

International Journal of TESOL Studies (IJTS) Special Issue

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Call for Papers

TESOL Teachers' Manifestations of Agency in a Time of Flux and Transformation

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Introduction and Rationale

TESOL teachers represent a diverse population, coming from varied backgrounds with different types and levels of expertise. In the field of TESOL, they have undoubtedly played a pivotal role in shaping language learning and teaching. In recent years, however, the field of TESOL has encountered unprecedented challenges and opportunities, spurred by technological advancements, shifts in educational policies, and the global redistribution of English language learners due to migration, globalization, and the rapid dissemination of information. These factors have significantly impacted the field, necessitating a special issue that delves deeply into the responses of TESOL teachers. This special issue is aptly titled “TESOL Teachers’ Manifestations of Agency in a Time of Flux and Transformation.”

Vähäsantanen et al. (2009) define agency in education as “the capability of persons to make intentional choices, and to act on these choices in ways that make a difference in their lives” (p. 396). Teacher agency refers to the capacity of teachers to make choices and implement actions to bring about change (e.g., Eteläpelto et al., 2013). The need to examine teacher agency is increasingly recognized due to the growing awareness of its importance to all aspects of the teaching profession, particularly its impact on curriculum reform, the teaching process, and professional development (Ahmad & Shah, 2022; Weng et al., 2019). Chisholm et al. (2019) affirm that “agency is [...] important because it [...] sheds] light on how teachers [...] potentially change the constraining conditions of their work that are created, to a large extent, by [...] policies” (p. 5). Moreover, Vähäsantanen (2015) highlights the necessity to investigating various forms of professional agency to understand how professional identities are negotiated” (p. 3) and allow teachers to “create different conditions for [their] productive work” (Vähäsantanen et al., 2009, p. 403).

In language education, different manifestations of teacher agency have been explored. For example, Cong-Lem (2021) categorized approaches of teacher agency into four types: adoption,

adaptation, transformation, and resistance. He also reviewed four paired mechanisms of teacher agency, including active/ passive agency, latent/manifested agency, and proactive/reactive agency. Bao et al. (2020) identified five orientations of teacher agency: resistance, appropriation, implementation, approval, and ambivalence. It is also important to note that agency can be either an individual endeavor or a collective effort initiated within a community (Eteläpelto et al., 2013), referred to as individual effort in exercising agency—has been more widely explored than relational agency (e.g., Huang, 2021; Miller & Gkonou, 2018). However, the understanding of other forms of agency, such as critical and uncritical agency (e.g., Lai et al., 2016), self-initiated agency and opportunistic agency (e.g., Loo et al., 2017), and positive and negative agency (e.g., Teng, 2019), remains rather limited. Teacher agency can encompass multiple forms of agency; for instance, it can be individual, proactive, and critical. Despite the increase in research on manifestations of teacher agency (e.g., Weng, 2023, 2024), the discussion still remains nascent (Kim et al., 2022).

Given the changes and evolution in the field of TESOL, it is critical to explore the forms of agency that TESOL teachers embody to highlight the innovative strategies they employ to address the rapidly changing demands of language teaching and learning. This includes the actions they take in response to shifts in curriculum, technology integration, assessment methods, and classroom diversity, as well as the personal and professional growth that they experience as they exert agency in their roles. In navigating this time of flux and transformation, TESOL teachers are not only encountering challenges but also discovering opportunities to redefine their pedagogical practices, advocate for their learners, and contribute meaningfully to the development of their profession. Therefore, this special themed issue of *International Journal of TESOL Studies* will contribute to the ongoing conversation about the future of TESOL, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders, and serving as an inspiration for those within the TESOL community to embrace their agency and shape the continuum of change.

By focusing on TESOL teachers' agency, this special issue will provide conceptual insights and offer a collection of empirically driven articles that examine diverse forms of agency across various geographical settings—from traditional classrooms to online learning environments, from urban centers to rural areas, and from primary education to adult learning—using different research approaches (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, action research, and self-study).

Potential topics

Some potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- how TESOL teachers adopt, adapt to, transform, or resist changes in language policies and their impact on teaching practices
- how individual TESOL teachers may exhibit different forms of agency (active, latent, proactive, reactive) across various teaching settings
- the journey TESOL teachers take from initial resistance to eventual empowerment through the integration of technology in their teaching
- exploring collective or community-based initiatives in TESOL that highlight the power of relational agency for professional development and curriculum innovation

- how TESOL teachers demonstrate agency either in critically challenging or uncritically accepting educational norms and structures
- intersections between individual and collective agency, as well as the implications of critical approaches to teacher agency
- how TESOL teachers' expressions of agency can lead to both constructive and destructive outcomes in times of educational flux and transformation
- analysis of cases where TESOL teachers take initiative in their own professional development compared to those who seize unforeseen opportunities for growth
- how TESOL teachers react to and manage the shifting demographics of English language learners due to global migration patterns
- exploration of the ways in which TESOL teachers express agency through pedagogical innovation, particularly in online and hybrid learning environments
- how TESOL teachers express agency in cross-cultural settings to bridge communication gaps and overcome instructional barriers

Manuscript Submission Information

Both original research, including empirical data and systematic or scoping reviews, and new constructs in language teaching are welcome. Interested/invited authors are asked to submit (1) the manuscript title and an abstract of up to 300 words excluding references and (2) a short bio of authors (~150 words per author).

There is no strict word limit for articles; the lengths provided here are merely suggestions. Original research articles should be between 6,000 and 10,000 words, including references but excluding any materials in the annexes. Articles focusing on key constructs in language teaching should range from 3,000 to 5,000 words. All manuscripts must be formatted in accordance with the journal's style guide. Contributors may also be invited to peer review papers for the special issue in the months following their submission.

Please email abstracts and papers according to the listed timeline to the lead editor, Zhenjie Weng (zw272@duke.edu). The tentative timeline is below:

- Abstracts due: April 30, 2025
- Invitations for full paper: May 15, 2025
- Full paper due: December 1, 2025
- Reviews sent to authors: January 1, 2026
- Final revisions due: April 1, 2026
- Publication of the issue: Summer 2026

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