

## UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY, EFFICACY, AND ATTRITION: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE

PHILIPPA PARKS, McGill University

**ABSTRACT.** In the past decade, rising teacher attrition rates have garnered worldwide attention. Research into the phenomenon tells us that the problem is most acute for novice teachers—those with less than five years’ experience—and for teachers in certain subjects, including second language teachers. What is it about second language teachers that makes them particularly prone to leaving the profession? Much research to date has focused on what we can do to prevent teachers from leaving *once they are in the field*. There is, however, a dearth of research into what we can do to address the problem *before it starts*; in teacher education. This critical literature review looks at what links second language education research has made between second language (L2) teacher attrition and L2 teacher self-efficacy, and between L2 teacher self-efficacy and L2 teacher identity, synthesizing these ideas to discover how they might inform second language teacher education.

**RÉSUMÉ.** Au cours de la dernière décennie, la hausse du taux d'attrition chez les enseignants a attiré l'attention à travers le monde. La recherche sur le phénomène nous indique que le problème est plus grave pour les enseignants novices—ceux qui ont moins de cinq ans d'expérience—et pour les enseignants de certaines matières, y compris les enseignants de langue seconde. Pourquoi les enseignants de langue seconde sont-ils plus particulièrement enclins à quitter la profession? Beaucoup de recherches à ce jour se sont concentrées sur ce qui peut être fait pour empêcher les enseignants à quitter l'enseignement une fois qu'ils sont dans le domaine. Par ailleurs, il existe une pénurie de recherche sur ce que nous pouvons faire pour éviter le problème avant qu'il ne se présente, soit au moment de la formation des enseignants. Cette revue critique de la littérature examine les liens établis par la recherche sur l'enseignement de la langue seconde entre l'attrition, l'auto-efficacité (“self-efficacy”) et l'identité des enseignants de langue seconde (L2), en synthétisant ces idées pour découvrir comment elles pourraient nous informer dans la formation des enseignants de langue seconde.

**Keywords:** *Second language, teacher identity, teacher education, teacher attrition, teacher efficacy.*

### INTRODUCTION

The past decade has seen an increased interest in the crisis of teacher drop-outs; both in the media and in the field of Educational Research (e.g., Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, 2003; Karsenti et al., 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). The problem is most acute for novice teachers—those with fewer than five years’ experience—and for teachers in certain subjects, including second language teachers, where the attrition rates are significant (Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Karsenti et al., 2013; Kutsyuruba et al., 2014). What is it about second language teachers that makes them particularly prone to leaving the profession? Second



language (L2) education research has made links between L2 teacher attrition and L2 teacher self-efficacy (Swanson, 2012) and between L2 teacher self-efficacy and L2 teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Velez-Rendon, 2002; Wilbur, 2007). This literature review aims to synthesize these ideas to discover how they inform Teacher Education, answering the following questions: What does the literature tell us about the possible causes of second language teacher attrition? What are the possible links between second language teacher attrition, efficacy and identity?

### SELECTING THE RELATED STUDIES FOR CRITICAL REVIEW

This review's scope, while not exhaustive, attempts to answer the question: Why are novice second language teachers particularly prone to leaving the profession? Initial results using the terms "Second Language Teachers" and "Attrition" in academic search engines (e.g., Google Scholar, JSTOR, ERIC...) yielded several articles that identified "efficacy" as a key concept linked to attrition. "Teacher Efficacy" therefore became a new key term in my second round of research, with articles selected that focused primarily on second language teacher efficacy. Several of these articles identified "classroom management," "pedagogical content knowledge," and "linguistic proficiency" as key sub-concepts in second language teacher efficacy (e.g., Swanson, 2010; 2012, Wilbur, 2007). The third round of research focused on each of the sub-themes individually and selected articles that contained the key sub-term, for example "linguistic proficiency," and another of the main search terms, for example "second language teacher efficacy." "Teacher Identity" is another important concept that emerged. Several articles, such as Steinbach and Kazarloga's (2014) research into how linguistic proficiency is an integral part of second language teacher identity, revealed a wealth of connections between second language teacher identity and second language teacher efficacy. In the final round of research terms matching "second language teacher identity" and those including or adjacent in meaning to "classroom management," "pedagogical content knowledge," and/or "linguistic proficiency" were included.



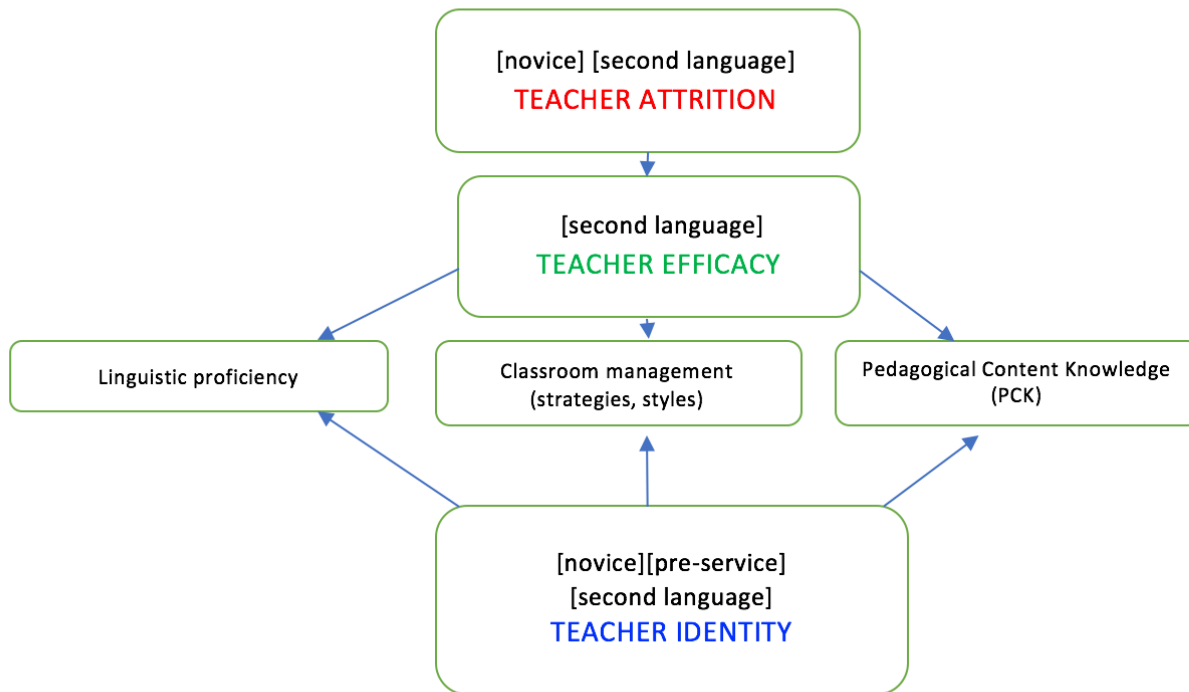


Figure 1: Second Language Teacher Attrition Research terms  
Source(s): Parks, 2017.

In total, 12 articles were retained with strong connections to the three main search terms linked by one or more of the sub-terms as described in Figure 1. These are summarized in Table 1.

Source	Focus & Context	Research Methods	Key themes & sub-themes
Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy (1998)	Understanding the construct of Teacher efficacy and how to measure it.	Comparing correlates collected from different tools measuring efficacy (e.g. Rand, Gibson & Dembo, Webb Efficacy scale).	Teacher Efficacy (TE).
Velez-Rendon (2002)	Overview of SLTE research findings.	Critical literature review.	Second Language Teacher (SLT) Education; Language proficiency; Pedagogical content knowledge.
Sfard & Prusak (2005)	Second language teacher identity formation – identity as narrative; 17-year-old newly arrived immigrant students from the former Soviet Union in Israel.	Narrative Inquiry.	Teacher identity, narrative, identity as story.



Vargese, Morgan, Johnson & Johnson (2005)	Understanding language teacher identity; creating a dialogue across paradigms.	Juxtaposition of three studies of identity with diverse paradigms (social identity theory, theory of situated learning, identity as image-text).	SLT Identity; NES (Native English Speaker) vs. NNES (Non-Native English speaker) identities; Linguistic competence.
Wilbur (2007)	Examining the methodological training of SLT in 32 Teacher Education institutions in the United States.	Document analysis of course syllabi; Cross-referenced with questionnaire about methodology instructors' beliefs.	SLT education, best practices; Linguistic proficiency (L2 Teacher Fluency); SL Teacher Identity; Pedagogical Content Knowledge.
Beauchamp & Thomas (2009)	Overview of SL teacher identity research findings.	Critical literature review.	SLT identity formation; Emotion and identity; Narrative and discourse aspects of identity; Addressing identity in Teacher education.
Swanson (2010)	Link between perceived efficacy and attrition; Foreign language (Spanish) teachers Georgia, United States.	Survey of teachers using FL Teacher Efficacy Scale & Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale.	SLT efficacy; SLT attrition; Linguistic proficiency; Pedagogical content knowledge; Teaching to beginners (teaching strategies).
Thomas and Beauchamp (2011)	SLT professional identity development; Undergraduates in the SLT education programs – two Quebec Universities.	Qualitative study: semi-structured interviews – asking participants to describe identity through metaphor.	SLT Professional identity; SLT education; Metaphors; New teachers.
Swanson (2012)	Link between perceived efficacy and attrition SLT teachers United States & Canada.	Survey of teachers using FL Teacher Efficacy Scale & Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale.	SLT efficacy; SLT attrition; Content knowledge (PCK); Facilitation of instruction; Cultural instruction; Classroom management.
Karsenti, Collin, Dumouchel (2013)	Teacher attrition causes.	<b>Literature review of 69 scientific papers.</b>	Novice teacher attrition; Teaching tasks (lack of time, preparation); Teacher psychological characteristics; Social environment (administration); Classroom management problems.



Steinbach & Kazarloga (2014)	Pre-service SLT attitudes toward native speaker proficiency; Linguistic and cultural identities as future ESL teachers; Fifty-four future pre-service teachers in Quebec.	Online survey.	SLT education; SLT professional identity; Linguistic identity; Cultural identity.
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Table 1: Articles selected for review

This critical review aims to look at each of the key concepts of second language teacher attrition, efficacy, and identity, and how they are linked by the sub-concepts “classroom management,” “pedagogical content knowledge,” and/or “linguistic proficiency.” It attempts to synthesize these concepts in order to draw insights for second language teacher education. The review will start by looking at the three main concepts, “Teacher Attrition,” “Teacher Efficacy,” and “Teacher Identity,” drawing connections between the three and will then delve more closely into how they are integrally linked through the sub-concepts of linguistic proficiency, classroom management, and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK).

## TEACHER ATTRITION

Teacher attrition, that is, teachers leaving the profession prematurely before retirement, became the subject of much research focus in the early 2000s. Ingersoll (2003) describes the problem as a “revolving door—where large numbers of qualified teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement” (p. 3). As Ingersoll and others (e.g., Borman & Dowling, 2008) discovered, the problem was particularly acute for novice teachers; that is, those with less than five years’ experience. Getting an exact understanding of the numbers of teachers leaving the profession, and how much it was costing society however, is problematic. As Karsenti, Collin and Dumouchel (2013) noted, some estimations gave a 46% attrition rate for novice teachers in the United States in the early 2000s, while others gave a range of 30%-50% for the same group in the same period. In Canada, similar estimates range from 30% for novice teachers nation-wide but varied widely province to province; for example, 15% in Quebec and 6-7% in Ontario (p. 554).

What is generally agreed upon was that the rate is much higher for novice teachers than for those with more than five years’ experience, and that teacher attrition has an extremely high cost, both in fiscal terms and in the human terms. Teacher turnover is clearly linked to a decrease in quality of teaching, social stability, and student achievement (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Interestingly, teachers of certain subjects, including teachers of second languages, have higher rates of attrition than teachers of other subject matters (Ashiedu & Scott, 2012; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Kutsyuruba, Godden & Tregunna; 2013). What is it about language teachers that makes them more prone to leaving the profession prematurely? The answer to this question is complex and seems to lie, not solely on working conditions, or in the phenomenon of teacher burn-out, but also in the way language teachers see themselves and their abilities in the classroom. In fact, as this review will show, research has demonstrated a strong link between a



language teacher's sense of self-efficacy, and their intentions to remain in the field or leave the profession.

## TEACHER EFFICACY

While much research into teacher attrition looks at personal and professional factors as well as working conditions as possible indicators for attrition (e.g., Borman & Dowling, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), educational theorists, such as Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) arrived at the problem of attrition from a different starting point: efficacy theory. Advanced by Bandura in the 1970s, efficacy theory is a concept that describes a person's belief in their abilities to do something well. For example, teacher-efficacy, has been defined as a teacher's "belief in their ability to have a positive effect on student learning" (Ashton, 1985, p. 142). It is important to note that self-efficacy distinguishes itself from other concepts of self, such as self-esteem, because it is specific to a particular task (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) and because it has no basis in actual measurable ability, but is rather a reflection of a person's belief in their abilities. Self-efficacy is of great interest to those studying attrition because it offers a tantalizing explanation for why some teachers are more resilient than others. As Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, and Hoy further explain:

One of the things that makes teacher efficacy so powerful is its cyclical nature. . . . Greater efficacy *leads to greater effort and persistence*, which leads to better performance, which in turn leads to greater efficacy. The reverse is also true. Lower efficacy leads to *less effort and giving up easily*, which leads to poor teaching outcomes, which then produce decreased efficacy. (pp. 233-234, italics added)

Teacher efficacy is a construct that shifts, that grows in response to success, or what Bandura (1997) calls mastery experiences. It diminishes when it encounters failure. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy (1998)'s explanation of the cyclical nature of teacher efficacy also points to an innateness of efficacy that has little to do with *actual ability* and more to do with *self-perception*. Here is where the concepts of teacher identity and teacher self-efficacy begin to merge.

## TEACHER IDENTITY

The definition of identity, initially accepted by structuralists to be essential and fixed, is now more generally understood by poststructuralists to be a fluid (rather than fixed) construct that is constantly created and re-created depending on context (Sachs, 2005; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Vargese, Morgan, Johnson & Johnson, 2005). People act as a "kind of person" during given times and places (Gee, 2000, p. 99). Identity also depends on being recognized as being a "kind of person" with certain abilities (Gee, 2000). In other words, identity depends less on a person's actual ability than on their own, and others', perceptions of that ability. A teacher's professional identity is understood in much the same way as other identities; teachers perform their teacher identity in the classroom context in response to societal expectations of teacher appearance, abilities, and skills (Sachs 2005). This professional teacher identity can be entirely separate from



the identity a teacher may perform as a colleague, parent, spouse or friend in different contexts (Pennington & Richards, 2016) and is created by teachers from “their own experiences as a student and as a teacher, their personal and professional histories inside and outside of schools, as well as the images of teachers presented in the popular media, films, fiction and so on” (p. 8).

Teacher identity and teacher self-efficacy have several things in common: first, they are both contextually specific; that is, they are performed or perceived according to the time, place and demands of a situation (Gee, 2000). Second, teacher efficacy like, identity, has less to do with *actual* ability, and more with how the teacher views his or her own abilities (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy, 1998). As Bandura (1997) explained, teachers “may question their self-worth, despite being very competent, if important others do not value their accomplishments” (p. 6). Identity statements in general can be recognized syntactically as containing verbs such as “be”, “have” or “can” which, as Sfard and Prusak (2005) pointed out, have a reifying effect. For example, “I *am* an English Teacher” is an identity statement.

Where teacher efficacy and teacher identity begin to overlap is in the nuances in statements such as, “I am a *good* English teacher” and even, “I am a *good* English teacher *because* I am *passionate about poetry*” or “I am a *good* English teacher because I am *passionate about poetry* and *have the ability to handle disruptive students easily.*” These statements both reify identity beliefs and contain an implicit understanding of identity based on the teacher’s *sense of their ability*. A teacher’s sense of self-efficacy in this sense can be understood as an integral part of their teacher identity.

## SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY, EFFICACY, AND ATTRITION

Building upon work done by theorists like Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy and Hoy (1998), researchers have used teacher efficacy as a theoretical lens with which to examine second language teachers’ attrition rates (e.g., Atay, 2007; Swanson, 2010; 2012). Works by Swanson (2010; 2012) found clear, statistically significant links between second language teacher efficacy scores and attrition rates. The literature reveals, however, that language teachers’ sense of efficacy, like their identities, is not a singular construct (“I am a good English teacher”) but is both multi-faceted and contextually specific. Three important dimensions of self-efficacy in teacher identity correlate with a language teacher's decision to remain within the profession, or to leave it. The first is a language teacher’s efficacy beliefs in their language proficiency (Steinbach & Zazarloga, 2014; Velez-Rendon, 2002; Wilbur, 2007). The second is their sense of efficacy in content pedagogy - or the belief in their ability to teach the language (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Karsenti, Collin & Dumouchel, 2013; Swanson 2010, 2012; Velez-Rendon, 2002; Wilbur, 2007). Finally, attrition rates for language teachers seem to correlate strongly to their belief in their ability to manage a class (Karsenti, Collin & Dumouchel, 2013; Swanson, 2010, 2012).

These multiple facets of self-efficacy, while often overlapping, are distinct and can react differently so that a teacher can experience simultaneously different feelings of efficacy as a part of their teacher identity. For example, an ESL teacher may have a high sense of self-efficacy with





regards to her ability to use the English language (language proficiency), but may experience lower efficacy in regards to her ability to resolve conflict within her classroom (classroom management). This is why it can be helpful to consider dimensions of teacher self-efficacy as a part of teacher identity as a whole, functioning as interdependent aspects of teacher identity, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

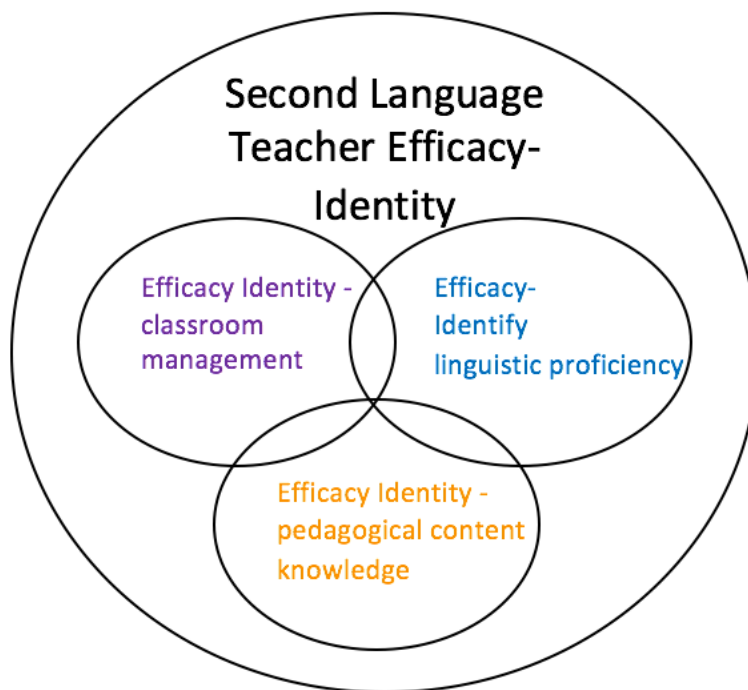


Figure 2: Second Language Teacher Efficacy-Identity  
Source(s): Parks, 2017.

The link between second language teacher attrition, identity and self-efficacy becomes clearer when we look at the complex act of teaching a language and break it down into these separate categories.

### Dimension 1: Linguistic Proficiency

There are some important nuances in a second language teacher's identity that differentiate language teachers from teachers of other subjects. One of these addresses what Vargese, Morgan, Johnson & Johnson (2005) identified as the *contradictory* identities that teachers hold. While negotiating the same tensions between personal and professional identities that other teachers experience (Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 9), second language teachers often have another layer of identity to contend with, namely their status as either a so-called native (NES) or non-native (NNES) English speaker. The phenomenon of NNES versus NES teacher identities has been studied with great interest in second language education research (e.g., Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014; Vargese et. al, 2005;), where nuances of status and hierarchy based on the





language teacher's native pronunciation influenced the teachers' emerging professional identities.

In Steinbach and Kazarloga's (2014) study, the implied elevated social and professional status of native English speaking teachers (NESTs) contributed to a disconnect between what students reported as their confidence in their linguistic ability and their dissatisfaction with their accent, "having a native-like pronunciation [sic] would improve my self-confidence [sic]" (Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014, p. 326). As we have already seen in this review, this idea of linguistic proficiency as a dimension of second language teacher identity is an important indicator of second language teacher attrition (Swanson, 2010, 2012).

The struggle that ESL teachers undergo in their quest to speak like a 'native' is also apparent in the work done by K. E. Johnson (1992) as reported by Vargese et al. (2005). In this study, Marc, a NNEST, grappled with her multiple identities as a teacher-of-language and a learner-of-language learner. Her need to "be ahead of the students" (Vargese et al., 2005, p. 26) was a source of underlying tension which was only assuaged when she joined a professional group of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs).

Both studies reveal how the multifaceted and contradictory aspects of a language teacher's identity are connected to their identity as native or non-native speaker of English. The anxiety surrounding a language teacher's NEST or NNEST in this study speaks directly to the teacher's sense of efficacy in the dimension of language proficiency.

### *Linguistic proficiency and identity politics*

A language teacher's identity as a native or non-native speaker can be further complicated by their position within the culture and society in which they teach. Vargese et al. (2005) described this aspect of identity as "contextual and associated to specific social, cultural, and political pressures" (p. 23). The province of Quebec in Canada, where Steinbach and Kazarloga's (2014) research was done, is an excellent example of how the intersection between linguistic identity and identity politics interact to pressure ESL teachers to perform their identity differently. In Quebec, language has historically been linked to political power and social status. After the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, it became politically and socially important to assert one's identity as Francophone. The political discourse of these identity politics continues to resonate in Quebec society. It is not surprising, therefore, that the ESL student teachers in Steinbach and Kazarloga's (2014) research were "not prepared to sacrifice their identities in order to teach English because of their strong national identity in a political and linguistic context where their native language has more political and social status than English" (p. 331). The resulting conflict between ESL student teachers' *personal* identities as Francophones and their *professional* identities as English-speaking ESL teachers, resulted in their contradictory and conflicting descriptions of their identities. It also causes them to "describe their cultural identity differently, depending on where they are or with whom they are speaking" (Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014, p. 327). The tension created by maintaining *contradictory* identities might hold a key to the particular stress that



language teachers experience and warrants further investigation if we are to understand why language teachers, more than others are prone to leave teaching prematurely.

### Dimension 2: Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

Linguistic proficiency may be at the core of a language teacher's identity, but the efficacy of pedagogical strategies and approaches that second language teachers use can also influence attrition rates (Swanson, 2010; 2012). In order to feel efficacious, a language teacher needs to be able to do more than *use* the language effectively, he or she must have confidence in his or her pedagogical content knowledge, or "what teachers know about teaching their particular subject matter... to make the subject matter comprehensible to students" (Velez-Rendon, 2002, p. 462). In other words, a language teacher must not only be able to use the language effectively, he or she must know what strategies to use in order to teach the language most effectively to students (Wilbur, 2007).

Swanson's (2010) research into second language teacher attrition reveals links between a second language teacher's sense of efficacy in the dimension of "pedagogical content knowledge" and the likelihood that he or she will remain or leave the profession. In his 2010 study, Swanson found a statistically significant correlation between a teacher's sense of efficacy in helping students learn at the beginning stages of language learning—their belief in their ability to teach language acquisition—and the likelihood that they would stay (retention) or leave the teaching field.

Wilbur's (2007) research into second language teacher education provides us with possible reasons for why linguistic proficiency, self-efficacy and teaching strategies might be connected. Although communicative methodologies of language instruction have long been considered more effective than rote-learning of grammar by second language educational researchers, many language teachers continue to use rote-learning as their primary educational approach. This may be because the communicative approach requires the teacher to create lessons that are designed to maximize interactions with students in the target language. As Wilbur explains, "because of their *lack of proficiency*, novice teachers shun more communicative methodologies and rely instead on traditional, grammar-focused teaching" (2007, p. 83, italics added). Here we see the same downward spiral in efficacy described earlier by Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998). It begins when a language teacher, lacking confidence in his or her ability to use the target language, avoids the communicative approach in favour of ones that, while less effective, require less linguistic proficiency from the teacher and in which the teacher feels a higher sense of efficacy. This pedagogical choice results in less successful results for the students and decreases the teacher's overall sense of efficacy as a language teacher. Again, the literature points to the downward spiral that occurs when second language teachers lack a sense of efficacy, not only in their linguistic proficiency, but also in their pedagogical subject matter knowledge.

General pedagogical skills that all teachers need such as "managing class time, giving clear directions, meeting students' needs, and focusing on students rather than on the self are at once



the most crucial skills for classroom success and the most difficult to acquire” (Velez-Rendon, 2002, p. 460). Effective classroom methodology for teaching language is easier when the students have basic proficiency in the language. On the contrary, when the students have little to no knowledge of the language, an understanding of language acquisition and effective teaching strategies are crucial. Looking at the literature globally, we see a portrait starting to emerge of a language teacher who, feeling unsure of their linguistic proficiency, selects more teacher centered and less successful pedagogical strategies, and in turn experiences decreased efficacy. The students in a language classroom who have a teacher with low self-efficacy experience less academic success (Velez-Rendon, 2002) and are more likely to act out their frustrations in class (Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990; Wilbur 2007). The resulting frustration between teacher and students brings us to the dimension of language teacher efficacy that is clearly linked to attrition: a teacher’s ability to manage their classroom successfully.

### Dimension 3: Classroom Management

The final dimension of a language teacher’s efficacy-identity that has important links to attrition rates is their sense of mastery over classroom management. It will come as no surprise to anyone who has ever taught—or who has ever been a student in a class with a teacher who was struggling with classroom management—that a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy in this dimension is one of the most important determining factors in whether they will stay or leave the profession. Classroom management styles correlate to a teacher’s sense of instructional efficacy: teachers with a low sense of efficacy favour a custodial attitude and sanctions to control students’ behaviour. They are often “mired in classroom problems” (Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990, p.140). In contrast, teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy rely more often on persuasive, rather than authoritarian management strategies, and support development of students’ intrinsic interests (Bandura, 1997, p. 241). In much the same way that a language teacher’s sense of linguistic proficiency influences their methodological choices (such as the communicative method for teachers with a high sense of efficacy versus a grammar-based approach for teachers with a low sense of efficacy), Woolfolk, Rosoff, and Hoy’s (1990) work links a high sense of teacher efficacy to a more humanistic approach to classroom management. In other words, teachers who experienced high efficacy overall, had a more positive classroom climate where misbehaviour was less frequent and handled in more positive ways. In classrooms where teachers had low overall self-efficacy, they were more likely to describe the classroom situation in terms of conflict and control (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990).

What is true for classroom teachers in general is also true for second language teachers: Swanson’s (2012) research into attrition factors for second and foreign language teachers confirms that self-efficacy, classroom management and attrition are linked. In this study, the most statistically significant predictors for a second language teacher’s decision to remain or leave the teaching profession were their perceived confidence in the dimension of classroom management particularly in their ability to “(1) control disruptive behaviour in the classroom. . . and (2) to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy” (p. 90). The dimension of classroom management in self-efficacy then is an essential place to start if we want to explore the problem of second language teacher attrition and how to prevent it.



## Second Language Teacher Identity: A Strategic Choice?

One of the strategies that language teachers use when developing classroom management efficacy is, interestingly, to assume a particular kind of identity. In Pennington and Richard's (2016) study into language teachers' identity construction, the authors found that novice teachers who have not yet mastered the highly complex array of skills teaching requires tend to take on a "situated identity" (p. 7). The situated identity is more traditional and teacher centered. It requires that the teacher stand in front of the class and lead interactions, requiring students to raise their hands as a condition of interaction. Novice teachers in this situated identity are performing the role of teacher in a way that is recognized by institutions and culture (Gee, 2000), but that may not be coherent with the professional identity they wish to assume; it may not be authentic. Pennington and Richard suggested that this performance of situated identity might, in fact, be an effective strategy for novice language teachers. It functions as a kind of place-marker for the teachers' professional identity while they gain experience and assurance in the classroom. The authors contrasted this kind of situated identity with a minority of novice teachers who assume a "more informal, personal and authentic identity," which Pennington and Richard refer to as a "transposable identity" (p. 8). This transposable identity, far from being a strategic choice for novice teachers, may, in fact be disadvantageous since "such a teacher identity may be less effective for new teachers, who have not yet mastered instructional content and pedagogical skills" (p. 8). A "transposable identity," they argued, is likely to lead to a breakdown in classroom management when students do not recognize their teacher's authority. What Pennington and Richard's research makes clear is that identity, and efficacy in the dimension of classroom management, are not only tightly linked, but that a particular kind of professional teaching identity becomes a strategic choice that novice language teachers need to make while they develop a sense of efficacy in the dimension of classroom management.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

Much research to date has focused on what we can do to prevent teachers from leaving once they are in the field (e.g., Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Johnson et al. 2010; Swanson 2012). However, the factors within the teaching field that appear to have the most impact over a teacher's decision to stay or leave the profession - such as the diversity of school environments and working conditions (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012) – are precisely those over which we have the least control. A more effective approach might be to address the problem where we can study it and control it before it starts in teacher education. Velez-Rendon's (2002) review of research into language teacher education highlighted what she sees as a shortfall in what pre-service language teachers need to know regarding their subject matter, "language proficiency is crucial for effective teaching... unfortunately, a large number of foreign language programs fail to provide prospective teachers with acceptable proficiency levels" (p. 462). Steinbach and Karlova's study (2014) has provided evidence of this failure of second language teacher education programs to ensure their teachers graduate with high levels of linguistic proficiency. They report that despite admission to second language teaching programs at two major universities in Quebec, more than 30% of their undergraduate teachers were unable to pass the



speaking tasks on the Test of English for Language Teachers (TELT) on the first attempt, and a further 20% were unable to pass the writing section, even after two attempts (Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014, p. 324). These tests were not administered as entrance exams, but were rather a requirement for graduation from the program. From the large percentage of students who were unable to pass portions of the test, even after two attempts, it appears that the teacher education program was failing to appropriately address the linguistic deficits of their students.

## Second Language Teacher Education: Identity Formation

Pre-service second language teachers, like teachers of other subjects, do not come to second language teacher education as *tabula rasa*, but bring with them a nascent identity based on “their own experience of teacher-models (or anti-models)” (Velez-Rendon, 2002, p. 459). As a language teacher moves through the process of teacher education, their identity shifts in response to their experiences within the university and while on field placements. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) describe this as “the inherent tension that exists for teachers as they navigate between personal and professional aspects of identity inherent within that of a teacher” (p. 177). In their study on undergraduate second language teachers in two universities in Quebec, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) detailed how the teachers’ descriptions of their identities through metaphor undergo a shift, moving from concepts of teacher as a “nurturer or protector of students” towards the idea of “teacher as survivor” (p. 767). Before they had had any extended experience as teacher in the classroom, the student teachers approached the field with an anticipation of forming a meaningful connection with their students (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011, p. 766). Their identities at this stage revolved around the theme of nurturer. Words like “guiding,” “mothering,” “protecting,” and “supporting” figured frequently in the metaphors they used to describe how they saw their role in the classroom (p. 765). After teaching in the field, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) noticed an abrupt shift in the students’ identities: rather than describing their identities in terms of their relationship with their students, the student teachers were now focusing on themselves without much reference to the students. Metaphors now focused on the multidimensional aspects of identity that teachers needed to perform; words like “survival” and metaphors of turbulent or calm waters now appeared (p. 764). The concept of “survival” is a familiar one for most novice teachers and raises flags for any researcher interested in examining the question of teacher attrition. Research needs to look more closely at why students are merely *surviving* and teacher education should find ways to scaffold students’ education so that they thrive, rather than survive the field placements. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) suggested a clear course of action:

Teacher preparation programs need to give preservice teachers more opportunities for actual experiences with instructing and managing children in a variety of contexts with increasing levels of complexity and challenge to provide mastery experiences and specific feedback. An apprenticeship approach—whereby the complex task of teaching is broken down into its elements and an apprentice teacher is allowed to work on developing one set of skills at a time—should encourage a compounding sense of efficacy over various contexts and skills. Performance feedback (verbal persuasion) early in learning that



highlights the positive achievements of the apprentice teacher and that encourages emphasis on attributions that are controllable and variable (e.g., effort and persistence) will have a positive effect on the development of efficacy beliefs. Assigning novice teachers smaller classes and more capable students in their first year should enhance efficacy. (p. 235)

Although these suggestions were made more than two decades ago, second language teacher education, like teacher education in general, has been slow to adopt these recommendations.

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This literature review began with the intention of considering the problem of second language teacher attrition by finding the answers to two research questions; first, what does the literature tell us about the possible causes of second language teacher attrition? Second, what are the possible links between second language teacher attrition, efficacy and identity? Upon reviewing the literature, we have seen that second language teacher attrition can be linked to self-efficacy and that efficacy can be understood as a facet of teacher identity. Research has shown that three dimensions of what I now term second language teacher “efficacy-identity” are statistically significant factors in second language teacher attrition:

1. linguistic proficiency (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Steinbach & Kazarloga, 2014; Swanson 2010, 2012; Wilbur, 2007);
2. pedagogical content knowledge (Karsenti et al., 2008; Kutsuyruba et al., 2014; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011; Velez-Rendon, 2002; Wilbur, 2007); and
3. classroom management (Karsenti, et al., 2008; Kutsuyruba et al., 2014; Swanson 2012).

In answer to the second question, there are several conclusions we can draw from the literature about connections between identity and efficacy for second language teachers: first, we can understand from this review that a second-language teacher’s sense of self-efficacy is an integral part of their professional identity. Next, the literature has shown that language teacher’s self-efficacy is not a *singular* dimension of their identity, but, like teacher identity itself, is multiple: it shifts and manifests differently depending on the skill and context which the teacher is being asked to perform at a given moment. For example, a language teacher might experience a high degree of efficacy in using and teaching in the target language (linguistic proficiency) with an advanced group of students, but the same teacher may experience low efficacy in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) when trying to explain to beginner students how to acquire the language effectively and become discouraged.

The further we explore the concepts of teacher identity and efficacy in the field of second language teaching, the more we discover how integrally they are linked, and how complex and multiple these identities are. Steinbach and Kazarloga’s (2014) study helps us to see the political and linguistic pressures that are unique to language teachers’ nascent professional identities, which cause them to experience contradictory and even conflicting identities, particularly in their understanding of their own linguistic abilities. The political discourse surrounding language and





identity that are inherent in the act of teaching language engender further layers of social and political pressure to perform certain identities that aren't present for teachers in other subjects and which may be a source of supplemental stress and tension that could account for the increased attrition rates for second language teachers. Thomas and Beauchamp's (2011) study into the idea of survival so prevalent in pre-service teachers' descriptions of their own identities also provides us with an entry point into understanding how novice teachers frame their professional identity and how it is formed.

### Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the results of this literature review, it would appear that if we are really to understand the underlying causes for second language teacher attrition, we need to better understand second language teacher efficacy (SLTE) and how it is developed. Many second language education researchers agree that second language teacher (SLT) education programs are not doing enough to make pre-service teachers feel effective (e.g., Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006; Velez-Rendon, 2002; Wilbur, 2007). Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) suggest longitudinal studies across teacher preparation programs and across the first several years in the field to map the development of efficacy beliefs. Experimental studies looking into pre-service teacher identity formation - particularly in the three dimensions of SLTE "efficacy-identity" identified by the literature (1. linguistic proficiency; 2. pedagogical content knowledge; and 3. classroom management) could also go a long way to helping SLT educators understand what teaching experiences and conditions help pre-service second language teacher increase their overall resilience before entering the field.

Comparative studies of graduating cohorts of SLTs from different SLT education programs could help us to identify which programs produce language teachers with higher senses of efficacy. We could then examine the course content and pedagogical strategies of the programs that graduate teachers with a high sense of efficacy in order to identify 'best practices' SLT education programs.

Researchers looking into the problem of second language teacher attrition also need to continue their examination into efficacy and attrition. Currently, SLTE is a strong predictor of teachers' *intention* to stay or leave the profession (Swanson, 2012), but a statistical study linking attrition rates to efficacy—perhaps through survival analysis of graduating cohorts with stronger or weaker senses of efficacy—would strengthen the connections between efficacy, identity and attrition.

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