, providing a novel perspective on the intersection of identity, ideology, emotion, and agency. Chapter 2 applies Gee’s (2000) identity framework and Engeström’s (2015) activity theory to discuss systemic tensions in the identity development of an English for Speakers of Other Languages teacher in an Iranian public high school, showing multiple, shifting identities helped the teacher negotiate the systemic tension. Chapter 3 investigates the identity tensions experienced by an English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher in Australia, underscoring how the tensions between “aspired” and “practiced” identities propelled his agentive acts for professional identity construction. Chapter 4 employs a multimodal narrative approach to probe identity tensions among in-service female English language teachers in Kuwait, which is an under-researched Middle Eastern context (Vaccino-Salvadore, 2020). It highlights how identity tensions emerged from age differences and “Kuwaitization” policies. Chapter 5 presents a narrative inquiry to capture the tensions among two South Korean teachers in Japan who negotiated personal-professional boundaries, becoming, and belonging. This chapter reveals how sociohistorical dynamics shaped their identity tensions, examines the role of spirituality with Christian faith in their tension-mediation strategies. Chapter 6 applies critical transnational agency and mobility systems frameworks to analyze raciolinguistic identity tensions of two multilingual writing teachers at a Midwestern U.S. public university. Finally, in Chapter 7, Trent presents a “short story” analysis (Barkhuizen, 2016) of the experiences of two ethnic minority English language teachers in Hong Kong. The findings point to multidimensionality of their identity tensions, asymmetrical power relations involved, and “centripetal-centrifugal discursive tension” at play in their LTI construction.

Part II, entitled “Identity Tensions and Teacher Education”, consists of four chapters, probing into identity tensions during teacher education. Chapter 8 embraces a post-structural approach to examine identity tensions experienced by student teachers in the educational context, stressing the interconnectedness of identity tensions across individual, institutional, and societal levels. Chapter 9 utilizes a duo-ethnography approach to explore the identity tensions faced by a teacher educator and a teacher candidate, suggesting that identity tensions emerge from disjunctures between pedagogical theory and classroom practice. Chapter 10 presents a qualitative case study to explore how a Yazidi American immigrant language teacher in a public secondary school negotiated multiple identities through investment. Finally, Chapter 11 draws on positioning theory to discuss the ways in which a multilingual student teacher in the United States navigated identity tensions through agency in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program, revealing that the macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors caused identity tensions.

Part III, titled “Identity Tensions and Teacher Beliefs and Practices”, consists of four chapters. Chapter 12 adopts narrative interviews to scrutinize the Iranian female teachers’ gendered identity tensions within the political, sociocultural, and religious context of the study, unpacking three sources of tensions: discrimination in favor of male teachers, constraints upon female teachers, and female teachers’ uneasy interpersonal relationships with other gender identities. Chapter 13 reports on a qualitative study grounded in an ecological approach to identity and agency, with the aim of examining the identity tensions experienced by two university-level TESOL practitioners and pointing out the relation between teacher agency, identity, and well-being. Chapter 14 uses narrative accounts to examine identity tensions among English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers at a southeastern U.S. community college, arising from conflicts between their professional values and institutional policy values. Finally, Chapter 15 analyzes how the second author employed emotional reflexivity to identify identity tensions and negotiated identity tensions through feeling power during ESL teaching.

The writing concludes with an epilogue, in which the editors reiterate the central goal of the book: to examine the identity tensions teachers experience across different contexts using diverse

pedagogical, methodological, and conceptual approaches. This aim is crucial for advancing our understanding of LTI at the nexus of agency, emotion, and investment. The editors provide a detailed discussion of the innovations and contributions that the 15 empirical studies offer to LTI research. First, the diversity of language teaching contexts represented across the studies collectively illustrate the various tensions encountered that language teachers encounter in their professional lives. Second, these studies employ diverse theoretical frameworks to investigate LTI, tensions, agency, and emotion, providing rich and multifaceted perspectives. Third, while consistently employing qualitative methods, the studies collect data from diverse sources, adding reliability to their findings. The editors highlight three conclusions in synthesizing some generalizable facets of identity tensions, yet fully acknowledge the uniqueness of each language teacher's experience, making it impossible to truly capture within these conclusions. First, inevitably, tensions arise in teaching careers deeply enmeshed with personal life. Second, language teaching within a context entails navigating "centripetal-centrifugal discursive" structures that shape meaning-making and identity construction. Third, while language teachers in the 15 studies exercised professional agency through adaptive strategy development to mitigate identity tensions, these interventions demonstrated limited efficacy in achieving sustained resolution. The editors conclude by urging teacher education programs to incorporate identity tensions as explicit learning topics, integrating them across both general program activities and specialized courses.

Collectively, these fifteen chapters, spanning diverse contexts and employing varied methodologies, offer a rich tapestry of insights into LTI tensions. Several key strengths of this collection deserve highlighting. This book stands out for its methodological pluralism. The collection of 15 empirical studies showcases how innovative qualitative approaches, such as critical autoethnography (Ch.1), duo-ethnography (Ch.9), and ecological niche analysis (Ch.13), can unpack the nuanced layers of identity tensions. What is particularly noteworthy is that multimodal narrative (Ch.4) and collaborative dialogue (Ch.15) transcend traditional interviews to capture the embodied and emotional dimensions of teacher identity.

Building upon this methodological pluralism, the book crucially leverages these qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive exploration of LTI tensions across diverse countries and regions, including Australia, Hong Kong, and Kuwait. This global scope vividly highlights the complexity of language teacher identities within varying cultural and educational contexts, enabling readers to grasp both the commonalities and differences in language teachers' identities on a global scale. Furthermore, it integrates theoretical frameworks from multiple disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and education, facilitating more in-depth multifaceted analysis of identity tensions. This interdisciplinary integration effectively addresses the limitations of approaches grounded in a single theoretical lens.

The current review also follows the same trend of a brief abstract, targeted critique, and carefully organized evaluation of the book's contributions, as seen in Soleimani's (2024) review of *Conducting Genre-Based Research in Applied Linguistics: A Methodological Guide*, published in *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research (IJLTR)*. Conforming to this trend, the current review aims to provide a close yet reader-friendly critique of the book by Tajeddin and Yazan (2024), in line with IJLTR's pursuit of scholarly excellence and applied utility in language teacher identity research (Soleimani, 2024).

While the book offers valuable insights, it does not adequately address how different types of language teachers who adopt translanguaging pedagogy (i.e., strategically integrating multilingual resources) navigate identity tensions in the digital teaching context. Additionally, a significant limitation of the book is that all 15 empirical studies adopt a qualitative research paradigm, lacking both quantitative research and mixed-methods approaches. Despite these limitations, it remains a highly recommended resource for readers interested in LTI tensions at the intersection of teacher agency, emotion, and investment.

Future research on LTI could fruitfully build upon existing methodological innovations and conceptual frameworks to provide deeper insight into the identity tensions experienced by diverse teacher groups. As teaching contexts continue to evolve, particularly with the integration of digital technologies, hybrid learning environments, and shifting sociocultural expectations, teachers may face new challenges in constructing and negotiating their professional identities. Exploring these nuanced identity struggles can enrich our understanding of how teachers adapt, resist, or redefine their roles in response to these dynamic changes.

To conclude, while this book offers valuable insights into how identity tensions emerge from the dynamic interplay of teacher agency, emotion, and investment, its overall contribution to the field of LTI research is best described as a promising starting point rather than a fully realized advancement. While its empirical breadth illuminates global patterns of convergence and divergence in LTI, the work ultimately provides a vital foundation for future research.

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