

## Language Teachers Exercising Agency Amid Educational Constraints: An Overview of the Literature

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**Abstract :** Teacher agency plays a crucial role in effective teaching, supporting diverse students, and providing an enriching learning environment; therefore, it is significant to gain a deeper understanding of language teachers' sense of agency in teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. This paper presents an overview of qualitative research on how language teachers exercise their agency in diverse classrooms. The analysis of the literature reveals that language teachers strive for addressing students' needs and challenging educational inequalities, but experience educational constraints in enacting their agency. The examination of the research on language teacher agency identifies four major areas where language teachers experience challenges in enacting their agency: (1) implementing curriculum; (2) adopting school reforms and policies; (3) engaging in professional learning; (4) and negotiating various identities as professionals. The practical contribution of this literature review is that it provides a much-needed compilation of the studies on how language teachers exercise agency amid educational constraints. The discussion of the overview points to the importance of teacher identity, learner advocacy, and continuous professional learning and the critical need of promoting empowerment, activism, and transformation in language teacher education. The findings of the overview indicate that language teacher education programs should prepare teachers to be active advocates for English language learners and guide teachers to become more conscious of complexities of teaching in constrained educational settings so that they can become agentic professionals. This literature overview illustrates agency work in English language teaching contexts and contributes to understanding of the important link between experiencing educational constraints and development of teacher agency.

**Keywords :** advocacy, educational constraints, language teacher agency, language teacher education

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