

## ROZDZIAŁ 9

### Education as a Vitality: Multidimensional Benefits of EFL Teaching and Learning for Ukrainian Asylum Seekers in Poland. Autoethnography

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**ABSTRAKT:** Niniejsza autoetnografia bada wielowymiarowe korzyści płynące z nauczania i uczenia się języka angielskiego (EFL) w ramach inicjatywy Uniwersytet Warszawski dla Ukrainy, której celem było wspieranie warunków edukacyjnych, socjologicznych i psychologicznych ułatwiających adaptację osób z Ukrainy w Polsce. Wykorzystując podejście oparte na analizie tematycznej, zbadano, w jaki sposób edukacja przyczynia się do ewolucji tożsamości nauczyciela języka (LTI) i kształtowania społeczności osób z Ukrainy szukających schronienia w Polsce. Główne pytanie badawcze dotyczy zmian, jakich doświadcza nauczyciel-uchodźca języka angielskiego w zakresie wypełniania obowiązków pedagogicznych w ramach programu, mających na celu zwiększenie odporności i integracji społecznej dorosłych ukraińskich osób ubiegających się o ochronę w Polsce. Wyniki dostarczają spostrzeżeń, które nie tylko potwierdzają, ale także poszerzają obecne rozumienie transformacji LTI i integracji uchodźców przez edukację. Badania podkreślają znaczenie tworzenia przestrzeni edukacyjnych wrażliwych na traumę, które rozpoznają i integrują różne rodzaje wiedzy, szczególnie w czasie kryzysów. Niniejsze badanie stanowi wkład w toczącą się dyskusję na temat tożsamości nauczyciela języków w wymagających okolicznościach.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** tożsamość nauczyciela języka (LTI), świadoma pedagogika traumy, uczenie się społeczno-emocjonalne, praca emocjonalna, osoby z Ukrainy poszukujące ochrony, uchodźcy

**ABSTRACT:** This autoethnography explores the multidimensional benefits of English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning within the University of Warsaw for Ukraine initiative, aimed at fostering educational, sociological, and psychological settings that facilitate the adaptation of Ukrainian asylum seekers in Poland. The study uses a thematic analysis approach. It investigates how education contributes to the evolution of Language Teacher Identity (LTI) and the cultivation of resilient communities of Ukrainian asylum seekers. The central research question addresses the changes an EFL refugee teacher experiences in shifting pedagogical responsibilities within the program to enhance the resilience and social integration of adult Ukrainian asylum seekers in Poland. The results provide insights that corroborate and expand the current understanding of LTI transformation and the integration of refugees through education. The research underscores the significance of establishing trauma-sensitive educational spaces that recognize and integrate various types of knowledge, particularly during crises. This study contributes to the ongoing conversation about language teacher identity in challenging circumstances.

**KEYWORDS:** Language Teacher Identity, Trauma-Informed Pedagogy, social-emotional learning, emotion labour, Ukrainian asylum seekers, refugees

## Introduction

At the outbreak of the war, Poland emerged as a primary refuge, accommodating nearly 1.5 million Ukrainians who were granted asylum as of October 2022 (UNHCR 2022). This influx included a significant number of educators from various institutional levels. I was among this cohort, having fled Ukraine on March 6, 2022, with my 12-year-old daughter. We settled in Warsaw, where my background as an English teacher and a PhD holder from Rivne State University of the Humanities, Ukraine, continued to shape my professional identity.

Before the war, I had taught English for 23 years. The onset of war initially disrupted educational activities, which were briefly halted before resuming in diverse formats — online, hybrid, and in-person — in less affected regions

of Ukraine (Lavrysh et al. 2022). Despite continuing my role remotely, a significant reduction in salary prompted me to seek new professional opportunities in Poland.

During my initial month in Warsaw, I connected with Polish academics from Warsaw University, including Agnieszka Kałdonek-Crnjaković, Luis Javier Pentón Herrera, and Karolina Czopek, who were involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees. Their assistance, along with the guidance of Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk, led me to the University of Warsaw for Ukraine (UW for UA) program. This opportunity allowed me to contribute as an English language trainer for Ukrainian asylum seekers residing in Poland.

This publication explores the multifaceted benefits of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning within the context of this program. The publication highlights how these courses have served not only as a vital support mechanism for Ukrainian asylum seekers but also as a transformative element in my own professional journey. Through autoethnography, I will reflect on the significance of these educational activities in shaping my language teacher identity (LTI) and enhancing the adaptation and resilience of Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

This autoethnography utilizes a reflective, self-inquiry approach to understand the intricate experiences of being both a refugee and an English language teacher of Ukrainian asylum seekers within the UW for UA program. Employing autoethnography as a method (Gannon 2017), I engage in profound self-examination and reflection on my emotion labour (Kałdonek-Crnjaković, Czopek 2023) and program outcomes. As an English language trainer for 12 groups of Ukrainians traumatized by the war, I view this as an opportunity for rethinking and self-study (Trinh 2020; Yazan 2019).

### 9.1. Theoretical background and framework

Over the past two decades, research has underscored that teachers are no longer mere providers of content. Instead, teachers' roles are shaped by their thinking, performance, and sense of belonging within their communities (Karimi, Mofidi 2019; Kayi-Audar 2019; Pennington, Richards 2016; Yazan 2019; Yazan et al. 2023). Language Teacher Identity (LTI) is critical in this context, influencing teachers' agency, self-efficacy, motivation, emotions, values, and beliefs (Benesch 2017, 2019; Bukor 2014; Golombek, Doran 2014;

Pentón Herrera et al. 2022; Pentón Herrera, Martínez-Alba 2022; Yazan 2018; Nazari, Karimpour 2023). LTI is particularly relevant in conflict zones or with traumatized students where education faces unique challenges (Davies 2004; Lopatina et al. 2023; O'Malley 2010).

Teaching under challenging circumstances involves a deep sense of care, characterized by attentiveness, trust, responsiveness, and fostering caring relationships (Kałdonek-Crnjaković Czopek 2023; Fridrikh 2022; Pranjić 2021; Koster 2011; Gkonou, Miller 2019). This caring attitude reflects a responsibility for students' success, addressing their complex learning needs and cultural and social requirements (Kayi-Aydar 2015; Cahan 2023; Yoon 2008). However, teachers may be expected to exhibit preferred emotions like patience, empathy, or understanding, which can lead to mental exhaustion, secondary trauma, depersonalization, and burnout (Tsybuliak et al. 2024; Acheson et al. 2016; King 2015).

Reflecting on my professional experiences within the UW for UA program, I try to find out how education can help refugees build new social networks and navigate everyday interactions. Through the course English Ups Your Life I provide insights into how targeted educational programs can address the unique needs of adult refugees, improving their chances for integration and personal development in Poland, where English is increasingly a lingua franca and a language of opportunity. The additional focus is on how English language learning within the UW for UA program transcends traditional educational outcomes to support Ukrainian asylum seekers in Poland, facilitating not only social inclusion and personal development but also addressing mental health challenges. By exploring the role of this program, I aim to analyze my LTI transformation and reveal how the program enhances adaptation and resilience among Ukrainian refugees and potentially informs better integration practices and policy decisions.

The question addressed is: *What transformations have I experienced as an English language teacher for Ukrainian asylum seekers in terms of my pedagogical responsibilities?*

Additionally, I am trying to analyze: *How has English language learning within the program fostered resilience and facilitated the social integration of adult Ukrainian asylum seekers in Poland?* In answering this question, I try to reveal how the English language courses within the program serve as a bridge for societal adaptation, acting not merely as a communication tool but as a vital resource for shaping and enriching the lives of Ukrainian asylum seekers in Poland.

Reflecting on my teaching experience, I utilize a narrative frame. Barkhuizen et al. (2013) and Barkhuizen (2014) describe a narrative frame as a structured template for storytelling which includes a sequence of incomplete sentences of different lengths. The narrative frame aids my reflection by offering an outline for the substance of my reflective thoughts.

## 9.2. Professional experience and reflections

Personal professional reflection, supported by journal entries, added a significant dimension to my thematic analysis of EFL teaching and learning within the program. I used citations from my reflective journal to support the defined themes and strengthen my autoethnographic analysis. I selected passages from my journal that directly relate to the specific theme we are discussing.

The thematic analysis was conducted using the method described by Corbin and Strauss (2008), which involves multiple stages such as open and axial coding. During open coding, I scrutinized the data to discern themes. These findings are then structured into subordinate levels, demonstrating the connections among codes, a process known as axial coding. The findings are illustrated in Table 1. Thematic Analysis: Themes and Codings.

The author (2024) used thematic analysis. Some themes were combined or recategorized for greater clarity and coherence. For example, ‘recognizing trauma’ and ‘trauma-sensitive approach’ were merged into a broader theme ‘Trauma-Informed Pedagogy’ (Table 9.1. Theme 1).

Some themes intersect and influence one another; for example, ‘trauma-sensitive teaching’ relates to building Resilience and Empowerment’ (Table 9.1. Theme 1. Theme 4.). The last is ‘Costs of Being a Refugees’ Language Trainer’ (Table 9.1. Theme 6). It contradicts others, as it is about my personal excessive responsibilities as an EFL trainer while trying to implement trauma-sensitive teaching into my classroom.

During the UW for UA program I felt a profound sense of responsibility. As I wrote in my reflective journal on March 3, 2023: ‘I was overwhelmed by the anxiety. I felt responsibility and the importance of the mission’. My pedagogical responsibilities underwent significant transformations, reflecting the unique challenges and needs of refugee students. As a language teacher, the pivotal changes I have undergone relate to Trauma-Informed Pedagogy (Table 9.1. Theme 1). It involves recognizing trauma and acknowledging

TABLE 9.1. Thematic Analysis: Themes and Codings

| Theme   | Coding   |
|---|--|
| 1. Trauma-Informed Pedagogy                       | recognizing trauma<br>trauma-sensitive approach<br>supportive environment<br>creating inclusive curricular<br>incorporating SEL into the classroom |
| 2. Language and Literacy Development              | material design<br>instruction differentiation   |
| 3. Support for Integration                        | flexibility<br>adaptability of a language teacher  |
| 4. Building Resilience and Empowerment            | motivation<br>promoting a positive learning<br>environment   |
| 5. Professional Development                       | a network administrator<br>an instructor of mindfulness technique<br>PD trainings & work-shops   |
| 6. Costs of Being a Refugees’ Language<br>Trainer | excessive responsibilities<br>emotion labour<br>secondary trauma<br>war-torn work-life balance<br>compassion fatigue                               |

SOURCE: own elaboration

the stress and displacement endured by refugee students, which impacts their learning and emotional health. Such awareness called for a more sensitive, supportive classroom approach and inclusive curriculum development. It was essential to build robust, trusting relationships with my students, demonstrate empathy and patience, and provide unwavering support.

Initially doubtful about incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) into my classroom, I came to appreciate its value in meeting the emotional needs of refugee students. Navigating and managing emotions – both my students’ and my own – was a challenge, yet it proved to be profoundly fulfilling.

SEL provides refugee students, who often encounter extra emotional and psychological challenges, with a systematic approach to foster resilience and cultivate an inclusive, supportive classroom atmosphere. Incorporating vocabulary related to emotions, both positive and negative, has been a powerful aspect of the SEL approach. It was crucial to help students understand that experiencing negative emotions is a normal part of life and to provide them with the vocabulary to express these feelings constructively. By introducing terms for various emotions, such as nervousness, frustration, anger, sadness, devastation, exhaustion, etc., I have facilitated discussions on the normalcy of expressing their negative emotions. These discussions have emphasized that everyone, including teachers and students, experiences a spectrum of emotions, normalizing the experience of feeling upset or frustrated. Through stories and personal narratives, we have illustrated that negative emotions are a natural part of life and that it is common to feel them occasionally. As I noted in my journal on April 14, 2022: 'It turns out that it is difficult to talk about emotions if they are not positive. And not only because of emotions. And there are not enough words. Have to think about introducing necessary vocabulary.' '[...] and how to respond? I don't even know what to say in my native language when people talk about pain and grief'.

A key component of this approach was introducing vocabulary related to a wide range of positive and negative emotions which helped students better recognize and articulate their feelings, both positive and negative, and learn healthy ways to cope with and express them. The personal journal entries highlight the challenges of discussing negative emotions, even in the native language. It underscores the importance of providing students with the necessary vocabulary and creating a safe space for emotional expression. For this, I implemented regular check-ins by beginning each class with a brief session where students expressed their feelings using emotional vocabulary. These check-ins encouraged students to express their emotions using appropriate vocabulary, while I modelled the use of emotional language by sharing personal experiences and coping strategies. This approach aimed to foster a supportive classroom environment and enhance students' emotional vocabulary and resilience.

The 'Language Hub' (Macmillan Publishing House) course was the primary textbook, providing access to digital resources. This curriculum, while comprehensive, frequently delved into personal topics such as hobbies, family, and work (level A1). For instance, a middle-aged student from Simferopol

became visibly upset when discussing family heirlooms left behind in the occupied city. Similarly, a student from Odessa experienced emotional turmoil when deliberating about a hobby that was no longer accessible. These incidents highlighted the importance of carefully selecting topics to avoid triggering traumatic memories. To mitigate these challenges, I shifted the focus towards more neutral subjects, ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. Neutral or impersonal topics, such as ‘Strange Hobbies Worldwide’, might be safer than more personal ones like ‘My Hobby’. I learned to choose class materials meticulously, mindful of my students’ traumatic histories, tailoring materials and content to their varied experiences. I noted the necessity of using impersonal topics in my journal on May 19, 2022, highlighting that: ‘Familiar topics and texts are not suitable for refugees. It is unbearable for them and me. I need to address the topics and gather materials for reading and discussion’.

In such moments as exemplified above, I felt at a loss, particularly as the lessons were online. At times, simply being there and listening is the most supportive response. Such instances intensified the emotional toll, contributing to my secondary trauma. Additionally, I had to manage not only my students’ well-being but also my own, as I am a refugee grappling with my mental health and experiencing secondary trauma through my students’ narratives (Table 9.1. Theme 6).

These cases with my refugee students have shown that traditional language learning materials and topics can unintentionally cause trauma to them. As a result, I have modified my approach to concentrate on neutral and impersonal themes, thereby preventing the aggravation of students’ emotional distress. In handling such delicate circumstances, especially online, I discovered that being available and attentive often constituted the most supportive action. My experience has underscored the importance of tailoring educational content to prevent re-traumatization through integrating SEL into the curriculum, corroborating the research on trauma-informed pedagogy (Yazan 2018; Pentón Herrera, Martínez-Alba 2022; Golombek Doran 2014).

Another essential aspect was creating a sensitive learning environment to establish a safe and inviting space where students feel emotionally supported, as this is beneficial for their learning. For this, I implemented group agreements focused on SEL and mindfulness, moving away from conventional rules. As I wrote in my reflective journal on April 2, 2023: ‘There is a need to think about establishing some rules in the groups and better agreements’.



This evolution brought strategies that included allocating time for sharing personal experiences and establishing Telegram groups for networking. We set up Telegram channels to share language-learning resources and vital information for Ukrainian asylum seekers in Poland. Responding to student requests, I recorded each lesson and shared it in the group, aiding those who wished to review the content or could not attend the sessions. Initially hesitant about recording, I appreciated its value due to the students' persistent requests.

The networking was essentially about creating genuine, significant connections within my classrooms. It transcended the simple exchange of educational content or links; it was about deeply connecting with others, understanding their narratives, and finding ways to encourage mutual development. Integrating the SEL approach with networking fostered stronger connections. This synergy created a surge of positivity, collaboration, and growth that might benefit individuals and enhance the whole classroom community. Empathy and a sincere desire to help others, with a focus on forming connections, nurturing relationships, and establishing a supportive network were key elements that drive Ukrainian refugee students forward in their adaptation, careers, and life paths in Poland.

In considering theme Language and Literacy Development (Table 9.1. Theme 2), I concentrated on the survival language skills, highlighting the practical, everyday language abilities refugees require for daily life, including navigating public services, healthcare, and social interactions. To address this, I developed materials tailored to the refugees' needs, such as organizing CVs and preparing for job interviews.

I also focused on differentiated instruction, which involves customizing lessons to accommodate the diverse levels of English proficiency and educational backgrounds among the Ukrainian refugee students. It required the simplified language or native languages and assorted instructional methods. As I wrote in my reflective journal on September 9, 2023: 'Students have different confidence in using the language, which adversely affects instruction understanding'. By tailoring lessons to my students' needs, I tried to use less complicated language or incorporate students' native languages to enhance comprehension and employ various teaching techniques, such as visual aids and peer collaboration. This differentiation was crucial to address the language barrier and ensure that all students, regardless of their language proficiency, can actively participate and learn effectively.

Moreover, I tried to provide assistance for adaptation beyond language instructions with an emphasis on holistic and sustainable support, such as

guidance on accessing resources, understanding local norms, and integrating into the broader society, defined as theme 3 (Table 1). I adapted to the changing needs, being flexible and responsive to the evolving circumstances of refugee students, who might experience frequent changes in their personal situations or have different levels of stability. This LTI transformation started with the question I asked myself in my reflective journal on September 6, 2023: 'Does the A1 proficiency level in English solve the problem of adaptation in any way? If not, what should be changed to make it work?'

Our classes were not exclusively focused on mastering English. I dedicated 10–15 minutes after the classes for sharing and Q&A on different topics, not limited to language issues. The students had the opportunity to use classes as a platform for networking, seeking additional information for their adaptation in Poland, and even forming online friendships. It expanded my responsibilities by adding network facilitation (Table 9.1. Theme 5).

From a language instructor who facilitated classes and imparted knowledge, I have evolved into a supporter, a network administrator, and even a teacher of mindfulness techniques. These roles have demanded significant emotion labour and have had their drawbacks (Table 9.1. Theme 6). I noted about this theme in my reflections: 'Excessive Responsibilities. As a teacher for refugees, I often had to assume multiple roles beyond teaching, including support and counselling, which led to burnout and stress. War-Torn Work-Life Balance. The intense demands of teaching students affected by war blurred the lines between my personal and professional life, making it difficult to establish clear boundaries. War-work-life is a quite complicated trifecta'.

These additional responsibilities led to increased emotion labour and work-life imbalance. My reflections highlighted the challenges of juggling multiple roles and the impact of the war on my personal and professional life.

Additionally, I had to regulate my emotions and expectations, considering that I could not be prepared in advance for various scenarios stemming from my students' traumatic experiences. My reflections from October 8, 2023 indicated this aspect: 'I feel exhausted. It's good that my husband and children understand this and cook dinner themselves. [...] I do believe everything we are doing will help my fellow citizens. I understand their feelings very well, as I have the same feelings myself'.

This reflection highlights the significant emotion labour involved in my role as an EFL trainer, particularly when dealing with students who have experienced trauma. The need to constantly regulate emotions and adapt to

unexpected situations was emotionally draining. My exhaustion was a valid response to the demands of my transforming responsibilities. Moreover, my new responsibilities included building resilience and empowerment (defined as Theme 4 in Table 9.1).

I focused on empowering students, aiding them in developing confidence and resilience by promoting a positive learning environment. Additionally, I have encouraged active participation, motivating students to take an active role in their learning and the classroom community, thereby enhancing their integration, adjustment, and resilience. I have utilized mindfulness techniques during difficult periods to reduce my students' stress and foster positive thinking. This inspires them to persevere in their studies, to keep moving forward, and to hold onto hope for a better future. Describing these efforts, I wrote down such a metaphor in my reflective journal: 'We cannot cancel the waves, but we can learn to surf. Wave after wave. Each new round of feedback from my students bolstered my resolve to introduce ideas'.

Creating a positive learning environment and empower students within the program's educational context was vital. The incorporation of mindfulness techniques was particularly effective, as it not only reduced stress but also cultivated hope and resilience. This comprehensive approach to education is commendable.

Nadia (72) and Yurii (74), engineers and marathon runners from Kharkiv, serve as inspiring examples. Faced with the inability to solve Polish crossword puzzles due to their lack of Polish language proficiency, they embarked on learning English to combat cognitive ageing. Despite the considerable challenge, they consistently attended every class and completed every assignment. Their educational pursuit went beyond acquiring a new language; it encompassed engaging with online platforms, Zoom, and digital textbooks. For immigrant seniors, the use of technology goes beyond simple platform navigation; it significantly enriches their social, emotional, and cultural experiences. In discussing the enhancement of digital media literacy among seniors, it is essential to emphasize their willingness to embrace digital tools, given the proper training and support. This method not only protects them against misinformation but also simplifies their everyday tasks. The conversation also addressed the importance of challenging ageism within technological and educational structures to provide tailored digital media literacy education. It has been noted that seniors view the internet as a vital tool for everyday life and better societal adaptation in Poland. In the case of our

Kharkiv students, their dedication inspired their classmates, alleviating any worries about memory decline or the difficulties of ageing when learning new languages and adopting new technologies.

All these experiences have fostered my professional development (Table 9.1. Theme 5) through ongoing training. I have engaged in professional development to stay updated on the best practices for teaching refugees, which include trauma-informed pedagogy, SEL, and meaningful techniques. I have also participated in networks and communities of practice that focus on refugee education to improve my teaching skills. These transformations showcase the complex and multifaceted nature of teaching refugees, where the role extends beyond traditional language instruction to include a wide range of support and adaptations to meet the diverse needs of students.

## Conclusion

In analyzing the evolution of my role and gaining responsibilities as a language teacher in the University of Warsaw for Ukraine program, I have gleaned several insights that corroborate and expand upon the existing body of knowledge regarding LTI transformation and the integration of refugees through education. My reflections support the dynamic nature of language teacher identities and the associated emotion labour. It is widely recognized that teachers' identities are fluid and shaped by their teaching environments (Karimi, Mofidi 2019; Kayi-Aydar 2019). My own experiences as a refugee teacher, being a refugee myself, have reinforced this view, showing how my identity and teaching methods evolved to meet my emotional needs and those of my students. The emotion labour of teaching traumatized students requires the application of SEL strategies and mindfulness practices, which also help to build students' resilience. The emotion labour, as discussed by Kaldonek-Crnjaković, Czopek (2023), and secondary trauma that educators face in challenging circumstances echo past research (Acheson et al. 2016; King 2015), underscoring the importance of self-care and the development of students' and personal resilience.

Programs such as this are designed to enhance social integration and cultural adaptation of refugees that go beyond educational outcomes. The significance of education in aiding refugee integration is well-established (Davies 2004; Lopatina et al. 2023). My observations build upon this by

demonstrating how the UW program, with its emphasis on language acquisition and psychological support, actively fosters social inclusion. Its structure, which includes developing supportive networks and employing digital tools, is in line with Yazan's (2018) and Golombek, Doran's (2014) insights into boosting educators' agency and learners' resilience via education. Furthermore, incorporating SEL into the curriculum, as I have done, is consistent with Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory that posits positive emotions enhance cognitive and emotional resilience.

Pedagogical adjustments in response to trauma were a crucial aspect of this educational program. The literature recognizes the significance of addressing students' emotional and psychological needs (Cahan 2023; Yoon 2008). My experience echoes this necessity, as it was imperative to adapt classroom materials and topics to prevent triggering trauma. Such adjustments align with the findings of Koster (2011) and Gkonou, Miller (2019), who emphasize the importance of a caring approach and awareness of students' experiences. Employing neutral topics and fostering a supportive classroom environment could be effective strategies for reducing the potential for aggravating refugee students' trauma.

Being a refugee teacher involves navigating complex and often challenging contexts, which profoundly impact professional growth and LTI. Such experiences can significantly extend the literature on LTI development, adaptation, and resilience. Refugee teachers frequently face unstable and unpredictable environments, which demand adaptability, flexibility, and resilience. This continuous adjustment to new and often challenging contexts fosters professional growth by enhancing their problem-solving skills and ability to manage stress. The development of creative strategies to meet the diverse needs of students and overcome systemic barriers is imperative for refugee teachers. The personal experiences of refugee teachers often lead them to develop a heightened sense of empathy and emotional intelligence. Building meaningful relationships with students who may also have experienced trauma or displacement allows these educators to connect with their students on a deeper level. This relational approach supports their growth as compassionate and effective teachers.

The challenging contexts in which refugee teachers work can lead to a reevaluation and evolution of their professional identities. They often reframe their understanding of teaching and their role within it, developing a more nuanced perspective that incorporates their experiences of displacement

and resilience. This evolving identity may involve a greater emphasis on advocacy, social justice, and a commitment to supporting refugee students.

These aspects of professional growth highlight how refugee teachers can evolve through their unique experiences, broadening the literature on teacher identity development by demonstrating how educators transform and thrive in the face of adversity. This evolution underscores the dynamic and multifaceted nature of teacher identity and highlights the importance of contextual factors in shaping educators' professional journeys.

This experience extends the literature on teacher identity development (Pennington & Richards 2016; Pentón Herrera et al. 2022) showing how educators can evolve through their interactions with refugee students and their responses to their complex educational needs.

The challenges of excessive responsibilities and the blurred line between personal and professional life reflect the literature on burnout and stress in high-demand settings (Tsybuliak et al. 2024; Acheson et al. 2016; King 2015). The approach to integrating mindfulness and SEL into the curriculum can be a direct response to these challenges, aiming to balance the emotional demands of teaching with strategies for personal well-being.

This autoethnography revealed the impact that thoughtful and holistic educational practices can have on refugee populations, providing them with multidimensional benefits. By addressing educational and social needs, the UW program exemplifies how educational initiatives can go beyond traditional outcomes to address broader needs, including social inclusion and psychological support. The UW for UA program facilitates language learning and promotes psychological resilience and social cohesion.

The insights gained from this publication contribute to the existing literature on teacher identity, emotion labour, and refugee education, offering practical implications for educators working in similar contexts. The reflections suggest that effective refugee educational programs should incorporate strategies for emotional support, community building, and professional development to enhance both students' and educators' well-being.

Overall, this reflection underscores the importance of adapting educational practices to meet the holistic needs of refugee learners and suggests that similar approaches could be beneficial in other contexts where education intersects with trauma and displacement.

The study indicates that educational programs like UW for UA can alleviate the adaptation challenges faced by refugees, yet it also recognizes certain

limitations. It is crucial to understand that the narrative is an autobiography of a refugee teacher who has experienced trauma and stress, which may influence the perspective and reaction to challenges. Additionally, it is conceivable that other teachers might have varying experiences and insights.

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