

## **Transformative L2 Teacher Education Innovations: Insights from Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory**

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This edited collection emerges from a foundational premise that teaching should drive intentional transformation, echoing Lev Vygotsky's (1978) vision of education shaping who learners can become. As emphasized in Russell Cross's thoughtful foreword, language teachers' actions cannot be reduced to transmitting content or competencies; rather, teacher education must invite the co-construction of knowledge, emotion, and professional responsibility. Drawing on Vygotskian sociocultural perspective (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), the volume shows how mindful mediation and dialogic reflection propel educators beyond surface-level approaches and toward deeper conceptual reasoning (Johnson, 1999) and strategic practices. It advances earlier breakthroughs in L2 teacher education—for instance, situating teacher knowledge in real-world contexts (Freeman & Johnson, 1998) and reframing teachers as active agents in their own growth. By grounding teacher learning in authentic teaching contexts and cultural nuances, the editors underscore that no single formula applies; rather, each setting's unique mediation strategies hold the key. Collaborative inquiry and reflective data illuminate tensions and triumphs in reimagining teaching identities. As a result, this text stands as both a rigorous academic reference and a guide to practical innovation, illustrating how instructors' consciousness and teaching activities can be artfully orchestrated for maximum potential. Indeed, the authors' shared focus on connecting knowledge, identity, and social context offers a forward-thinking approach, equipping teacher educators to navigate the evolving complexities of modern language classrooms worldwide. In doing so, it fosters robust connections among researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers. This publication thus contributes to the L2 teacher education sphere.

A central theme across the chapters is how teachers can be supported in exercising professional agency by reshaping classroom norms to foster more equitable learning conditions. In Chapter 1, the volume editors lay the theoretical foundation by arguing that mediational spaces (Johnson & Golombek, 2016) can prompt novice and in-service teachers to challenge everyday assumptions and envision alternative realities. Nicolas Doyle (Chapter 9) shows how volunteer tutors in an under-resourced adult ESL program reclaimed their roles by viewing "language as social practice," shifting from standard packets to context-sensitive instruction. Similarly, Dorothy Worden-Chambers and Bedrettin Yazan (Chapter 5) highlight how teacher candidates' language ideologies can evolve from rigid correctness-based stances to agentive views of grammar, recognizing grammar as meaningful and discourse-dependent. Meanwhile, Meredith Doran and Jacob Rieker (Chapter 11) demonstrate that English Medium Instruction (EMI) faculty—often resistant to adopting "language-teaching" methods—can find novel ways to use English for student engagement and disciplinary thinking, freeing themselves from prescriptive models and reclaiming how content is taught. Although many chapters celebrate teacher choice, some authors address institutional constraints that inevitably shape agency. Nonetheless, these studies collectively propose that reflective tasks, coaching sessions, or collaborative research can enable teachers to re-envision their practice, redefine their roles, and implement changes that respond to local contexts. These interventions underscore teachers' capacity for transformation.

A second strand of thought is consistent advocacy for dialogic mediation as a prime driver of teacher development. Paula Golombek (Chapter 3) describes "tiny talks" that serve as immediate post-lesson debriefings, allowing co-teachers to articulate emotional and conceptual dilemmas in real time and exchange supportive solutions. Malba Barahona and colleagues (Chapter 10) document a shift from evaluative, top-down post-observation feedback to more dialogic, question-oriented sessions that invite

pre-service teachers to outline the rationale behind their classroom decisions. This approach expands teacher autonomy, enabling the co-construction and testing of alternative strategies. The interplay of cognition and emotion also emerges in Chapter 4, where Reiker discusses how novices' sense of "something missing" in their past practice is transformed into a newly solidified teaching stance via concept-based mediation. In a similar vein, Michael Amory (Chapter 7) shows how microteaching simulations, reflective journals, and guided peer discussions coalesce into a systematic chain of mediational events that spur deeper pedagogical reasoning over time. Although such findings are not without caveats (e.g., teacher educators must devote time, skilled facilitation, and institutional support to nurturing these dialogues), these chapters collectively affirm that dialogic feedback shapes cognitive and affective breakthroughs, helping novices adopt engaged inquiry as a tool rather than merely complying with prescribed methods.

A final common focus across the chapters is concept-based pedagogical innovation that transcends mechanical techniques. Drawing on principles of concept-based instruction (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014), Alba García Alonso and Elliott Casal (Chapter 2) show how concept-based language instruction (C-BLI) fosters mastery of linguistic concepts—e.g., conditionals—so that novice teachers can adapt in the moment rather than rely on prescriptive rules. Rieker (Chapter 4) exemplifies such learning with the Schema for a Complete Orienting Basis of Action (SCOBAs), operationalizing eight pedagogical principles. Once internalized, these principles enable educators to orchestrate dialogic mediation in real time, shifting from routine instruction to adaptive, student-centred practices. Meanwhile, Annela Teemant and co-authors (Chapter 8) highlight how critical sociocultural coaching can scaffold mathematics teachers' adoption of enduring principles of learning (EPL), using contextualized data and dialogue to improve outcomes for language-minoritized learners. By grounding teacher education in coherent frames such as "language as social practice" or "English as a Medium for Engagement/Learning," the volume shows teacher learning beyond superficial strategies. Instead, novices learn to interpret and redesign instruction aligned with equity, interaction, and deeper learning. Concept-based pedagogy demands robust, context-responsive scaffolding. Whether adjusting grammar lessons in Brazilian EFL (Agnolotto & Dellagnelo, Chapter 6) or supporting a Taiwanese professor in electron microscopy (Doran & Rieker, Chapter 11), sustained coaching translates theory into meaningful innovations. It illustrates how theory-driven frameworks support sustainable professional growth. By making conceptual tools explicit and encouraging novices to reimagine classroom possibilities, this collection points to a path for teacher educators seeking to balance theory with implementable practices.

While this volume's eleven chapters offer valuable perspectives, certain enhancements could enrich its overall contribution to L2 teacher educators. For instance, Chapter 2 might broaden its discussion of socio-political forces on teacher identity, potentially adding clearer examples that illustrate how institutional policies shape professional agency. Chapter 5 could further detail reflective practice by including explicit case studies that anchor theoretical discussions across diverse contexts. Meanwhile, Chapter 7 might strengthen its argument on bridging theory and classroom realities with deeper data triangulation, thereby ensuring stronger credibility for novice educators. Chapter 9 could engage more directly with systemic cultural constraints alongside language-based considerations, fostering more holistic transformations. Finally, on a macro level, this volume could benefit from a more cohesive cross-chapter synergy, enabling readers to see how insights interrelate and transfer across different instructional settings. Expanding these dimensions could help actualize the text's promise of robust pedagogical inquiry, sustained teacher growth, and cross-institutional relevance worldwide.

Despite the areas noted for improvement, this volume offers substantial value and creativity to the realm of L2 teacher education. The chapters collectively illuminate a rich spectrum of evidence-based strategies drawn from diverse educational contexts, encouraging adaptation to local practice. By examining a variety of methodologies and reflective approaches, the text actively demonstrates how theory and classroom implementation can be woven together for more meaningful teacher-learning experiences. The contributors effectively highlight sociocultural perspectives often overlooked in conventional training

programs, inspiring educators to reconsider how local realities inform pedagogical decision-making. Moreover, the emphasis on dialogic feedback, collaborative interactions, and differentiated instruction stands out as particularly inventive, providing nuanced ways to support both novice and experienced teachers. Overall, this volume is poised to benefit teacher educators, graduate students, and in-/pre-service language teachers seeking to expand instructional repertoires and enhance reflective practices across contexts.

### *The Reviewer*

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