EDITORIAL

Head and Heart in the Reflexivity of Language Teachers and Researchers Regarding Political Issues

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Focusing on two fundamental forces that shape the present and future of language teaching and applied linguistics research—language teacher identity (LTI) and reflexivity—we argue, following Barkhuizen (2017), that the identities of language teachers and researchers are complex and encompass cognitive, emotional, ideological, and political dimensions. These dimensions reflect teachers' beliefs, experiences, and social interactions, and they relate to both the individual and the collective dimensions of LTI. Reflexivity, the second force, seems to demand a purely rational investment from teachers and researchers, as if they could separate their feelings, emotions, and desires from reason. With this in mind, we wish to question the marked emphasis on the rationality of language teachers and researchers, an emphasis that diminishes the emotional dimension as if it were merely biological. In keeping with the view of language teachers as both rational and emotional beings—made of head and heart, two facets of their multidimensional nature—CALJ has served as an alternative academic and research forum (Bonilla Medina, 2024) for affirming the reflexivity of these teachers and researchers.

With regard to LTI, the cognitive and emotional aspects of language teachers' and researchers' identities lead us to consider those moments when they understand themselves reflexively, influenced by beliefs, theories, and emotions such as hopes and desires for the future. They draw on past experiences and available discursive resources to shape their identities, a process that gives rise to both internal and external struggles. In Colombia and in countries facing similar predicaments, we find large teachers' movements fighting against educational injustice. Applied linguistics, in turn, has seen growing research on language teacher identities and their relationship to unequal power relations. What does it mean, for example, to be a Black language teacher? A non-native second-language teacher? A queer language teacher? A woman teacher? These questions are valuable once we recognize that these identities have been subjected to unequal treatment. Thus, as language teachers navigate this continuum of political struggles, they may experience different kinds of political emotions, which may relate to general or specific political demands.

These struggles appear to lie along a political continuum that ranges from the most general scenarios to the most specific. Language teachers' political identity formation is a site of struggle in several respects. On the one hand, teachers may feel the need to advocate for public causes that favor the well-being of educators as a collective. On the other hand, they may feel that not all educators share the same contexts and identity particularities, which may lead them to fight for recognition and representation in multicultural societies. Peña (2022) describes this as the tension between universalism and identity politics. The former, through a process of abstraction, envisions people as citizens of a political system who share common conditions, regardless of individual identities; in the latter, people participate in collective decisions by embodying the identities they have adopted or, at times, constructed for themselves. The problem arises from the apparent threat that identity politics poses to the egalitarian principles of universalism and, conversely, from the threat that universalism poses to the recognition and celebration of difference

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promoted by identity politics. Nevertheless, since political life need not be conceived as an either-or choice, it is worth asking: How can we reconcile the universalism of rights with multiculturalism and the recognition of difference?

Different stakeholders hold varying views, and teachers negotiate ideological differences within social and institutional settings. This relates to the inner and outer dimensions of LTI—internal personal aspects and external social and material aspects—and highlights its complex, paradoxical nature. LTI generates certainties and, above all, uncertainties (Quintero-Polo et al., 2022) in language teachers and researchers. These, in turn, prompt decisions and actions that may be considered primarily rational because they must be well informed. But what about the emotions implicit in them? And what do teachers and researchers need to think, say, and do about their emotions?

We uphold the claim that language teachers are not only rational but also emotional beings, since we see their emotional dimension as reinforcing its reflexive and political nature. This leads us to view language teachers' reflexivity on emotions as political. We also consider it important to examine the sociopolitical context of language teaching in Colombia and similar countries, because we argue that language teaching, and educational systems at large, in this part of the world have been shaped by an economic neoliberal inset (Quintero-Polo & Guerrero-Nieto, 2023), a factor that binds these countries together. This inset shapes experience in all spheres of life under the illusion of progress, defining and imposing views and practices.

We therefore draw on Nussbaum (2013) to situate language teachers' emotional reflexivity within their political context, as it moves them to engage in emancipatory and socially transformative practices that address their local unequal realities. This is linked to what teachers and researchers think, say, and do as a form of academic activism; language teachers' reflexivity on emotions thus becomes public and political. We believe that the emotional and political dimensions of language teacher reflexivity unfold within the implementation of educational policies and their instruments, which legitimize and normalize hegemonic, ideologically laden discourses emanating from the political sector (Giroux, 1981), and that teachers take emerging actions either against or in favor of these discourses. Nussbaum (2001) helps us understand that the experiences fostered by policymaking processes, together with teachers' unique individuality in their personal, professional, and academic selves (Quintero Polo, 2016), generate emotions that are rational, as they are grounded in judgments about what teachers value and care about deeply. Thus, because teachers' emotions operate within a rational framework, they are connected to teachers' ability to problematize, analyze, and act in the circumstances that involve and shape them (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In other words, their emotions are bound to their reflexivity, understood as the ability to reflect on and act toward society on the basis of sociocultural and political aspects and of how these are inherently related to their being as language teachers (Quintero & Guerrero, 2018). Along this line of thought, language teachers act on their rational emotions, and these actions ultimately constitute social practices that have an impact on policymaking processes. Their reflexivity on their emotions thus becomes political as those actions are made concrete.

In sum, we see teachers and researchers as made of head and heart, and their reflexivity reflects a balance between reason and emotion. In turn, language teachers' and researchers' reflexivity on emotions becomes public and political.

What Readers Will Find in This Issue of CALJ

The nine contributions in this issue address a broad range of questions in language education and applied linguistics, bringing together research on teacher development, assessment, peace education, reading, artificial intelligence, multimodality, academic genres, and Spanish as a foreign language. Together, they reveal the complexity of contemporary language teaching and the need to attend simultaneously to teachers, learners, pedagogical practices, technologies, and the sociocultural contexts in which language education takes place.

Several contributions focus directly on teachers' professional knowledge, practices, and development. Sadoughvanini and Yazdanmehr examine the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' preferred teaching styles and their perceived self-efficacy. Drawing on social cognitive theory and data from 233 teachers, they find that the facilitator and personal-model styles were the most frequent, and that teachers adopting a facilitator style reported

the highest levels of self-efficacy. Their findings underscore the importance of teacher education programs that foster communicative practices, student engagement, and teachers' psychological resources. Idarraga Robayo, in turn, investigates Colombian university teachers' cognition and practices in speaking assessment. Through interviews and an analysis of assessment materials, the study identifies connections among teachers' perceptions, knowledge, experience, and approaches to assessing speaking, while also revealing concerns about current practices and the need for targeted professional development.

The issue also foregrounds the social and transformative dimensions of language education. Arismendi Gómez, Aristizábal Cardona, Cárdenas Reyes, and Meza Taborda explore foreign language educators' understandings of peace education through professional development workshops conducted in Colombia. They show that teachers construct diverse understandings of peace and that collaborative professional development can support collective knowledge-building and the inclusion of peace education in foreign language classrooms. Nash's study of a two-tier response-to-intervention (RtI) pilot in a CLIL-oriented primary school in northern China complements this view of teachers as reflective, socially engaged professionals. Based on teachers' perceptions, the study reports positive evaluations of the RtI framework, particularly of targeted Tier 2 support, and identifies insufficient practical structure and professional support as obstacles to effective implementation.

A second group of studies examines technology and new forms of language learning. Aldayel and Pravitasari investigate the use of ELSA, a mobile artificial intelligence (AI) application, to support university students' autonomous learning of English pronunciation. Their pretest–posttest study with 28 students reports substantial gains in pronunciation scores after the intervention, suggesting that accessibility, immediate feedback, and self-paced practice make mobile AI applications useful supplementary resources for pronunciation instruction. Karlik takes a broader view of the role of AI in English language teaching, highlighting the potential of adaptive platforms, AI-supported assessment, natural language processing, chatbots, virtual tutors, and virtual reality to personalize learning, provide immediate feedback, strengthen language skills, and support teachers' instructional decision-making. These two contributions illustrate both the practical applications of AI and the broader changes that emerging technologies are bringing to language education.

Other contributions draw attention to language, literacy, and pedagogical discourse. Molina examines the family of genres associated with didactic planning, combining a corpus analysis of lesson plans, syllabi, and curricular designs with interviews with pre-service and in-service teachers. The study identifies two main genre subfamilies—authorial genres and critical reading genres—and shows that these texts perform important epistemic and argumentative functions. Far from being merely technical or formulaic documents, didactic planning genres enable teachers to reflect, justify decisions, and engage critically with their teaching practices. Castro-Garcés and Gómez-Vargas explore pre-service elementary teachers' multimodal practices from a multiliteracies perspective. Their qualitative study shows how images, actions, graphics, sound, and digital resources can contribute to teachers' knowledge development, confidence, and awareness of the contextual and ethical dimensions of digital tools.

Finally, López Yatacue and Chamorro Mejía offer a field-level perspective on Spanish as a foreign language in Colombia through a scoping review of 34 articles published between 2013 and 2023. Their analysis identifies growth in research activity, particularly since 2014, and shows that communicative, cultural, and intercultural competencies have received sustained attention. The review also points to the need for further research on intercultural competence and for teaching materials that reflect Colombia's regional dialectal diversity, including virtual materials based on naturally occurring language.

Overall, the nine contributions portray language education as a multidimensional, continually evolving field. They show the importance of strengthening teachers' professional knowledge and self-efficacy, developing more responsive forms of assessment and intervention, incorporating social and peace-oriented perspectives, and engaging critically with AI, digital technologies, multimodality, and professional genres, while situating these developments within their specific educational, linguistic, and sociocultural contexts. We invite readers to view language teaching not simply as the transmission of linguistic knowledge but as a complex professional, technological, social, and reflective practice.

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