An Eccentric and Dialogic Autoethnography of Two Language Teacher Educators as an Extension of Self-Study Paradigm

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Abstract

In this rather eccentric manuscript, we invite you into our ongoing dialogue, which is a shared journey where we approach autoethnography as more than a method. It is a way of knowledging through conversation for us, two language teacher educators. Throughout, we reflect on how critical autoethnographic narrative allows us to voice our vulnerabilities, map our identities, and challenge the taken-for-granted norms and practices in language teacher education. Together, we meander through retro/intro/pro/spective reflections, blending theory with storytelling; mind with heart; English with occasional Turkish expressions; past, present, and future. We embrace autoethnography not only to understand who we are and how we got here as language teacher educators, but also to co-create spaces of healing, resistance, and transformation. Along the way, we question colonizing research practices, recognize affective turn and critical paradigm in the field, and make room for emotions, discomfort, and laughter. This piece is not a conclusion—it is a continuation. We speak, write, and remember loudly hoping that our readers/companions will not just act as onlookers, but participate in our dialogue in this being, becoming, knowing, and writing experience.

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Prologue

Dear our readers/companions… In this manuscript, we continue our scholarly conversation in/around/for autoethnography through our series of synchronous dialogic writing via Google Doc. So far, we have discussed quite a number of different

topics in/around/for autoethnography hoping to contribute to the existing scholarship on language education and language teacher education (LTE) research. While doing so, we have deliberately diverted from the traditional written academic discourse by experimenting with different critical and creative writing strategies and techniques such as incorporating poetry, informal language, first language use, visuals, fragmented expressions, unfinished sentences, word plays, interjecting expressions in Turkish language, and all. Instead of going for the serious (and boring) third-person voice of the all-knowing "author"ity, we have positioned ourselves as "your" (our readers) companions.

For us, you are not passive recipients of our "text" but active listeners of our sincere, friendly, and honest "wor(l)d." Instead of distancing ourselves from you, we intentionally practice vulnerability, which eventually makes us approachable to you (and you to us) when we share our wor(l)ds with each other.

This manuscript is inşallah going to be a contribution to our ongoing dialogic conversations. And… As usual, we invite y'all to listen to us actively and engage with our inner wor(l)d, which is quite organic, unorthodox, and weird. At this point, we would like to thank Jaber, the editor-in-chief of Language Teacher Education Research (LTER), for giving us the space to meet with you and letting us get as eccentric as we want. We think/believe/feel that LTER is a safe space for us all. More importantly, we hope that it will remain a great venue for language teacher educators from various schools of thoughts/beliefs/emotions.

Transition… Well, after this introduction and before we start our dialog, we would like to remind y'all that you can catch up with our previous conversations if you would like to read more about our wor(l)ds. So far, our conversational topics have varied from knowledging through dialogic and retro/intro/pro/spective reflection as a means of fighting against epistemic violence (e.g., Yazan & Keleş, 2025); integrating emotions into autoethnography as a dialogic (k)not-working methodology; utilizing critical autoethnographic narrative as a tool for professional development in LTE; discussing multilingual leader(=friend)ship that allows for multivoicedness and welcomes uncertainty; making sense of teacher identity tensions through critical autoethnographic narrative bringing together our beliefs/thoughts/emotions about "home" in accordance with our lived experiences as transnational scholars; pushing towards new ways of being, knowing, and thinking in educational research; exploring our transnational teacher identities through poetic autoethnography; Reflecting retro/intro/pro/spectively on emotionally charged identity tensions; autoethnographying as a duet performance of countering

colonialingualism; utilizing critical autoethnographic narrative as a self-reflexivity component of a qualitative research course.

In this dialog, we intend to discuss how we can contribute to LTE research by the use of autoethnography as self-narrative and retro/intro/pro/spective reflection. We discuss the interface that autoethnography investigates between the self and the sociopolitical discourses in ecological systems. We highlight how that interface can help educators understand that their identity transformation is influenced by both individual and social dynamics at the nexus of the personal, professional, and political temporospatialities. Making the personal political, autoethnographic scholarship can help unpack the tensions that emerge when individual agency meets dominant cultures/discourses in the context. We do not mean to present autoethnography as a panacea for issues around LTE, but we maintain that its conceptual underpinnings, methodological affordances, and practical implementations may present discursive and experiential spaces for the cognitive and emotional dimensions of LTE. Hazırsanız… Başlıyoruz…

Our Dialogue

Ufuk: We penned down the introduction above after we completed our dialog. Honestly speaking, we thought/believed/felt that an introduction could reduce the eccentricity of our dialog. So, the introduction's main function was to give you a heads-up. Nothing more… Nothing less. Now, let us rewind the tape and let me hand down the bağlama to Bedrettin Hocam so that he sets the scene and the act.

Bedrettin: Sağolasın, Ufuk Hocam… Ben ufaktan gireyim söze madem… [A SHORT PAUSE] Dear readers/companions… In this dialogue, our overarching goal is to explore what autoethnography offers for language teacher educators to engage in self-inquiry to make better sense of their multiple identities. However, we do not promise you a structured outline. We will be meandering around, taking detours, and enjoying the scene/seen. Throughout, we discuss the methodological affordances of autoethnography in the field of LTE to situate the "self" in relation to "the other" within sociopolitical contexts to critique the cultural discourses that influence language teachers' and teacher educators' personal, professional, and academic development. Because autoethnography reports on the interplay between the *auto* (self) and the *ethno* (cultures) by foregrounding the socio-political situatedness of the autoethnographer, such a self-inquiry method, we reckon, could help language teachers and teacher educators conceptualize their identities through what we call retro/intro/pro/spective reflection (Keleş, 2025a; Yazan & Keleş, 2025).

Ufuk: after this brief introduction, I'll share a background for autoethnography as an unorthodox methodology in qualitative research. To keep our dialogic voice, I will pause after a while to let you chime in with your contributions. Does that work for you?

Ufuk: [TWO DAYS LATER] Sorry for my late response, Hocam. I have been struggling with my students' assignments lately… But it does work for me. Ne demek! Perfectly fine for me. I am all ears!

Bedrettin: Great. So, let me continue. Where was I? Oh, yes! Well, framing autoethnography as a combination of autobiography and ethnography, qualitative researchers tend to describe autoethnography by using the three main parts of the word (*auto*, *ethno*, and *graphy*), which correspond to the three main dimensions of the method (Adams & Herrman, 2023). *Auto* refers to the autoethnographer collecting, generating, and analyzing data from their own lived experience to provide a self-reflexive narrative account about their experiences along with the associated thoughts/beliefs/feelings. That aspect of autoethnography – meaning the researcher being the researched at the same time – has been a significant concern articulated by 'traditionalist' qualitative researchers (Boufoy-Bastick, 2004; Murray, 2004). That is, "at times, autoethnographies become intellectual 'navel-gazing,' revealing intimate details of lives that seem out of place (to some) in social science discourse" (Marshall et al., 2022, p. 31). Second, the *ethno* -

Ufuk: Sorry to interrupt, Hocam. Before you move on to the *ethno* component, I think I must add others' criticism of autoethnography in addition to its being a navel-gazing approach. Well… some criticize autoethnographers and say that they are *idiocentric* and autoethnographic research is "narcissistic," (Eriksson, 2010), "too introspective" (Alvesson, 2003), "an intellectual cul de sac" (Delamont, 2009, p. 57), and "solipsistic" with ineffective or non-existing theoretical base (Ploder & Stadlbauer, 2016). I agree that these are valid concerns. After all, if researchers do not carefully craft their autoethnography, they may fall into these traps. However, focusing on the *ethno* - I mean the society and the ideologies, discourses, and practices surrounding it - may prevent us from falling into this trap, right?

Bedrettin: [AFTER A FEW DAYS] Now, I must say sorry for my late response. It is so hectic here as we are nearing the end of the semester. Per your question, I must say that you took the words right out of my mouth. Well, the *ethno* dimension is a reminder that autoethnography is grounded in ethnography. That is, the autoethnographer needs to engage in a critical, ethical, and self-reflexive investigation of cultural phenomena (Chang, 2008; Hughes et al., 2012) to present "a nuanced

understanding" (Adams & Herrman, 2023, p. 3) of those phenomena by using the personal stories as data. When mentoring pre- and in-service language teachers, I tend to use this aspect of autoethnography as a way to attend to the above-mentioned concerns of idiocentrism taking over the analytic and critical nature of autoethnographic research. Let's remember Spry's (2001) words: "Good autoethnography is not simply a confessional tale of self-renewal; it is a provocative weave of story and theory" (p. 713). Although weaving story and theory together is easier said than done, it is definitely an important cautionary note. Therefore, depending on how autoethnography is represented, "[s]ometimes cultural understanding is implied and embedded in a story, and sometimes these cultural experiences and understandings are explicitly discussed and addressed" (Adams et al., 2022, p. 3). Speaking of representation, I think the *graphy* aspect of autoethnography is also where it proves to be an unorthodox qualitative research method. Often through written/textual resources, sometimes through multimodal constructions including performance- and fine arts-based production, *graphy* pertains to the presentation of autoethnography and how it becomes visible to the readership or audience who experiences or learns about the autoethnographic research study.

Ufuk: Let me add to your discussion of the *graphy* component, Hocam. Well, as I said elsewhere, while I am composing an autoethnographic manuscripts, I always bear in mind that good autoethnographic works are crafted "thinking like an ethnographer, writing like a novelist" (Ellis, 2004, p. 330). We must think systematically, analytically, and critically while simultaneously writing evocatively, creatively and empathetically to present ourstory not only to inform but also inspire and resonate with diverse readership.

Bedrettin: [ABOUT THREE HOURS LATER] Absolutely! Yeah. You're right! Well… How autoethnography is represented is important in that most methodologists argue that it should engage the reader at both cognitive and emotional levels, i.e., "create purposeful dialogue between the reader and the author" (Goodall, 1998, p. 7). Spry's pithy description is "emotionally engaging" and "critically self-reflexive of one's sociopolitical interactivity" (2001, p. 713). So, you are right. An autoethnographer is both a literary and a scientific figure.

Ufuk Hocam, I think discussing the three morphological components of autoethnography would suffice for our purposes in this dialogue, but please feel free to make any additions you'd like. To invite you to the dialogue, I'll pause here after asking a few questions to you. So… what strikes you about autoethnography as a method to contribute to LTE scholarship? Does it offer anything methodologically

particular for LTE to address how language teacher educator identities develop over time? On a side note… Is this focus close to LTER's aims and scope?

Ufuk: [THE NEXT DAY] Thanks, Hocam, for these challenging yet eye-opening questions. Well, honestly, I think/believe/feel that our discussion may contribute to LTE scholarship in many ways. As for your question about our dialog's focus… I mean… whether it fits in the scope of LTER, which is a new yet promising journal on LTE… It absolutely does! For one thing, it would be interesting to discuss how autoethnography challenges traditional forms of research and how it opens the door for more dynamic and personal narratives that could enrich the field of LTE (Kessler, 2024). Second, as you mentioned, such a discussion triggers an insightful discussion of paradigm shifts and transformative turns in language (teacher) education (Keleş, 2020). And third… Diving deep into autoethnography's potentialities and possibilities sets the stage for exploring how personal yet critical narratives may foster more astute exchanges, intricate plays, and profound networks in LTE and among language teacher educators - like you and me.

On top of my mind, I may say that autoethnography fosters retro/intro/pro/spective reflection (Yazan & Keleş, 2025) and underlines the role of critical autoethnographic narrative (CAN; Yazan, 2019, 2024; Hauber-Ozer et al., 2025; Kamali, 2024) in LTE on both formal and informal grounds. This way, it (a) empowers teachers and teacher educators to assume and maintain their own voices, (b) encourages a more profound understanding of sociocultural and sociopolitical experiences, and (c) improves both intra- and inter-personal communication. Before I go through these in detail one by one, let me ask you whether you agree with me and what (else) could be added to this list?

Bedrettin: Yes, I'd add more to the list… I think… [PAUSE] Well, I want to note that we've been talking about autoethnography a lot in the last several years, because I think autoethnography can be an answer or response to many calls or paradigm shifts in the broader field of applied linguistics and LTE. Here are a few examples. Please feel free to unpack or expand my examples. First, the call for more critical sociocultural practices and research in LTE resonates with autoethnography because scholars view it as the "praxis of social justice" (Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway, 2013, p. 558) and "the personal text as critical intervention in social, political, and cultural life" (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 763).

Second, the call for decolonizing research methodologies (Barnawi & Rboul, 2025) also accords with and is promoted by autoethnography since Denzin (2006), for example, argues that autoethnography problematizes "hegemonic ways of seeing and

representing the other" (p. 333). In a similar vein, Gannon (2006) notes that autoethnographic writing "is part of a corrective movement against colonizing ethnographic practices that erased the subjectivity of the researcher while granting him or her absolute authority for representing "the other" of the research" (p. 475).

Third, we've been witnessing and experiencing an "affective turn" (White, 2018) in our field in which now emotions of learners, teachers, and teacher educators are being investigated more and more. "[A]uto-ethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world, it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, and reflexively" (Ellis, 2013, p. 10). That is, emotions are foregrounded in autoethnography; as Spry (2001) notes, "good autoethnography must be emotionally engaging" (p. 713). Same with agency, I suppose. It has also been theorized and explored extensively in LTE recently (Miller & Gkonou, 2018; Song, 2025). Autoethnography particularly focuses on the individual's agency to tell their own story without letting their life get narrated or represented by others, those with the power and voice in research (Canagarajah, 2012). Turning to Spry's (2001) words again: "Performing autoethnography has allowed me to position myself as active agent with narrative authority over many hegemonizing dominant cultural myths that restricted my social freedom and personal development" (p. 711). She added how, through autoethnography, she became more conscious about how her privilege vis-à-vis her racial identity and socioeconomic status might have limited the freedom of others.

Lastly, (perhaps I should've mentioned this one at the beginning), we have extensive research on language teacher identity and an emerging strand of research on language teacher educator identity in the field of LTE. And autoethnography has methodological affordances for language teachers and teacher educators to explore their identities through personal narratives, as we have seen in several recent examples (e.g., Fall, 2019; Keleş, 2020; Solano-Campos, 2014; Uştuk, 2025). Especially conceptualizing language teacher identity as socio-politically situated, colleagues can do and write autoethnography to better understand their identity construction in a specific time/space and to experientially and discursively construct their identity in the process of autoethnographic research. I think I've been using "experientially and discursively" for a while to highlight the experience involved in doing autoethnography (which involves discursive engagement, too) and to attend to the identity construction we engage in as we (c/d)raft our autoethnographic manuscripts. What I'm trying to argue with those convenient adverbs is that we need to consider both identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse dimensions of language teacher (educator) identity as discussed in Varghese et al.'s (2005) foundational article. I need to pause here since this entry is becoming a lengthy one. I tried to share my thoughts

about how autoethnography offers methodological responses to the calls in our field. I'm sure I'm missing some. [Keleş], please, sen al sazı eline, yoksa okuyucu benden ciddi anlamda sıkılacak.

Ufuk: [THE NEXT MORNING] Lol, Hocam! Sure… While reading/listening to your response, [PAUSE] I took some notes… Şükür! I did. You left me with so much to ponder… social justice-oriented practices… decolonization of research… affective turn… language teacher agency… language teacher educator agency… language teacher identity… language teacher educator identity… Phew! [A LONG PAUSE] Madem sazı ben aldım elime… let me start by commenting on these topics of discussion shortly (and maybe add a few more) and underline their significance in LTE to autoethnography as a self-study method stemming from narrative inquiry. Then, if it works for you, too, we can unpack how the potentialities of autoethnography pertain to each topic.

So… starting with the intersection of social justice and autoethnographic research in LTE, I must say that they both draw on critical paradigms (Clay et al., 2023). While social justice perspective provides a contextual depth and critical dimension for teacher educators to address issues of marginalization, oppression, otherization, disenfranchisement, and so on when they work with teachers, autoethnography directly gives voice to those who are marginalized, oppressed, othered, disenfranchised to present their cases in their own words and in their own ways (Yazan & Keleş, 2025). Therefore, I view autoethnography as a tool for counteracting dominant ideologies and the relevant discursive practices. In a way, it comes in handy when incorporating critical paradigm and self-study into LTE research.

This perspective brings us to the issue of decolonization of scientific research. Autoethnography blurs the binaries between the researcher and the researched as well as the insider and the outsider in scientific inquiry (Gannon, 2006; Keleş, 2022a; Yazan, 2019, 2024). Traditionally, an outsider/researcher goes into a community to "mine" community members' (insider/researched) lived experiences by observing their behavior, asking them about their thoughts/beliefs/emotions, and/or analyzing the cultural products generated by the community. After "extracting" sufficient data, the outsider/researcher goes back to where they came from so that they can "process" the collected data, interpret them, and write up a scientific paper according to their own inferences. This type of research is no different than a colonizer's work, right? Go there… make the locals work for you… exploit them to mine the resources… to extract the ore… to process it… and… to make a profit! How so dehumanizing, right? On a parallel note, if I (assuming an LTE researcher identity) go into a school, observe the local language teachers' classroom practices, and interview them regarding their

performance, I may miss the complexities and the localities of the school environment they navigate. If I acted more boldly and tell them what they should or should not do without understanding their contextualities, I would cause more harm than good… let alone educate them. In an alternative scenario, if I work with them in the same environment and help them create their critical autoethnographic narratives, they may have a more profound understanding of their teaching practice, right?

Bedrettin: [A FEW HOURS LATER]. Certainly! And… to add to your example… Let me tell you that, with autoethnography, "the locals" have an opportunity to reconsider their positionality to free themselves from the outsider's directives… These directives are, in a way, are forms of colonizer's oppression and all the accompanying ideological practices that legitimize outsiders' intervention. [A SHORT PAUSE] Sorry to interrupt! Please go on…

Ufuk: Hiç sorun değil. And I do agree with you Hocam… There is one point I want to make… I want us to bear in mind… That is… I don't want us to sound like we refuse all kinds of traditional research methods. We both know that, in almost all cases, social scientists are there to conduct a systematic inquiry to understand the local discourses and practices without any political agenda. However, being an outsider and interpreting the local cultural norms and practices according to your own "knowledge base" may hinder the actual meanings/feelings and create an unwanted colonizing effect. What I mean to say is that having an autoethnographic lens will definitely reduce the colonizing effects of sociocultural inquiry.

Bedrettin: I understand your point there. Yet… Could you be more specific for our readers/companions?

Ufuk: Yes, sure… Maybe… We should make a note here for our readers/companions. That we highlight the strengths of autoethnographic writing in language teacher education, we are not disregarding other research methodologies. For us, assuming an autoethnographer identity is not only about using data from "the self" only… It is about transforming language teacher education research into more transformative research that locates the lived experiences of the locals in the center of our research practice. As the Turkish saying goes: "Önce iğneyi kendine batır; sonra çuvaldızı başkasına," meaning that you should criticize yourself before criticizing others. Being able to criticize the self gives the locals the power to speak up for themselves, right?

Bedrettin: Agreed! Autoethnography as a form of emancipation, huh?

Ufuk: Exactly… With autoethnography, the locals acquire the tools to speak up so that they have a chance to look back to understand, talk back to voice their object(ificat)ions, and fight back for their own (ch/v)oices. Autoethnography enables them (partly if not fully) to denaturalize the process of oppression, colonialization, and dehumanization. In short, autoethnography allows the locals to explore their own land (space); dig deep into their own soil (cultural items); locate, extract, process and use their own (c)ores (goals); and turn them into their own gems that represent their own cultural practices, stories, thoughts/beliefs/emotions.

On a side note… As you know, Hocam, I view thoughts, beliefs, and emotions as inseparable dimensions of our lives. That's why I use slashes when I talk about them (i.e., thoughts/beliefs/emotions). This holistic view helps me understand the human condition as an organic whole - not in isolated units… It is the same for language teachers and language teacher educators since our profession requires us to look at ourselves from a viewpoint where thoughts/beliefs/emotions merge and submerge into our multiplied, blurred, and entangled identities to make sense of our lived experience fully.

Bedrettin: Well, I understand where you come from. It does make sense. Please go ahead.

Ufuk: Circling back to what I meant to say… Well… At this point, I must say that the affective turn in applied linguistics comes in handy for me (Benesch, 2017; Pavlenko, 2013). Before this turn, applied linguists were mainly interested in the cognitive aspect of teaching and learning languages; how our brains processed linguistic information. Emotions were often ignored. With affective turn, however, we are now able to talk about emotions, well-being, and mindfulness more comprehensively. Now, many scholars in the field believe that thoughts, beliefs, and emotions are inseparable when teaching and learning languages (see Golombek & Doran, 2014). Likewise, with autoethnography, we are reminded of the importance of feelings in LTE research (Penton-Herrera et al., 2025). In a way, autoethnography, which blurs the so-called lines between the mind and the heart, equips us with the pedagogical tools to make sense of, reflect on, and write about our own thoughts/beliefs/emotions. As a scholar of LTE research, "I want a story that moves me, my heart and belly as well as my head" as Bochner and Ellis (2016, pp. 212–213) notes. [PAUSE] And I know that engaging with autoethnographic research gives me that thought/belief/emotion.

As for language teacher agency and identity, sazı sahibine teslim edeyim. After all, you are the expert. Please go ahead, Hocam. I know you have a lot to say about these topics of discussion.

Bedrettin: [THREE DAYS LATER] Haha. I am an autoethnographer who has made a lot of mistakes. Thank you! İltifat deyip kabul edeyim… Your words made me think about several aspects of autoethnography that I wanted to share with you and the readers/companions. Just so you know, I saw your comments. [PAUSE] On a related note, let me switch gears towards critical autoethnographic narrative (CAN) after I make a few reflexive notes here about how I see myself both as a language teacher educator and as an autoethnographer.

I arrived at autoethnography in a non-conventional way. I've told this story in several other places before. Let's see how I'll tell it this time/space. I was looking for a way to push forward my research and practices around language teacher identity as a language teacher educator, as an assistant professor who was nearing the time of tenure and promotion review. As a researcher, my job is to engage in innovation in my field. I'd been reading and thinking about and researching language teacher identity, i.e., what it is, why it is important (to teachers and me), why it merits researching, how I should research it, and why it matters for teacher education. Where I ended up was similar to where colleagues have: identity should be "central organizing principle" (Varghese et al., 2016, p. 557) in LTE. This research implication urges us to innovate our practices of teacher education, which for me ultimately was an identity work as a teacher educator. That's how my identities as a researcher of teacher education and a language teacher educator are so intertwined. I'd already discussed a critical identity activity in the implications of a paper, which I needed to cut down for word count requirements. I called it "critical autoethnographic narrative (CAN)," which I'd constructed in the fifth revision of my manuscript (Yazan, 2018) from my doctoral dissertation. Later, I expanded what I cut from that paper to submit to *TESOL Journal*, and in the same year, I tried it out in my class, in which you were a student, Ufuk!

Ufuk: Yes, Hocam. I was. Thank goodness that I was! Sayenizde çok ekmeğini yedim; hala yiyorum. Bereketli çok… Haha! Sorry to interrupt! Please go ahead!

Bedrettin: Well… I benefited from that course, as well. The feedback from students in that semester was great, despite the initial challenges. Since then, CAN has kept me busy in my research and practice of teacher education. (Looks like I ended up with CAN here already as I was sharing some reflexive notes).

It took me some time to remember why I was telling this story … oh yes, what I mean to show is that me trying out the use of CAN as an iterative, scaffolded, reflective writing in my class led me to engage in what Spry (2011) would call "practiced vulnerability" which refers to:

a methodology of moving out of one's comfort zone of familiarity, a strategic surrendering into a space of risk, of uncomfortability, or uncertainty that one experiences when critically reflecting upon and then embodying one's own experience. The practiced vulnerability is a purposeful movement into the liminality—the betwixt and the betweenness—of the critical, creative process of moving from person to persona. (p. 167)

With the design and implementation of CAN, I was asking my students, who were either pre- or in-service language teachers – like you, to be vulnerable by telling their stories about language learning, speaking, and teaching, which tended to be very intimate and traumatic at times.

Ufuk: I suppose you are pointing to the emotionally-charged nature of language teacher identity work, right?

Bedrettin: Exactly. Interrogating what I was doing, I thought I needed to make myself vulnerable by sharing my stories, which I did, and many times in an unplanned fashion, in so much that I sometimes found myself realizing in the middle of the story that it was my first time sharing it with anyone, especially in an English-speaking setting. Then, I started narrating and analyzing my own stories and publishing them to share with broader communities. As I kept using CAN with language teachers in my classes and later teacher educators, I kept moving into "the liminality—the betwixt and the betweenness—of" criticality and creativity (Spry, 2011). That movement led me to better understand myself as a language teacher educator as well as a qualitative researcher, i.e., the importance of my presence as a researcher in the research process and how my positionality (itself dynamic and evolving throughout the research process) influences and is influenced by the research experience.

Regarding my reflexivity in research and LTE, I'd like to share two quotes that stuck with me and I revisit on purpose, since they have sobering messages. The first one (which we partly cited earlier in this dialogue) is from Gannon (2006) who said:

Autoethnography is part of a corrective movement against colonizing ethnographic practices that erased the subjectivity of the researcher while granting him or her absolute authority for representing "the other" of the research. In autoethnography, the subject and object of research collapse into the body/thoughts/feelings of the (auto)ethnographer located in his or her particular space and time. (Gannon, 2006, p. 475)

Frankly, autoethnography corrected me away from colonizing practices in qualitative research (I'm not going to expand much on this aspect of autoethnography since

you've discussed it already). I learned to make my subjectivity more visible in my research and questioned/destabilized the authority I had when representing my research participants. The second one, along similar lines, is from Adams et al. (2022), who share some of the beliefs and practices that are still prevalent in the academy:

> The colonizing belief that we can—and should—mine others for data. And although the Western canon and its bedrock of dominating whiteness continue to crack, the fissures are slight and accompanied by abusive practices and supposedly well-intended colleagues who talk social-justice-talk but who then perpetuate, with their actions, the systems they claim to work against. (p. 1)

Reading the words from Adams et al., I find myself asking, Am I mining others for data? By others, I mean the language teachers in my graduate courses. Is my research colonizing them? How true or close is my practice to what I advocate for in my writings about language teacher identity? Am I walking the walk, as much as talking the talk? Am I one of those well-intended teacher educators? What can I say and do to walk and march against the colonizing ideologies of research? Engaging in autoethnographic work reminds me of those questions I need to keep asking, both as a researcher and a language teacher educator.

Ufuk Hocam, it is time I paused here to hear from you. What strikes you about autoethnography as a method that LTE may benefit from substantially? Does CAN writing offer anything methodologically particular for teacher educators to address identity development and well-being?

Ufuk: Well, Hocam! Great questions! Before I get to them, please allow me to underline what well-being means for me as an autoethnographer. Agreeing with Pentón Herrera et al. (2021) who find 'self-exploration' as a well-being practice, I must say that engaging in autoethnography is a powerful act of self-exploration (and often self-discovery) for me. I write to make (non)sense… of the smell of the grass, the air, the sea… of the sound of people, the birds, the TV… of how I think/feel/believe about myself, mystory, my world… A famous short story writer from Türkiye, Sait Faik (Abasıyanık, 2019, p. 74), once said "I'd go crazy if I didn't write." To contribute, I say "I'd go insane if I didn't write autoethnography."

Such a perspective serves me well as a language teacher educator when I occupy myself with CAN writing. *Temet nosce!* I know who I am, and this makes my profession meaningful for me; and sharing my autoethnographic accounts with the readers/companions means that I am also making my vulnerabilities public - or practicing vulnerability as you call it (Yazan, 2024), which, in and of itself, has a

therapeutic effect for me. The experience of (re)calling, (re)visiting, (re)creating, in short, (re)living some unpleasant memories is not an easy task, which even causes emotional distress to some degree. However, it is also therapeutic at the same time, especially when my "retro"spection gives more meaning to my "intro"spection and illuminates my "pro"spection. Yani… my inclination to make sense of my lived experiences (auto) through societal dynamics, norms, and practices (ethno), and my desire to write about these in the form of CAN helps me acquire an autonomous status. Therefore, guiding my students, who are also in-service language teachers, to write their CAN feels like I am helping them develop their own autonomy. Reflecting critically on their lived experiences and taking the social dynamics, norms, and practices into account while doing so, they have a better grasp of their language teacher identity. In short, just as I learn from writing about my mistakes, challenges, and uncertainties as a language learner, speaker, teacher, teacher educator in my CAN, I try to help my students to learn from their own mistakes, challenges, and uncertainties through their CANs.

Looking back in time, I can peak from my mind/heart that autoethnographying has transformed my professional identity to a great extent. To me, CAN writing is an act of mindfulness. "[M]edi(t)ation would be the closest word to describe the experience!" (Keleş, 2020, p. 100). Through this medi(t)ation, I restore my personal, professional, and academic identities. I am not afraid when my identities are entangled. Assuming teacher and teacher educator; researcher and the researched; and writer and speaker roles simultaneously, I view autoethnography as "a process of self-exploration and interrogation [that] aids individuals in locating themselves within their own history and culture allowing them to broaden their understanding of their own values in relation to others" (Starr, 2010, p. 1).

As you know, Hocam, autoethnography means so much to me… It is much more than a qualitative research methodology that I can utilize in my LTE scholarship. It is a way of being, becoming, knowing, thinking/believing/feeling, and healing. Let me directly cite Qutoshi (2015) here:

> [Autoethnography] works as: (1) an '*un-locker*' that opens hidden windows to view unseen things; (2) a *revealer* that exposes sociocultural delicacies and/or intimate secrets of self/others; (3) a *healer* that creates empathy and sympathy for being victimized and/or marginalized; (4) an *energizer* that empowers the powerless to fight against inequalities; (5) a *challenger* who fights to disrupt canonical ways of seeing, believing and doing things as taken for granted; (6) an *enabler* that develops capacities in self/others; and a change agent who creates feelings of emancipation in society. (Italics original, p. 162)

As a relatively new, innovative and radical qualitative research methodology, autoethnography opens hidden doors; exposes social ills and inequities; and problematizes 'naturalized' power dynamics of the self/society.

Bedrettin: Isn't this what we want for ourselves and our students as language teachers and teacher educators?

Ufuk: Certainly. Not only the skillset but also the mindset, let me say. Equipped with them, CAN offers great potential to cater to the well-being of LTE researchers, especially of those whose scholarship is based on post-structuralist and interpretivist paradigms about language teacher and language teacher educator identities. In a way, autoethnography liberates us from the normative discourses of canonical ways of approaching, saying, and doing things. As I remarked elsewhere (Keleş, 2022a; 2022b, p. 2038), autoethnography enables us "to tell [our] own stories in [our] own voice and style." It empowers us to narrate how we have become the persons we are now despite all the marginalization we have gone through all our life.

Likewise, in one of my published autoethnographies, I discussed how I - the fifth out of six children in a working class family - survived my college years among my classmates coming from upper-middle class families (see Keleş, 2023a); how challenging it was to navigate my in-betweenness as a transcultural, transnational, and translingual PhD student at a university in Alabama, which is dominated by monocultural, monolingual, mononational White faculty, staff, and students (see Keleş, 2023b); and how peculiar it felt - and still does - to take up an academic career as a middle-aged man, who is a seasoned teacher, relatively new teacher educator, and a novice researcher (see Keleş, 2025a, 2025b). There is a saying attributed to Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, that goes: "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards!" I think autoethnography helps us understand life retrospectively. In return, it helps us explore our current practices introspectively and anticipate what the future holds for us prospectively.

Epilogue
Dear our readers/companions… In this manuscript…   you are not passive recipients… but active listeners of our sincere, friendly, and honest "wor(l)d… we share our wor(l)ds with each other…
     organic
          unorthodox
               weird
meandering around

taking detours
enjoying the scene/seen

some criticize autoethnography…
idiocentric
narcissistic
too introspective "*intellectual cul de sac*"
solipsistic

Good autoethnography… is a provocative weave of story and theory… thinking like an ethnographer, writing like a novelist… purposeful dialogue between the reader and the author
opens the door for more dynamic and personal narratives
triggers an insightful discussion of paradigm shifts and transformative turns
sets the stage for critical narratives
fosters retro/intro/pro/spective reflection
underlines the role of critical self-narratives

draw on critical paradigms
critical autoethnographic narrative
empowers teachers and teacher educators
encourages a more profound understanding
improves both intra- and inter-personal communication

praxis of social justice… the personal text as critical intervention in social, political, and cultural life… part of a corrective movement against colonizing ethnographic practices

affective turn… emotions of learners, teachers, and teacher educators

language teacher identity as socio-politically situated

we (c/d)raft our autoethnographic manuscripts
as a tool for counteracting dominant ideologies
to make sense of,
reflect   on,
write   about
our own thoughts/beliefs/emotions

Autoethnography blurs the bin < - > aries

The practiced vulnerability is a purposeful movement into the liminality

Autoethnography is part of a corrective movement

Am I mining others for data?
    Is my research colonizing them?
        Am I walking the walk, as much as talking the talk?
           Am I one of those well-intended teacher educators?
             What can I say and do?
                Does CAN writing offer anything?

"I'd go insane if I didn't write autoethnography."

autoethnography means so much to me
    an   *un-locker*
      a   *revealer*
        a   *healer*
         an   *energizer*
           a   *challenger*
            an   *enabler*

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards!"

autoethnography helps us
    understand life retrospectively
        explore our current practices introspectively
           anticipate what the future holds for us prospectively.

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