A Systematic Review of Poststructuralist-Discursive Research on Language Teachers' Emotion Labor: Themes, Methods, and Implications

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A B S T R A C T

Language teacher emotion labor has recently gained traction as more educators recognize the importance of addressing institutional power dynamics. The present contribution is a review of poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor. The rationale behind a particular focus on poststructuralist-discursive perspective lies behind the recent proliferation of studies framed within this framework. Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021), the content of 57 studies published from 2018 to November 2024 was analyzed for their themes, methods, and implications. The findings revealed that emotion labor experienced by language teachers in online and face-to-face instruction, the interplay of emotion labor, identity, and motivation, emotion labor caused by top-down assessment policies, and emotion labor due to institutional expectations in transnational and EMI/EAP/ESP contexts were among the most frequently investigated themes in the relevant body of literature. It was also observed that language teacher emotion labor has predominantly been examined through qualitative research paradigms, including case studies and (auto)ethnographies. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis, narrative frames, short stories reconstructed based on narrative data, vignettes, and visuals comprised the most prevailing data collection instruments deployed in this area of research. Furthermore, the implications of the existing literature mainly signified the need for institutional reform and raising language teachers' awareness of the complexities of emotion labor through teacher education programs. The current review calls for more longitudinal, observational, cross-cultural, and mixed-methods explorations of language teacher emotion labor in the future.

Keywords: emotion labor; discursive; feeling rule; institutional pressure; language teacher; poststructuralist; power imbalance

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Introduction

The systematic study of emotions in language education has its origins in the introduction of the affective filter hypothesis by Stephan Krashen in 1982. A substantial portion of this developmental history has been shaped by two predominant trends. First, a significant body of literature on emotions in applied linguistics has been devoted to the study of language learners' emotions (e.g., Tsang & Dewaele, 2024). Second, emotions have primarily been examined in terms of negative and positive binaries, a perspective mainly advocated by scholars from the cognitivist camp. This line of research generally concludes that negative emotions like anxiety (Gkonou et al., 2017) and boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Zawodniak et al., 2023) inhibit language learning while positive emotions such as grit and enjoyment (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024) promote learners' achievement.

The landscape is undergoing an extensive transformation, however. Recently, there has been a burgeoning interest in exploring the emotions of language teachers. This proliferation of research can be attributed to a growing recognition of the crucial role played by emotions in various aspects of the language teaching profession, including curriculum implementation (e.g., Yang et al., 2022), identity construction (e.g., Derakhshan & Nazari, 2024; Derakhshan et al., 2023a, 2024 Nazari et al., 2023d), and professional development (e.g., Song, 2021). Additionally, the significance of language teachers' emotions is further understood in light of the concept of 'ethic of care' (Noddings, 2013), which requires intense emotion investment on the part of the teachers to manage their students' emotions. The importance of recognizing the emotional demands of the ethic of care becomes particularly evident in language classrooms as ecosystems in which the emotions of teachers and learners intersect with institutional norms and rules. This new wave of research led to the emergence of what could be termed the *emotion turn* in applied linguistics, echoing Pavlenko's (2013) notion of the 'affective turn'.

Another significant recent development is the study of language teachers' emotions through the lens of emerging approaches. One such approach is the poststructuralist-discursive perspective, which views emotions as discursively constructed in relation to power dynamics. Following Hochschild (2012), studies on emotions have adopted a critical stance by examining the tensions between teachers' emotions and institutional 'feeling rules' that specify which feelings are deemed appropriate and which ones must be suppressed. The resulting tension is often described as 'emotion labor' (Benesch, 2017). Consequently, a substantial body of recent research on language teachers' emotions has been framed within a poststructuralist-discursive approach often carrying the phrase 'emotion labor' in their titles.

The present contribution is a systematic review of language teachers' emotion labor literature within poststructuralist-discursive framework. The main objectives are to outline the research themes of this line of research, highlight the research methods employed in this area, and synthesize the implications offered by such research. This review is particularly timely, given the notable increase in the volume of relevant publications as illustrated by Han et al. (2023). The need for a particular focus on poststructuralist-discursive approach is also underscored by a recent surge in studies within this framework, reflecting its relevance in understanding the complexities of language teachers' emotions. The importance of this particularity lies in the caution voiced by Benesch and Prior (2023) regarding the need to maintain the criticality of poststructuralist-discursive perspective while engaging with this approach. By addressing these dimensions, the current review aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of language teachers' emotion labor and outline future directions in this line of research.

Conceptual Background

Historical traces of examining emotions from a critical perspective and in relation to power structures are rooted in a pioneering work by Hochschild (1979). In her study of the recruitment and training procedures at Delta Airlines in the 1970s, Hochscild noticed that flight attendants were compelled to display positive emotions even when faced with rude and aggressive customers. She described institutional directives regarding proper and improper emotions as 'feeling rules' and argued that power hierarchies formulated them to boost corporate profitability. In response to imposed feeling rules, Hochschild (1979) observed that employees used three strategies, including surface acting through hiding their real emotions and feigning the emotions demanded by the institution, deep acting wherein employees internalized the required emotions, and expression of authentic emotions. She coined *emotion management* (Hochschild, 2012) to encompass an individual's overall capability to manage emotions. She then divided this concept into *emotion work*, pertaining to managing emotions in personal relationship with family and friends, and *emotion labor*, highlighting the tension between institutional feeling rules and personal emotions. To Hochschild, emotion labor could have significant bearing on emotion work and seriously impact employees' well-being.

Hochschild's conceptualization of emotions marked an obvious departure from cognitivist approach, which adopted a structuralist view of emotion as an isolated construct residing within the individual rather than being interconnected with wider contextual variables. Hence, her theorization gave rise to a poststructuralist perspective on emotions, which was inherently critical as it considered unequal power relations. This perspective has undergone significant modifications in language education. First, language teacher education researchers (e.g., Benesch, 2020a; Gkonou & Miller, 2021) propose that studies on emotion labor should emphasize what emotions do in relation to their historical, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts rather than approaching them as positive and negative dichotomies. Next, unlike Hochschild (1979, 2012) who assumed that individuals possessed an authentic self which they concealed or violated during emotion labor, applied linguistic researchers (e.g., Benesch, 2017, 2020b) have averted the authentic-fake binary positioning that emotions are discursively co-constructed through sociopolitical and ideological dialogs. Finally, while Hochschild considered emotion labor as a negative experience to be avoided, language teacher education researchers (e.g., Benesch, 2018, 2020a) recognize it as a source of teacher agency and activism which reflects the need for institutional reform. This expanded version of Hochschild's theorization of emotion labor is commonly known as a poststructuralist-discursive perspective in language education.

Against this background, the present paper systematically reviews language teacher emotion labor research conducted from 2018 to November 2024 through a poststructuralist-discursive lens. Previous reviews of the related studies in both general education and language education provide valuable insights into the nature of emotion labor research. In general education, for instance, Wu and Wei (2022) conducted a bibliometric analysis of teachers' emotion labor published in the Web of Science from 1900 to 2020. They retrieved a total of 173 documents out of which 15 studies belonged to linguistics (10) and language and linguistics (5) categories. Although highly informative, bibliometric reviews often do not provide an in-depth analysis of the theoretical and practical implications of the relevant research. Within language education, some relevant systematic reviews analyzed studies conducted in a single context (e.g., Barcelos & Arangão, 2018) while some others synthesized the findings of studies on the relationship between emotion labor and a particular construct such as well-being (e.g., Blake & Dewaele, 2023). These reviews, although highly valuable, may have a limited generalizability power. Other notable reviews (e.g., Han et al., 2023; Morris & King, 2024) examined language teacher emotions more broadly without adhering to a specific theoretical framework. However, as Benesch (2019) argues, theoretical clarity is crucial for understanding the implications of language teacher emotion labor research. Given these gaps in the literature and in response to call for "theoretical transparency"

(Benesch, 2019, p. 2) in language teacher emotion labor research, the present systematic review was guided by the following questions:

1)   What are the primary themes investigated by poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor?

2)   What are the research methods employed by poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor?

3)   What are the implications of poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor?

Method

The present systematic review of language teacher emotion labor research from a poststructuralist-discursive perspective was conducted following the guidelines set out by Benesch and Prior (2023), who raised concerns over the uncritical uses of poststructuralist-discursive approach in recent relevant publications. Specifically, they advocated for the consistent use of *emotion labor* instead of *emotional labor* to avoid the negative connotations of the word 'emotionality' as opposed to 'rationality'. They also distinguished emotion labor from other resonant concepts, including emotion regulation and emotional intelligence/competence/literacy. To Benesch and Prior (2023), emotion labor focuses on the triggers of language teacher emotions whereas other similar concepts focus on the strategies deployed by language teachers to manage their emotions irrespective of the triggers. Finally, they proposed a poststructuralist-discursive approach should meet the three criteria of (a) examining "educational institutions as top-down workplaces imbued with feeling rules", (b) avoiding the promotion of "particular emotions and feeling rules as unquestioningly good or bad for teaching (or learning)", and (c) viewing "schools as possibly emotionally inhospitable spaces rather than teachers (or students) as emotionally illiterate" (Benesch & Prior, 2023, p. 7). Against these guidelines, we developed our search strategy to locate the relevant literature for the current systematic review. Additionally, PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021) were followed to identify, screen, apply the eligibility criteria, and include the relevant studies.

Search Strategies

To find the literature on language teacher emotion labor from a poststructuralist-discursive perspective, we searched a number of databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, and ResearchGate, using the following search strings:

• ("emotion labor" OR "emotional labor") AND ("language teacher" OR "EFL teacher"): The phrase 'emotional labor' was included in this string to locate studies which did not recognize a distinction between *emotion labor* and *emotional labor* (e.g., Hopkyns & Gkonou, 2023). This string also returned studies which did not explicitly state poststructuralist-discursive approach as their theoretical lens (e.g., Ding et al., 2022; Nazari et al., 2023b), but met the criteria established by Benesch and Prior (2023).

• ("emotion labor" OR "emotional labor") AND ("language teacher" OR "EFL teacher") AND ("poststructural*" OR "poststructuralist-discursive"): This string encompassed all of the key elements. The use of a wildcard character (*) helped locating those studies which used 'poststructural' rather than 'poststructuralist' (e.g., Benesch, 2020b) and those studies which used both concepts interchangeably (e.g., Cinaglia et al., 2024).

Additionally, we examined the literature review section and reference lists of identified studies to identify further works pertinent to poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor. This process continued until we reached data saturation, indicated by the emergence of repetitive works.

Inclusion Criteria

During the screening stage, we included literature that met the following inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed (particularly, for journal articles and systematic reviews)

- Published in English (to ensure findings are accessible across various contexts)

- Published from 2018 to November 2024 (to capture the emerging research methods)

- Utilized poststructural(ist)-(discursive) approach as a theoretical lens

- Maintained criticality by examining issues of institutional power dynamics even if conducted through such frameworks as activity theory (e.g., Nazari & Karimpour, 2022) or ecological perspective (e.g., Nazari et al., 2024c)

- Focused on what emotions could do rather than categorizing them into positive and negative binaries

Exclusion Criteria

In addition, the following exclusion criteria were applied to further screen the identified documents:

- Attending to resonant constructs such as emotion regulation (e.g., Ma & Liu, 2024)

- Studies that categorized emotions as positive and negative binaries (Richards, 2022)

- Studies that examined students' perceptions of language teachers' emotions (Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021)

Overall, the above inclusion and exclusion criteria aligned with the specifications suggested by Benesch and Prior (2023) and helped us build a data set of 57 relevant documents (Table 1).

Table 1

Types of Documents Included in the Current Systematic Review

Document type	Book chapter	Commentary	Journal article	Systematic review	Viewpoint	Total
Number	*1*	*2*	*49*	*4*	*1*	*57*

Data Analysis

Following the screening stage, we read the selected documents carefully taking notes of their titles, research questions, findings (in line with our first question on research themes), methods (to

answer our second research question on research methodologies), discussions, and conclusions (in search for an answer to our third question on the implications of poststructuralist-discursive research on language teachers' emotion labor).

Findings

Research Themes

Emotion labor experienced in practice

Several studies in our database explored the emotion labor experienced by language teachers in their practice. For instance, Liu et al. (2021), Liu et al. (2024), and Nazari et al. (2024c) investigated the emotion labor experienced by language teachers during transition to online teaching in response to the COVID-19 health crisis. The main sources of emotion labor during the pandemic included institutional obligation to teach online without prior preparation (Liu et al., 2021), being dedicated and responsible (e.g., by providing students with timely feedback), caring for students by motivating them, flexibility and resourcefulness in addressing students' needs (Liu et al., 2024), and school policies regarding materials coverage, interacting with and engaging students, content preparation, and assessment delivery (Nazari et al., 2024c). Teachers often responded to these feeling rules through surface acting, which involved pretending to be confident in their effectiveness of online teaching, and deep acting through establishing online learning and support networks (Liu et al., 2021).

In face-to-face teaching contexts, Oliveira and Barcelos (2024) reported that the tension between a language teacher's aspiration to be a critical teacher and the prevailing neoliberal discourse, political situations, and institutional expectations were the primary causes of emotion labor in Brazil. While Maria, the only participant in the study, sought to integrate mobile technology into her practice, the neoliberal discourse of *teacher productivity* entailed that she provided her students with loads of reading and writing tasks. Therefore, students' use of cell phones in class could reflect Maria's poor productivity. Additionally, Maria believed that the *school without party* movement, which required teachers to avoid any discussion of the current political status quo in Brazil, was an attempt to silence teachers and downgrade their position. As to institutional expectations, implicit rules demanded teachers adopt a strict demeanor whereas Maria felt the strong need to establish rapport with her students to enhance their engagement. Maria chose to resist some of these feeling rules by, for example, abandoning an authoritarian posture. However, these tensions led to her burnout and her personal health was affected. Similarly, low teacher status and institutional adherence to broader cultural and political norms were identified as emotion bearing situations by King et al. (2024) and Nazari et al. (2023c), respectively. Finally, Cinaglia et al. (2024) and Meşe and Mede (2024) highlighted the dual impact of colleagues' collaboration, both as a source of and a means to navigate the emotion labor experienced by language teachers.

Emotion labor and identity construction

Language teachers' identity construction in relation to emotion labor was the subject of investigation in the studies presented in this subsection. In their longitudinal case study, Kocabaş-Gedik and Hart (2021) explored the identity construction of two novice native-speaker English teachers at a Turkish university. The participants, Emily and David, attended an in-service training program where they developed skills for designing lesson plans and instructional materials. The study revealed that the two teachers experienced different trajectories in the formation of their identities. Emily felt frustrated and isolated as her colleagues socialized with each other and in

Turkish. Additionally, she failed to manage her students' misbehavior due to lack of prior experience in teaching and the power relations between parents and the institution. These challenges complicated Emily's efforts to establish herself as an effective English teacher. In contrast, David pursued an M.A. degree in teaching English, learned Turkish, adapted quickly to cultural norms, and took on administrative responsibilities at the institution. He decided to adopt language teaching as his career upon his return to his home country.

The next two studies reviewed here were set in China and Japan. Zhang (2023) observed mixed emotions among three novice teachers during their participation in a pre-service training program. Initially, the teachers expressed genuine emotions of joy and happiness while the hierarchical nature of the school and broader Chinese society compelled them to disguise their negative emotions. It was only at the end of the practicum that the teachers learned how to conform to institutional norms and build their identities as language teachers. In the context of Japan, Lleses (2024) found that Filipino assistant language teachers experienced disappointment and frustration due to a language barrier that prevented them from socializing with their Japanese colleagues. Nevertheless, Japan's supportive educational system helped them navigate their emotion labor effectively and develop their identities as language teachers.

Other studies presented in this subsection were conducted by Nazari and his colleagues in the context of Iran. Nazari and Karimpour (2022) pointed out that top-down approach to school organization, emphasis on caring for students, and exercising agency to resist school policies hindered their attempts to construct their desired identities as language teachers. In another study, Nazari et al. (2023b) reported that the use of teacher education programs as a revenue source by the school, ethical challenges, and an appraisal system based on whether teachers obtained their university degrees at public or private institutions were the primary sources of struggle in identity construction. As to teachers of young learners of English, institutional and parental expectations were found to obstruct identity construction (Nazari et al., 2023a). Lastly, dominant job-related discourses and lack of autonomy were the major institutional factors that caused identity tensions among language teacher educators (Nazari et al., 2024a).

Emotion labor and assessment policies

Another theme which garnered language teacher emotion labor researchers' attention was the institutional top-down language assessment policies. In her first study, Benesch (2020a) found that the three discourses of inevitability, unfairness, and injustice caused emotion labor among language teachers. Teachers felt that administering tests was inevitable; nevertheless, they expressed concerns about the linguistic content, testing conditions, and technical aspects of assessment, including scoring rubrics. They viewed the promotion of high stakes testing by their institutions as unfair and regarded institutional assessment policies as unjust, particularly because these policies denied non-native speakers the opportunity to pursue their education in a timely manner. In response to these institutional discourses, teachers used their activism and offered assessment tools that served their learners' needs. In another study, Benesch (2020b) identified institutional pressure to offer timely feedback to students' writing as a site of emotion labor since it compromised the quality of the feedback given. The pressure teachers felt to resist institutional assessment policies served as a major source of emotion labor.

Similarly, Her and De Costa (2022) examined Alan, a non-native English teacher who experienced emotion labor due to institutional pressures to shorten course durations. Alan's institution implemented a policy allowing students to self-assess alongside standardized placement tests, which conflicted with his professional training. However, due to his job insecurity as a part-time teacher, Alan felt unable to resist this change. Instead, he chose to cultivate his emotional capital through spirituality and empathy (for a critical review of this study, see Hu & Zheng, 2022).

Nazari and Molana (2022) also observed persistent dissonance between language teachers' preferences regarding assessment practices and institutional policies. In this case, participants exercised their agency by utilizing various assessment tools to better meet their students' needs.

Emotion labor of transnational language teachers

The emotion labor experienced by transnational language teachers has also attracted attention from language education researchers. For example, Alshakhi and Ha (2020) examined the emotion labor of four western-trained transnational language teachers working in Saudi Arabia. Institutional factors that caused emotion labor included lack of effective teacher-student communication due to language barriers, unfair perceptions of transnational teachers as monolingual and ineffective, the need to recognize social, cultural, and religious norms to avoid conflicts, and top-down instructional and assessment policies. Contributing to this line of research, Hopkyns and Gkonou (2023) explored the emotion labor of ten transnational language teachers working at the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Emotion labor for these teachers stemmed from various pressures, such as the need to provide feedback, address issues of plagiarism and low attendance, and feelings of guilt regarding students' struggle with learning. Additionally, negative attitudes toward transnational language teachers as neocolonial educators who promulgated western values (Hillman et al., 2024), lack of sociocultural training (Nazari & Kamali, 2024), and lower status assigned to transnational language teachers by their mentors (Zang et al., 2024) were identified as sources of emotion labor among this particular teacher group.

Emotion labor in EMI/ESP/EAP contexts

The literature reviewed here identified numerous factors contributing to emotion labor among teachers involved in English Medium Instruction (EMI), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). In their study of two Nepalese language teachers, De Costa et al. (2020) found that institutional pressure to conduct English-only classes following the implementation of an EMI policy, lack of autonomy in selecting teaching methods, and insufficient mentoring led one teacher to resign and prompted the other to consider resignation. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2022) reported that the adoption of an ESP policy at a medical university in China resulted in emotion labor among language teachers. Furthermore, lack of teacher autonomy in materials selection (Derakhshan et al., 2023b) and assessment practices (Nazari et al., 2024d) in EAP and ESP context of Iran comprised the major sources of emotion labor among language instructors. More recently, Nazari and De Costa (2024) identified institutional pressure on EMI teachers to publish scholarly works as an additional trigger of emotion labor.

Emotion labor and caring

The running theme of the studies outlined here was the culture of care denoting a teacher's responsibility to help learners feel accepted and valued. Pereira (2018) observed that the Ministry of Education in Singapore promoted neoliberal ideologies through its politics of care. He noticed that language teachers' genuine care for their students' well-being conflicted with school's policies of caring aimed at obtaining high scores on standardized tests and achieving educational objectives. Furthermore, he found that the promulgation of the discourse of good teaching described as teachers' ability to suppress their negative emotions to care for their students caused emotion labor and exhausted teachers to the point of falling ill. Similarly, Gkonou and Miller (2019) noted that caring for their students' anxiety jeopardized the well-being of language teachers in Greece (see Blake & Dewaele, 2023 for a systematic review of the research on the connection between emotion labor and well-being). Warner and Diao (2022) also reported that the ethic of care exerted pressure on language teachers to establish personal relationship with their students,

maintain classroom community between students, and provide their students with support beyond the course.

Emotion labor and motivation

In the first study within this category, Zhang and Zhang (2023) observed Zoe, a novice Chinese language teacher, during her second year in the profession at a private tertiary institution. The institution expected teachers, including Zoe, to be empathetic and encouraging toward students despite their demotivation and disruptive behavior. Moreover, the institution took advantage of its constant observation policy to suppress teachers. The test-oriented curriculum within the institution was also against Zoe's professional beliefs and training. These chronic (i.e., ongoing institutional pressure) and acute (i.e., sudden critical moments inside the classroom) sources of emotion labor diminished Zoe's enthusiasm, and she ultimately resigned from the language teaching profession to preserve her well-being.

In another study, Yang and Yin (2024) demonstrated how three Chinese language teachers' motivations were enabled and constrained by their daily emotion labor. The study revealed two general feeling rules. The first one was "Don't show negative emotions" (p. 5) despite the fact that teachers felt anxious due to heavy workload and the pressure to publish research papers for promotion. The second feeling rule was "Do show positive emotions" (p. 5) to create an engaging leaning environment. Consequently, three types of motivations emerged, including relational, bumpy, and adaptive. In relational motivation, teachers' interest in conducting research was entirely driven by external factors. A bumpy motivational type was characterized by resisting feeling rules by showing anger in response to students' lack of engagement. In adaptive motivation, teachers tried to conform to institutional demands through designing engaging learning tasks.

Finally, Banegas (2024) investigated the interplay of emotion labor, language teacher (de)motivation, and agency in Silvia, an Argentinian language teacher. Short stories constructed out of rounds of interview data with Silvia along with her drawings of her emotions comprised the data source. In the first story, Silvia decided to join teacher strikes because of being underpaid and lack of institutional support during COVID-19. Here, Silvia drew a laptop screen with images of his students and a blank space representing her absence. In the second story, Silvia decided to resist a school principal's pressure to join strikes. The next day, however, Silvia and her students were locked out of the school by the principal. Silvia illustrated herself at the school door with her hands on her side as a symbol of inaction. In the last story, the teacher union representative reproached Silvia because she refused to join the strike. He told Silvia that she was an English teacher who endorsed neoliberal ideologies and English-speaking countries hegemonic practices. Silvia could say nothing but to go home and cry. She depicted herself inside a tumble dryer to show her confusion following this event. At the time of the study, Silvia was on a two-week sick leave due to the emotion labor she had experienced as a result of power imbalance.

Miscellaneous themes

This subsection synthesized research on themes addressed by one or two studies. For instance, Benesch (2018) and Benesch (2019) examined how language teachers exercised their agency to resist strict institutional policies on dealing with students' *plagiarism* and *attendance*, respectively. Miller and Gkonou (2018) demonstrated how dealing with teacher-student relationship engendered both *emotion labor* and *emotional rewards*. As to *professional development*, studies indicated that the struggle to manage emotion labor resulting from the gap between theory and practice (Song, 2021) and engaging in deep acting as well as expression of genuine feelings in response to institutional pressure (Ding et al., 2022) led to language teachers' professional growth. The

intersection of emotion labor and action research leading to the development of language teacher-researcher identity made up the subject of a recent study by Nazari et al. (2024b). Afreen and Norton (2024) identified lack of funding and training as well as poor organization and teacher recognition as the sources of emotion labor among *teachers of languages other than English*, what Li and De Costa (2023) called 'small' languages. A *taxonomy of language teachers' emotion labor*, including "anger, distress, depersonalization, and demotivation" (p. 10) originating from hierarchical organizational culture was developed by De Costa et al. (2023). Yet, other themes included *emotion labor in response to supervisor feedback* (Nazari & Karimi, 2024), *emotion labor across demographic factors* (Aminifard et al., 2024), and *translanguaging and emotion labor* resulting from linguistic inferiority and lack of a shared first language (Hopkyns & Dovchin, 2024). Figure 1 illustrates the relevant research themes and their corresponding number of documents.
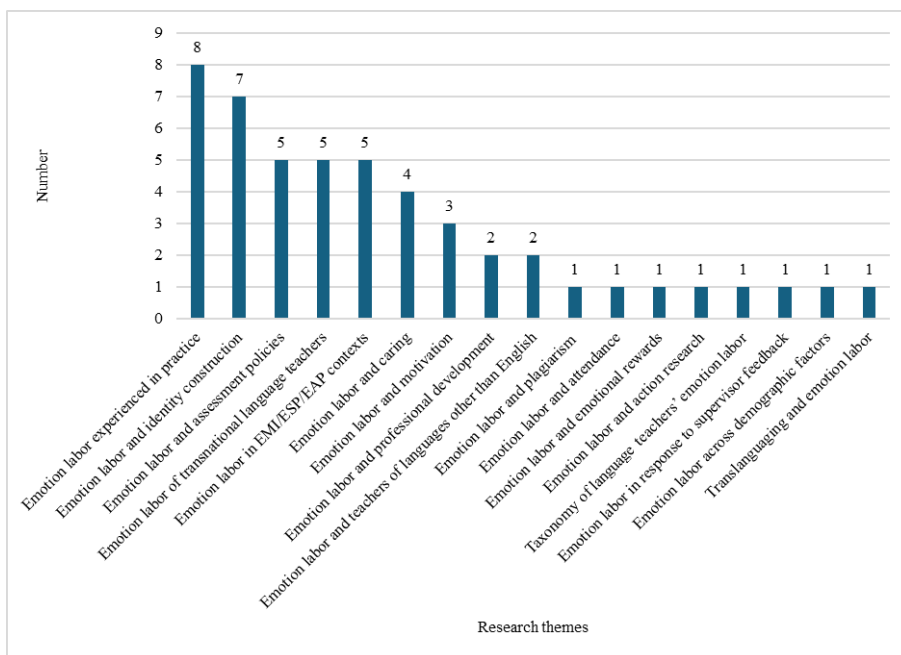

Figure 1. Research Themes in Poststructuralist-Discursive Approach to Language Teacher Emotion Labor

Research Methods

The poststructuralist-discursive research on language teachers' emotion labor reviewed here was almost exclusively framed within the qualitative strand, including case study (e.g., Afreen & Norton, 2024; Her & De Costa, 2022; Hopkyns & Gkonou, 2023; Oliveira & Barcelos, 2024), ethnography (Li & De Costa, 2023), and autoethnography (Cinaglia et al., 2024; Hillman et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2021). Except for a few longitudinal studies (e.g., Ding et al., 2022; Kocabaş-Gedik & Hart, 2021; Zhang & Zhang, 2023), the rest of the empirical research endeavors in our data set employed a cross-sectional approach. Semi-structured interview (e.g., Benesch, 2018, 2019, 2020a, b; De Costa et al., 2020; Hopkyns & Dovchin, 2024; Miller & Gkonou, 2018; Zhao et al., 2022), comprised the most prevailing data collection instrument. Reflective journals and classroom observations were also utilized along with interviews in some studies (e.g., Nazari et al., 2024b; Zhang, 2023) for data triangulation purposes. Document analysis (e.g., Yang & Yin, 2024; Zhang, 2023; Zhang & Zhang, 2023; Zhao, 2022) formed another essential data collection tool as

a measure to isolate explicit institutional feeling rules. Other emerging data curation instruments included:

- Narrative frames: used by Nazari and Molana (2022) and Nazari et al. (2024d), a narrative frame represented a variation of narrative in the form of an incomplete narrative to be completed by participants. The structured nature of narrative frames was believed to help researchers collect data focused on their variables of interest.

- Vignettes: as deployed by Meşe and Mede (2024), a vignette was a drawing based on the data collected through other data collection instruments, including narratives and narrative frames

- Short stories: stories reconstructed from data gleaned through interviews and/or narratives as in Banegas (2024)

- Visuals: drawings that depicted internal feelings as employed by Banegas (2024), who took account of Silvia's internal feelings through analyzing her drawings of the emotion labor she experienced in different situations

The only quantitative poststructuralist-discursive piece of research on language teachers' emotion labor in our database was Aminifard et al. (2024). This study investigated emotion labor among Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers across their gender, career length, and affiliation using a researcher developed questionnaire informed by Benesch and Prior's (2023) guidelines.

Research Implications

In addition to specific implications for particular teaching contexts such as online education (e.g., Afreen & Norton, 2024; Liu et al., 2021), poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor offered several broad implications as outlined in this subsection. First, it was suggested that emotion labor, rather than being regarded as a negative undertaking to be avoided, could be considered a site of activism and praxis to incur institutional reforms (Benesch, 2018, 2019, 2020a; Hopkyns & Gkonou, 2023; Yang & Yin, 2024). Next, the literature reviewed here identified the need for raising language teachers' awareness regarding emotion labor and its significant bearing on practice, burnout, and overall well-being (Ding et al., 2022; Ghyasi & Gurbuz, 2023; Miller & Gkonou, 2018; Nazari et al., 2024b; Warner & Diao, 2022). In line with this implication, some studies (Benesch, 2019; De Costa et al., 2020; Nazari & Molana, 2022; Zhang, 2023) highlighted the need to incorporate training on emotion labor into language teacher education programs to provide teachers with the necessary skills to manage workplace feeling rules. Yet, the need for teacher collaboration in navigating power imbalance and the resulting emotion labor (Benesch, 2020b; Song, 2021) was another implication of the relevant research. Shifting focus from teachers to policymakers, some studies (Aminifard et al., 2024; Her & De Costa, 2022; Meşe & Mede, 2024; Nazari et al., 2024c; Zhang & Zhang, 2023; Zhao et al., 2022) called for paying attention to practitioners' emotions while making educational decisions.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present contribution is a timely review of poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor. It aimed to shed light on the themes hitherto investigated in this area of research, the methods employed in the relevant body of literature, and the implications of such research. The findings from our review revealed valuable insights into the emotion labor experienced by language teachers across various teaching contexts, particularly in the wake of the

COVID-19 pandemic (Liu et al., 2021, 2024; Nazari et al., 2024c), face-to-face instruction (Cinaglia et al., 2024), and educational settings imbued with a particular ideology such as neoliberalism as in the context of Brazil (Oliveira & Barcelos, 2024). The studies also highlighted the complex interplay of institutional feeling rules, language teacher identity construction (Kocabaş-Gedik & Hart, 2021; Lleses, 2024; Zhang, 2023) and motivation (Banegas, 2024; Yang & Yin, 2024). Furthermore, the findings from Benesch (2020a, b), Her and De Costa (2022), and Nazari and Molana (2022) demonstrated how top-down assessment policies and restricted teacher autonomy in this respect caused emotion labor among teachers and raised their concern over unjust and unfair uses of language tests. Regarding the emotion labor of transnational English teachers, the reviewed literature (e.g., Alshakhi & Ha, 2020; Hopkyns & Gkonou, 2023) indicated how transnational teachers underwent emotion labor as a result of lack of sociocultural training. Other themes given sporadic research attention by scholars within poststructuralist-discursive camp included, among others, emotion labor among EMI/EAP/ESP teachers (e.g., Derakhshan et al., 2023), the link between emotion labor and professional development (Song, 2021), emotion labor across demographic factors (Aminifard et al., 2024).

The research methods employed in this body of literature were predominantly qualitative, encompassing case studies and (auto)ethnographies. Semi-structured interviews along with document analysis, journal writing, reflections, narrative frames, short stories, vignettes, and visuals comprised the most frequently used data collection instruments in this line of research. The reliance on qualitative techniques in researching language teacher emotion labor could be attributed to the complex and dynamic nature of emotions, which require in-depth exploration of implicit feeling rules and their impact on language teachers' emotions and decision-making.

Moreover, the implications of the poststructuralist-discursive research on language teacher emotion labor indicated the need for institutional reforms and policymakers to consider teachers' emotions in their composition of institutional expectations. Raising language teachers' awareness of emotion labor strategies through collaborative support networks and teacher education programs appeared to be an essential step in preparing teachers to address workplace pressure. Finally, language teachers were encouraged to exercise agency and activism to navigate emotion labor caused by institutional power imbalance.

Although a focus on poststructuralist-discursive perspective per se was a major limitation of the current review, the findings revealed the need to address language teachers' emotion labor in order to enhance their instructional efficacy and well-being. Furthermore, a closer scrutiny of the present research synthesis identified future directions in this area of investigation outlined below. First, the need for "theoretical transparency" (Benesch, 2019, p. 2) and preserving the criticality of poststructuralist-discursive framework (Benesch & Prior, 2023) should be recognized by future studies framed within this approach. Next, the themes hitherto investigated are significant, but further in-depth investigations of the same themes and other thus far overlooked aspects of language teachers' work (e.g., institutional pressure on teachers to attend to a myriad of instructional, scholarly, and administrative responsibilities) probably provides us with a closer understanding of emotion labor in language education. Regarding the significant role of context, studies from a wide variety of educational settings as well as cross-cultural studies can offer valuable insights into language teachers' emotion labor. With respect to research methods, the findings signify the need for more longitudinal, observational, and mixed-methods research in this area. Conducting mixed-methods studies, in turn, entails the urgent need to develop and validate language teacher emotion labor scales rooted in the findings of the previous research. Finally, future studies on language teacher emotion labor are advised to adopt an integrative approach that combines various theoretical frameworks to enrich our understanding of this complex phenomenon.

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Asterisks (∗) denote works included in the current review.

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