

Book Review: Language as Power in the Language Teacher Education Ecosystem, by Jaber Kamali (Cambridge University Press, 2026)

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Standard language teacher education (LTE) programs have mainly prioritized technical skills, focusing on practical aspects such as curriculum design, classroom management, and instructional techniques. Although these elements contribute to the teacher's professional development, they often leave sociocultural and ideological factors underexplored. Foundational elements within training programs, including teachers' professional identity, the role of mother tongue, and broader views of culture, are often overlooked as the programs prioritize step-by-step instruction. Furthermore, hierarchical institutional systems frequently restrict teachers' pedagogical autonomy and embed them within broader frameworks of monitoring and evaluation (Uysal & Gao, 2026). To address these shortcomings, Jaber Kamali's *Language as Power in the Language Teacher Education Ecosystem* (2026) responds to these gaps by highlighting language as a central domain where authority and professional expectations are negotiated within the LTE ecosystem. He develops an ecological framework that explores how language functions as a mechanism of power, extending from classroom (microsystem) interaction to a larger structural context

(macrosystem). From this perspective, authority arises from institutional norms and pedagogical practices, revealing that LTE cannot be detached from power relations.

The book begins by constructing a conceptual and historical framework that presents language as a powerful force that influences teacher identity and professional status within the LTE ecosystem. To support the argument, the discussion places the Language as Power (LaP) model within a wide intellectual tradition, from Plato's classical rhetoric to the critical theories of Foucault, Freire, Bourdieu, and Phillipson to emphasize the fact that instructional practices and processes are strongly influenced by broader power structures.

Section 2, LaP in the LTE microsystem, examines the classroom context and applies Korthagen's model to challenge the theory-practice dichotomy by giving prominence to the teachers' personal identity. The analysis highlights the role of discourse in shaping teachers' identity and professional status while demonstrating how hierarchical questioning patterns can maintain or shift power relations. Silence, humor, and translanguaging are presented as micro-resistance strategies that encourage educators to critically reflect on their own pedagogical practices and help to reduce the distance between theoretical insights and classroom realities.

Broadening the discussion beyond classroom practices, the book examines how power is distributed throughout the LTE ecosystem. At the institutional level (the mesosystem), the analysis reveals how standardized classroom observation and teacher professional development practices often sustain the audit culture that prioritizes institutional hierarchies over teacher autonomy. In contrast to this approach, teacher-driven collaborative feedback approaches are emphasized. The critical evaluation of institutional practices paves the way for a broader consideration of the macrosystem, where the concept of native speaker superiority is critically investigated. By examining World Englishes with sociolinguistic perspectives, the analysis illustrates how neoliberal ideologies and biases contribute to the marginalization of non-native speakers.

Extending his analysis, Kamali considers future trajectories for LaP in LTE through the lens of possible, probable, and preferable outcomes. While recognizing AI's potential to foster teacher agency and multilingual practices, he warns that uncritical adoption may reinforce prevailing linguistic hierarchies. The discussion concludes by emphasizing the importance of sustained and equity-driven actions to develop these developments responsively.

This volume presents a detailed examination of the LaP framework within the LTE ecosystem, focusing on teacher agency, ideological view of language, multilingual practices, and institutional arrangement across micro-, meso-, and macrosystems. Its significance can be attributed to several key features. Firstly, Kamali uses an ecological perspective on language teacher agency, which moves beyond individualistic interpretations and emphasizes the role of broader sociopolitical and ideological contexts in shaping teacher development and practices. This view is consistent with an ecological conceptualization of teacher agency as emerging from the dynamic interaction between individuals and multilayered contextual factors, whereby teachers' actions are influenced by norms and resources at the institutional level as well as by broader policies and ideologies at the macro level (Tao & Gao, 2021).

Another notable strength of the book lies in rich historical and theoretical foundation. The author offers a comprehensive account of the relationship between language and power through philosophical, sociological, and decolonial perspectives. The engagement with influential thinkers, including Plato, Foucault, Freire, Bourdieu, and Kumaravadivelu, enables readers to link the classical theories of language as power to contemporary perspectives of teacher identity, native-speaker ideology, and linguistic equity. A further strength of the book lies in the discussion of the LTE microsystem, as it underscores the sociopolitical assumptions embedded in the ordinary classroom practices. In fact, by emphasizing teacher voice, participation, and dialogic interactions, the book offers valuable insights into how classroom power is constructed and negotiated within language classroom settings. While the discussion of the LTE microsystem is conceptually and theoretically rich, some concepts such as humor, silence, and translanguaging as forms of micro-resistance are presented rather briefly, potentially because of word limitation, and would be strengthened by more concrete pedagogical examples and explanations. The volume's emphasis on teacher voice and legitimacy parallels Crozet and Díaz's (2020) *Silent Voices and Unseized Spaces*, which explores how unequal power relations influence whose voices gain visibility, recognition, and authority in language education. Therefore, in both works, voice is understood as closely intertwined with the dynamics of authority, identity, and legitimacy.

The book's engagement with debates surrounding native-speakerism, multilingualism, and professional legitimacy constitutes an important contribution to current discussions in LTE. The endurance of teacher-speaker ideology is questioned by highlighting the teachers' voices and experiences, revealing that what counts as professional legitimacy is negotiated through organizational and sociopolitical contexts, instead of relying solely on monolingual standards. This perspective is particularly significant as native-speaker beliefs shape recruitment processes and

professional standing throughout the language teaching environment. By emphasizing multilingual practices such as translanguaging, the book further develops its critical examination, illustrating how multilingual resources can question the unequal linguistic system. However, while the author successfully places these issues within broader ideological debates, further empirical examples would clarify how these perspectives could be operationalized in classroom practices and institutional contexts.

Research has increasingly conceptualized translanguaging as an agentic pedagogical practice that enables teachers to enact linguistically responsive instruction and challenge inequitable language hierarchies in classroom interactions (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019). Recent research further highlights the reciprocal relationship between teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and their instructional practices. Hamman-Ortiz et al. (2025), in a systematic review of translanguaging research, describe this reciprocal relationship between teachers' translanguaging stance and classroom practice, indicating that asset-oriented views of students' multilingual resources often lead to more inclusive pedagogical approaches, while the enactment of translanguaging practices can also reshape teachers' beliefs.

Through the examination of teacher professional development and classroom observation feedback, the book demonstrates how institutional practices affect teachers' professional careers. In fact, professional development and observation are not presented as neutral instruments of teacher growth, but it is demonstrated that standardized frameworks, assessment criteria, and feedback discourse tend to reinforce particular norms and models of desirable pedagogical practices. This argument reveals how institutional norms shape teaching practices and define the accepted and legitimate expertise in teaching. These insights reflect broader discussions of language teacher agency, which highlight how teachers' practices emerge through ongoing interactions with institutional structures, professional discourses, and social contexts (Kayi-Aydar et al., 2019).

Through addressing future developments, the book further develops its examination of language and power beyond current inequalities to the forces that might influence LTE over time. The author argues that the future of LTE is evolving and it is dependent on technological advancement and human agency. The balanced view of AI is the significant contribution of this part. In fact, all aspects of AI such as transformative potentials and risks are considered by the author. Although AI might strengthen teacher agency and expand opportunities for knowledge production, it might reinforce and reshape the pedagogical biases and power as AI is developed and programmed on extensive datasets that frequently reproduce the dominant ideologies

and unequal linguistic norms. In this sense, through framing AI within the larger political landscape of LTE, it emphasizes that technological advancement will not automatically guarantee linguistic justice.

Overall, the book significantly contributes to the LTE ecosystem, providing a thorough examination of structural constraints encountered by language teachers. It stands out in conceptual and theoretical depth, particularly through its ecological analysis of power across micro-, meso-, and macro-ecological settings. Despite this, as the work is primarily conceptual and theoretical, the analysis would benefit from more detailed empirical grounding from institutional and organizational data. While the movement across ecological layers is intellectually persuasive, the pathway through which teacher agency at the micro level may lead to sustainable institutional transformation at the meso and macro levels remains underexplored. The analysis would benefit from richer empirical examples of how teachers' agentic responses might lead to structural changes and would strengthen the LTE field.

Furthermore, the book's main focus on examples from English language teaching context, might constrain the applicability of some of the claims across language education settings. Because the book lacks a dedicated concluding chapter, the synthesis of central arguments and implications for future research is partially developed. More explicit guidance on how to operationalize language as power in curriculum design, assessment practices, and teacher development tools would further strengthen its practical relevance. Considering how firmly institutional policies and linguistic hierarchies are rooted in societies worldwide, readers may seek clearer strategies for enacting change within structurally constrained environments. Nevertheless, Kamali's examination of agency, technology, and linguistic justice remains highly valuable, encouraging teachers and scholars to critically interrogate existing power structures while envisioning more equitable futures of language teacher education.

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