

Book Review: Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education: Perspectives on Professional Learning, Identity, and Agency (1st ed.), Edited by Manuel Jiménez Raya, Borja Manzano Vázquez, Flávia Vieira (Routledge, 2024)

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Over the past few decades, the concept of autonomy has emerged as a focal topic in language education, closely tied to learner-centered approaches and the democratization of classroom practices. There is a growing need for teacher education programs that equip language teachers to engage with the complexities of autonomy-oriented pedagogies (see Benson, 2011, and Vázquez, 2018), as educators and researchers increasingly advocate for student agency and teacher self-direction. This need is further emphasized by recent systematic reviews that highlight the evolving landscape of language teacher education research, which has expanded significantly in scope and methodological sophistication over the past four decades (Khany & Valizadeh, 2023). *Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education: Perspectives on Professional Learning, Identity, and Agency* bridges the gap between theory and practice in this area by presenting diverse case studies that illustrate the interplay between professional learning, teacher identity, and agency.

This edited volume is grounded in ideas from critical pedagogy and constructivist learning. It provides language teacher educators with practical ways to create classrooms that support learner autonomy while also encouraging teachers to reflect on their own roles and practices. The book shows both the opportunities and the challenges of using autonomy-focused approaches in language teacher education.

The book has 13 chapters and brings together case studies and theoretical discussions that look at how autonomy can be understood and practiced in language teacher education. The opening chapter, written by the editors, introduces the key ideas of the book and places the volume within current conversations about teacher autonomy, professional learning, and teacher identity. It also explains the main theories that guide the book and gives readers a clear roadmap of what to expect in the chapters that follow.

Chapters 2 through 12 present a wide range of research studies conducted in diverse educational contexts. The chapters conceptualize autonomy as both an individual pursuit and a socially and institutionally mediated process. They highlight the role of pedagogical inquiry in linking theory to practice in language teacher education. Chapters 2-5 focus on how language teacher education programs can support both teacher and learner autonomy through structured design and practice. These chapters review initiatives that promote autonomy, examine how teacher autonomy connects with teacher identity, and show how case writing and practicum-based action research help student teachers link theory with classroom practice. Chapters 6-9 shift attention to autonomy as a developmental process across professional and personal identities. They explore how student teachers grow as both learners and future teachers, the need for specific autonomy-focused teaching approaches through micro-teaching, and examine how experienced educators support reflective thinking in teacher candidates. These chapters also include a personal account of a teacher rediscovering the learner's perspective and showing how professional and learner autonomy can come together. Chapters 10-12 concentrate on institutional and program-level efforts to promote autonomy. They describe how a teacher education program strengthens skills for autonomous teaching, how structured courses can interrupt traditional, non-autonomous teaching habits, and how self-reflective tools and digital platforms can encourage professional agency and innovative teaching in language teacher education. Through a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative data, the chapters provide a rich perspective on the complexities of implementing autonomy-oriented pedagogies in real-world language teacher education contexts.

In the concluding chapter, the editors synthesized key insights from the book and reflected on the intricacies of adopting autonomy in language teacher education while

addressing persistent challenges and future directions for research and practice. According to the authors, “the cases show what a scholarship of initial TE towards autonomy may look like, illustrating the authors’ unique paths as teacher educator-researchers who seek to understand, transform, evaluate, and improve their work” (p. 204). They noted that while autonomy is widely recognized as essential, its integration into language teacher education remains inconsistent and context-dependent. They outlined key challenges, including bridging the gap between theory and practice, developing a realistic stance toward professional identity, and ensuring that student-teachers are prepared for real-world teaching beyond theoretical frameworks. The book concludes with a call for more systematic efforts in ensuring that autonomy is not only encouraged in pre-service training but also sustained throughout teachers’ careers.

The volume makes a valuable contribution to the field by expanding the discourse on teacher autonomy and bridging the gap between theory and practice in language teacher education. A key contribution lies in its clear articulation of the interdependence between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy. The editors assert that “the promotion of learner autonomy requires the development of teacher autonomy” (p. 2), positioning teacher education as the foundation for cultivating democratic, learner-centered classrooms. The book emphasizes that the “exercise of professional autonomy fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, motivating professionals to pursue greater responsibilities, namely the promotion of learner autonomy by challenging and transforming practices based on transmission, obedience to authority, and reproduction” (p. 2). Through the integration of reflective pedagogy, case-based learning, and action research, the book illustrates how pre-service and in-service language teachers can engage critically with their own beliefs and contexts to foster both their own autonomy and that of their students. This relational understanding of autonomy builds upon and extends earlier foundational works such as Barfield and Brown (2007), which explores innovative self-reflexive approaches to autonomy in language education. What sets this volume apart is its multi-layered, practice-oriented exploration of autonomy within the lived experiences of teacher educator-researchers across diverse educational and sociocultural contexts. It redefines autonomy as a dialogic, socially situated practice with the potential to transform both teachers and learners.

One of the book’s strengths also lies in its strong theoretical grounding and innovative use of teacher educator-researcher voices to explore autonomy in language teacher education. The volume emphasizes critical reflection and experiential learning as essential to fostering teacher agency and professional growth using a constructivist framework. The contributors draw on Freirean critical pedagogy to conceptualize

language teacher education as a space for transformation, where educators critically examine their assumptions and practices in context. The book highlights the importance of a critically reflective stance that is dialogic, situated, value-laden, and links theory to practice through lived experiences. The concept of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, is central to this approach, which enables educators to engage with the demand of teaching with ethical and reflective judgment. This emphasis on reflective practice aligns with emerging trends in language teacher education research that prioritize the development of teachers' emotional intelligence and self-awareness as integral components of professional competence (Herrera, 2024).

The book also succeeds in providing practical pedagogical tools and models that can inform real-world language teacher education. Several chapters feature context-specific strategies such as portfolio development, reflective journals, case writing, and action research projects. These tools are embedded in the pedagogical frameworks of each study and illustrate how teacher autonomy can be cultivated through structured reflection and inquiry. For instance, case-based learning is used to prompt student teachers to critically analyze professional dilemmas (chapters 2 and 4), while action research is presented as a means of enacting and sustaining change within institutional constraints (chapter 5). Importantly, these tools are both accessible and adaptable across a range of institutional and cultural settings, making the book particularly useful for teacher educators operating in diverse contexts.

However, despite its international scope, the book's coverage reveals some limitations in terms of geographical and institutional diversity. While it successfully features contributions from Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Turkey, and Japan, the volume leans heavily on Southern European and Latin American contexts, with limited representation from African, broader Asian, or North American settings. This regional concentration, while offering rich localized insights, narrows the global applicability of the book's findings and restricts its engagement with varied educational systems, sociopolitical structures, and linguistic landscapes. A broader cultural and institutional representation could have enhanced the generalizability of the autonomy-oriented practices discussed, especially in contexts where teacher education faces different systemic constraints. This limitation is particularly significant given recent calls for more diverse and inclusive approaches to language teacher education research that better reflect the global nature of the field (Kamali et al., 2024).

The volume would be stronger with more consistent research methods and longer-term evidence. Many chapters share rich stories, reflections, and case examples. Some chapters clearly explain how their data were collected and analyzed, while others rely

more on personal accounts. A key weakness is the lack of long-term or large-scale studies that show what happens after teachers leave their training programs. As a result, it is difficult to know whether autonomy-focused practices continue once new teachers face real-world school pressures.

The book raises important questions about policy, school structures, and the long-term future of autonomy in teacher education. Although it shows the promise of reflection and inquiry, it does not fully address how school rules, testing systems, and institutional cultures limit teacher autonomy. There is little discussion of how factors such as standardized tests, rigid curricula, and school hierarchies shape teachers' work in different contexts. The book could also give more attention to how autonomy connects with issues of equity, access, and power, especially in settings with limited resources or political restrictions.

In sum, *Pedagogies for Autonomy in Language Teacher Education: Perspectives on Professional Learning, Identity, and Agency* offers a well-theorized and practice-oriented contribution that will be especially valuable to language teacher educators and researchers. It is highly recommended for education scholars and researchers, language teacher educators, curriculum designers, and graduate students in the curriculum and instruction fields. It is a timely and important resource that advances critical conversations on agency, identity, and professional learning in language teacher education.

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