

REVIEW

Sarah Mercer and Achilleas Kostoulas (eds): *LANGUAGE TEACHER PSYCHOLOGY*. Multilingual Matters, 2018.

Language Teacher Psychology (LTP) focuses on topics of psychological individual differences of language teachers, such as cognition, identity, and resilience. Research concerning *LTP* is scarce, though it is significant in its own right since ‘teacher psychology is equally if not more important than learner psychology’ (Mercer *et al.* 2016: 215). To address the research gap, Mercer and Kostoulas edited the volume under review, attracting considerable attention to the area.

The editors organize the main chapters in the order of more researched topics (e.g. teacher identity) to less examined ones (e.g. teaching well-being). However, I would review the book in light of the main themes of book, that is, from language teacher identity and language teacher cognition (LTC) to factors regarding positive psychology in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Oxford 2016).

Chapters 5–7 investigate topics concerning language teacher identity and LTC. Chapter 5 considers teacher identity as a cultural and social participation process and explains the process with the theory of cultural models and figured worlds, both of which highlight cultural and social milieus in interpreting the construction of identities. Chapter 6 focuses on the formation and changes of teacher identity based on the framework of community of practice and the concept of cultural myths. Both chapters emphasize that teacher identity is constructed within interpersonal and institutional contexts (Duff and Uchida 1997). Chapter 7 reviews relevant studies in response to Borg’s (2006) call for more attention to LTC. More importantly, the chapter recaps the significance of research on LTC with longitudinal and contextualized approaches.

The remaining chapters of the book explore topics concerning positive psychology, that is, teacher motivation (Chapter 2), self-factors (Chapters 3, 4, and 8), emotion (Chapters 9–11 and 18), agency (Chapter 12), and teacher well-being (Chapters 13–17).

First, teacher motivation is a topic that has been substantially investigated in the field of teacher education. However, there still exists much to explore from the perspective of *LTP*. Chapter 2, based on a systematic review of research in the area of teacher education, argues for the use of motivation theories in other fields (e.g. self-determination theory and goal-achievement theory) to study language teacher motivation and its relation with other factors such as student motivation.

Secondly, self-factors such as self-system and self-efficacy are the themes in Chapters 3, 4, and 8. For example, Chapter 3 examines the process of formation and changes of teachers’ future selves, whereas Chapter 4 unveils the

trajectories of transition from teachers' ideal selves to feasible selves. In addition, Chapter 8 surveys self-efficacy beliefs of language teacher, and treats self-efficacy belief as a dynamic, task-related, and subject-matter-relevant construct. These chapters are all inspired by the concepts (e.g. ideal self) and theories outside the area of language teacher education.

Thirdly, emotion as a research topic is gaining much more attention in SLA than in *LTP*, which may explain why the book spends much space (Chapters 9–11 and 18) on the topic. Chapter 9 explores L2 teacher emotional labour in class and emphasizes the connection between teacher emotions and relevant factors such as students, cultural rules, and society. Chapter 10 examines interactions between learners and teachers with high-level social and emotional intelligence, as well as the impact of the interactions on teachers' beliefs and professional practices. Chapter 11 investigates the effect of factors such as teachers' emotional intelligence on their attitudes to the students, whereas Chapter 18 focuses on tertiary-level teachers' emotion control and pertinent factors. The foregoing four chapters extend the research scope of language teacher emotion with new concepts (e.g. emotional intelligence) in the area.

Fourthly, agency is discussed in Chapter 12, which suggests, in response to the 'ecological turn' (Larsen-Freeman 2018), researching language teacher agency from an ecological perspective.

Lastly, teacher well-being is 'crucial in rewarding but very demanding profession' (p. 178). Although the term is not observed in the titles of Chapters 13–17, these chapters are all connected to the issues of language teacher well-beings. For example, Chapter 13 examines how teachers construct their meanings of being teachers and achieve psychological well-being. Chapter 16 also focuses on well-being achievement but from the perspective of novice teachers' receiving scaffolding from their mentors with signature strengths. Signature strength (also named character strength), an important factor closely pertinent to teacher well-being (Oxford 2016), is unfortunately insufficiently researched. The chapter may serve as a starting point for future work on the topic. In addition, two chapters are devoted to the topic of resilience. Chapter 14 reviews theories and studies pertaining to resilience and argues for more attention to the research of language teacher immunity. Chapter 15 investigates resilience with a case study of teacher resilience from language teacher to language teacher educator. Chapter 17 examines how three distinguished scholars in applied linguistics experience well-beings when they actively participate in teaching or research. Issues that may be of interest to positive psychology research are explored in the study, such as emotion regulation, future time perspective, and the relationship between self-esteem and achievements. More importantly, the chapter extends the participants of *LTP* research from pre-service and in-service teachers to the retired ones, which seems significant for future research in *LTP*.

To summarize, the volume successfully promotes *LTP* as an important research area in that it introduces theories closely related to *LTP* research, suggests possible topics for future *LTP* studies, and exemplifies research methods

in the area. It ascertains the interdisciplinary nature of *LTP* research in terms of theories and frameworks. One feature of its interdisciplinarity is that many works in the volume develop their theories or models from other disciplines. For example, Chapter 15 starts from the review of resilience in positive psychology, defines it as a complex emergent process, and ends with a model of the language teacher resilience system based on resilience theories from positive psychology. In addition, also thanks to the interdisciplinary nature, many topics are proposed for future research in the area, such as teacher cognition, identity, agency, and signature strength. It is noteworthy that many of the topics are underexplored in the area of *LTP*, such as resilience and signature strength, though some of them (e.g. teacher cognition) have been substantially explored in language teacher education. These topics hopefully will attract more attention from researchers in applied linguistics and teacher education, and may elicit more in-depth research in the future.

The book may also serve as an invaluable reference in terms of research methods in *LTP*. A closer look at the research methods used in the studies of the volume may reveal that most of them (nine to be specific) use qualitative ones. This may give an impression that qualitative methods are preferred in *LTP*. In response to the issue, I would refer readers to Dörnyei's (2007: 308–9) discussion concerning the choice of appropriate methodology. On the one hand, Dörnyei recommends qualitative approaches for exploratory purposes in under-researched areas. On the other hand, it is also appropriate to take into account existent research traditions. His foregoing considerations are evident in the volume. For example, researchers in Chapter 17 employ the narrative approach to investigate the psychology of retired language teacher educators, an under-researched topic. In contrast, Chapter 11 explores the relationship between language teachers' emotion and attitudes with quantitative methods widely used in positive psychology. As such, the book provides opportunities for researchers to reference a variety of methods for their future research in *LTP*.

To conclude, I believe that this volume may generate more interest in researching *LTP* as well as in applied linguistics. It indeed shows us the vibrancy of *LTP* 'which is hugely relevant to our overall understanding of language education' (p. xx) and informs us of the scope as to what we could explore in future.

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