



## **Rahat Zaidi**

### **LRA Vice President Nominee**

#### **Biography**

I am honored to be nominated as Vice President of the Literacy Research Association (LRA). I am a Werklund Research Professor at the University of Calgary and the 2024-2025 Mobility Research Chair in Bilingualism in the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) at the University of Ottawa. My career is dedicated to literacy research, focusing on multilingualism, intercultural communication, and social justice in literacy education.

My scholarship has been widely published in leading academic journals, including Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Literacy Research, Canadian Modern Language Review, and with publishers, notably Routledge, Multilingual Matters, Peter Lang and Lexington. With over \$2 million in funding from agencies including the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada, I am committed to knowledge mobilization beyond academia, sharing my scholarship through documentaries, podcasts, exhibitions, and webinars.

My leadership within LRA includes serving as:

- Member of the Oscar Causey Award Committee (2018-2020)
- Member of Field Council (2019-2021)
- Member of the Board of Directors (2021-2024)
- Board Liaison for Innovative Community Groups (ICGs) (2021-2024)
- Board Liaison for the Edward Fry Book Award Committee (2022-2024)
- Board Liaison for the Doctoral Students Innovative Community Group (DSICG) (2022-2024)
- Co-Author of LRA's Statement on Antisemitism and Islamophobia (2024)

Beyond LRA, I work globally with educational stakeholders to implement literacy initiatives that address systemic inequities and promote culturally sustaining pedagogies. My contributions to literacy education have been recognized through several prestigious accolades, including the

Social Justice in Teacher Education Award from AERA's Division K, as well as various community and provincial awards.

### **Position Statement**

I am honored to accept the nomination for Vice President of the Literacy Research Association (LRA). As a scholar, educator, and advocate for equity in literacy education, I am deeply committed to LRA's mission of fostering rigorous, methodologically diverse, and socially responsible research in literacy. My scholarship has consistently sought to bridge the gaps between research, policy, and practice, particularly in multilingual and immigrant communities.

If elected as Vice President, my leadership will prioritize LRA's primary objectives of inclusivity, transparency, and transformative literacy research. My vision for LRA is centered on what I maintain are three essential core pillars of the LRA Strategic Plan for globally sustaining the organization's impact on literacy research and education: (a) Uniting Members Across Differences; (b) Promoting Methodologically Diverse Research; and (c) Ensuring Transparent Communication and Governance.

#### **1. Uniting Members Across Differences**

In an era of increasing polarization, it is crucial that we create an environment where scholars from different backgrounds can engage in meaningful discourse and work collectively towards common goals. LRA's strength lies in its diversity of thought, methodologies, and perspectives. As Vice President, I will work to further LRA's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and cross-cultural dialogues.

Literacy research should reflect and support the lived realities of diverse populations, including multilingual and immigrant communities, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued. My experience working with ethnically and racially diverse communities across local, national, and transnational settings has shaped my approach to leadership that fosters relationally healthy decision-making, where members feel a sense of agency, trust, and belonging.

As Vice President I will emphasize the following key initiatives to unite members across differences:

- a. Promote Equity and Inclusion in Literacy Research and Leadership by:
  - o Expanding funding opportunities for historically underrepresented scholars;
  - o Develop mentorship programs to foster equity and inclusion in academic leadership.
- b. Advance Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Research by:
  - o Encouraging interdisciplinary research partnerships to tackle complex global literacy challenges;
  - o Strengthening advocacy for literacy education policies that promote racial, linguistic, and cultural equity.
- c. Enhance Engagement and Relevance in Literacy Education by:
  - o Facilitating forums and roundtables for members to discuss navigating differences and building consensus;
  - o Introducing initiatives addressing the impact of geopolitical and social polarization on literacy education and research.

Through these initiatives, I aim to create a professional community where multiple perspectives are heard and valued, ensuring that literacy research serves as a vehicle for social justice.

## 2. Promoting and Advancing Diverse and Impactful Research

LRA's commitment to methodologically rigorous, ethical, and socially responsible research must be upheld and expanded. As a multilingual and transcultural scholar, my work has emphasized the importance of inclusive literacy research that reflects the realities of diverse learners. As Vice President, I will strive to uphold the following actions that promote and advance diverse and impactful research:

- a. Enhance Research Diversity and Collaboration by:
  - o Broadening the representation of qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods research and other emerging innovative methodologies in literacy research;
  - o Supporting collaborations integrating critical literacy, sociocultural perspectives,

and emerging technologies.

b. Improve Dissemination and Practical Application of Research by:

- o Increasing dissemination of research findings through accessible formats;
- o Strengthening the connection between research and practice to ensure actionable benefits.

c. Advocate for Inclusive and Impactful Research by:

- o Advocating for research approaches that consider the experiences of diverse communities;
- o Promoting transnational research partnerships to ensure tangible societal impact.

By reinforcing LRA's commitment to diverse research methodologies, the organization can address urgent literacy challenges across different contexts, from refugee education to digital literacy, the role of artificial intelligence (AI), and beyond.

### 3. Ensuring Transparent Communication and Governance

Transparency in decision-making implies trust and engagement among members. My leadership will prioritize open communication, ensuring that members feel a sense of agency in shaping LRA's future. As Vice President, I will seek to:

a. Enhance Communication and Engagement by:

- o Establishing regular updates on LRA governance decisions through newsletters and interactive Q&A sessions;
- o Providing clear pathways for members to engage in committee work, conference planning, and policy discussions.

b. Develop Leadership and Mentorship Programs by:

- o Expanding leadership training opportunities for early-career and mid-career scholars;
- o Implementing structured mentorship for members interested in policy and advocacy work.

c. Promote Inclusivity and Constructive Dialogue by:

- o Developing strategies to navigate polarization in academic discourse;
- o Creating structured leadership pipelines for scholars from historically marginalized communities.

In today's increasingly polarized world, fostering spaces for constructive dialogue and mutual understanding is more important than ever. The Literacy Research Association is at a pivotal moment, where the intersection of research, advocacy, and practice can shape the future of literacy education. By promoting transparency and active participation, LRA can build an organization where every member feels valued and empowered to contribute to its mission. If elected as Vice President, I will leverage my extensive background working with ethnically and racially diverse communities with a focus on literacy research for multilingual education and academic leadership. I will strive to strengthen LRA's impact, drawing from these experiences to foster collaboration across differences and unite members around shared goals.

I will also aim to ensure that LRA continues to be a leader in advancing literacy research that is inclusive, equitable, and socially responsible. Together, we will cultivate a professional community that values diversity, fosters innovative research, and upholds principles of social justice in literacy education.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve LRA in this capacity and look forward to collaborating with members to advance the organization's strategic goals.