

## **Evolution of Approaches to Teacher Cognition and Teacher Identity: A Conceptual Conversation**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, as two TESOL practitioners, our purpose is to capture our reflections on how conceptual approaches to teacher learning have evolved over the years to highlight the interplay between teacher cognition and teacher identity. We also seek to decrease the distance between ourselves and our academic writing, essentially emerging from behind the conventions of academic writing to discuss concepts in a conversational tone, hopefully making them more accessible to a larger audience of practitioners and scholars. In discussing our ongoing negotiation of theoretical orientations, we have been able to reflect on the influence of the language teacher cognition research base on the wider field of language teacher identity research. The main take-away is that we can better illustrate the complexity involved in the practice of language teaching and the process of becoming language teachers if we combine the two in complementary ways: teachers' individual cognitive and metacognitive processes involved in their professional learning and their situatedness in social, cultural, political, and economic discourses.

**Keywords:** TESOL teacher educator, Language teacher cognition, language teacher identity, teacher preparation, multilingual learners.

Increasingly, attention is being paid—via both empirical and pedagogical work—to the essential role of identity construction and development among language teachers and learners (Yazan & Lindahl, 2020). While earlier “methods” of language learning focused more on procedures, skills or strategies, the field has evolved to consider not only the “what” and “how” of language teaching, but also the “who,” the “why,” and the “where” (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The answer

to “who” was engaging in language teaching activities was constructed in the scholarly literature primarily as *teacher cognition*—that is, what teachers were thinking and what they believed about teaching— from the 1980s to the early 2000s (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). However, as focus shifted more to learners’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds via concepts such as Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), linguistic repertoires (Kachru, 1982), and subsequent translanguaging pedagogy (Garcia et al., 2017), the natural evolution of the concept was to explore similar ideas among language teachers themselves. Shifting geopolitical context, sociocultural factors impacting language users, neoliberal ideologies urging people to learn languages (especially English) for economic reasons, and power dynamics between and among discourse communities all warrant the exploration of *language teacher identity*, i.e., how teachers’ identities not only inform what they do in their pedagogical practices, but also how they can incorporate identity work into their own teaching (Morgan, 2004).

As teacher-educator educators (i.e., professors who prepare Ph.D. students for academic careers), teacher educators of preservice teachers, professional development facilitators for in-service teachers and current journal co-editors, we often reflect on how to make certain facets of academic scholarship and its connection to teaching more transparent to our colleagues. One of these facets is how concepts can evolve over time, which is often traced by reviewing literature over a certain time period (as seen in the useful timeline on language teacher identity created in Kayi-Aydar, 2019). However, in our various professional conversations, we realized that we had in fact lived through much of this conceptual evolution ourselves individually, and needed to engage in a reflective journey about the concepts of language teacher cognition and identity. We define the former as “the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching, what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p. 81) and the latter as “teachers’ dynamic self-conception and imagination of themselves as teachers, which shifts as they participate in varying communities, interact with other individuals, and position themselves (and are positioned by others) in social contexts” (Yazan, 2018, p. 21). We felt that such a reflection would provide an example of how academic thinking (and subsequent academic activity) shifts gradually at the micro level through our individual grappling with the concepts. Our conversation responds to Borg’s (2003) call from twenty years ago to “map... the processes of change in teachers’ cognitions and practices” (p. 105) by in turn mapping the evolution of our own understanding of these notions. The conversation also responds to recent calls, such as that by Yuan and Zhang (2020), to acknowledge the relationship between metacognition among teachers (and in our case, teacher educators) and how they “manage, regulate and distribute their identities” (p. 870). We also wanted to nudge the boundaries of academic writing conventions by using a conversation format to humanize the process and to better reflect what we do in our professional lives as teacher educators and researchers of language teacher education.

Although we both completed our graduate education at about the same time in the United States, we traveled in somewhat different academic circles, with Bedrettin being more involved in the Non-Native English Speaking Teacher (NNEST) scholarly discussion, and Kristen being more involved in preparing educators for content-area K-12 formal school settings. We met a few years later, organizing a conference panel on teacher education and teacher identity. Recognizing the need for more scholarship in these converging sub-fields of applied linguistics, we went on to edit a journal special issue and publish an edited volume on that topic. Now, as professors at the same institution and co-editors of a journal in the field, we have had ample time to discuss, ponder, reflect, and reject ideas about language teacher

identity. For this particular piece, we constructed this conceptual conversation in vivo by sitting across from each other at a table and simultaneously working on a Google document. Our purpose was to capture our reflections on how conceptual approaches to teacher learning have evolved over the years to highlight the interplay between teacher cognition and teacher identity. We also sought to decrease the distance between ourselves and our academic writing, essentially emerging from behind the conventions of academic writing to discuss concepts in a conversational tone, hopefully making them more accessible to a larger audience of practitioners and scholars.

We both started with teacher cognition as a framework in our dissertation research, yet over time our scholarly paths—by no means linear in nature—diverged into different lines of inquiry to ultimately converge at language teacher identity, where we are right now. These individual journeys don't mean that we have the exact same conceptual orientation to the role of cognition in understanding language teacher learning now, which has made the following conversation more interesting. In discussing our ongoing negotiation of theoretical orientations, we have been able to reflect on the influence of the language teacher cognition research base (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Borg, 2003; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015) on the wider field of language teacher identity research. While the foundational work on teacher cognition to which we were exposed earlier in our career may not be as visible in what we do now in terms of research, it continues to undergird our conceptual approaches to teacher learning and corresponding veins of inquiry. In writing this paper, we paused and sought to explicitly acknowledge the layers of teacher cognition related to identity and its evolution in our own conceptualizations of teacher learning, as well as recognize the corresponding scholarship which has been part and parcel of that evolution.

In the remainder of this paper, we start with our positionality to discuss how we relate to the concepts of language teacher learning, cognition, and identity. Then, we present our dialogue about the interconnection between teacher cognition and teacher identity which reflects our learning as teacher educators and researchers in the “dynamic tension” between our “past, present, and future” (Britzman, 2003, p. 31). We wrap up our conversation by highlighting Bakhtin's (1984) concepts of unfinalizability and unpredictability in our, dialogues, learning, and identities.

## **Our Positionality**

Reflecting on the evolution of our own thinking also involves reflecting on our own identity, if we really want to explore the relationship between cognition and identity in language teaching.

*Bedrettin:* I am coming from a geopolitical context where cultural and linguistic in-betweenness and hybridity characterize identities and interactions. I grew up in the Northwestern region of Turkey which is geographically considered part of Europe. I was introduced to different minoritized languages (i.e., Balkan Romani, Pomak) along with my home language, Turkish, which is the national majority language. Early on in my educational trajectory, I knew I would become an English language teacher as I attended a teacher training high school where I started developing my social justice perspective to serve students in underserved communities especially in rural areas (such as the one where I was raised). From middle school onwards, I studied Arabic, German, and French along with English. Moving to the US as an international doctoral student was a significant turning point in my life, to switch from a context where I

was mostly privileged as being part of the majority culture and language, to a context where that same culture and language were minoritized. However, I acknowledge my racial, able-bodied, and educational privileges in the US context. Bringing my whole-person, “funds of identity” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) to my practices as a language teacher educator and researcher, I feel “at home” working with teacher candidates who prepare to serve multilingual learners in US K-12 schools. At the same time, I maintain my transnational ties and spaces with colleagues from communities outside the US. Identifying as a transnational language teacher educator helps me make sense of my in-betweenness as I traverse the borders of communities—academic and otherwise—and incorporate the affordances and challenges of being in a liminal space into my pedagogy, following Morgan’s (2004) notion of identity-as-pedagogy.

*Kristen:* I am a heritage Spanish/English bilingual, whose fascination with language and passion for education is rooted in both my family history and my parents’ own careers as teachers for over 35 years. After teaching secondary English as a second Language (ESL) to mostly Spanish-speaking newcomers in the US, I pursued graduate studies in the interest of disrupting deficit narratives that circulate about bilingual/multilingual students and their engagement in the academic content areas. This work continues to be the main motivation behind my own continued professional identity development as a teacher educator, and it became especially salient when I relocated with my family to South Texas. The new context brought about new raciolinguistic positionings and complexities for me personally and professionally.

In sum, professionally we see ourselves as practitioners of teacher education, serving teacher candidates from raciolinguistically minoritized and marginalized communities of South Texas at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Here at an HSI, we are not only preparing teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse K-12 children, but most of our teacher candidates themselves are members of the same bicultural and bilingual communities, and have similar experiences of marginalization during schooling. Providing opportunities for teachers to engage their identities in various ways that do not necessarily perpetuate monolingual norms of teacher education and pedagogy is both relevant and necessary in this context, and has prompted us to continually reflect on how we’ve been learning, thinking, and writing about how teachers learn, all of the ways in which they identify as “teachers”, and what informs their practices.

## **From Isolation to Connectedness**

As we began our conversation, we noted an observable shift from looking at teacher cognition as an isolated concept to viewing it as highly interrelated with notions such as emotions, agency and the professional knowledge base. To follow, we then asked ourselves, *how did this shift from “isolation” to “connectedness” occur, and why?* We also wondered, *where does teacher cognition research stand in our current approach to teacher learning and practice, which tends to be grounded in identity-oriented perspectives?*

*Kristen:* Starting in my earlier work, I was mostly interested in why teachers do what they do and make the choices they make—responding to students, parents, school administrators, local, district and national policy—it’s quite a list. It seemed like what interested me was the relationship of those decisions to language itself, i.e., how did teachers’ thoughts on language

learning and teaching motivate any or all of those decisions? So, I began my point of inquiry there, at that intersection of teacher thinking, practice and language.

*Bedrettin:* When I was working on my research questions in my dissertation, initially I was certain that I was interested in learning how teachers learn and how their learning informs their practices in the classroom. Then, I came across the literature on language teacher cognition which helped me theorize the relationship between teachers' thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs and their practices. I assumed that teacher candidates construct their cognition by bringing in their past experiences with language learning and teaching, and I was interested in learning how that cognition continues to be constructed in teacher education programs.

*Kristen:* Literature that helped consolidate my inquiry was Borg (2003), in which he reviewed multiple studies on teacher cognition and conceptualized it as a sum of multiple parts including schooling, contextual factors, professional coursework, and classroom practices. For me at the time, this encompassed much of what I sought to explore with regard to how teachers attended to language in formal classroom settings. However, rather than working specifically with self-identified language or English as a second language (ESL) teachers, I was working with K-12 teachers in US public schools, who tended to heavily identify as content-area or grade-level teachers, and less as "English teachers" or "language teachers" although they worked or would likely work with multilingual learners (MLLs, or students who speak multiple languages; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Therefore, they differed in their knowledge base from language teachers, as they had different declarative knowledge (i.e., they had not considered language as an object of study in their teacher preparation, but primarily as a medium for delivering instruction under the assumption that most of their students would speak the same languages as they would). This left me in a bit of a third space as a scholar—most of the language teacher cognition research was on just that—*language* teacher cognition. Most of the general education teacher cognition research paid less (or no) attention to the role of language in how teachers operationalized coursework and implemented practices. I existed somewhere in the middle.

*Bedrettin:* I also have learned a lot from Borg's (2003) research on language teacher cognition, as well as other seminal scholarship including Freeman and Johnson (1998), Johnson and Golombek (2003), and Tedick (2005). They expanded my understanding of language teacher learning and knowledge-base. I agreed with them that teachers are not technicians who are taught a particular set of decontextualized skills or competencies to internalize and use in their classes. However, I felt myself asking more about the situatedness of language teachers within sociopolitical discourses, probably due to my experience and identity as a transnational doctoral student and prior research on nation building and nation-state ideologies. Around the same time, I was being exposed to the Non-Native English Speaking Teacher (NNEST) scholarship (Braine, 2010; Ilieva, 2010; Mahboob, 2010; Moussu & Llorca, 2008; Selvi, 2014) and advocacy through TESOL International and the Washington Area TESOL Affiliate (WATESOL) where I learned about how discourses within and beyond the field of ELT shape what teachers 'can' and 'should' be and do in their classes (Rudolph et al., 2019). That exposure made me think about the relationship between sociopolitical and individual dynamics of teaching, and I thought I needed to include more into my theoretical approach to make sense of how language teachers learn to work with multilingual learners.

## Teacher Cognition in Context

*Kristen:* Within the K-12 context, I realized more and more how heavy the content focus was, and how teachers had not been prepared to develop students' language skills in the academic disciplines. At the time, language skill development was really compartmentalized to the ESL teacher's responsibilities and less explored among content-area teachers (Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013). This led me to wonder, how do teachers become more aware of language (or at least aware enough to support multilingual learners) if it isn't their primary content focus? I landed on Andrews' conceptualization of teacher cognition as a type of awareness—*teacher language awareness*, or TLA (Andrews, 2003). In his scholarship, he supported the idea that it was not enough for researchers to explore teacher cognition but for teachers to be *aware* of their own cognition related to language use, analysis and teaching practice (see also Edge, 1988). This “awareness” addition was ground-breaking for me in that it added a layer to teacher cognition that seemed previously underexplored. Principles of *noticing* (Schmidt, 1995) had been discussed with language learners, but I hadn't come across much about language noticing among teachers. When I did find TLA, I realized it had mostly been investigated in English as an additional language (EAL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, and not among content educators of MLLs in ESL settings.

*Bedrettin:* It's great to hear about your thinking process and search for a conceptual approach that fits in your research plans. I think I've always kept in mind the conceptual contributions of the extensive research of teacher cognition, teacher learning, and teacher knowledge base, but I was also trying to connect my understanding of the nature, learning, and teaching of languages to broader meso- and macro- levels. Norton's (1995, 1997) seminal work demonstrated the relationship between language learning and identity by bringing in feminist, poststructuralist approaches. It really resonated with me, but I don't think I asked, “What about teacher identity?” at that point. Later on, when I was reading *The Cambridge companion to second language teacher education* (Burns & Richards, 2009), I bumped into a section on “Identity, cognition, experience in teacher learning” and started reading all chapters right away. That Section 4 covered almost everything I was looking for and interested in back then. I remember being so excited about Jennifer Miller's (2009) chapter on teacher identity since this international companion offered identity as a new conceptual lens to examine teacher candidates' transformation into professionals and understand ongoing professional learning. That was the moment I decided that I wanted to explore language teachers' identity development. It is funny, writing this now, I kind of felt the same excitement again.

*Kristen:* So interesting that you mention the *Cambridge companion to second language teacher education* book...I found Nat Bartel's (2009) chapter on Knowledge About Language (KAL) in that volume and it resonated with what I was searching for, as well! I went on to read many of his publications about how people develop knowledge *about* language and not just proficiency *in* a language. Cognition began to evolve into identity, though, when I read about the three domains of TLA in terms of how teachers see themselves as users (speakers) of a language, analysts of a language, and teachers of a language (Lindahl & Baecher, 2016; Wright, 2002). Content teachers in ESL contexts definitely saw themselves as users of English, but much less so as analysts due to the underexposure of declarative knowledge about language. They had many of the pedagogical practices in place, but far fewer, if any, that focused on English learning specifically. The next logical question for me was, *how do teachers develop not just TLA but TLA in these distinct “identity” categories? I then began to question, what*

*does it mean to be a “user” of a language?* I started to add to my mental list of characteristics of TLA items such as, “awareness of linguistic imperialism,” “recognition of different varieties,” and others that expanded the context of TLA beyond the individual to their positionality in society.

*Bedrettin:* I just realized that I haven’t talked much about teacher candidates I was working with and who was going to be my participants in my dissertation research and afterwards. Moving to the US to pursue my doctoral studies, I was struggling to decide in which context—the US or Turkey—my research study should be situated. On one hand, as I had completed my teacher education in Turkey and taught there for five years before moving to the US, it made sense to focus on EFL teacher candidates in Turkey with whom I shared a lot in terms of prior language learning experience, socio-political-educational context, and teacher education programs. On the other hand, I had been working with teacher candidates in the US who were becoming ESL teachers in the state of Maryland. I had more immediate and convenient access to the latter, though my learning curve would be steep. Positioned at the crossroad of choosing between my immediate context and my ‘past’ context, I ended up designing my study with the ESL teacher candidates at the University of Maryland at College Park where I was becoming a language teacher educator. I decided to apply the conceptual framework of teacher identity development to ESL teacher candidates in order to understand their experience of learning to work with multilingual learners in the teacher education program. My transnational identity reminds me, now as I write this sentence, to also acknowledge that I have consciously maintained my ties with the context of Turkey’s language teacher education.

*Kristen:* As I worked with similar participants to yours, I also started to realize there was a lot more to language awareness than language. That might not make sense, but stick with me for a moment. In one study, I asked content-area monolingual English-speaking teachers to do an awareness task that Martha Bigelow and Susan Ranney (2005) kindly agreed I could replicate, which involved identifying grammatical structures in a content-area text. Two things happened as they reflected on their cognitive processes: first, the content-area teachers struggled with it, and next, they had some fairly negative reactions to it as they reflected. Reactions ranged from feeling they needed to justify their performance, to wishing they had learned more about language, to apologizing and just feeling bad about it (Lindahl, 2019). These reactions gave me pause, as (1) I had not been including emotions much in my exploration of TLA until this point and (2) I wondered, *Who was this invisible “judge” of language that concerned them so much?* As it turned out, they had been socialized to hold very high expectations of what academic or standard language and grammatical knowledge should entail, and were overall disappointed in themselves when they perceived they didn’t have it. To me, an implication of that was how those ideologies of standardization (Cameron, 1995/2012) would transfer to their practices with students who were themselves learning English. So, I folded emotions and ideology into the TLA “mix.” Mike Mena now has a great video out about his article with Ofelia García about “standardized” language being disembodied (video: Mena, 2022; Mena & García, 2021), which really rang true for me as I watched it recently and then connected it to my own past observations.

*Bedrettin:* I remember reading about that connection between emotions and ideologies in your research, which manifested differently in my work. I took a slightly different route. I have been introduced to different ways of understanding teacher identity through Varghese et al. (2005) and Morgan (2004). To begin with, I found Wenger’s (1998) work useful for my study then,

although I was aware of the critique that it did not include the impact of asymmetrical power relations in the ways communities of practice are constructed and members are socialized into those communities. What really resonated with me in Wenger's work is the way he connects professional identity with learning which I translated into language teacher education to maintain the focus of teacher learning, cognition, and knowledge base in my conceptualization. I've always let my inner critic ask the "so what?" question when I theorize language teacher professional identity and answering that question leads me to explicate how teacher identity serves as a borderline construct between the individual and social/sociopolitical dimensions of language teaching. In other words, teacher identity conceptually tethers teachers' cognition, learning, and knowledge base at the micro level with sociopolitical forces at the meso and macro levels.

### **Interplay between Teacher Cognition and Teacher Identity**

*Kristen:* So far, we have both explained how we arrived at our current scholarship, which was initially grounded in teacher cognition and has now evolved into more of an identity-oriented approach to understanding cognition writ large. Being at this point, however, has perhaps brought us to the crux of this conversation: *What is the relationship between teacher cognition and teacher identity?*

*Bedrettin:* Great question! I appreciate you making us pause and ask that question whose answer would be aligned with the theme of the special issue. I would actually expand the question a little bit, to include teacher learning, too. That is, how does teacher cognition relate to teacher learning? Is teaching learning inclusive of ever-evolving teacher cognition? I'm offering this modification because I can't conceptually separate teacher cognition from the process of teacher learning. Anyways, let me see how I can answer those questions by explaining my understanding of the complex relationship between the three: teacher identity, cognition, and learning. When I constructed the conceptual framework for my dissertation research, I placed teacher learning and identity at the center and connected them with teacher cognition, emotions, biographies, and participation in communities of practice which are all surrounded by contextual factors. Looking back at that visual (about which I had a recent conversation with a colleague who is working on their dissertation) (Yazan, 2018), I find myself struggling with teacher cognition being a separate concept that I suggested connecting to the conceptualization of teacher identity. If teacher cognition is defined as teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and knowledge (see Borg, 2003), then I would argue that teacher identity conceptually captures teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and knowledge already. I don't mean to discount the importance of teacher cognition in understanding teacher identity, but using teacher identity as a lens can already provide an explanation to make sense of teachers' cognition. If one concept affords explanation for a certain phenomenon, do we need to couple it with another concept to explain the same phenomenon?

*Kristen:* Also, a thought-provoking question! When it comes to cognition and identity, I think there's a difference between two things that are inexorably tied together and two things being the *same*. That is, I think how teachers think, act, reflect and learn—especially the reflection part—encourages identity development as in turn, identity influences those actions in the first place. But I don't know that they're the same thing. They can't be separated, but I don't know if that makes them synonymous. For me, teacher identity has been the most salient framework for understanding how and why teacher cognition differs across individuals, contexts,



professional and social positionality. I think it also begs the question, *how can we operationalize teacher cognition without considering identity?* That loops back to your question above.

*Bedrettin:* I agree that teachers' cognitive engagement is inseparable from their professional identity development processes. You also made me think about why I believe identity has attracted lots of attention from scholars who used it as a conceptual lens to reach a more comprehensive understanding of being and becoming a language teacher. The extensive research on teacher learning (including cognition, knowledge base) in the early 1990s focused on teachers as agents of teaching in and outside the classroom who make decisions as policymakers. When language teacher education research introduced teacher identity as a lens (Varghese et al., 2005), the focus on the teacher as an individual who brings their entire person to the classroom was already there, which is, I believe, why identity was adopted really quickly by scholars. The second point that you made me think about (which is very much related to the first one) is that: teachers' professional identities are inseparable from their other social identities vis-à-vis the discourses of language, race, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, faith/religion (see Duff & Uchida, 1997; Motha, 2006a, 2006b; Park, 2012, 2015; Trent, 2016). In other words, identity made it conceptually possible to demonstrate that connection between who we are as teachers and who we are as persons: how we embody the intersection of personal, political, and professional dimensions of language teaching in educational contexts.

*Kristen:* I absolutely agree with you, and I'll add to that by bringing awareness back into our discussion of cognition and identity. As you said, the teacher identity lens helps researchers explain teacher learning and action from a holistic perspective; I think a key factor of identity as teacher learning has to do with teachers—not just researchers—being aware of their own identity development and how that awareness itself also contributes to their ongoing identity-as-learning. Underpinning that identity-as-learning process is teachers' awareness of other factors such as emotions, agency, and/or how they orient toward ideologies in circulation. In this conceptualization, reflecting on identities (i.e., engaging in identity work) requires metacognition, just as reflecting on ideologies that influence teacher decision-making requires and may even develop ideological clarity; discussing emotions, ideologies, etc. requires the metalanguage to engage in metacommentary (Fallas-Escobar, 2020). To illustrate with an example, let's say you want to incorporate an identity approach to a teacher learning situation. Most activities—constructing a narrative, responding to an image or a text, recalling a key incident, drawing a linguistic repertoire, painting a language story, drawing an ideology tree—require some degree of reflection. Which thought process underlies reflection? Metacognition. Can you have metacognition without cognition? So, we're back to cognition being at the core of these discussions.

*Bedrettin:* I think that's where we are right now in language teacher identity research, i.e., how we can adopt an identity approach or how we can make identity work a central principle in our teacher education curriculum (Varghese et al., 2016; Yazan & Lindahl, 2020). What you said makes me think we can't engage in identity work without cognitive and meta-cognitive work. I know I'm summarizing your words here to help myself make sense of it and see how I can add to it. Again, cognitive work which we may need to acknowledge more in our research on identity! You also made me think that the conceptual strength of identity lies in the way it

interfaces the individual dimension (cognitive and meta-cognitive as you note) of teaching and the social/cultural/political dimension of being, becoming, and acting like a language teacher.

*Kristen:* To reflect, that is the main reason I gravitated toward identity as a way to understand all we have discussed in this article. In exploring language teacher cognition and language awareness at the outset of my career, I realized I needed a way to explain the emotions engendered by certain pedagogical tasks, or the ideologies that emerged when teachers were prompted to analyze and reflect on learner language or their own schooling experiences. Much of the explanation was found in that connection you mention between professional and social identities, how they inform each other and the power dynamics that shape them—it has prompted me to look more toward critical language awareness and critical multilingual awareness as supporting research frames for these inequities, particularly in instances of ethnoracial linguistic minoritization. You can't consider a teacher's cognition without also considering the ways in which society either constrains or affords their different identity positions in different contexts or at different times. Recognizing inequities in terms of which identities have been marginalized and which have been privileged helps understand teacher cognition. I think this further supports the point we are making about how cognition and identity complement each other, and both promote and require criticality in language teacher education.

*Bedrettin:* In this conversation, we ended up discussing the conceptual nexus of language teacher cognition and language teacher identity. The main take-away is that we can better illustrate the complexity involved in language teaching and becoming language teachers if we combine the two in complementary ways: teachers' individual cognitive and metacognitive processes involved in their professional learning and their situatedness in social, cultural, political, and economic discourses. As a concept explaining the personal/individual with the political/social in language teaching, language teacher identity can promote that complementarity.

## **Unfinalizable Thoughts**

Wrapping up our conversation here, we're reminded of Bakhtin's (1984) description of Dostoevsky's characters with "unfinalizability" and "unpredeterminability" (p. 61) which resonate well with both the field of language teacher education and us as practitioners and researchers situated in that field. Unfinalizability will continue characterizing the broader scholarly conversation, typically mediated through conferences and publications, as well as the micro level individual conversations we have as a response/contribution to that broader conversation. The conversation we shared in written form in this paper is a reflection of our ongoing informal dialogue as part of our collaborative work. We have had bits and pieces of this dialogue at various points in our work, but we'd never "completed" the conversation. It was an intellectually stimulating exercise to write this dialogue by making sure that we shared everything that reflects our current conceptual journey within the scope of the special issue. The entire process of externalizing our approaches to language teacher cognition in relation to language teacher identity not only led us to explain our thinking to the readership and ourselves, but also it was a reflective practice to better understand the relationship between our own teacher educator cognition and professional identities. We encourage scholars and practitioners of teacher cognition and identity to turn to forms of expression such as narrative, autoethnography, and self-study, among others, to highlight their own voices and experiences from the unique context in which they work, learn, and teach. We realize this particular

conversation is not an ending or a conclusion to the conceptual evolution we have traced in our own trajectory, but only a point for pause and reflection on a journey of identity development and negotiation that is indeed unfinalizable.

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