

Language teacher associations as a nexus of research and practice: A collaborative autoethnography

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ABSTRACT

Due to what has been identified as an increasing divide between language teaching practice and research, there exists a growing need to identify unique ways of building sustained collaborations between researchers and teachers. This is particularly needed in the context of world languages (WL) teaching in the United States, which faces numerous challenges arising from pervasive macro-level forces at the state and national levels. One promising means of addressing this need is teachers' and researchers' collective engagement with language teacher associations. Taking a collaborative autoethnographic approach, this qualitative study sought to understand how individuals of varied and overlapping roles (e.g., researchers, WL teachers, teacher educators, students, members and leaders of a language teaching association) perceived the structure and mutually contributory nature of one state level teacher association in the United States. Findings indicated that WL teachers and researchers both contributed to and received contributions from the language teacher association in diverse ways. In addition, the findings revealed how the rationale and type of bidirectional contributions were shaped by the constraints and affordances of the state context. The study illuminates the potential of language teacher associations in mediating and sustaining such a research-practice nexus and collective agency in challenging contexts. Implications for language teachers, researchers, teacher educators, and language teacher associations are discussed.

1. Introduction

Recent research in applied linguistics has concerned itself with the growing divide between the work of language practitioners and researchers (Rose, 2019; Sato & Loewen, 2022). This divide has been seen as a threat to the development and validity of both language teaching research and practice as well as the shared goals of supporting students' linguistic and social outcomes. Out of these growing discussions have come numerous recommendations for building a more mutually supportive and bidirectional relationship between practitioners and researchers (Hwang et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2022; Sato & Loewen, 2022; Shu et al., 2024). One recurring idea is the creation of structures that facilitate partnerships between schools, institutions, and other organizations, such as language teacher associations (LTAs) (Lamb et al., 2012; Sato & Loewen, 2022; Smith & Kuchah, 2016). By working collectively and sharing resources, it is argued that all involved in language teaching will be more prepared to respond to challenges and think proactively about the future (De Costa et al., 2022).

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In this study, we highlight and examine one context—world languages (WL) education in the U.S. state of Oklahoma—in which a range of individuals of diverse roles (e.g., teachers, researchers, teacher educators, administrators) and their respective institutions (e.g., schools, universities, LTA) are working collectively to build community, improve teaching, and address challenges and needs. Despite the ubiquity of multilingualism in Oklahoma and the United States more broadly, significant challenges persist for advancing WLs in the state and beyond. The pervasiveness and power of English monolingualism continues to have an impact on national and state policy decisions, resource allocation, public perceptions toward multilingualism, and the growth of WL programs across the country (Fogle & Moser, 2017; Stein-Smith, 2019; Swanson & Mason, 2018). In Oklahoma, the Oklahomans for World Language Teaching Association (OFLTA) serves as the primary organization for elementary and secondary (i.e., K-12) and postsecondary WL teachers, administrators, researchers, and teacher educators who care and advocate for WL teaching and multilingualism in the state. Through professional development, opportunities to share resources, and collaboration at conferences, OFLTA seeks to create opportunities for all involved in language teaching to develop in their practice and advocacy, build community, and identify common ground on issues that affect the teaching and learning of WLs in Oklahoma.

We, the researchers, have been and continue to be involved in OFLTA in varying capacities. As individuals of varied and overlapping roles (e.g., researchers, teachers, teacher educators, students, members and leaders of a language teaching association) in Oklahoma, our ongoing collaborations, reflections, and conversations have led us to engage together in this research on the roles and possibilities of LTAs. Given calls for more research on researchers who engage in dialogue with practitioners in the context of institutional and organizational partnerships (De Costa et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022; Paran, 2016; Sato et al., 2022), the current study examines one association for language teachers, OFLTA, as the center of research and practice in Oklahoma. Specifically, this qualitative collaborative autoethnographic study explores the experiences and perspectives of individuals seeking to sustain such a “nexus” of research and practice amidst macro-level contextual forces. Focusing on the context of WLs in Oklahoma, our research highlights the unique possibilities of collective agency between language teachers and researchers in challenging contexts. By centering our focus on the agency of LTAs, which have been documented internationally (Lamb et al., 2012), it is our hope that the findings of this study may incite reflection and action for language teachers and researchers seeking to build and sustain institutional partnerships. Our collaborative autoethnographic study was guided by two research questions:

1. How do WL researchers and teachers perceive the nature of the WL teaching-research relationship in Oklahoma?
2. In what ways does the state context shape the partnership between WL teachers and researchers?

2. Literature review

2.1. Need for language teacher-researcher dialogue

All those involved in language teaching and learning, including language teachers, researchers, and teacher educators, among others, share a common goal of identifying, enacting, and extending effective language teaching to support student learning and well-being. Despite these shared goals, however, many have argued that the divide between language teachers and language researchers has been widening (Kramsch, 2015; Sato & Loewen, 2022). Rose (2019) characterizes the divide as a hierarchy whereby language “researchers mingle in an isolated academic community ‘above’ while the majority of teachers ‘below’ are distanced from research and disempowered within research agenda setting” (p. 896), thus calling for more teacher-informed rather than researcher-informed research.

Language teachers and researchers, however, both face obstacles in bridging this divide. In many contexts, language teachers face increasing workloads and political scrutiny while having fewer resources, less autonomy, and limited time to do it (Sato & Loewen, 2022; Torshizi, 2018). Language teachers also lack institutional support for engaging in or with research, which researchers may not be aware of (Borg & Liu, 2013; Rose, 2019). Others have argued that professional publications are becoming more intellectualized and difficult for teachers to access (Coss & Hwang, 2024; De Costa et al., 2022; Kramsch, 2015; Marsden & Kaspruwicz, 2017). In addition, language researchers are prone to taking a deficit approach to researching classroom language teaching, “identifying what has not been done correctly” and then seeking “to repair problematic classroom practices” (De Costa et al., 2022, p. 9). Researchers, on the other hand, face pressures related to “publication culture” and institutional expectations for scholarly output (Sato & Loewen, 2022, p. 514). In this way, many researchers are not incentivized by their institutional expectations to collaborate or seek long term dialogue with teachers within high-stakes accountability systems (Sato et al., 2022; Sato & Loewen, 2022). Together, these forces extend the gap between language teachers and researchers and constrain the extent to which the shared goals of stronger practice and student outcomes can be attained, thus advancing the idea of the formation and sustainment of dialogue between language teachers and researchers.

2.2. Language teacher-researcher partnerships

One approach to mitigating these obstacles and facilitating sustained dialogue between language teachers and researchers is the creation of a partnership in which teachers, researchers, schools, postsecondary institutions, and/or other organizations collaborate toward shared goals (Sato & Loewen, 2022). Sato and Loewen (2022) and Rose (2019) characterize such partnerships as a bidirectional relationship which positions both parties as “equal and contributing coproducers of knowledge” (Traynor et al., 2015, p. 99) which assists in destratifying the school-institution hierarchy (Rose, 2019). Sato and Loewen (2022) provide recommendations for facilitating such partnerships. First, establishing a collaborative mindset between teachers and researchers helps all to understand that both

possess different and valid types of knowledge relevant to their shared goals. Another avenue for facilitating partnerships is for the topics of potential research projects to originate from the interest, goals, and challenges of practitioners themselves (Torshizi, 2018). In addition, Sato and Loewen (2022) suggest seeking out venues that facilitate dialogue between teachers and researchers such as language teacher education programs, professional development, and university-school partnerships. Workshops and other professional development opportunities have been identified in the research as prime spaces for teacher-researcher engagement (Abbott et al., 2018; Sato et al., 2022). Support from institutions such as universities, departments of education, language teacher associations, and school districts can help organize venues for the research-teaching dialogue while alleviating practical obstacles related to time, funding, space, and expectations.

Studies have identified a number of diverse examples of partnerships between language teachers and researchers. De Costa et al. (2022) highlighted four instances of community engaged research across diverse language teaching contexts, ranging from an inquiry group with EFL teachers in Nepal to sustained professional development for immigrant and refugee language teachers in the United States. Action research originating from language teachers is another approach (Banegas, 2019; De Costa et al., 2022; Lopez-Gopar et al., 2021; Vangrieken et al., 2017), although Sato and Loewen (2022) recommend that “research topics be negotiated between teachers and researchers, with teachers taking a primary role in generating ideas and researchers taking up these ideas” (p. 517) and teachers evaluating the findings given challenges of workload and time (Torshizi, 2018). Language teachers can also be invited to present findings from their research to a wider audience, such as the case with a researcher working with teachers in Sri Lanka who co-presented with his teacher-researcher partners at multiple conferences (De Costa et al., 2022). Professional conferences on language teaching offer a space for language teachers and researchers to come together, “refresh their enthusiasm, find out about new trends and resources in the field, and to engage in professional debate” (Paran, 2016, p. 129). Given the financial barriers of conference travel and registration, however, institutional support is essential for practitioners in actualizing these opportunities (Hwang et al., 2024).

Language teacher educators may be uniquely suited to establish spaces for dialogue between teachers and researchers (Gao, 2019). In addition to contributing their institutional resources and access to such a partnership (Hwang et al., 2024), Rose (2019) recognizes how a language teacher educator’s identity “straddles the research and teaching domains” (p. 900), thus acting as a bridge for connection through their work with pre-service language teachers and in-service professional development. Further, Hwang et al. (2024) explain that language teacher educators “live at the research-practice gap in their everyday work, and more importantly, they consciously perform ‘bridging’ and ‘mediating’ roles in much of their practice” (p. 3; see also Nguyen et al., 2022). This is further supported by research demonstrating an association between the value researchers place on facilitating workshops and their perceptions of their research as practical and relevant for language teachers (Sato et al., 2022).

2.3. Language teacher associations as partnerships

Research on language teacher associations (LTAs) is a small yet growing area of inquiry (Smith & Kuchah, 2016). Noted previously for its dearth of research, LTAs have since been the increasing focus of a number of research articles and an edited volume on the topic (see Elsheikh et al., 2018). Lamb’s (2012) international study conceptualizes LTAs broadly “as networks of professionals, run by and for professionals, focused mainly on support for members, with knowledge exchange and development as well as representation of members’ views as their defining functions” (p. 9), although these functions vary by language teaching context. Conferences offered by LTAs have been shown to have an impact on language teachers’ practice, confidence, and community building, while also ameliorating feelings of isolation (Borg, 2015; Lamb, 2012; Neubauer & Wesely, 2023), which may assist in recruiting and retaining language teachers (Swanson, 2012; Swanson & Mason, 2018).

Among the many purposes of LTAs is the goal of promoting, presenting, and sponsoring research around language teaching and learning (Ashcraft, 2018; Mahboob & England, 2018). Smith and Kuchah (2016), in fact, argue that research is at the heart of LTA practice, with such research involving “a collective attempt within a TA [teacher association] to carry out research based on members’ expressed practical needs” (p. 213). LTAs around the world have been found to involve themselves in research by attracting funding for research projects, collecting and analyzing poll and feedback data from membership, supporting language teacher members in their own research, repositioning plenary and keynote sessions long term research collaborations, and disseminating research through events and publications (Lamb, 2012; Paran, 2016). LTAs also present research-based sessions, invite researchers to speak, and sometimes offer outlets for research publications (Lamb et al., 2012), thus acting as an organic professional community of teachers (Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Echoing recommendations from Sato and Loewen (2022), LTAs are uniquely poised to collaborate on research with other organizations and institutions (Lamb et al., 2012; Allwright 1998) positions LTAs as providing “a ‘location’, both physical and psychological (but mostly psychological), for the collegiality and continuity so essential to sustainability” (as cited in Smith & Kuchah, 2016, p. 213) of the teacher-research relationship. LTAs often creatively partner with other institutions or organizations to extend their message and provide better access for membership (Lamb et al., 2012). In this way, many position LTAs as a bridge between language teachers and researchers (Paran, 2016; Sato & Loewen, 2022) while also promoting community and pedagogical self-efficacy (Borg, 2015; Lamb et al., 2012; Neubauer & Wesely, 2023). LTAs, however, do not exist in isolation, but instead are influenced by the supporting and constraining systems within which they reside. Reynolds (2018) suggests that “seeing the LTA as part of the larger educational system reminds us to consider the ecology of the landscape in which we operate” (p. 42). In this way, LTAs change the way they operate in response to dynamic contextual forces and the needs of membership and language teachers within their purview.

Few studies, however, have specifically explored the perceptions, impacts, and structures of WL teacher associations in the United States (Davis & Howlett, 2022; Neubauer & Wesely, 2023; Ritz, 2021). Despite the research exploring LTAs, Smith and Kuchah (2016) argue that they are still “strikingly neglected in the broader literature on teacher development” (p. 220). This is particularly evident

within the context of WLs in the United States. Further, [Paran \(2016\)](#) suggests future research explores the relationship between LTA conferences and teacher development, necessitating research collaborations between teacher educators, researchers, language teachers, and LTAs themselves. With university-based teacher education programs and language teacher educators playing an important role in establishing and sustaining dialogue between WL teachers and researchers, further research is needed to examine the potential of LTAs in facilitating such partnerships.

3. Methods

3.1. Context of the study

This study is situated in Oklahoma, a landlocked state in the South-Central area of the United States. While English is the prevailing language in the state, languages such as Spanish, Vietnamese, and Marshallese, among many others, are also common (U.S. Census, n. d.). Oklahoma is home to 39 sovereign Native American tribal nations, many of which predate American colonialism. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forcibly relocated additional tribal nations to what is now Oklahoma territory, notably shaping the state’s Indigenous landscape before Oklahoma statehood in 1907. As such, numerous Indigenous languages are represented and used throughout the state (Sam Noble Museum, n.d.). This comprehensive linguistic diversity positions Oklahoma as a thoroughly multi-lingual state despite English’s status as the official language and constrained opportunities for formal language education.

The current study is contextualized within two structures in which we, the authors, are involved: OFLTA and the World Languages Education program at the University of Oklahoma. OFLTA is a non-profit teacher association which foremost seeks to promote WL in the state. The LTA acts as the unifying body for world language teachers in the state and provides multiple conferences and other professional development opportunities each year. The administrative board of the LTA comprises volunteers from a range of positions, including WL teachers, teacher educators, researchers, administrators, and advocates from the elementary to postsecondary level.

The second institution-housed structure is the World Languages Education (WLE) program at the University of Oklahoma, a large public research university classified as a “high research activity” institution. The WLE Program, of which William and Rebecca are professors and Katelin and Wenqing are doctoral students and advisees, is housed within the education college and primarily serves pre-service and in-service language teachers across the undergraduate to doctoral levels.

World languages, traditionally referred to as ‘foreign’ languages, is a subject area that is frequently taught in Oklahoma schools and institutions from the elementary to postsecondary levels. World languages classes typically entail teaching a language other than English to students who most often speak English as their first language, with the goal of guiding “learners to develop competence to communicate effectively and interact with cultural competence to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world” (ACTFL, n.d.).

Because of the unique nature of language pedagogy compared to other subject areas ([Haukås, Mercer, & Svalberg, 2021](#)) and the common positioning of WL study as a voluntary elective ([Fogle & Moser, 2017](#)), WL programs often face challenges to their programmatic growth. In addition, recent legislation (Oklahoma House Bill 3278) was passed which stripped the study of WLs as a requirement for high school graduation. The effects of this raises barriers for continued advanced language study (Oklahoma State Legislature, 2024), thus constraining WL programs and contributing to teacher isolation ([López-Gómez & Albright, 2009](#)). This phenomenon is not specific to Oklahoma ([Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016](#)) and has been shown to lead to stress and teacher burnout ([Acheson et al., 2016](#)).

3.2. Collaborative autoethnography

Given that the idea for this research originated from ongoing conversations of our varied roles and identities as researchers, language teachers, teacher educators, students, and members and leaders of a language teaching association, we approached the design of this study as a collaborative autoethnography. Collaborative autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology in which “researchers work in community to collect their autobiographical materials and to analyze and interpret their data collectively to gain a meaningful understanding of sociocultural phenomena reflected in their autobiographical data” ([Chang et al., 2013](#), p. 23). This method has grown as an established form of empirical research in the field of education ([Hughes et al., 2012](#)) and has been increasingly encouraged in applied linguistics and teacher education ([De Costa et al., 2022](#); [Mirhosseini, 2018](#)) due to its capacity to examine the relationships between environment, self, and others. In addition, collaborative autoethnography as a methodology has been recommended for language teachers and researchers in addressing the gap between research and practice ([De Costa et al., 2022](#); [Hwang et al., 2024](#); [Rose, 2019](#)). We, the authors (William, Rebecca, Katelin, Wenqing), are the four participants of this collaborative

Table 1
Researchers’ self-identified roles.

	Language Teacher	Researcher	Student	Teacher Educator	LTA Member	LTA Leader
William		x		x	x	x
Rebecca		x		x	x	x
Katelin	x	x	x		x	x
Wenqing		x	x		x	

autoethnographic study. Table 1 illustrates our various self-identified roles across institutions and organizations.

3.2.1. Researcher positionality

As this study examines language teachers' and researchers' perceptions of the teacher-researcher partnership in Oklahoma, it is important for us to share our positionality in relation to the research context and each other as co-researchers. This is particularly needed given our overlapping and connected roles and identities that introduce a power imbalance and potential bias toward the research context.

William's positionality statement. As a researcher, teacher educator, and LTA leader in Oklahoma, I enter into this research with an understanding that I inhabit numerous roles that interact with those of both my co-authors and the teachers we have interviewed. Despite best intentions, I recognize that my positionality entails an imbalance of power that must be named and addressed. As a teacher educator, researcher, and professor, two of my co-authors on this paper are also my students and advisees. Further, as the President of our state organization, OFLTA, I represent and serve all WL teachers in the state, including my co-authors, one of whom is a board member alongside me. To address this dynamic, we have worked together to develop a methodology that fosters even engagement amongst us, from co-constructing data collection prompts, to conversations about the direction of analysis, to the writing of the manuscript. While these interacting roles and the familiarity of the research context bring challenges, these relationships and knowledge have also acted as a catalyst for productive, reflective, and meaningful research for which I am thankful.

Rebecca's positionality statement. As a pre-tenure teacher educator, researcher, former President of OFLTA, faculty advisor, and mentor to graduate students involved as co-participants in the current study, my positionality within this research warrants thoughtful consideration. These overlapping roles present both opportunities and potential biases that I have attempted to address throughout the scope of the research process. My familiarity with the participants in this collaborative autoethnography provided a meaningful context for engaging with their perspectives and experiences across the various roles we inhabit professionally. However, it also requires acknowledging the inherent power dynamic present between professor (researcher and teacher educator) and student. To mitigate potential bias, we collectively engaged in several strategies that included co-construction of journal prompts and iterative reflections. Additionally, each of us were encouraged to voice dissenting interpretations without fear of repercussions. Promoting shared authorship and the valued contributions of each person involved in the research to amplify all voices was my primary objective as a researcher. Engaging in our research this way provided insight into each of our perspectives regarding the nexus of the researcher-practitioner partnership, while simultaneously allowing me to recognize and reflect on the influence of my own position as the professor of two members of our research team and the colleague of another.

Katelin's positionality statement. I'm engaging in this research as a middle school Spanish teacher, Ph.D. candidate, and the President-Elect of OFLTA. Two of my co-authors are professors on my dissertation committee, and we have collaborated as board members of OFLTA. I argue that the reflective nature of this project has provided a mutual learning experience that highlights the interconnectedness of our roles rather than reinforcing a power dynamic. I acknowledge that my involvement in these spaces shapes my analysis of the relationships between associations, WL teaching, and WL research. However, my engagement also informs my understanding and enables me to interrogate the dynamics within these spaces. Even more, it allows me to consider how and why I identify with these roles. I am a teacher deeply dedicated to public education. While I occasionally face imposter syndrome as a researcher, this work has fostered introspection and built my confidence. My experiences as a teacher and researcher also enrich my contributions to the OFLTA board. These roles do not exist in isolation; they intersect and support one another, shaping my experiences and perspectives.

Wenqing's positionality statement. As a second-year Ph.D. student, I see myself as an emerging researcher who is learning how to conduct research and pursue my degree. Given the hierarchical structure between professors and students, there is naturally an imbalance in power dynamics. However, this potential imbalance was mitigated through dialogue and reflection journals, ensuring a more equitable collaboration. Reflection journals allowed me to contribute my insights to the study, while research meetings created opportunities for open and critical conversations to exchange ideas and co-create knowledge. Rather than being a worker, I was actively involved in collaborating with the other researchers to make decisions and contribute to the project. For me, this was an experience of mutual learning, as our different experiences and perspectives were shared and valued throughout the entire process.

3.3. Additional participants

After the first weeks of data collection, we collectively realized that our ongoing analysis needed additional voices to discuss, validate, and complicate the knowledge we were producing. Referred to as theoretical validation (Walther et al., 2013), the approach seeks to critically examine the "fit between the social reality under investigation and the theory produced" (p. 641). To this end, we decided together to reach out to two additional WL teachers who we knew existed within and likely had unique perspectives on the teaching-research partnership we had discussed given their multi-layered roles in WL teaching. It is important to note that we did not invite the two teachers to journal and converse with us as equal co-researchers, but rather engaged with them through individual semi-structured interviews. The intention behind the decision was to bring our growing collaborative conceptualization of the teaching-research nexus in Oklahoma to two additional teachers for triangulation of our analytic approach.

The first participant, Alice (pseudonym), is an early career WL teacher in Oklahoma who is also a member of OFLTA. We purposefully identified Alice given her recent initial experiences with attending and presenting at an OFLTA conference. The second participant, Helen (pseudonym), is a mid-career WL teacher in Oklahoma whom we identified as a potential participant given her longstanding involvement with the OFLTA organization.

3.4. Data collection

Three types of data were collected across the participants in this study over the course of approximately two months (Fig. 1). Data generated from the four of us included two independently written journal entries, recorded conversations from three meetings, and conversations during interviews with the two additional teachers. We chose to alternate between journal entries and group conversations because “the combination of individual and group works adds rich texture to the collective work” (Chang et al., 2013, p. 24). Prompts for our journal entries were co-constructed and addressed initial topics and themes in our conversations (Appendix). In addition, our responses to the journal prompts and the process of reading each other’s journal entries incited conversation for upcoming meetings.

We also collected data through semi-structured interviews with the two additional teachers, Alice and Helen. We designed the interview protocol to explore the teachers’ experiences with the language teaching association (OFLTA), their perceptions of its function within the state, their perceptions of the relationship between the association, WL teachers, and our WLE Program, and their identities as teachers and researchers (Appendix). To support their reflexivity and engagement and promote methodological transparency, we provided the two teachers with the questions we would ask in advance of the interviews (Haukås & Tishakov, 2024). William and Rebecca were present for the 45-min interview with Alice, while William, Rebecca, and Katelin were present for the 60-min interview with Helen five days later. Interviews and research conversations were transcribed by the research team.

3.5. Analysis

Often in collaborative autoethnographic research, the stages of data collection, analysis, and interpretation take place concurrently and iteratively (Bhattacharya, 2017; Chang et al., 2013). This characterizes our research approach, in which analysis of the data began with the start of data collection. Further, analysis of our initial conversations and journals in response to the first research question (RQ1) led to identifying an additional one (RQ2). This allowed us to continue our self-study as we investigated an extended and logical line of inquiry.

Analysis of the textual data from journal entries, recorded meetings, and the two interviews began with qualitative coding. Our approach to coding was different for each research question as each question sought to generate different types of knowledge (Saldaña, 2021). As RQ1 sought to understand our perceptions of the nature of the WL teacher-researcher relationship in the state, we coded the existing data inductively to ensure that we remained close to our narratives. We applied this coding process only to the initial data sources, namely the journal entries and the transcripts of our first two meetings. For example, we recognized the excerpt, “I feel that now we’ve created this thriving program that supports OFLTA, involves and engages the organization and teachers in research and practice in cool new ways” (Rebecca, Journal #1) as an indicator and evidence of directional support. Through this inductive coding process we began to identify patterns representing the perceived nature and structure of the WL teacher-researcher relationship (Bhattacharya, 2017).

The second research question extended this line of inquiry by seeking to identify our perceptions of what exactly those forces and contributions were and how those forces influence the contributions within the partnership. As we entered the second research question with a developing framework, we selected an *a priori*, provisional approach to coding that allowed us to use our hypothesized framework to organize the data (Saldaña, 2021). Codes in this stage included *macro-level forces* and the four directions of contributions (e.g., *teachers’ contributions to OFLTA*) and were applied to the entire data corpus (i.e., journal entries, meeting transcripts, and interview transcripts). For example, we coded the excerpt, “It’s providing an authentic space for us to generate research” (Rebecca, Meeting #3) as *OFLTA’s contribution to researchers*. As we clustered the excerpts within each coded category of our developing framework, we began to identify patterns illuminating the types of contributions and forces we perceived in the state (Bhattacharya, 2017).

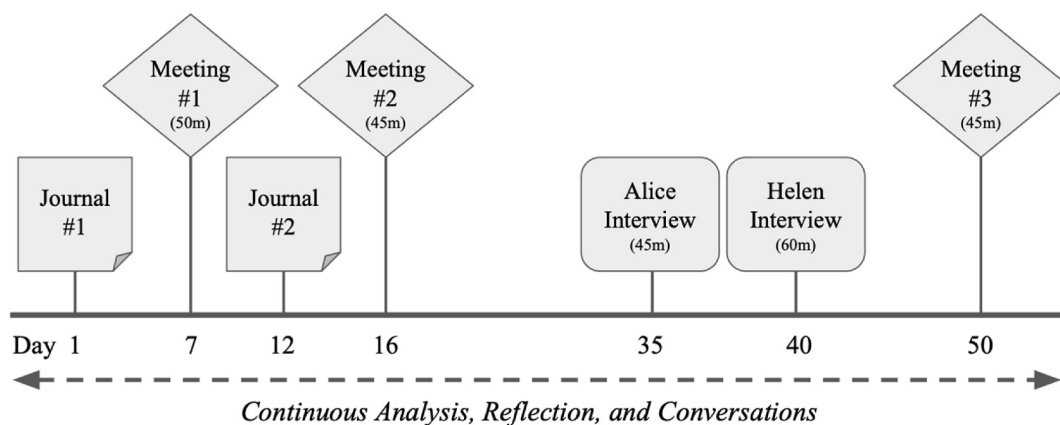


Fig. 1. Timeline of data collection and analysis.

4. Findings

4.1. Research question 1: How do WL researchers and teachers perceive the nature of the WL teaching-research relationship in Oklahoma?

Our initial conversations about the nature of the WL teaching-research relationship in Oklahoma led us to identify the state level organization, OFLTA, as an essential part of connecting teachers and researchers. Through an understanding of partnerships as a mutual relationship featuring a bi-directional flow of knowledge (Rose, 2019; Sato & Loewen, 2022; Shu et al., 2024), we began to recognize OFLTA as playing a facilitatory role in that process. The following exchange took place in our first recorded conversation displaying how we grappled with the nature of the relationship between world language teachers, researchers, and OFLTA in the state:

WILLIAM: ... and so I guess one of the things I'm thinking about moving forward is, what does a partnership mean? I'm not saying you have to contribute to be in a partnership, but ...

REBECCA: It does seem bidirectional. And I think about, what does OFLTA provide as a reciprocal partner? ... You know, they provide a space for us to talk with people and connect with teachers. And yeah, I think they represent a reality that we're not as connected to on the day-to-day as we once were as language teachers. (Meeting #1)

As we continued to discuss the nature of the language teacher-researcher partnership, we each took notes, sketched conceptual maps, and collectively visualized the role and positioning of OFLTA.

Throughout our conversations and writings, we began to position OFLTA as part of a nexus through which the organization contributes to Oklahoma WL teachers and researchers, and to which WL teachers and researchers themselves contribute. This led to William independently sketching a visual of this hypothesized partnership between meetings (Fig. 2). It became clear that we had arrived at a shared understanding during our third conversation as Rebecca noted:

What I was telling William yesterday was that what he actually drew was exactly what I had in my mind. And I feel like, Katelin, when you and I talked, it was similar. We were envisioning the same things about the arrows. And so when William showed it to me yesterday, I was like, yes! (Meeting #3)

Our final visualized structure of this nexus can be seen in Fig. 3, highlighting what we perceived as the reciprocal contributions of WL teachers, OFLTA, and WL researchers. This led us to identify an additional research question examining our perceptions of what those contributions were amidst the influences of macro-level forces in the state.

4.2. Research question 2: In what ways does the state context shape the partnership between WL teachers and researchers?

In this section we highlight the contributory nature of the teacher-researcher partnership, specifically how WL teachers and university researchers contribute to each other through the state language teacher organization, OFLTA. To address this research question, we have organized these contributions into four categories representing the bidirectional nature of the partnership (Shu et al., 2024): (a) WL teachers' contributions to OFLTA, (b) OFLTA's contributions to teachers, (c) researchers' contributions to OFLTA, and (d) OFLTA's contributions to researchers. Within each category we examine how macro-level forces in the Oklahoma context, such as educational policies, ideologies toward language teaching and multilingualism, and institutional support, shape these contributions and how teachers and researchers collaborate to sustain the partnership.

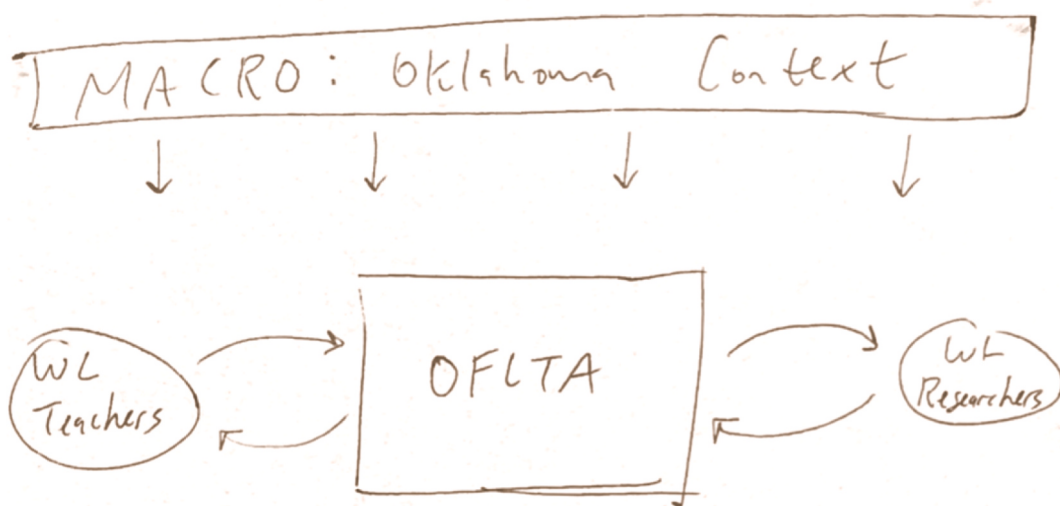


Fig. 2. Initial sketch of the teacher-researcher partnership in Oklahoma.

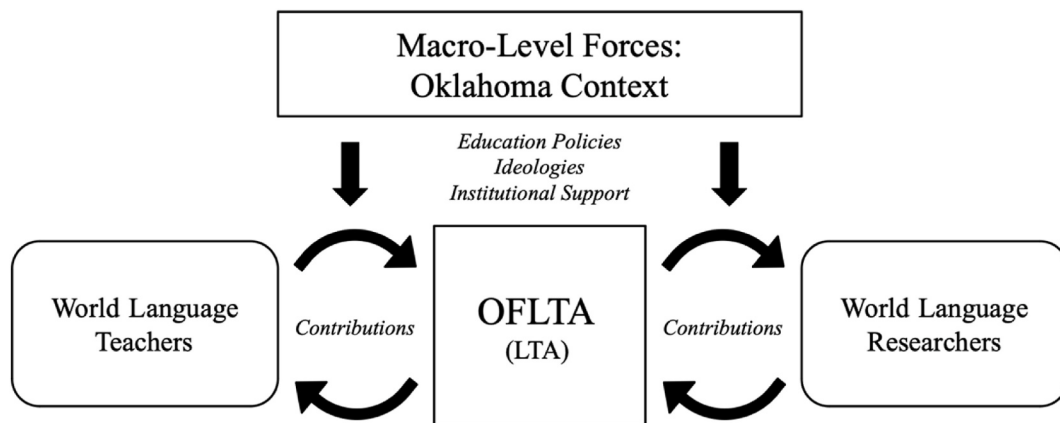


Fig. 3. Final conceptual structure of the nexus of research and practice in Oklahoma.

4.2.1. OFLTA's contributions to teachers

In response to the isolation and lack of support experienced by WL teachers across the state, OFLTA intentionally cultivates itself as a space for community, belonging, and growth for WL teachers in Oklahoma. During our third conversation as a research team, William attempted to make sense of the ways in which the Oklahoma context influenced OFLTA's contributions to the local teaching community: "I think the argument here is that OFLTA, given the challenges in the state, is listening to what teachers need, and at least attempting to create a space that's going to ... I don't know, it's shaped by the needs of teachers."

Since we have been involved in OFLTA, the LTA has positioned itself as a community of WL teachers and advocates and designs its conferences and workshops to reflect that. One teacher and OFLTA member that we interviewed, Helen, affirmed our perspective, sharing: "Whether or not you want to go to a conference, to be a member of your professional organization is to say that 'I belong somewhere, and that's my group, and those are my people.'" As such, conferences are consistently planned so that time for meeting new colleagues and building community is integrated throughout, including gatherings for teachers of the same language. For Wenqing, the sense of community felt through OFLTA as a new graduate student was what made her see herself as part of something bigger. She expressed, "It was my first opportunity to connect with local teachers and other students. I met many Chinese language teachers, and during our language meetings, I felt like I had found a community" (*Wenqing, Journal #2*).

For new WL educators, we see OFLTA as a potential bridge between their university experiences and their professional lives, offering opportunities to build relationships with others who understand the unique challenges of WL instruction. One early-career teacher we interviewed, Alice, described how she experienced this supportive environment as a university student:

Probably the thing that made me most excited about being there was that everybody was so welcoming and kind, and I got to talk to so many people who were in classrooms ... so things like that allowed me to make connections to people in world languages that ended up being really cool because there are people I ended up getting to work with later.

Language teachers also get involved in OFLTA to develop in their language teaching practice. Thus, OFLTA seeks out sessions, professional development, and keynote presentations centered around research-based practices and advocacy to build up teachers' skills and self-efficacy. Calls for conference proposals request sessions centered around research-based practices such as high-leverage teaching practices (*Glisan & Donato, 2017*), advocacy for language teaching and multilingualism, and themes of social justice and diversity. Helen characterized OFLTA as representing "quality cutting-edge professional development that you could pay a lot of money to travel and go somewhere, but we have it right here."

Reflecting on our range of evolving roles as OFLTA leaders, classroom teachers, and researchers, we recalled experiences with OFLTA where conversations about organizing upcoming conferences were rooted in considerations of current trends in research and practice. Rebecca shared that when she began her role on the OFLTA board, she felt that, while the practitioner focus of the conference model worked well, teachers would benefit from knowing "why" they should implement certain techniques. She recalled,

And at the time, it seemed like there were a lot of teachers in need of understanding why they would make a change in their approaches to teaching from something that maybe is more traditional and more grammar translation focused. Why would we use the target language at 90%? Why would we adopt these kinds of practices in our classroom? So I was thinking about it. Let's take a step back and figure out, what does the research say about this, and then we can dig into some of the practitioner stuff around it. (*Rebecca, Meeting #1*)

Throughout our writing and conversations, we also recognized how OFLTA encourages teachers to test new ideas in their classroom that they learned from conferences, reflect, and then present sessions on what has been working in their classrooms, thus re-igniting the cycle for other teachers and researchers. Alice described this relationship between attending and presenting at OFLTA conferences: "It's made me reflective about the practices I'm using in my classroom, because I started thinking about, 'Oh, what are these things I'm using? What's working, and what's working so well that I might want to share it with somebody?'"

Board members, comprising WL teachers, researchers, and state-level language coordinators, make decisions for future offerings based on attendee feedback, teacher surveys, and trends in language teaching at the state and national levels. Katelin, a WL teacher, doctoral candidate, and the current President-Elect of the organization, reflected on conference feedback during one of our group conversations, noting that “so many people brought in advocacy, and that’s the focus for the Winter Workshop ... It’s something that I see, that we try to be intentional about taking that feedback and moving forward with it and really trying to make it teacher-centered” (*Meeting 3*). Reflective practice is ingrained into the process of the OFLTA board, making the LTA highly responsive to teachers’ needs and the dynamic landscape of language education in the state.

4.2.2. Teachers’ contributions to OFLTA

WL teachers play a significant role in sustaining the nexus of research and practice in Oklahoma by contributing their expertise, time, and resources to OFLTA. The most impactful way in which we see WL teachers contributing to OFLTA is through attending conferences and workshops and presenting conference sessions. In Oklahoma, attending and presenting at teacher conferences is typically not expected nor valued in teacher evaluations. Further, we have seen that WL teachers face increasing difficulty in securing funding through their schools to pay for registration costs. Despite these barriers, many WL teachers voluntarily propose sessions to present at OFLTA conferences. Alice explained the factors that led her to present for the first time:

Part of what made me want to do that was recognizing how helpful it had been to hear from other people. And then last year, having had an experience that I thought was pretty relevant and shared between other people in world languages, when I was talking about advocacy within schools, that feeling made me want to share it with other people, because I recognized how helpful it was on the other end of it.

Alice’s narrative represents how WL teachers in Oklahoma often share ideas from their practice with the intention of impacting the practice of their language teacher colleagues from around the state. We have also seen teachers who have engaged in action research by learning something new at a conference, adapting it to their context, and sharing their findings with attendees at a future OFLTA event. Katelin recalled how this cycle represented one of her colleagues:

At the last conference, [the teacher] went and saw the keynote speaker do some brain break about emotions and weather. And she came back [to school] and she was doing it with her kids. ... And so I think again, still with that line of action research, I mean, that’s what it is. She learned it, it’s something she’s trying out in her class. She changed it a little bit to make it fit her purpose and what she needs. And so I think we care about teachers doing this stuff all the time. (*Meeting #3*)

In addition, some WL teachers in Oklahoma make the decision to get involved on the organization’s executive board. Through our collective experiences and conversations, we have seen that one of the primary reasons language teachers choose to involve themselves in an OFLTA board position is because of the urgent need of support for language teachers around the state. Helen echoed this sentiment in her own reasons for getting involved with the organization:

I just see that your state organization wants what’s best for its teachers, and we have people on that board who are implicated in many ways, and others who put their neck out to try and fight for people’s livelihoods. And so that’s important work, and it should be important to every world language teacher.

Although not a board member or leader within OFLTA, Alice affirmed this relationship between participating in the organization and sustaining it:

I think that as somebody who continues to show up to these, you know, essentially large meetings of people in the field to continue learning, and then also I’ve had the opportunity to contribute to that a couple of times now. I feel like that helps to sustain world languages and programs and teaching in the state.

Further, with fewer WL teachers in Oklahoma and thus fewer language teachers regularly engaging with the organization, it is not uncommon to have difficulty filling vacancies on the board. This same reason also contributes to teachers’ decisions to seek a nomination or volunteer for a position. Board positions also require a significant time commitment, including required attendance at two conferences, one workshop, and at least four board meetings each year. In addition, acting in a board member role is voluntary and uncompensated, other than the executive treasurer position. Together, these factors demonstrate teachers’ understanding that “stepping up” and becoming further engaged in the organization has become essential for its sustenance.

Last, WL teachers often coordinate with their administrations to secure space for conferences, workshops, and other professional development opportunities within their own school and school district buildings. As reserving space within local public school buildings often comes free of charge, teachers’ advocacy to secure such spaces significantly alleviates the financial burden on the organization associated with rising conference planning costs and acts as a major contribution to its sustenance.

4.2.3. OFLTA’s contributions to researchers

OFLTA acts as a space for us to stay connected with the experiences, perspectives, and challenges of practitioners in the state. Involving ourselves on the organization’s board and attending and presenting at conferences has allowed us to engage in continuous dialogue with WL teachers and learn about their ideas, practices, needs, and challenges in dynamically changing educational landscape in Oklahoma. Rebecca describes this contribution directly:

Getting to talk with other teachers and hear about what's going on and see what other teachers are doing, I think also sparks some areas that we focus on in terms of our research, whether it's classroom research or just looking at possibilities for professional development on our end. (*Meeting #2*)

Additionally, Alice provides a teacher's perspective on the importance of researchers joining OFLTA and engaging in discussions with teachers:

You guys are active in OFLTA, and so you're constantly hearing from and talking to language educators. ... I don't think you guys would let yourselves become disconnected from it. But I think knowing what's happening in the field, if your research is focused on the educator piece, knowing what their experiences are in language teaching, I think that's probably a good part of that connection there.

These experiences not only directly inform how we (William and Rebecca) plan for and teach in our university program, but also act as the foundation for our lines of research as pre-tenure faculty. While this influence is something we had recognized prior to our self-study research, we did not fully understand the extent to which our experiences with OFLTA catalyzed our research projects and, more broadly, our overall lines of inquiry as we move toward tenure. The following exchange from our third conversation illustrates how we recognized this contribution from OFLTA together:

WILLIAM: Our research is based on what we see in our area. Maybe not explicitly. You can't read the paper and see the word "Oklahoma" a thousand times. But what we're talking about in this paper, you can see the impact, or the origins of this other work from it.

REBECCA: I don't know. I actually disagree. I think you can see Oklahoma in it. I think if you look at any of the practitioner work that we've done, it's all based on the context of Oklahoma. Like the article that Katelin and I co-authored for *The Language Educator*, yours and mine for *The Language Educator*, the chapter that [name] and I wrote about language program vitality. And then our other recent research, 2022 to 2024. It's been Oklahoma teachers and their contexts. It's very local, I think. ... When you really think about it, like, yeah, this is actually exactly what we're doing.

KATELIN: And I think, it's not saying, "Oklahoma, this will only ever work in Oklahoma." It's still tying to the bigger picture.

REBECCA: Absolutely. And that's something that William and I discussed yesterday. Yeah, so how does this play out in other contexts? Because the contexts are different. But there are a lot of states like Oklahoma that could think about how important and central the state organization could be to the vitality of the research work and then and the teachers that belong to the organization. (*Meeting #3*)

William's line of inquiry, for example, centers on the collective agency and leadership of WL and bilingual teachers in the United States, paying particular attention to how language teachers, especially early career language teachers, navigate constraining school, community, and policy environments (Davis & Borden, 2024, 2025; Davis & Howlett, 2022; Janssen Sánchez & Davis, 2024). This area of study developed immediately after William moved to Oklahoma and joined the OFLTA board in 2021, providing him a conduit to recognize the contextual challenges he saw for new and established WL teachers in the state. Similarly, Rebecca's research has explored elementary through secondary WL teachers' self-perceptions of their pedagogical practice, curricular decision making, and oral proficiency (Bell & Borden, 2022; Borden, 2024; Borden & Bell, 2024), placing an emphasis on the relationship between teachers' confidence and agency. William, Rebecca, and Katelin have also written about the ongoing collaboration between OFLTA and the University of Oklahoma World Languages Education program in a teacher-facing journal through ACTFL, *The Language Educator* (Borden & Davis, 2022; Frantz & Borden, 2023).

The topics of our OFLTA conference sessions and workshops have also exemplified the sustainment of this teacher-researcher partnership. In response to conference feedback and needs of local teachers, William, Rebecca, and Katelin collaborated on the annual OFLTA Winter Workshop to design a research-based session on scaffolding students' engagement with target language texts and planning subsequent communicative tasks. Further, William and Katelin are currently collaborating on an upcoming workshop to strengthen WL teachers' advocacy skills in response to the recent legislation in Oklahoma.

Last, we (William and Rebecca) recognized how our continued engagement with OFLTA has acted as passive recruitment for our WL education program. Some teachers who attend OFLTA conferences inquire about and begin graduate studies in our program, thus becoming co-researchers with us on projects situated within the Oklahoma context and strengthening their own agency as teachers. Our mediating and overlapping roles have enabled these contributions, allowing our identities as WL researchers, teacher educators, and advisors to be steadily transformed.

4.2.4. Researchers' contributions to OFLTA

Like WL teachers in the state, we also seek to contribute to and sustain the partnership by regularly presenting at OFLTA conferences, facilitating research-based workshops, and normalizing our pre-service world language teachers' professional engagement with OFLTA and other relevant organizations. As three of us are currently or were previously involved in the organization's four-year president track (William as President, Katelin as President-Elect, and Rebecca as a past President), we recognize our WL education program as a state leader for research-based language teaching practices and, thus, feel a responsibility to support WL teachers around the state in their own practice.

Professional engagement is one of the major goals of our WLs education program and is normalized throughout students' coursework. We also model professional engagement through our own actions. Students in our WL education program, whether pre-service

teachers or current WL teachers, are expected to take part in OFLTA. This is an intentional decision given the impacts it can have on the students and OFLTA. First, we know that as our students graduate and start their first years of language teaching, maintaining a connection with OFLTA will help keep them connected, growing, and thus cultivating their well-being and contributing to their longevity as a language teacher despite statewide challenges. Second, with the low numbers of new WL teachers entering the profession, we hope that in the future they may take on a leadership role with the organization and sustain it as we are doing now.

This dynamic, however, seems to have grown over time. In our second meeting, Rebecca and Katelin discussed their evolving connection with OFLTA. Katelin recalled that as an undergraduate and pre-service teacher, there was no structured WL education program or encouragement from the university to engage with OFLTA, asking, “Did it happen more so when OU got a real WL education program?” Rebecca confirmed there was little connection before, sharing that she first attended as a high school teacher, where a colleague promoted professional development. Her involvement grew in graduate school and, during her doctoral studies, she became more engaged in presenting, stating, “As I got into my PhD, I was more enthusiastic about presenting, also because my advisor thought that was a good idea.” This discussion demonstrated how the WL education program has intentionally cultivated its relationship with OFLTA over the years, suggesting that these actions could be replicated in other contexts.

Another instance evidencing the urgency in which we, WL researchers, engage ourselves in OFLTA is the conflict of how we, including our departmental colleagues, perceive the role of service in our work with how service is ultimately enumerated on annual evaluations. Rebecca addressed this discord between institutional expectations and contextual needs:

For researchers, there’s this push to ingrain the service work that you do at a national level, that’s highly valued. ... But with the Oklahoma context being what it is, that partnership and that support within the state organization is vital to the health of world languages in our state. ... There’s sort of a point value in many cases placed on how we engage with service, and it’s highly valued to participate at the national level, and you know, you get less points. You’re rewarded less for state-level work, and the state-level work is so important. (*Meeting #3*)

Although we recognize the real contributions OFLTA has made to our work and identities as scholars, our continued contributions to OFLTA illustrate the urgency and responsibility we feel to sustain the partnership between language teachers and researchers in the state. As William wrote in one journal entry:

I know that our university, college, and department holds capital—institutional, financial, cultural—that I/we can leverage to further support the goals of OFLTA, such as conferences, workshops, recruitment, and so on. Taking these two together, I feel that there’s a huge responsibility for me to get involved. (*Journal #2*)

Given the urgent challenges in Oklahoma, we argue that engaging in local and state level service is vital for institution-based researchers within the world language teaching context. We are grateful to work alongside our teacher education colleagues who, like us, value and are consistently and deeply engaged in local and state service.

5. Discussion

This qualitative collaborative autoethnography study explored the structure and mutual contributions of a world language teacher-researcher partnership in the United States from the perspectives of individuals embodying multiple roles within that partnership. Our experiences operating across blurred identities as world language teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and members and leaders within the state’s LTA (OFLTA) position us as active members of this partnership to which we contribute and which contributes to us. Our collective experiences within this nexus of language teaching, research, and teacher preparation have also allowed us to map the macro-level forces, such as education policies, ideologies toward language teaching and multilingualism, and institutional support, that shape why and how we and other individuals seek to sustain the partnership. Taken together, the findings provide further synthesis to the literature on language teacher-researcher partnerships (Rose, 2019; Sato & Loewen, 2022) and language teacher associations (Lamb et al., 2012; Paran, 2016; Smith & Kuchah, 2016) in a number of ways.

A unique finding of this study is the critical role of the state’s language teacher association, OFLTA, in how we have perceived the teacher-researcher partnership in Oklahoma. Although seemingly a rudimentary finding, the language teaching-research relationship in Oklahoma explored in this study further demonstrates that the structure and purposes of language teacher-researcher partnerships are diverse and reflect contextual constraints and affordances (De Costa et al., 2022; Hwang et al., 2024; Reynolds, 2018; Sato & Loewen, 2022). While some research exploring the teacher-researcher divide has identified professional conferences as suitable venues for dialogue (De Costa et al., 2022; Paran, 2016; Sato & Loewen, 2022), LTAs, as organizations, have not yet been identified as an indispensable component for the sustainment of such partnerships. In the case of Oklahoma, we recognize OFLTA as playing a critical role of facilitating, mediating, and enabling the work of the partnership’s members, namely WL teachers (i.e., school- and university-based language programs) and WL teacher educators and researchers (i.e., university-based language teacher education programs) through a bidirectional flow of knowledge and mutually-supportive contributions (Rose, 2019; Sato & Loewen, 2022). Perhaps the most representative example of the unique structure of the Oklahoma partnership is how the OFLTA operating board is made up of WL teachers, administrators, researchers, and teacher educators across languages, levels, and teaching contexts. In this way, the partnership in Oklahoma enabled through OFLTA strongly represents a “nexus” of complex relationships that go beyond teachers and researchers (De Costa et al., 2022). In addition, rather than researchers requesting language teachers’ involvement at an LTA conference, the membership of state level world language teacher associations, like OFLTA, is already primarily practitioners (Lamb et al., 2012; Vangrieken et al., 2017). This positions state and local LTAs as a promising means of undoing the institution-school and researcher-teacher hierarchy (Rose, 2019).

The study's findings also add to this area of research by exploring our perceptions of the nature of the bidirectional flow of knowledge between language teachers, researchers, and teacher educators (Sato & Loewen, 2022), expanding on the kinds of contributions LTAs may share and receive from its partners (Lamb et al., 2012), and identifying how those are shaped both by political forces and institutional supports (Paran, 2016; Reynolds, 2018). In response to the isolation and attrition of WL teachers established through pervasive forces in the state, OFLTA has responded by intentionally contributing a welcoming community (Neubauer & Wesely, 2023) and accessible, research-based professional development (Lamb et al., 2012). In the case of OFLTA, its purpose serves as a member-oriented teacher community with goals that are "continuous rather than short-term, and include enhancing teachers' professional development and offering a solution for their isolation, while using the teachers' practical teaching experience as the main resource" (Vangrieken et al., 2017, p. 52). Further, by WL teachers feeling compelled to attend, present at conferences, and become involved on the OFLTA board, the partnership promotes WL teachers' resilience (Davis & Borden, 2024, 2025; Hiver, 2018) and collective agency (Kayi-Aydar, 2019) thereby addressing the top-down forces present in the state through bottom-up processes (Reynolds, 2018).

Our findings also identify how this mutual support extends to researchers and teacher educators at the university level. Although university-based faculty may be cautious of contributing their time against the backdrop of tenure pressures and publishing expectations (Sato & Loewen, 2022), the study's findings demonstrate how involvement in an LTA may provide them with a meaningful context and a practitioner-centered origin for their research and a means of recruiting new graduate students and thus involving more practitioners in research. Similarly, as expressed by Ashcraft (2018) and Reynolds (2018), by normalizing pre- and in-service teachers' engagement with an LTA, teacher educators are planting seeds for future leadership within the organization and partnership. Last, echoing sentiments from De Costa et al. (2022), Hwang et al. (2022), Peercy and Sharkey (2020), Rose (2019), our process of collaborating via autoethnography as individuals implicated in language teacher education has allowed us to see the agency of teacher educators as bridge builders between theory and practice, schools and institutions, and language teachers and researchers.

One limitation of this study is that it was conceptualized and led by individuals who are active in the association. Further, the two additional teacher participants we interviewed were also highly involved in the LTA. With continuing constraints related to money, time, and isolation, many language teachers in the state are not able or are unwilling to attend conferences and events hosted by OFLTA. Recognizing this, future research might explore the factors that afford or limit language teachers' participation in LTAs as well as the efficacy of interventions aimed at strengthening and sustaining teachers' engagement.

5.1. Implications

As the importance and functions of LTAs have been documented internationally (Lamb et al., 2012; Paran, 2016; Smith & Kuchah, 2016), the findings of this study offer clear implications for language teachers and researchers in diverse contexts seeking to replicate and/or adapt these ideas to cultivate constructive partnerships between schools, institutions, and LTAs. Continuing our collaborative autoethnography approach, it is our intention to present implications from this study by addressing each member of the partnership directly (Coss & Hwang, 2024). Although we understand that the borders between these identities and roles are blurred (Rose, 2019; Sato & Loewen, 2022) and that possibilities for partnerships vary greatly by context (De Costa et al., 2022; Elsheikh et al., 2018) we hope that these implications may incite reflection, further dialogue, and action:

- To language teachers: There is a great need for teaching-informed research and theory. We recognize, however, the heavy workload, lack of time, and dearth of support language teachers often experience for engaging in research. Some actionable steps may include (a) collaborating with researchers to provide them "with real issues and contextual problems of [the] classroom to be examined and addressed in their studies" (Torshizi, 2018, p. 576), (b) enacting, adapting, confirming, or problematizing new research findings, and (c) reflecting on how those experiences may be shared at future LTA conferences or through practitioner journals (see Lamb et al., 2012; Sato & Loewen, 2022; Torshizi, 2018).
- To researchers: Language teacher associations (LTAs) are unique spaces to learn about and act on the expressed strengths and needs of practitioners in your context. Through critically reflecting on the question, "Who is my research for?" (Sato et al., 2022, p. 626), we hope that you may recognize, as we have, the value of building long term, accessible collaborations with practitioners through involvement in LTAs. LTAs can also benefit from the institutional support (i.e., space, funding, access) researchers are afforded. Last, we argue that research originating from such collaboration can not only sustain a researcher's line of inquiry, but also lead to publications in high-impact journals (see Coss & Hwang, 2024; Rose, 2019; Sato & Loewen, 2022).
- To language teacher educators: In your role of supporting current and future language teachers, your work is inherently mediating and naturally bridges the gap between research, theory, and practice. We encourage you to model and normalize pre-service language teachers' and graduate students' participation in LTAs with the understanding that they will likely inhabit one of these diverse roles in the future. Collaborative and self-examining research approaches such as collaborative autoethnography, self-study of practice, and action research will invite practitioners and emerging researchers in and lead to opportunities for co-writing and presenting at LTA conferences (see Hwang et al., 2024; Peercy & Sharkey, 2020).
- To language teacher associations: Your organization is built to act as a forum for contributing ideas, dialogue, and access between language practitioners and researchers. In working toward shared goals, we advocate that you critically self-reflect on the makeup of your association's board and membership: What steps might be taken to ensure a diverse representation of roles, including language teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and other administrators and supervisors? Last, we encourage cultivating research collaborations among members and make space for research in your conference and initiatives (see Elsheikh et al., 2018; Lamb et al., 2012; Paran, 2016).

- To all partners: Sustained involvement in an LTA, especially those at the local, regional, and/or state level, is a mutually supportive endeavor entailing an equal, bidirectional flow of knowledge between school and university-based partners. Building partnerships, however, takes time, care, and extended collaboration. We encourage you to reflect on how engagement with an LTA, whether through attending, presenting, or volunteering on the board, may support you and your work while also sustaining the partnership as a whole.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

William S. Davis: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Rebecca S. Borden:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Katelin Frantz:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Wenqing Yue:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Appendix

Individual Journal Prompts

Journal #1 Prompt: In what ways do you identify professionally as a world language teacher and/or world language researcher? How might you characterize your journey into, within, and across these professional identities?

Journal #2 Prompt: How would you characterize the relationship between OFLTA and University of Oklahoma WL Education Program? How do you see the areas of research and teaching practice apparent in the relationship between OFLTA and the program? What role do they play in your mind and experiences? How do you see yourself existing, sustaining, or contributing to this connection between OFLTA and the program? Why?

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. In what ways do you identify as a teacher? A researcher?
2. Have you shifted between these identities over time?
3. When did you first attend or get involved with OFLTA? What were your impressions?
4. How often do you participate? How has it felt to present?
5. What has made you want to continue engaging with OFLTA?
6. How do you perceive the role or purpose of OFLTA in Oklahoma?
7. How have your perceptions toward OFLTA changed over time?
8. What role does OFLTA play in your professional life?
9. How do you see the relationship between the University of Oklahoma WL Education Program, world language teachers in Oklahoma, and OFLTA?
10. We're interested in exploring what the relationship is between institutions and WL teachers in Oklahoma. What role might OFLTA play in this relationship?
11. In what ways do you feel that the University of Oklahoma WL Education Program contributes to OFLTA?
12. In what ways do Oklahoma WL teachers contribute to OFLTA?

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