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Language Teacher Motivation Research: Its Ends, Means and Future Commitments

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Abstract

This chapter reviews research which highlights the role of language teacher motivation in supporting students' meaningful engagement in language learning in the classroom and beyond. In addition to providing a brief overview of teacher motivation research, my aim is to focus on those strands of inquiry that have made or promise to make significant inroads into relating what moves teachers to do what they do with the educational consequences for their students. I will argue that in order to advance research that is relevant to the lives of language teachers and students, the future language teacher motivation research might find inspiration from transdisciplinary orientations to conceptualising the subject as well as the method of inquiry. I outline some possibilities for advancing future research agendas along these lines.

Introduction

The need to look at 'the other side of the desk' and consider the motivation of language teachers as well as that of students has been long acknowledged (Savignon, 1976), though the topic has arguably not enjoyed the same theoretical and empirical attention as the burgeoning field of L2 motivation (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015). In their reflection on the possible reasons, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) state,

The ultimate aim of motivation research is always to explain student learning, and in order to associate the latter meaningfully with the motivation of teachers, we need to show first that an increase in teacher motivation leads to improved motivational practice on their behalf, which in turn promotes student motivation, which eventually results in enhanced student performance. While the chain is intuitively convincing, it is difficult to get empirical confirmation for it because of the manifold confounding variables at each connection level (p. 101).

Put in this way, the task of language teacher motivation researchers does appear to be fraught with challenges from the outset, which no doubt plays a contributing role in the lack of attention from this specific domain of inquiry, referred to as language teacher motivation research. At the same time, however, enlarging the conceptions of motivation, of language learning, and of the language teaching-learning relationship opens up a rich and growing body of existing research in applied linguistics that presents both new opportunities and new imperatives for language teacher motivation research.

In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of key theoretical perspectives of current language teacher motivation research, before launching a reflection on its future. I suggest that a broader and necessarily transdisciplinary scoping of research across applied linguistics and beyond can be instrumental to articulating this domain's purposes and to enlarging its theoretical and methodological repertoires. I then return to the existing language teacher motivation literature through this enriched lens and outline three theoretical metaphors, complexity, figured worlds, and acts of imagination, for their promise to contribute to this more encompassing agenda of language teacher motivation research. I end by proposing a new epistemological orientation to researching teacher motivation as a way of harnessing this

promise. In so doing, I hope to prompt researchers and educators to consider anew why and how teacher motivation matters to the work of educating language learners and why, therefore, a concerted effort to look at ‘the other side of the desk’ may not be an optional extra but a necessary complement to our understanding of what goes on in language classrooms and beyond. Becoming more comfortable at the transdisciplinary intersections rather than dwelling firmly in the ever more innovative but largely confined disciplinary homes may cast a new light on the purposes, methods and future directions in this area of research.

The Current Landscape of Language Teacher Motivation Research

Language teacher motivation research has been concerned with issues broadly summed up by questions of what brings people into the language teaching profession and what keeps them in it, often despite the multitude of micro- and macrostructural constraints (for a comprehensive overview of specific themes and findings, see Hiver, Kim, & Kim, 2018). Yet, delineating the boundaries of this domain of inquiry in the larger context of educational and applied linguistics inquiry is not as straightforward as it may first appear. On the one hand, there is a sense of a clearly carved out *language teacher motivation* agenda firmly located in the psychological tradition of educational research and closely linked through its theorising with L2 motivation research. On the other hand, however, research whose findings speak to the broad questions of why language teachers do what they do, does not always begin with this focus in mind, often borrows from theoretical traditions beyond the motivation literature, or openly rejects the conceptual, epistemological or methodological assumptions of motivation research.

More specifically, at one end of this theoretical continuum, a range of psychological theories and constructs found in general motivation research, including self-determination,

self-efficacy, and self-discrepancy, have informed the theorising within language teacher motivation agenda. These have contributed to our understanding of a range of motives (from intrinsic, internally and externally regulated, to altruistic and value-driven), self-efficacy beliefs (both individual and collective) and future possible selves that shape language teachers' entry into the profession, their investment in their continuing professional development, and their classroom practice. Some examples include the application of self-theories to the study of EFL teachers working in state schools in Brazil (Costa Ribas, 2012) or to English Medium Instruction university teachers in the Basque Autonomous Community in the north of Spain (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2016).

Others have examined teacher motivation through the broader lens of vision (Kalaja, 2016; Kubanyiova, 2014) or visual identity (Brandão, 2018), incorporating insights from neighbouring domains, most notably language teacher identity and language teacher cognition (cf. Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). And there is also a substantial body of scholarship that has made implicit or explicit links to teacher motivation while focusing on distinctive concepts such as, among others, inspiring teaching practice (Lamb & Wedell, 2015), teacher commitment (Moodie & Feryok, 2015), teacher enthusiasm (Peng, 2008), teacher emotions (Martínez Agudo, 2018), or teacher resilience (Hiver, 2018).

At the other end of the spectrum is research which has been informed by distinctly sociocultural, sociolinguistic and/or critical perspectives with the aim to inform language teacher education policies and practices, as well as language pedagogy. This body of work, located primarily at the intersection of language teacher education (Crookes, 2009; Hawkins, 2011; Johnson & Golombek, 2016) and language teacher identity (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Varghese, Motha, Park, Reeves, & Trent, 2016), has not referenced motivation as its construct of inquiry. Its findings have, nevertheless, illuminated issues that are, or might need to be in the future, at the heart of questions asked by language teacher motivation researchers.

To give but one example, critical language teacher education research has made it clear that the growth in populations of multilingual children in mainstream education across the world has created a need to think about language and language learning differently in order to understand and serve such contexts (Hawkins, 2011). This suggests that the landscape from which to examine language teacher motivation has also been enlarged as a result. It is because some of those language teachers who enter the profession do so from a strong critical stance: they see themselves as advocates for the often marginalized communities of bilingual children and their families (Télléz & Varghese, 2013). Others position themselves as active dissenters against political, social and administrative pressures that actively discourage language teachers from adopting such advocacy roles (Morgan, 2016). These identity positions shed new light on questions about what compels language teachers to join and remain committed to the profession and how they can be supported in articulating and embodying their values, visions and professional identities. Crucially, they amplify ways in which language teachers' desires and visions are deeply embedded in and constrained by the social, cultural and political ecologies of their teaching contexts on the one hand while shaping the educational consequences for their students on the other.

Drawing from insights from across these multiple domains might lend an instructive transdisciplinary perspective on the future shape, scope, and directions for language teacher motivation research; that is, a perspective that engages more systematically with the broader sociocultural and ideological as well as psychological layers of language teachers' work on the one hand and which seeks to integrate the knowledge base of other disciplinary domains, such as sociolinguistics and second language acquisition (SLA) on the other. I return to the latter point at the end of the next section.

The Ends of Language Teacher Motivation Research

Another but closely related reason that this wide-lens approach to scoping the terrain of language teacher motivation may be necessary is rooted in its original aspiration to connect empirically the motivation of teachers with that of their students. The teaching-learning relationship is of course complex in its own right (see, for example, a discussion of the 'relationship of influence' in Freeman & Johnson, 2005, but also a chapter on Motivational Teaching Strategies, this volume) and any scholarly effort to establish the connection needs to account for this complexity in non-reductive, ecologically valid and ethical ways; a commitment which is likely to test the limits of any one disciplinary domain. Yet, the urgency of that effort is uncontested and increasingly visible in the surrounding areas of applied linguistics research as well as in the general teacher motivation inquiry.

For example, in the recent re-envisioning of purposes of language teacher cognition, Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) have urged scholars working in this line of research to articulate more explicitly and enact more robustly their commitment to addressing some of the central questions of classroom-based language education research, namely: “How do language teachers create meaningful learning environments for their students and how can teacher education, continuing professional development, and the wider educational and sociocultural context facilitate such learning in language teachers?” (p. 435) This, they further argued, was needed because while the research activity focusing on describing language teachers’ knowledge and beliefs had seen a vigorous growth over the past few decades, assessing its relevance to the real-world concerns of language teachers, language teacher educators and language learners was problematic if the connection between language teachers’ cognition and students’ language learning remained unexamined.

That a similar commitment might be necessary for the language teacher motivation domain has been signalled in a recent review of extensive research on motivation and

emotion in general teacher motivation literature. In their stock-taking chapter on teacher self-efficacy beliefs, for instance, Klassen, Durksen, and Tze (2014) have noted a significantly slowing trend. They ascribe this to the weak links between theory and practice, noting that very little of the extensive research on teachers' self-efficacy has actually been translated into concrete practices or policies. Among many reasons, not accounting sufficiently for the various dimensions (sources) that influence teachers' self-efficacy and not linking research on teacher self-efficacy to the actual educational outcomes (students' learning) were cited by the authors as the most pressing concerns. Commenting on the state of the art of teacher motivation research more globally, Alexander, Grossnickle, and List (2014) conclude,

What we found in our analysis of these chapters was that the end state of investigating teacher motivations and emotions was not often clearly depicted. And, without a more definitive sense of where those embarking on this adventure are headed, it will be rather impossible to determine whether they are moving in a positive direction (p. 159).

Finally, reflecting on the ends of teacher motivation research in relation to student learning is crucial but further complicated by an expanding picture of what we mean by L2 learning and whose L2 learning and in what settings is relevant to our inquiry (cf. Teemant, 2018). This is captured in a recent transdisciplinary framework by a group of scholars in the field of SLA:

... our present collective text is motivated by the conviction that SLA must now be particularly responsive to the pressing needs of people who learn to live—and in fact do live—with more than one language at various points in their lives, with regard to their education, their multilingual and multiliterate development, social integration,

and performance across diverse contexts. A new SLA must be imagined, one that can investigate the learning and teaching of additional languages across private and public, material and digital social contexts in a multilingual world. We propose that it begin with the social-local worlds of L2 learners and then pose the full range of relevant questions—from the neurobiological and cognitive micro levels to the macro levels of the sociocultural, educational, ideological, and socioemotional. (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 20)

It would appear, therefore, that if the contemporary language teacher motivation research aspires to make firmer connections with students' lives and thus serve their needs “with regard to their education, their multilingual and multiliterate development, social integration, and performance across diverse contexts” (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 20), it might, by definition, have to expand its traditionally psychological boundaries and borrow insights from across the sociolinguistic and critical perspectives on language learning, language teaching and language teachers' lives. In what follows, then, is my return to the existing language teacher motivation literature with the aim to examine possible conceptual and methodological pathways that it offers for advancing such a transdisciplinary agenda.

The Means of Language Teacher Motivation Research: Theoretical Metaphors

In this overview of promising theoretical directions for language teacher motivation research, I propose three broad conceptual metaphors as examples of productive lenses through which to study language teacher motivation in relation to the educational consequences for language learners. These frameworks have already guided language teacher motivation scholarship by foregrounding the situated, synergistic and dynamic nature of the phenomenon of teacher motivation (complexity), the multiple sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts in which

teachers' motivation is embedded (figured worlds) and the teachers' here-and-now investment in their imagined futures (acts of imagination). I see these theoretical lenses as promising possibilities, especially if they are treated in the way I intend to offer them here: as heuristic devices that allow and actively encourage new questions, understandings, and interdisciplinary borrowings in the effort to address the changing realities of the language education context across the globe. In other words, these theoretical umbrellas, while distinctive in what they foreground with regards to teacher motivation, all open up transdisciplinary possibilities that can guide the field more closely towards its worthwhile ends. I offer examples of published as well as unpublished research that can serve as useful framings for extended future inquiry.

Complexity

Complexity-informed research into language-related phenomena is already firmly established in applied linguistics (Larsen-Freeman, 2017) and the existing scholarship across different sub-fields of applied linguistics has focused on moving away from complexity as a metaphor and towards the development of substantive theoretical principles of complex systems and dynamic systems theory in particular (cf. Ortega & Han, 2017). In contrast to these efforts, I take a deliberately metaphorical stance here by offering *complexity* as a profitable but essentially open-ended frame of thinking about language teacher motivation, inviting multiple and varied theoretical reiterations. I briefly allude to sample studies inspired by complexity thinking which juxtapose teachers' motivation and students' engagement in their language learning and thus signal future possibilities for substantiating that relationship.

Michlizoglou (2007) adopted a systems theory to examine the motivation of state-school EFL teachers working in remote regions of Greece. Her findings show teachers who saw their job as a way of giving back to their community and pursued it as an "offering". They were energised by supportive relationships with colleagues as well as by the recognition

received from their school management. But the most powerful fuel to their day-to-day job of teaching English in these remote parts of the country was their students' "fulfilment of their role as students" (p. 62). Michlizoglou's data, however, exposed frequent accounts of students' reluctance to take up such roles, manifesting in their misbehaviour or unwillingness to participate in learning tasks, which, in turn, had detrimental consequences for the teachers' motivation. At the same time, Michlizoglou's careful application of a systems theory approach allowed her to portray classroom life as a succession of interrelations, interactions and recursive motives behind the teachers' and their students' behaviour with important implications for understanding and enhancing the motivation of both. To this end, she used her findings to emphasize the need to generate detailed descriptive rather than judgmental evidence of what goes on in the classroom, to remember that students and teachers are co-participants in and co-contributors to the system and to focus on communication as key in creating more productive relations across people, ideas and institutional conditions.

Another example of complexity-inspired understandings of language teacher motivation is Kimura's (2014, in press) rare type of an over a decade-long ongoing research programme, capturing the professional development of a group of English language teachers in China, South Korea and Japan. Over the time, the teachers have participated in various curricular initiatives informed by the broad principles of project-based learning and Kimura has been documenting their developmental and motivational trajectories. There are variations across and within the participating teachers' settings, encompassing differences in the types of support mechanisms that these teachers have enjoyed, the institutional roles they have assumed, or their public status. Kimura's research has made visible how each language teacher is located uniquely in more than one system with unique consequences for the kinds of interactions and relationships with students that they are able to access. These, in turn,

shape their motivation to teach and, ultimately, make a difference to how or whether the students benefit from the teachers' participation in professional development.

Finally, Sampson's (2016) autoethnographic account of his practice as an EFL teacher at a Japanese technology college focused on the ebbs and flows of teacher motivation over the course of one academic year. Drawing on his introspective research journal along with data from his students' reflections, Sampson's data have linked teacher motivation in a complex relationship with emotions and professional identity and to the external forces beyond the classroom. His chief conclusion, however, was that teachers' complex motivational trajectories captured over the life of the project are uniquely bound to specific class groups.

Although these sample research projects locate the study of teacher motivation in diverse contexts, they collectively demonstrate thanks to their complexity-conscious research designs that our understandings of teacher motivation will be limited if we attempt to separate the bonds between the teachers' and students' lives as they play out in specific interactional, institutional, cultural, and historical settings. Language teacher motivation research, then, has a lot to gain by adopting and adapting the metaphor of complexity, especially if it also strives to draw on the language of arts and humanities (Cameron, 2015) in its efforts to expose and revel in the uniqueness of specific people's relationships.

Figured Worlds

Another perspective that has informed a particular aspect of teacher motivation research, teachers' motivation *to learn*, is a situative approach to learning which is concerned with how individuals learn within their activity systems (Horn, Nolen, Ward, & Campbell, 2008; van Lankveld et al., 2017). Combining the focus on motivation and learning, this perspective places an emphasis on student teachers' motivation to learn to participate in relevant activities across different contexts of their professional development (such as university

teacher education settings, teaching placements, or real-world classrooms). But it also recognises and endeavours to make visible the role that these contexts play in shaping their motivation. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) have termed these contexts *figured worlds* to amplify their own histories and shared cultural practices, which place distinctive demands on participants' roles, identities and practices, are governed by distinctive and often contradictory goals and values, and afford participants different levels of access depending on their social and professional status.

Because student teacher motivation is brought to bear differently across these distinctive figured worlds of teacher learning (i.e. university teacher education programmes, teaching placements, or real-world classrooms), research on teacher motivation to learn has to strive to provide detailed accounts of both persons' motivations and the varied contexts in which their motivation is (or is not) invested. As Nolen, Ward, and Horn (2014) explain, "Our approach to teacher motivation orients us to the factors, both individual and situational, that contribute to teachers' desire and commitment to learn and use particular instructional practices" (p. 169). They call these reasons to learn and commit "motivational filters", which are both personally relevant to individuals at any point in time as well as socially shaped through teachers' participation in "collective imaginings" (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 51), that is, established and shared ways of being and acting in the varied figured worlds of teachers' professional development. Although similarities with complexity thinking are obvious, this perspective's insistence on deeper understandings of these shared practices as a way of appreciating individuals' motivation clearly sets it apart.

In applied linguistics, the concept of *figured worlds* has been used to account for linguistic practices and identities of students in different settings, such as multilingual children in language immersion contexts or adult refugees learning the language of their receiving environments (Baynham, 2006; Dagenais, Day, & Toohey, 2006), but admittedly

less so in the context of language teachers' motivation. Varghese (2008, 2018) and Clarke (2008), for example, have drawn on this framework to discuss language teacher identity construction, which is seen as fundamental to language teachers' professional learning (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Although this work does not tend to refer to teacher motivation explicitly, the questions that Varghese (2018) poses as a way of justifying the importance of adopting sociocultural conceptualisations, such as figured worlds, are at the core of a teacher motivation line of inquiry. As she notes,

One of the reasons that examining language teachers' beliefs and experiences is important is because it provides us with a greater understanding of what shapes teachers' learning and professional identity along with other factors such as their professional development/teacher education experiences. It can also provide an insight into language teachers' professional paths such as what kind of jobs they may seek and why, where they would be seeking such jobs, how long they may stay, and what types of support may assist teachers in staying in and enjoying the particular professional paths they have sought (p. 71).

The questions, then, are close to identical to those asked by what we know under the umbrella of language teacher motivation. But while the latter would seek conceptual explanations in the largely cognitively-oriented models of *individual motivation*, the metaphor of figured worlds lends a distinctly sociocultural and, crucially, ideological and socio-political perspective on understanding *the worlds* in which teachers are invested as they learn to support their students. For example, language ideologies, educational policies and accountability regimes that discourage or even sanction language teachers' investment in supporting their students' language learning in particular ways may have negative

consequences for the teachers' desire to remain in the profession despite, or paradoxically because of, their continuing deep commitment to their students (cf. Santoro, 2015).

This appears to be an important opportunity for language teacher motivation researchers committed to addressing the link between teacher motivation and educational consequences for their language learners: to bring insights from research into the figured worlds of students from the broadest range of lived experiences (e.g. Dagenais, Day, & Toohey, 2006) with those of their teachers as they grow in or are constrained in their commitment to support them (cf. Varghese, 2018).

Acts of Imagination

Finally, language teacher motivation research has also been approached through a theoretical perspective which seeks to illuminate the very acts of teachers' investment in those 'systems' or 'figured worlds': language teachers' emerging *acts of imagination* (Kubanyiova, 2019).

This metaphor has grown from research into what is now a well-known construct of *language teachers' possible selves* (Kubanyiova, 2009), whose origins were inspired by theorising in psychology (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and whose relevance to the study of language teacher motivation has been examined across diverse contexts of language teachers' work (Arkhipenka, 2017; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2016; Hiver, 2013; Kumazawa, 2013; Sahakyan, Lamb, & Chambers, 2018).

Given its scholarly heritage, the theoretical metaphor of acts of imagination may at first sight appear to be bounded by a well-theorised construct of *possible selves* and therefore less permeable to transdisciplinary influences. Yet, recent scholarly efforts have shown its power as a broader lens for encompassing sociologically- as well as psychologically-informed ways of understanding students' and teachers' lives, striving for balance in the emphasis between agency and structures, tackling issues around social justice (Henderson,

Stevenson, & Bathmaker, 2019), and foregrounding the moral dimension of educators' meaning making (Kubanyiova, 2017, 2018).

Contemporary research on language teachers' motivation is decidedly moving away from seeing possible selves as distinctive and clear-cut images of ideal, ought-to or feared selves that teachers articulate and which, especially in the case of ideal selves, they are often unable to live up to. The current inquiry is directed instead towards assessing the ways in which the framework of possible selves might serve as a broader metaphor for understanding language teachers' sense making as they go about their task of educating language learners. For example, Sahakyan, et al.'s (2018) study of Armenian language teachers has signalled the need to open up the construct of possible selves in order to understand the teachers' motivational trajectories over time. Their findings showed that the images of ideal future selves that the teachers articulated as they entered the profession were either transformed or completely abandoned, because they no longer reflected their day-to-day realities as these teachers progressed in their careers. They found that although imagination was clearly crucial in fuelling the teachers' motivation to support their students, it was more accurate to talk about these imaginings as 'feasible' future selves, encompassing components of teachers' desires, obligations, as well as fears.

My own inquiry into language learning opportunities in teacher-led classroom discourse of EFL teachers in Slovakia showed that despite their professed motivation to create opportunities for students' meaningful and equal participation in classroom conversation, the teachers did not always appear to act on it when such opportunities presented themselves in teacher-led discourse (Kubanyiova, 2015, 2019). I have theorised that what language teachers are doing as they perform the activity of language teaching is participate in what I have termed emerging *acts of imagination*: They see, make sense of, and engage in their professional interactions through the prism of their deeply desired evolving

images of their future selves. To use the previous metaphor, these images are, of course, are clearly anchored in the “collective imaginings” (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 51) of the teachers’ figured worlds but are not easily articulated at a conscious level. At the same time, however, they cannot be separated from teachers’ here-and-now actions and, crucially, have factual consequences for students’ engagement in the classroom. In other words, what feeds language teachers’ acts of imagination appears to shape which language learning affordances in classroom discourse become genuine learning opportunities and for whom.

The metaphor of *acts of imagination*, then, presents an opportunity for language teacher motivation researchers to inquire not so much into what ‘possible selves’ language teachers ‘possess’ and how these might or might not relate to their motivation and practice, but rather direct the analytical gaze much more directly to teachers’ specific practices of supporting their students’ language learning. It is through this shift in focus that further questions can be asked: what kinds of images might be at the heart of these specific teachers’ acts of imagination, what are the sociocultural, historical, political, or linguistic circumstances that may have given rise to those images, in what ways do these ‘acts of imagination’ evolve in ways that are symbiotic with or, in contrast, in active resistance to the circumstances of the teachers’ work, and, most importantly, what difference do they make to their students’ language learning experience in the classroom and beyond?

In addition to the opportunities for transdisciplinary borrowings that the broader lenses of complexity and figured worlds present to the domain of language teacher motivation research, the metaphor of *acts of imagination* also invites a more philosophically-informed stance of teacher motivation. Desire, for instance, is central to the images that feed teachers’ acts of imagination. But perhaps the kind of desire which channels students’ meaningful language learning has less to do with the “restlessness reflected in the continual quest for the perfect method, the perfect lesson or the ideal language learner” or a “desire for

that which the other deems desirable, or the desire to attain the other's approval" (Clarke, 2017, p. 266), and more to do with the desire to receive and enter into a relationship with the Other (Biesta, 2015; Kubanyiova, 2016b, 2018; Levinas, 1972/2006).

The Means of Language Teacher Research: A Practice-Oriented Epistemology

The perceived difficulty to link teacher motivation with student learning may at first sight appear to be an insurmountable obstacle in advancing the worthwhile ends of language teacher motivation research. Yet, as noted earlier in this chapter and shown through my discussion of selected theoretical metaphors and sample studies, the nature of this challenge depends on how we conceptualise and, consequently, research motivation, learning, and the learning-teaching relationship. A typical response has been to present this challenge as principally a methodological one, with qualitative methodologies generally seen as better equipped to deal with the complexities of teacher motivation than the quantitative ones. While this remains a largely uncontested view, the studies discussed in this chapter have signalled that the question is fundamentally an epistemological one, requiring a robust reflection on what we treat as evidence of motivation and learning. I propose that the place to look is *practice* and the commitment to such *practice-oriented epistemology* has several implications.

To start with, the aspiration to make the connection to student learning requires that language teacher motivation inquiry be located more directly in the contexts in which students' lives are invested and in which such learning unfolds. This means that in a research study committed to addressing the link between teacher motivation and the educational consequences for language learners, the question of the latter might have to become a starting point rather than an afterthought. Studies which began as in-depth inquiries into students' experiences and evolved into explorations of teacher motivations (Ogawa, 2017; Sampson,

2016) can serve as useful examples of research designs capable of producing insights into these motivational synergies (cf. Pinner, 2017). Related to this is the need to move away from often simplistic measures of student L2 achievement as evidence of student learning and consider a fuller range of deeper and more nuanced understandings of what it means to learn, use, and live with multilingual repertoires across people's contexts of meaning making (Hall, 2019; The Douglas Fir Group, 2016).

More generally, a commitment to a practice-oriented epistemology in the study of language teacher motivation draws on an anthropological heritage in the conviction that researching people's motivation involves "direct, intimate, and more or less disturbing encounters with the immediate details of contemporary life" (Geertz, 2000, p. 22). Whether one is inspired by the metaphor of complexity, figured worlds, acts of imagination, or any other, understanding people's motivation to act essentially requires a direct gaze at such acts as they unfold in relevant interactions, systems or figured worlds. In other words, a practice-oriented epistemology does not take interest in isolating different facets of teacher motivation as reified concepts, such as intrinsic motives, altruistic values, or ideal selves. Instead, it is concerned with studying what motives may be embodied in the teachers' practice of supporting students' language learning. Adopting some of the well-established approaches across applied linguistics, such as grounded theory ethnography (Kubanyiova, 2016a), linguistic ethnography (Creese, Blackledge, & Takhi, 2014), or emerging narratives (Razfar, 2012) may open up new opportunities to generate thick descriptions of teachers' motivation in practice.

Inherent in the practice-oriented epistemology is also the recognition that people's motivation is "managed immediately and subtly through the normative resources of interaction" (Potter, 2012, p. 576). Such a discursive orientation to studying psychological concepts is already visible across research on teachers' lives, including research on teachers'

emotions (White, 2018), cognition (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015), personal practical knowledge (Golombek, 2009), or possible selves (Kubanyiova, 2015, 2017, 2019). But the practice-oriented approach must also acknowledge with humility that the meaning of that which is visible in practice may not be immediately obvious to the analyst without painstaking piecing together of other pieces of the mosaic. Cameron's (2015, p. 43) summary of her "discourse dynamics model" which is grounded in the discursive approach and informed by broader principles of complexity can serve as an apt summary for this practice-oriented epistemology: start by interpreting an instance of interaction, unpack the elements, connections, and dynamics of the system, investigate the detail with appropriate tools, and take moral responsibility for every decision.

Conclusion: Future Commitments of Language Teacher Motivation Research

This overview has examined a body of research built around a seemingly straightforward broad question of 'What moves language teachers to make a difference to their students' language learning experience?' The idea that we may not find meaningful answers unless we commit to working and thinking in a transdisciplinary, and perhaps by necessity collaborative, fashion may be a deeply disorientating proposition to some. Yet the unfolding geo-political events, public discourses, and the countless human stories from around the globe challenge us to reflect critically on virtually all of this question's parts: who are language teachers, who are language learners, what is language, and what does it mean to learn, use, and teach it? The answers will be far more complex than the traditionally psychologically-informed language teacher motivation research agenda could ever aspire to provide. This, however, is not the domain's problem but rather its unique opportunity: to strive to ground the study of language teacher motivation in the specific spatial and temporal contexts of particular people's lives, to work in concert with other domains of applied

linguistics as well as reach beyond its boundaries, and to commit to an intellectual, practical, as well as methodological stance that is resolute in its effort to preserve rather than erase “the dignity of difference” (Sacks, 2002, pp. 47-8):

Each landscape, language, culture, community is unique. Our very dignity as persons is rooted in the fact that none of us – not even genetically identical twins – is exactly like any other. Therefore none of us is replaceable, substitutable, a mere instance of a type. That is what makes us persons, not merely organisms or machines. If our commonalities are all that ultimately matter, then our differences are distractions to be overcome.

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