Teaching English Language Learners Who Have Trauma Experiences: Healthy Boundaries, Happy Teachers

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English language teachers, especially those working with refugees and vulnerable populations, are at risk of empathy-based stress (e.g., burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma). Due to conditions prevalent in the English language teaching context and relationships of trust that develop classrooms, instructors may inadvertently be exposed to and impacted by learner trauma. Over time, empathetic engagement and hearing troubling stories can result in vicarious trauma. One key factor that puts instructors at risk of vicarious trauma and other empathy-based stress is unclear boundaries. In this article, we draw on data from 44 semi-structured ethnographic interviews with language instructors who self-identified as being negatively impacted by their work with learners who have had trauma experiences. We report specifically on themes related to boundaries that emerged from the data. The findings focus on factors that contribute to crossed boundaries, such as overfamiliarity, role misperception, a saviour mentality, and dual relationships. We also describe benefits of and strategies for setting and maintaining boundaries. The article concludes with implications and recommendations for policy makers, organizational decision makers, and English language instructors.

Les enseignants d'anglais, en particulier ceux qui travaillent avec des réfugiés et des populations vulnérables, sont exposés au risque de stress lié à l'empathie (par exemple, l'épuisement professionnel, la fatigue de compassion, le traumatisme vicariant). En raison des conditions prévalentes dans le contexte de l'enseignement de l'anglais et des relations de confiance qui se développent dans les salles de classe, les enseignants peuvent être exposés par inadvertance aux traumatismes des apprenants et en subir les impacts. Au fil du temps, l'engagement empathique et l'exposition aux récits troublants peuvent entraîner un traumatisme vicariant. Un des facteurs clés qui expose les enseignants au risque de traumatisme vicariant et à d'autres formes de stress liées à l'empathie est le manque de clarté des limites. Dans cet article, nous nous appuyons sur les données de 44 entretiens ethnographiques semi-structurés avec des enseignants de langues qui ont déclaré être affectés par leur travail avec des apprenants ayant subi des traumatismes. Nous rapportons spécifiquement les thèmes liés aux limites qui ont émergé des données. Les résultats soulignent les facteurs qui contribuent au dépassement des limites, tels que la familiarité excessive, la perception erronée des rôles, la mentalité de sauveur et la dualité des rôles. Nous décrivons également les avantages de fixer et de maintenir des limites et les stratégies pour ce faire. L'article

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se conclut par des implications et des recommandations à l'intention des décideurs, des décideurs organisationnels et des enseignants d'anglais.

Keywords: boundaries, English language teaching, refugees, trauma-informed practice, vicarious trauma

Canada is a top refugee resettlement country, aiming to welcome about 168,000 refugees in the next three years (IRCC, 2024). While the country's commitments and obligations to provide refuge to persons displaced by war or fleeing danger offer hope, traumatic experiences often continue to affect refugees and other newcomers (Minihan et al., 2018) after reaching Canadian shores. Learner trauma can impact educational outcomes (Horsman, 1999, 2013) and can lead to empathy-based stress such as compassion fatigue, burnout, and vicarious trauma for their instructors (Crossman, 2022; Kostouros et al., 2022; Mayor, 2021). Language learning and classes such as Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) are naturally oriented to community building, communication, and sharing information. As such, learners often develop relationships of trust with their instructors and see them as cultural informants or even counsellors, which is outside the scope of most instructor roles and expertise. This can be compounded by unclear boundaries, leading to learners disclosing trauma experiences, the accumulation of which can lead to vicarious trauma. We argue that there is interplay between boundaries—or lack thereof—and instructor well-being. Drawing on findings from this research study and relevant literature, we explore boundaries between language instructors and learners as they relate to empathy-based stress and make recommendations for instructors and policy makers.

Literature Review

Empathy-Based Stress and English Language Instruction

Compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress are occupational hazards and normal consequences of helping work with survivors of trauma (Mathieu, 2012). These hazards arise when professionals empathically engage with those with whom they work, projecting themselves into a client's distressing situation or absorbing their pain (Rothschild & Rand, 2006). This can occur between instructors and learners, endangering both parties' well-being, especially when instructors do not have the required skills, strategies, or resources to cope with the situation (Craig & Sprang, 2010). Even when they have the necessary skills, teachers are still at risk of being affected (Iliffe & Steed, 2000), especially when they have insufficient training about the potential negative consequences of work in helping professions (DuBois, 2010).

The causes of trauma vary, although commonalities exist. Trauma events "overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning" (Herman, 1992, p. 33). War, domestic abuse, captivity, and migration—forced or voluntary—can be traumatic, and trauma responses may persist and manifest in various ways. Trauma can impact learning, health, and behaviour. In this respect, many language instructors work directly with learners who are suffering the effects of trauma events, and for some learners, navigating educational (or immigration) systems can be trauma-inducing in itself (Venet, 2023). Trauma-informed educational practices recognize the potential impacts of trauma on learning, and through principles of consistency, transparency, empowerment, and trust, they seek to

mitigate the effects of trauma on learning, improving outcomes for all learners and their teachers (Fallot & Harris, 2009).

As a result of working with learners with trauma experiences, teachers may suffer from empathy-based stresses, such as professional burnout, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious trauma, which are related to each other and often co-occur. In this context, *professional burnout* refers to exhaustion (physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual) resulting from workplace stress that an individual is not able to effectively cope with (WHO, 2019). It can be exacerbated by prolonged work with people that are vulnerable; high workloads and school leadership styles also contribute to teacher burnout (Tsang et al., 2022). Although burnout is experienced individually, its causes are collective and structural; simply put, it reflects a system or organization that expects too much while providing too little. *Compassion fatigue*, described as an experience that affects those who are most effective at their job (Figley, 1995), refers to emotional and physical exhaustion felt by those in the helping professions. Manifestations include becoming embittered or dispirited, making workplace errors, and becoming less patient or understanding with learners and loved ones (Mathieu, 2012). *Vicarious trauma* refers to shifts in a person's schemas (i.e., one's mental constructs and frameworks of how one organizes and understands the world) that occur over time from exposure to others' stories of trauma (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 2013). While vicarious trauma is cumulative, *secondary traumatic stress* has a more immediate onset in response to a triggering event (Jenkins & Baird, 2002) and typically refers to behavioural manifestations rather than shifts of cognitive schemas (Newell & MacNeil, 2010).

There are also organizational and structural factors that contribute to empathy-based stresses. Precarity and demanding working conditions within the adult English language sector in Canada (Breshears, 2019) increase the possibility of emotional and psychological risks associated with direct contact with vulnerable populations (Shackelford, 2006). Furthermore, factors related to individuals, workplaces, and served populations can lead to burnout, which is strongly associated with long-term draining of professionals' empathic feelings (Maslach, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001). For example, the sudden transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic added to instructors' time pressures, required extra efforts in meeting students' technological needs, and interrupted traditional teaching methods (Detwyler, 2022), leading to burnout. Instructors also found themselves going further to support and solicit feedback from learners, thereby increasing their own emotional labour (Kennedy et al., 2022).

Disclosures of trauma are associated with both negative and positive impacts. In their research reviewing impacts of trauma disclosure on family members, Dalgaard and Montgomery (2015) found that modulated and culturally appropriate disclosures were associated with more favourable outcomes, and sharing trauma stories too directly or outside an appropriate cultural context can lead to detrimental impacts on both parties. Although openness and listening to students' trauma stories may foster inclusion and a sense of community (Wilbur, 2016), instructors may in turn experience reduced capacity or suffer from compassion fatigue (Adams et al., 2006). Trauma experiences and the stories surrounding them can permeate existing schemas about perceptions of the world and sense of control (Janoff-Bulman, 1989); for example, someone who has heard repeated stories of tragic circumstances may experience shifts in their schemas around safety, potentially coming to believe the world is unsafe. This may manifest as hypervigilance about the safety of themselves or their loved ones in the form of persistent worry, constant check-ins, checking and rechecking locks, and so forth. However, when instructors are aware of the effects of trauma on learning and well-being, they can mitigate the negative impacts. Additionally, vicarious trauma growth response (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013) is possible, and instructors may derive great meaning and satisfaction as they witness learners overcome adversity and succeed.

Boundaries in English Language Instruction

An important component of trauma-informed educational approaches, boundaries are the rules and guidelines that identify the limits of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional territory. Boundaries are not meant to create a distant relationship between instructors and students but to foster values of trust, compassion, mutual respect, and empathy. Crossed boundaries can have negative repercussions for helpers and those they work with, contributing to compassion fatigue (Sheppard, 2016), burnout (Demerouti, 2015), and vicarious trauma (Caringi & Perlman, 2009).

How professional boundaries are conceptualized varies among professionals, depending on their interpretation of their job duties and practices (Fine & Teram, 2009). Deviation from a defined role can lead to boundary crossing, that is, engaging in behaviour that may cause harm or risk to helpers or those they are serving (Knapp & Slattery, 2004). The first steps in setting boundaries are self-awareness, being conscious of one's own expectations, and communicating clearly and in a timely manner. Although there is often a flexibility inherent in teaching and adopted by educational institutions (Daniel, 2016), the absence of clear guidelines and policies about teacher and student personal relationships can lead to unclear or unhealthy boundaries between teachers and students (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013). When it comes to instructors who work in the English language sector, this can be exacerbated by conditions such as high workload, precarity, and the distinct needs of language learners (Mercer, 2020).

Having healthy boundaries entails instructors defining, communicating, and enforcing limits to protect against long-term effects of students' trauma experiences. Therefore, it is helpful to establish professional expectations and to give instructors sufficient control over their own role to secure their safety (Nancarrow & Borthwick, 2005).

Methodology

Study Context

In this article we report on findings from interviews with language instructors, which were part of a larger research project. The project, funded by IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada), took place over three years across Canada. The first phase of the research involved interviews with language instructors, program supervisors, and experts in the field of trauma research. The data collected in interviews were also used to inform the development of a toolkit, which was co-created by instructors and learners and geared toward English language instructors. The project also saw regional and national pilots of the instructor toolkit. This paper reports only on the research phase of this project.

Two broad research questions guided the development of the interview guide, data collection, and data analysis:

- What are the impacts of teaching learners with trauma experiences among English language instructors?
- How can organizations and individuals address and mitigate the risks associated with vicarious trauma and other empathy-based stress experienced by language instructors?

Although we had not set out to investigate boundaries, the topic emerged during interviews, as often happens in qualitative research. We focus here on findings from instructor interviews, particularly related to the theme of boundaries, exploring three questions that emerged during data collection and analysis:

- What do instructors identify as factors that lead to boundary crossing in ELT contexts in Canada?
- How do instructors describe incidents of boundary crossing, and what impacts do these incidents have on their professional roles and student interactions?
- What strategies and suggestions do instructors offer for setting and maintaining boundaries in their teaching practices?

Reflexivity and Positionality of Research Team

As researchers engaging in phenomenological study, we recognize that our identities, experiences, and perspectives shape our work. Our professional backgrounds in education inform a nuanced understanding of the complexities instructors face when supporting students with trauma histories. Additionally, our personal experiences create an inherent bias toward recognizing the emotional toll on educators. We are also mindful of diverse cultural backgrounds, acknowledging that perceptions of boundaries and relationships vary widely. Our commitment to ethical research includes transparency about our positionality, as we strive to minimize biases by actively engaging with the data and allowing the voices of instructors to guide our interpretations, while acknowledging that our insights are filtered through our own experiences and values.

Participants

Of the 53 participants interviewed, 44 were language instructors or working in classrooms with language learners. They all self-identified as having been impacted by their work with learners who have trauma experiences. Interview participants were recruited through English language school and partner listservs, along with English language teaching professional associations. Interviews took place between July and December 2020. They were designed to last 60 to 90 minutes and ranged from 52 to 102 minutes in length.

The findings presented emerged from interviews with these 44 participants, and pseudonyms are used. These interview participants worked in various programs and contexts (see Figure 1): 31 (~70%) were LINC instructors, five (~11%) were non-LINC ESL instructors, three (~7%) were English Language Arts (upgrading) instructors, and five (~11%) were "other" who worked directly with language learners. Their experience in language classrooms varied greatly (see Figure 2): 11 (25%) had five or fewer years' experience, 11 (25%) had six to ten years' experience, five (11%) had 11 to 15 years' experience, six (14%) had 16 to 20 years' experience, and 11 (25%) had 21 or more years of experience.

Interviewees were asked if they had taken formal training on related topics such as trauma or vicarious trauma. Most (38) had attended professional development sessions related to trauma and/or mental health, and two of those had also taken part in more advanced mental health training. No interviewee reported taking formal trauma training or learning about vicarious trauma in their teacher training.

Data Collection

A phenomenological research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was used to investigate and understand the experiences of ELL instructors with empathy-based stress and vicarious trauma. As a result, interview participants' voices are centred in the findings, and theory emerges from the collective data. We used an interpretive phenomenological approach (Munhall, 2012) in which the researchers communicate the

Figure 1

Professional roles reported by interview participants

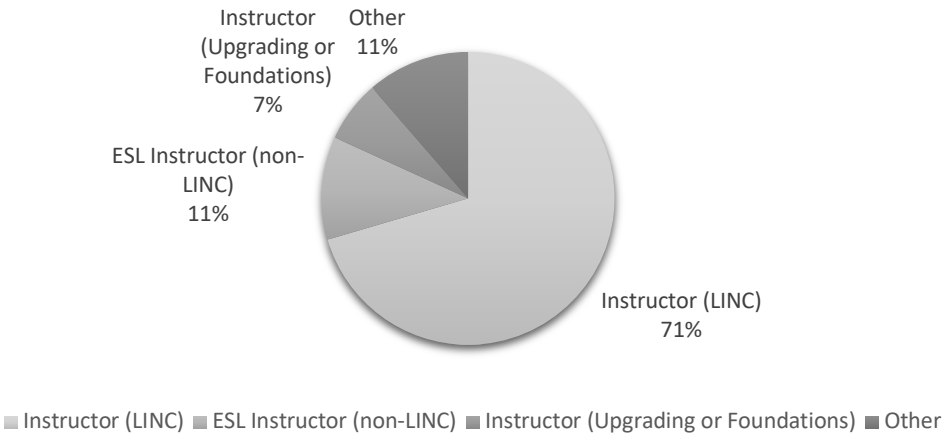
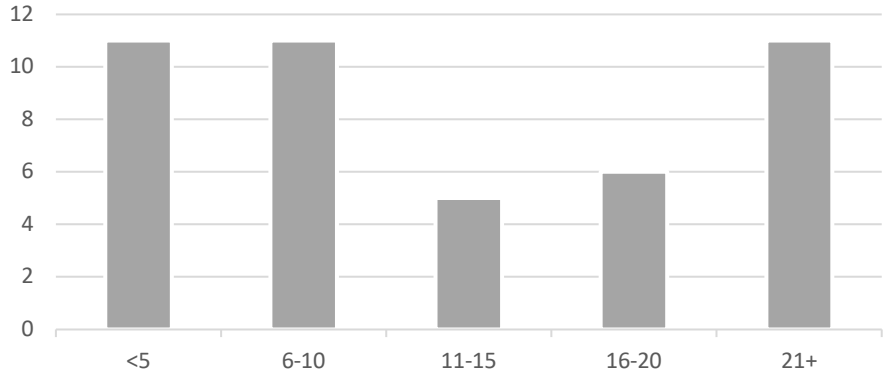


Figure 2

Years of teaching experience reported by interview participants



meaning of experiences through individual participant narratives. This methodology is recommended for studying complex phenomena and was well suited to exploring the intersecting issues related to empathy-based stress such as vicarious trauma, vicarious growth response, and working with students who have experienced trauma. This project was reviewed and approved by our institutional Research Ethics Board.

An interview guide (see Appendix) was created for instructor interviews, and questions were informed by previous research about vicarious trauma experienced by clinicians working with torture survivors (Hernandez-Wolfe et al., 2015). Many of the questions were adapted to an educational context and to frame the questions in a conversational manner to elicit reflection and examples. The first questions were demographic, to gather background information about interviewees and build rapport. The remaining questions were open-ended and focused on empathy-based stresses such as vicarious trauma, vicarious trauma growth response, and related educational, classroom, and organizational factors. We also added questions about recommendations and useful resources.

Because of the timing of our interviews and the COVID-19 pandemic, we added a few sub-questions to tease apart typical experiences and those that resulted from the pandemic, the resulting shift to remote

learning and teaching, and its aftermath. As is usual for semi-structured interviews, at times interviewers skipped questions or asked follow-up questions that naturally arose.

Data Analysis

Using audio recordings of interviews, our research team produced typed transcriptions. The goal of transcription was to capture the content of the interviews; therefore, verbal cues and hesitations (e.g., *um*, *uh*, *hmm*) were not systematically included. Interviewees were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts. Some made minor suggestions or found errors. In those cases, we amended the transcripts to reflect their feedback.

The research team co-developed a codebook and used qualitative analysis software (NVivo) to refine the analysis. After team checks for inter-coder reliability, the first cycle of coding was completed using a combination of elemental methods (Saldaña, 2016). Because we had a large dataset, we completed a secondary cycle of focused coding (Saldaña, 2016) to analyze separate codes in greater depth to better understand the themes. During and after identifying and populating sub-themes with examples from the data, we also reflected on and recorded our thought processes about how themes connect, why we made decisions about keeping or culling examples, and big picture ideas. This was done to keep track of details we might later not recall and to make sure that the synthesized information would be clear and easily accessible.

The research team employed an inductive logic model (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 64) to data analysis, whereby after the data were analyzed to form categories and themes, the researchers looked for broad patterns and generalizations. Theories arising from these findings and the literature were then posed. Those related to boundaries are presented in this article. Of the 44 interviews, 39 were contained for boundaries, for a total of 166 times.

Findings

As noted above, themes can emerge from the data (Naeem et al., 2023), and the research question "What are the impacts of teaching learners with trauma experiences among English language instructors?" surfaced a theme of boundary crossing. Drawing on direct quotes from interviews and participants' lived experiences, this section presents contextual and individual factors that contribute to crossed boundaries and benefits of and strategies for setting and maintaining boundaries.

Crossed Boundaries: Predisposing Factors

Factors prevalent in English language teaching contexts and among English language instructors may inadvertently lead to unclear, inconsistent, or crossed boundaries. Two broad categories of factors that can lead to crossed boundaries emerged from the data: the conditions and contexts of English language classrooms, and individual risk factors related to instructors and learners.

LINC literacy instructor Elizabeth provides valuable context around English language learning: "Professional boundaries are in a bit of a different place than other frontline workers because of the nature of the work we do…. We are trying to build communities."

Conditions of English language contexts and classrooms

Language instructors, especially those working with literacy learners or refugees, may find a significant number of students with trauma experiences in their classes. In our research, instructor assumptions about the number of their learners with trauma experiences varied widely, from "at least 20% in every class" (Tina, LINC instructor) to "100%" (Mehri, LINC instructor), whose conception of trauma was broader and who spoke about how she "needed to value all kinds of trauma and not do the hierarchy of trauma," noting that any learner can have trauma experiences, not just refugees.

Language classrooms are communities, and community building is often central to language instruction, especially in a settlement context. In interviews, multiple instructors mentioned how personal connection is central to English language teaching. It follows that overfamiliarity may be more likely to occur in language classes, compared to math or science classes. Jessica, an instructor working with newcomers as a high-school upgrading English Language Arts instructor, said, "They're not writing about the personalized in math and science, so it doesn't come up. But then it all comes up in English." Jessica added, "Because of your position, you are automatically the person that they talk to."

The amount of time that learners, especially those in full-time LINC classes, spend with instructors can also contribute to crossed boundaries. LINC instructor Lorena described how she began hearing more trauma stories and became more aware of a learner trauma and the need to adjust her practice when she started working in a full-time program: "Being with them on the daily basis [was] the first time I learned how to separate what was going on outside the classroom into what is going on inside classroom."

The linguistic limitations of students also played a role in crossed boundaries. Tina, a LINC instructor, recalled a student who "did not have enough language to explain to me what happened in her life, so she brought me photographs [of] her husband['s body] on a blue tarp." Recalling this image during the interview visibly upset Tina, and she was not the only instructor to be affected by an image shown by a learner. Rebecca shared how one of her students showed her a photo of a young girl who had died by suicide. Her learner asked her: "'Could I just show you a picture?' …. It was actually a picture of the parents of this little girl over her corpse." Similarly, Rebecca still recalled the details of this image and could conjure it in her mind years later.

This LINC instructor also described how a learner fainted and sustained a head injury while attending court connected to domestic violence she had experienced. Not getting help in the courthouse and not knowing what to do, she came to the school and asked her LINC instructor Rebecca for help: "I went to the first aid box and cleaned her up and got her fresh bandages and got her a cab, so she could go get stitches and, and I was so angry."

Ariana, a non-LINC ELL instructor, added that when teaching learners with limited English, especially those with trauma, "there's just a lot more that goes into teaching outside of the content … our job is just making them feel like they can. It's also unpacking the material in a way that will be accessible to them."

Individual risk factors

Some instructors we spoke with described a high degree of familiarity with their learners; others shared how they use and benefit from boundaries. We did not find connections between professional experience, boundaries, or negative impacts of empathy-based stress. This section focuses on the risk factors and draws connections between overfamiliarity, role misperception, saviour mentality (Venet, 2023), dual relationships, and negative outcomes. Some instructors described sharing details about their personal lives as a teaching tool or to connect with learners. For example, LINC instructor Samantha said, "I think that's part of my personality. I think I'm comfortable sharing a little bit about myself." Likewise, some students may find language classes a safe place to display the unhealed wounds of their trauma without being

ashamed of or seized by their limited linguistic skills: "They feel safe. It's a safe place [with a] safe person," mentioned Rebecca, a LINC instructor.

Exposure to learner disclosures or trauma can lead to negative impacts. Lisa, a LINC instructor working with literacy-level learners, shared how her student's family member "had been abducted … They were raising money to try to buy her back. He was coming in very stressed out about that, [and it was] affecting me. And so, I started having nightmares."

Although disclosure can help in building bonds, reducing teacher–student distance (Cayanus et al., 2009), and strengthening the relationship (Ryan et al., 2016), some inappropriate disclosure leads to the sharing of upsetting information (Borshuk, 2017), especially in language classes when emotions play a significant role (Dewaele, 2015), learners may have experienced trauma, and instructors may not be equipped to respond appropriately or hear every story. Brenda, another LINC instructor, described how past disclosures and overfamiliarity created a sense of discomfort and confusion among learners, noting that students "hit a barrier with me where they've revealed too much, and they're not comfortable anymore, and it kind of ruins their learning."

Instructors often want to be supportive listeners when students disclose their trauma experiences, as described by upgrading instructor Leila: "Sometimes [learners] just need someone to tell, and I don't mind being that person," and she later mentioned that she always keeps her notifications on and responds to students as soon as she sees their messages: "I can't keep up … I can't turn it off, it's a personal thing. People say, 'just turn off your notifications' … I don't know how to do that." Although Leila did not make a direct connection to poor boundaries, she then described her own mental health as poor and had recently taken a leave of absence for that reason. She mentioned that her main goal was to remember to eat to address her weight loss, and she described her attempts to complete chores and work but being paralyzed by exhaustion the night before her interview: "I just sat there. I couldn't move. I was just so tired."

LINC instructor Ekaterina described a student "who had trauma, and she found in me some kind of support, and she tried to connect to me even after classes because she [saw me as] the only person who could listen or help her." In some cases, learners may transfer feelings for loved ones onto their instructors. Deena, an instructor who works with newcomer youth, told us she "had several students say that they think of [her] like their mom." In other cases, learners may see their instructor as someone who will help them heal from their trauma. Tatum mentioned that students have told her, "'I'm suicidal, I'm this, I'm that,' and they expect [her] to take more of a therapist role."

The COVID-19 pandemic and online learning in general may have further muddled boundaries and roles. After transitioning online during the pandemic, some instructors reported losing control over their instruction. Because of the unprecedented events, role confusion occurred in the absence of clear institutional guidelines. Instructors often played multiple roles to meet student needs. These new challenges aligned with previous research about students' extended expectations of teachers in online environments (Matzat, 2013; Zingaro & Porter, 2014), including breaching their time boundaries. Tina, a LINC literacy instructor, told us she had "gotten calls at night" from her students. Natalie echoed this, telling us, "There are no guidelines about limiting work hours, when to answer phones, send emails, etc. I get emails sometimes at midnight or 1 am." Likewise, Ekaterina mentioned that this issue of boundaries isn't limited to students with trauma experiences: Learners "send me emails at night, in the morning, in the afternoon, any time of day when they have problems with technology, with the task, they can't open the PDF. Any problem they try to connect to me."

Ekaterina described how, during COVID, her work was more challenging and her boundaries became eroded because usual policies about not sharing personal phone numbers could not be sustained: "Because it's online learning we had to share our phones to connect with students. [A learner] could call me even after classes to ask for some advice or just talk to me. So, for me it was difficult." Likewise, LINC

literacy instructor Elizabeth expressed how the high expectations and unlimited responsibilities created blurred boundaries when instructors played vague roles. She described how she had to provide learners with extra support to get online, and one in particular "was very difficult to get online, he ha[d] low-tech skills and [was] working on a phone, so I was texting him a lot … I could have chosen to block him because he continue[d] to text me."

There is a fine line between appropriate and inappropriate support. Mehri, a LINC instructor, wanted to connect with a student who was suffering: "She really impacted me because she was with me a long time. Honestly it was so hard to see her suffer, and she didn't want support. I tried. I took time to connect with her, but she was very removed." Similarly, Samantha, a LINC instructor, said, "Knowing the kinds of struggles that they've had and the importance of education to them … encourages us to try to make up for all of the bad things that have happened to them," noting that learners are often "navigating a system [with] very low levels of English." When instructors assist with navigating the system beyond English language learning, it may lead to being engaged in dual relationships, and boundaries can be complicated by altruistic gestures, which can be a feature of dual relationships (Reamer, 2013). Penny, a LINC instructor, relayed how one of her students contacted her outside of class to give her a gift she was uncomfortable with. She said, "He had all this frozen chicken from his workplace that he wanted me to have … that's very sweet, but I was trying to keep that boundary, but it just broke down."

Another example of altruistic gestures from teachers to students was shared by Jessica, who had a student that was not able to access appropriate technology for a course. She wondered, "Is it against the rules to buy someone a laptop?" She added, "It's actually not clear whether it is or not … I didn't do it, but I felt … I always felt like I should have."

Although instructors build relationships with their learners as an altruistic gesture to be supportive and build community, this can go beyond their professional roles. Ariana, a LINC instructor, described how she "understand[s] as newcomers they're looking for connections in the community." However, she described that her boundaries were being crossed, and she had "WhatsApp messages coming in from the daughter [of her learner]. She wants to go to the mall." Ariana found herself trying to navigate requests not only from learners but also from their family members. She was uncomfortable with this situation but struggled to assert her boundaries, lamenting, "All of the kids want me to come over every weekend. They want to go for bike rides." While she was happy to connect with her learners' communities, she found herself feeling burdened and guilt-ridden about wanting limits.

Ariana's case is not the only one. Heather, an instructor working with foundational learners, mentioned that her students often invited her to their homes for birthday parties and other events, and she accepted these invitations early in her career. Mehri described visiting a learner at home to provide tech support, while Beverly spoke about going out for meals with her learners. These examples highlight a practice among some instructors of engaging with learners and their families outside of the classroom, effectively blurring the boundaries between professional and personal relationships.

Maintaining Boundaries

As indicated, the higher mental health needs of students with histories of trauma can lead to overfamiliarity between instructors and students, resulting in role confusion or crossed boundaries, unless instructors recognize their roles as educators and proactively communicate that to their students (Venet, 2019). Many of the instructors we spoke to discussed what they do to maintain boundaries in this profession.

Strategies

Some instructors we interviewed described how they navigate and benefit from professional boundaries. Lisa, a LINC instructor, described weighing the options in her role as a caring and effective instructor. She stated, "trying to find a balance between being caring and supportive, but also not overstepping or amplifying what they're dealing with. Then making sure that we're protecting ourselves as well." Similarly, Margaret, a language instructor, tried to differentiate between whether the help is academic or personal: "In terms of academic boundaries, I like to provide extra help when needed. If it's something personal, I've learned to tell the students that this is not my area of expertise."

Instructors shared how they communicate boundaries with learners. Trudy, a literacy instructor, tells her students, "I don't work on the weekends." She confided to the interviewer that while she does often work weekends and checks her messages, she makes sure that her students do not have the expectation. Other instructors mentioned how their boundaries protect both themselves and their learners. For example, LINC instructor Sylvia described how she used to hug "all of [her] students" but has come to realize that it is not always appropriate. Sylvia did not stop hugging her students; rather, she developed an awareness of the potential risks and rewards and could make better decisions about when and with whom a hug might be welcome or appropriate.

Our interviews surfaced the fact that boundaries may also be necessary for the well-being of others in the classroom. Ekaterina underscored the importance of considering other learners in the class and the potential for trauma contagion: "Every time the students want to talk to me, I need to assess the situation and decide how it will influence the whole class." Another instructor, Lorena, mentioned that when a student begins disclosing, she will "validate it, and [they] might talk a little bit, and then I will say 'you can talk to me later.'" Lorena then reiterates her role and connects them with an appropriate support person. Brenda found that giving students the chance to share their stories can contribute to their healing; however, she realized she was not equipped to hear their stories, and other professionals are better positioned to do that: "I try not to think about it. I've taken on the attitude that they have to tell their story because it's part of their healing process, but I don't have to listen to it." She added, "I do have layers of cushions between me and students" to protect them and herself.

Deena also addressed the importance of maintaining boundaries, describing how she understood the scope of her role and the limits of her expertise, while also recognizing that learners may be hesitant to pursue help from more appropriate sources. To encourage awareness of mental health, she "always advocate[s] for talking about what they've been through because counselling is often something that's taboo." She brings in guest speakers from her organization's counselling services and underscores the value of seeking appropriate help from trained professionals.

Another strategy instructors mentioned to maintain boundaries is to avoid accepting invitations from students, on social media and for non-work-related purposes. Beverly told us, "I'm never friends with students on Facebook…. A lot of them send friend requests … I just explicitly say, 'I'm your teacher. I'm not your friend. I'm going to support you, but our roles are different.'" Penny mentioned that she often gets "invited to students' homes and parties and weddings, and [she] had to put a stop to most of it, because as soon as one person finds out you went to their child's wedding [others expect it]."

Some instructors noted that self-care helps them set boundaries. Bethany, who works mainly with literacy learners, told us, "I need to really clearly make cognitive boundaries … [instructors are] more predisposed to vicarious trauma; [they] have to have good self-care routines at home." Working from home and keeping work and home life separate can be difficult; awareness of the potential consequences of overwork and avoid feeling compelled to overwork because of internal pressures was mentioned by-Deena:

"I'm a little bit of a workaholic in the sense that I'm always willing to take on more opportunities … I've taken on probably too much, but yeah, I try not to look at my computer in the evenings."

Benefits

Some participants shared how they had set or reset their boundaries after experiencing negative impacts of overly flexible boundaries. For example, some found that having stricter boundaries helped them manage class time better. LINC instructor Sarah said, "I had to set up much, much firmer boundaries with my students because it ended up taking a ton of time in class, and it was really, really draining." Similarly, a focus on the learning process was what urged Lisa to set up her boundaries; she identified one of her biggest challenges as "a lack of those professional boundaries to ensure that we were keeping things focused on learning."

LINC instructor Samantha, when speaking about preventing disclosures, said, "That's a big part of my teaching philosophy. I don't want students to feel stress associated with [class]. I want it to be … a safe place for them, a place where they can leave a lot of that behind." By focusing on her role as an instructor, she can draw on her expertise and training to create a safer space that is more conducive to learning.

Instructors also saw the impacts of boundaries in their personal lives. Trudy described her previous job as a settlement worker: "I couldn't walk down street. I was always being harassed to the point that I had a few clients actually stalk me," adding, "I couldn't even go in the grocery store without clients recognizing me and stuffing papers in my hand." She described the emotional toll of this and the negative outcomes in her life, which led her to suffer negative health consequences, prompting her to leave that job and more clearly define and communicate her boundaries. Similarly, Deena highlighted the importance of boundaries in achieving a work–life balance. She noted how her family life is affected when her boundaries are not in check: "It's tough because those boundaries get blurred too, and then I find that I'm not necessarily giving my kids the time that they always need ... you get snappy and you get tired, and there's definitely fatigue." Both instructors illustrate that boundaries are crucial for professional well-being and personal health and ultimately lead to a more balanced and fulfilling life.

Discussion

The interviews with instructors reveal nuanced insights into maintaining boundaries while providing support to students, particularly those with trauma histories. This section presents the research team's literature-supported interpretations organized under three broad themes: boundaries in the classroom, boundaries beyond the classroom, and the benefits of maintaining boundaries.

Boundaries in the Classroom

Instructors such as Ariana emphasize the necessity of creating a supportive classroom environment. Research suggested that trauma can significantly impact a student's ability to learn, as it affects cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and emotional regulation (Brunzell et al., 2015). Educators must recognize and respond to the fact that learners may be dealing with significant needs and barriers that extend beyond language acquisition and proficiency. To effectively support students, teachers must employ strategies that foster a sense of safety and belonging. This includes building strong professional relationships, understanding individual student needs, and using accessible or universal teaching methods. Students who feel understood and supported are more likely to engage with the material and achieve academic success (Liu, 2024). Boundaries in language classrooms include aspects such as instructor

and learner communication, balancing empathy and professionalism, role awareness, and navigating disclosures.

Instructors benefit from clear frameworks for their interactions with students. By setting explicit guidelines for how and when they will engage with learners on personal matters, educators can create a safer space that encourages students to share without undue emotional burden. This proactive approach not only helps instructors maintain their own emotional health but also fosters an environment where students feel respected and understood. Proactively communicating boundaries fosters a healthy educational environment, as illustrated by the approaches taken by instructors like Trudy. By clearly articulating her limits, Trudy not only safeguards her own well-being but also establishes a framework for her students to understand the nature of their relationships. Research indicated that when instructors effectively communicate their boundaries, they create a culture of respect and trust, enhancing student engagement and promoting positive learning outcomes (Ryan et al., 2016). This practice empowers students to navigate their own needs and expectations, ultimately fostering a sense of safety and predictability.

As seen in the findings and literature, instructors often find themselves navigating a delicate balance between fostering caring relationships and upholding professional boundaries. This complexity is exemplified in instructor experiences (e.g., those of Lisa) as they strive to provide support without overstepping their roles. Research indicates that empathy is a powerful tool in education, enhancing student engagement and building trust (Mazer et al., 2014). When students perceive their instructors as empathetic, they are more likely to participate actively in their learning and feel a sense of belonging within the classroom environment (Zhang, 2022). However, excessive familiarity can lead to significant challenges, including emotional burnout and role confusion among instructors (Caringi & Perlman, 2009). Instructors who become emotionally involved with their students may find it difficult to maintain the necessary professional distance, potentially compromising their effectiveness as educators. This tension underscores the need for structured training in boundary maintenance, emphasizing the importance of balancing connections and professionalism. Such training could equip educators with the skills to manage their dual roles effectively, allowing them to be supportive without sacrificing their well-being or professional integrity (Venet, 2019).

The experiences shared by the instructors highlight the intersection of language education, trauma, and holistic support. Rebecca's situation involving a learner who fainted and sustained a head injury is a stark reminder that educators navigate complex emotional and physical challenges faced by their students with trauma experiences. The learner's decision to come to the instructor first, even after sustaining an injury elsewhere, speaks volumes about the trust and connection established between the student and the educator. This instinct to seek support from the instructor, despite physical pain and the emotional turmoil of being in a courtroom, underscores the significant role that educators play in providing a sense of safety and stability and how learners may perceive them as the first-line healers (Gordon, 2019). It illustrates that the classroom can be a refuge, where students feel valued and understood, even amid distressing circumstances. This trust is crucial for fostering a supportive environment where students can openly communicate their needs and challenges.

Sylvia's evolving perspective on physical contact further emphasizes the necessity of contextual awareness in boundary setting. As she reflects on the diverse cultural backgrounds of her students, Sylvia recognizes that expressions of support, such as hugging, may not be universally accepted or welcomed. This awareness aligns with findings in cultural psychology (Borshuk, 2017), which have suggested that norms around physical touch vary significantly across cultures, impacting how individuals interpret gestures of care and familiarity. Instructors need to be attuned to these differences, adapting their approaches to ensure that all students feel comfortable and respected.

Moreover, effective communication of boundaries can serve as a model for students, teaching them how to set and articulate their own boundaries in various relationships. This is particularly important for students with trauma histories, who may have difficulty understanding or asserting their needs (Caringi & Perlman, 2009). By demonstrating clear boundary setting, instructors can help students develop skills that contribute to their emotional well-being and personal growth. In addition to establishing personal limits, instructors can also engage in discussions about the importance of boundaries in broader social contexts. This may involve addressing topics such as consent, respect, and the impact of trauma on interpersonal relationships. By incorporating these discussions into the classroom, instructors not only enhance students' understanding of boundaries but also promote a culture of openness and empathy (Dewaele, 2015).

The challenges surrounding student disclosures of trauma are profound and multifaceted. Instructors play a critical role in creating a safe and supportive learning environment, as highlighted by Ekaterina's approach of assessing broader class dynamics before responding to a student disclosure. This careful consideration creates a supportive atmosphere that safeguards individual students and the overall classroom environment. Research showed that managing disclosures requires a high degree of sensitivity and skill to prevent emotional overload for both students and instructors (Dewaele, 2015). Lorena's strategy of validating a student's experience before redirecting the conversation exemplifies an effective approach to navigating these sensitive situations. By acknowledging the student's feelings, she fosters a sense of safety and support. This approach allows for meaningful engagement without delving into potentially distressing details that could overwhelm either party. It reflects an essential understanding that instructors must cultivate the ability to be present and supportive without absorbing the emotional weight of their students' trauma (Cayanus et al., 2009).

Additionally, this strategy emphasizes the need for instructors to have clear boundaries regarding disclosures. Training in trauma-informed practices can equip educators with tools to handle disclosures effectively, ensuring they know when to listen and when to guide students toward appropriate support services. Such training can help instructors understand the psychological implications of trauma and the importance of connecting students with professional mental health resources when necessary (Dierdorff & Ellington, 2008). Instructors, like Deena, who actively advocate for mental health resources, exemplify the critical importance of recognizing the limits of their roles within educational settings. By promoting access to appropriate support services, educators enhance student well-being and destigmatize mental health discussions. Research has shown that when educators engage in conversations about mental health, it helps create a culture of openness and acceptance, which is essential for students who may be hesitant to seek help (Earls, 2018). This advocacy reinforces the boundaries of the instructors' professional identities, allowing them to maintain a clear distinction between their teaching responsibilities and the emotional support they can offer. By acknowledging that they are not mental health professionals, instructors can empower students to seek the assistance they need from qualified sources, thereby navigating the complexities of their roles more effectively (Davidson et al., 2005).

Boundaries Beyond the Classroom

Language classrooms do not exist within a bubble, and as a consequence there are issues related to boundaries that extend beyond the classroom; these issues may include dual relationships, related training and professional development, and self-care practices. The deliberate avoidance of non-professional relationships, as articulated by instructors like Beverly and Penny, underscores the significant risks associated with dual relationships in educational settings. Research indicated that engaging in dual relationships can lead to role confusion, ethical dilemmas, and potential exploitation (Reamer, 2013). When instructors step outside of their defined roles, it complicates the power dynamics inherent in the teacher–

student relationship, making it essential for educators to maintain clear boundaries. Instructors who establish explicit boundaries regarding social media interactions and personal invitations help mitigate these risks, preserving the integrity of their professional relationships. For instance, Beverly's firm stance on not accepting friend requests from students reflects an understanding that online platforms can blur the lines between personal and professional interactions, potentially leading to misunderstandings and complications. By clearly communicating their limits, instructors can create a safer environment for themselves and their students. This emphasis on maintaining professional boundaries highlights the necessity of a structured framework for instructor–student interactions that prioritizes educational goals (Chang, 2011). Such a framework not only delineates the roles and expectations within the classroom but also provides a foundation for fostering respectful and effective communication.

Instructors can further benefit from training that emphasizes advocacy as an integral component of their teaching practice. Such training can equip educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify students in need, refer them to appropriate resources, and foster a supportive environment. For instance, workshops focused on emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and communication strategies can provide instructors with practical tools to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics. Additionally, training can provide educators with frameworks for integrating discussions about mental health into their curricula, making these topics a natural part of classroom dialogue or activities. By openly discussing the importance of mental health resources and sharing information about available support services, instructors can cultivate an atmosphere where students feel safe and validated. This approach not only enhances student well-being but also promotes a healthier school culture where mental health is prioritized.

Moreover, incorporating reflective practices into professional development can aid instructors in recognizing their emotional responses and understanding how these may impact their teaching. Regular self-assessment and peer feedback can facilitate a continuous dialogue about boundaries and empathy in the classroom, ultimately enhancing both student and instructor experiences (Schwartz, 2017).

In addition to professional development, personal development and wellness were also discussed by interviewees, and the theme of self-care repeatedly emerged in connection with boundaries. Bethany's acknowledgment of the need for cognitive boundaries highlights that personal well-being is foundational for effective teaching. Research indicated that prioritizing self-care enables instructors to better manage the emotional demands of their roles, which can otherwise lead to burnout and diminished effectiveness (Dierdorff & Ellington, 2008). Self-described "workaholic" instructors like Deena illustrate the complexities of maintaining work–life balance, emphasizing that boundary setting is an ongoing process that requires continuous reflection and adjustment (Cohen, 2008). This indicates that self-care practices should be dynamic and fit individual needs and circumstances. Effective self-care may include setting clear time boundaries for work-related tasks, engaging in regular physical activity, pursuing hobbies, or seeking support from colleagues or mental health professionals.

Moreover, engaging in self-care benefits instructors personally and enhances their capacity to support students effectively (Abou Assali & Al Abdouli, 2024). When educators prioritize their own mental health, they are more present, empathetic, and capable of creating a safe and nurturing learning environment. This alignment between personal well-being and professional effectiveness reinforces the idea that self-care is not a luxury but a necessary component of sustainable teaching practices.

To support self-care efforts, educational institutions play a pivotal role by providing resources such as wellness programs, access to mental health services, and opportunities for professional development focused on resilience and self-care strategies. By fostering a culture that values well-being, schools can help instructors recognize that maintaining personal health is integral to their ability to fulfill their roles as educators and advocates for their students.

Benefits of Boundary Maintenance

The benefits of maintaining boundaries recurred in instructors' experiences and reflections. Stricter boundaries enhance the learning process by fostering a safer and more structured environment and contribute significantly to instructors' mental health and overall job satisfaction (Venet, 2023). By establishing clear limits, instructors can create a classroom atmosphere where students feel secure, which is particularly important for those with trauma histories who may be sensitive to emotional triggers.

Instructors, such as Samantha, who focus on creating a stress-free classroom environment exemplify how effective boundary setting can yield positive outcomes for both students and instructors. Her approach, along with that of Beverly, underscores the role of boundaries in minimizing anxiety and promoting engagement, allowing students to concentrate on learning without the added stress of emotional overreach or ambiguity in instructor–student relationships. This illustrates how boundaries are part of a trauma-informed approach to teaching, reinforcing the notion that safety and predictability in the classroom are vital for effective learning (Green, 2003).

Additionally, maintaining boundaries can protect instructors from the risk of vicarious trauma, which can occur when they become overly involved in their students' emotional lives. By clearly delineating their roles, instructors can manage their emotional investments and reduce the potential for burnout. This sense of protection enhances their job satisfaction while allowing them to remain focused and effective in their teaching. Moreover, the establishment of boundaries fosters professional growth and development. Instructors who clearly understand their roles are more likely to pursue training and resources that enhance their teaching abilities and promote self-care strategies (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016). As they become more adept at balancing empathy and professionalism, they model healthy relational dynamics for their students, reinforcing the importance of boundaries in all interpersonal interactions.

Recommendations

The findings and discussion have demonstrated that conditions within the English language teaching context are fertile ground for unclear boundaries and disclosures of trauma, which can lead to empathy-based stress. Remen (2006) described this with a powerful metaphor, noting how "the expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet" (p. 79). Continuing with this metaphor, individual and systemic approaches can help instructors prepare to get in the water, swim safely, and dry off. To make it safely back to shore, instructors need clear policies that assist them to maintain appropriate boundaries.

At the *systems level*, policy makers must recognize the impacts of trauma, not only on learners but also on their instructors (Scarff et al., 2023). Additionally, other factors may exacerbate empathy-based stress if they are not trauma informed. For example, the continuous intake of learners, while convenient, can be disruptive to classroom learning and to communicating classroom expectations. Likewise, heavy (and often unremunerated) administrative or assessment loads placed on instructors lead to reduced capacity to proactively handle the risk of vicarious trauma, build in self-care practices, support their learners, and take part in professional development. Furthermore, the precarious nature of many English language teaching positions (Breshears, 2019) often leads to instructors working in multiple locations and for long hours without access to workplace benefits such as counselling or other mental health support, reducing their capacity to learn about and prevent empathy-based stress or exercise healthy boundaries. This can result in greater burnout, leave-taking, and attrition. Those making policy and high-level decisions should be aware of these limitations and create and reward conditions that provide instructors with the time, educational, and psychosocial resources to thrive at work.

On an *organizational level*, exacerbating factors can be mitigated with coordinated efforts to recognize and respond to the impacts of vicarious trauma. Providers of language classes should have codes of conduct in place to outline learner and instructor expectations regarding boundaries and boundary infractions. However, this alone is insufficient. Recognizing that there is a gap in accessible resources that many instructors are currently filling, decision makers must ensure that appropriate resources are available and accessible to learners and instructors alike. This may be an annually updated list of local supports, initiatives to connect learners and instructors with resources, and the implementation of trauma-informed policies. Organizations could have formal mechanisms for peer support and mental health mentorship among instructors as well.

The most common methods in teaching and assessing ELLs may expose instructors to subtle forms of emotional distress. Rethinking the teaching and assessment methods used in classes can enable teachers to examine their assumptions and make modifications to mitigate risks associated with empathy-based stress. Some currently used methods (e.g., one-on-one student interviews and assessments) facilitate inappropriate disclosure. To mitigate this, guidelines must be set up and communicated to and by instructors. That could also reduce the sense of guilt that some instructors have when they encounter traumatic stories and fall into a conflict between their professional role or taking on additional roles to meet students' nonacademic needs. The language class provider is crucial in shaping these boundaries and must be wary of leaving it solely to instructors' instincts and personal judgment. This also fosters consistency and transparency, which are key principles of trauma-informed education.

In our interviews, we found that those teaching at settlement organizations tended to experience fewer crossed boundaries and negative impacts from exposure to learner trauma. It appears that when organizations offer on-site wraparound supports, such as counselling with interpreters, settlement workers, and childcare, learners are more able to connect with psychosocial supports and tend to not seek it from their instructors. Likewise, instructors who had access to other professionals such as occupational therapists and educational assistants indicated that this greatly improved their ability to focus on delivering high-quality instruction.

At the *individual level*, instructors must first develop an awareness of the risks of vicarious trauma and other empathy-based stresses. Although most instructors we spoke to had attended conference sessions or workshops about learner trauma, they largely had very little training about vicarious trauma. Therefore, we recommend that they take advantage of available information and professional development. We argue that instructors' greatest source of power in preventing vicarious trauma, while still providing excellent support to learners, is through developing and enforcing consistent and reasonable professional boundaries. In particular, co-developing, communicating, and revisiting classroom guidelines and boundaries can reduce the burden on instructors while providing learners with clarity and consistency (Burden, 2020; Maag, 2004).

Our study findings identified how negotiating boundaries is related to the overfamiliarity and role misperceptions between instructors and students. In the absence of clear guidelines, interviewees shared how they may adopt more flexible approaches that inadvertently lead to overinvolvement. At times, instructors might embrace a saviour mentality. Although speaking of trauma-informed education for children, Venet (2023) puts it well: "educators should not try to heal, fix, or save but to be connection makers and just one of many caring [people] in a [learner's] life" (p. 82). Instead, a coordinated effort to promote a trauma-informed system that acknowledges the realities of working with learners who have experienced trauma can mitigate a burden on the instructor. It is necessary to identify and fill gaps with appropriate resources rather than leaving it to instructors to attempt to coordinate. When instructors can focus on their students' language-learning needs, while ensuring other needs are consistently responded to by those with training and expertise, language instructors and learners can experience better mental health.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

Goal:

- Purpose: to gain a better understanding of instructor experiences related to VT so that we may develop resources
- Time: 1–1.5 hours

Preamble: Confirm completed consent form (MS Forms) and double check that we can audio record. Respond to any participant questions and confirm understanding.

Throughout the Interview: Be sure to clarify if the interviewee is speaking about situations specific to covid or more typical experiences.

Curious question: How did you hear about this research?

<u>Interview Questions</u> (adapted from Hernandez-Wolfe, et al, 2015)

Background & Demographic information (Note: This information will not be connected to participant's identity)

1. Where do you work, and what is your job?
2. How long have you worked at your current job?
3. How many years have you worked with newcomers? Students that (may) have experienced trauma?
4. Can you give me an estimate as to how many newcomers you have worked with?

5. Have you or do you now work with survivors of trauma? If so, briefly describe.

6. (How do you identify people who have trauma) – what, if anything, do you notice? What's the process – can you walk me through an example of when you identified a student as a person with trauma.

Training/background

7. Have you taken coursework, advanced training, and/or continuing education on trauma? (Fish for Covid related sources, or violence training, etc. How did you find out about it/what brought you to it?)

8. Have you done any informal training or your own research on trauma? Or violence? What lessons did you learn? How did you find out about it/what brought you to it?

VT experiences

9. Can you think of any ways that you have been impacted by your learners' trauma? What was that like/can you give me an example of this/different things you do because of …

10. (Follow up to 9) Sometimes we identify the impact as vicarious trauma. Have you experienced symptoms of VT in relation to your work with newcomers?

11. Has VT (may need to describe it within context of the effects of working with traumatized students) been a constant in your work, or does it affect you in patterns - for example, when you first began working with refugees/asylum seekers or at certain times of the semester? Has it changed over time? Has Covid impacted this? Is there a change since the pandemic? *Class participation levels? Problems less visible? Teams making the split more difficult? Teams creating difficulties?*

Growth response from VT

12. Among the learners you have worked with, have you seen a learner who impacted you because of his/her capacity to overcome adversity? If so, what challenges did you witness this person overcome?

13. Thinking about yourself, do you have any thoughts about how your perception of yourself may have been changed as a result of exposure to your learners' resilience? *If so, in what ways – can you walk me through an example?*

14. Some people who work with traumatized populations say that their learners' resilience has altered their general outlook on the world, on human nature, and on their own lives. How about you? Flesh out concrete examples. Has it impacted your personal response to Covid?

Example to flesh out 14 (Some people who work with traumatized populations say that their spirituality or spiritual views have changed as a consequence of their clients' resilience. How about you?)
**other example – heightened sense of empathy from an injury

Professional (growth) responses

15. Has your role as an instructor may have been impacted by your learners' resilience? Has this affected how your work with trauma survivors? If so, how? Are there differences pre/post Covid? *May need to flesh out what learner resilience is.*

Extra: Do you have any specific examples of how a learners' resilience impacted how you approach trauma/patterns of oppression/(in)justice/interpreted experiences. Can you walk me through an example of this?

Fish around privilege & day to day. *May need an example to jog memory and flesh out.*

16. Do you have any 'self-care' practices? What are they? (Any related to VT?) How did these come about?

[Is *the way you take care of yourself][Are the ways you cope with work][Do you find time to take care of yourself]* affected by exposure to your learners' resilience? If so, how? Are you able to do this in the current working environment – are there differences pre/post Covid?

Coping, managing, living day to day

17. Do you have any clues of when things aren't going well for you – the body, habits, sleep, etc. How does this show up in your life?

18. Do you have supports in place to help you cope with the impact of working with newcomers? Describe. Fish around professional and personal supports.

Are you aware of institutions' professional supports?

19. What supports do you think would help you better cope with the impact of working with those who have experienced trauma?

(Fish around ideal personal and professional supports that could help you/people cope)

Wrap up

Do you feel like you have been able to give me an accurate picture of _____?

Is there anything we missed today?