
Uncovering Third Space in Virtual Transnational Partnership: Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Transformation

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ABSTRACT: This qualitative case study explores how two English language teachers from South Korea and Taiwan developed transcultural dispositions as they participated in a virtual professional development program. The study employed third space as a conceptual framework and the third generation of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT-3rd) as an analytical framework to uncover the teachers' learning experiences. Findings from this study reveal the dynamic and complex process of becoming a trans-educator through transforming one's professional identity and teaching practices. This study contributes to inclusive and responsive educational practices that reflect the complexities of globalized teaching and learning environments.

KEYWORDS: Transcultural, transdisciplinary, language teacher education, third space, activity theory

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The current era of globalization has led to “the intensified flows of capital, goods, people, images, and discourses around the globe” (Blommaert, 2010, p.13), blurring national boundaries and creating linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. This transnational and transcultural phenomenon involves crossing cultural, ideological, linguistic, and geopolitical borders (Duff, 2015), which has significantly impacted bi/multilingual education, making the teaching of culture an integral part of language instruction (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Sercu, 2006). Consequently, language teachers are expected to act as intercultural mediators who view culture not only as facts, artifacts, and social practices but also as the lens through which

meaning is mutually constructed and communicated (Czura, 2016; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

To fulfill this role, teachers need certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes (i.e., transcultural dispositions) (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). However, prior studies indicate that teachers often feel ill-prepared due to insufficient professional development (PD) opportunities and resources (Nugent, 2020; Sercu, 2006). Advances in information and communication technologies offer ways to cultivate a transcultural disposition without the need for travel abroad (Soong et al., 2021). That is, teachers can form “virtual communities’ to connect with others and treat their relationships, investments, and experiences as occurring in a liminal space” (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019, p. 3). Despite the crucial role of virtual learning communities in teacher development, online approaches remain under-examined (O’Dowd & Dooly, 2022). To address this gap, this study provides an in-depth examination of the virtual learning experiences of two English language teachers in South Korea and Taiwan.

The trans turn (Hawkins & Mori, 2018) in applied linguistics and intercultural communication research is a relatively recent development (Baker, 2022). As a result, there is a lack of research exploring the concepts of transculturality and transdisciplinarity together within the scope of English language teacher education, particularly in contexts where teachers engage in transnational partnerships. This study leverages the interconnected paradigm of English language teaching (ELT) and the discipline of interculturality for designing a pedagogical intervention: a virtual PD program for English language teachers. Using Bhaba’s (1994) theory of third space, this study investigates how teachers from different countries and cultures meet and occupy a virtual liminal space, which facilitates transition and transformation in their professional learning. Specifically, the study explores how the teachers developed transcultural dispositions throughout their participation in virtual PD and how these experiences shape their interactions within the third space. By employing CHAT-3rd as an analytical framework, this study uncovers the dynamics of the third space and identifies factors that either facilitated or hindered the development of transcultural dispositions. The following questions guided this study:

1. How does teachers’ development of transcultural dispositions evolve throughout their participation in the virtual PD that is grounded in a transdisciplinary approach?
2. How do teachers’ professional learning experiences in the PD shape how they meet and engage with the third space while becoming trans-ELT professionals?

Theoretical Framing

To ground our inquiry, we present the theoretical lenses that inform our understanding of transnational virtual space and language teacher development.

In particular, we examine how third space theory and the development of transcultural dispositions offer insights into the ways language teachers negotiate meaning and construct professional identities. These theoretical perspectives help us better understand the complex processes involved in teacher learning across sociocultural boundaries.

Transnational Virtual Space: Theorized by Third Space Theory

The field of language education has significantly evolved from earlier approaches that viewed language and culture teaching in isolation. Educators have embraced a deeper understanding of cross-cultural encounters and the interconnected nature of language and culture (Lo Bianco et al., 1999). Accordingly, cross-cultural encounters are now seen in a new light, where participants are not merely understanding or integrating into another monolithic community but rather exploring a third place between cultures. Drawing on Bhabha's (1994) concept of third space, we conceptualize such intersection of cultures as a fluid, flexible, multi-layered territory that bridges different communities of practice (Tatham-Fashanu, 2023). These liminal spaces are where members of diverse communities collaborate, leading to transformative interactions that allow them to build connections between their own culture and that of others (Byram & Fleming, 1998).

Previous studies on teacher education employed the concept of third space to address "in-between" spaces which provide the terrain for developing new signs of identity and innovative collaborations, essential for developing new ideas. Gutiérrez (2008) brought together third space theory with critical language and literacy studies, arguing that third space pedagogies would produce new knowledge by intentionally exploring tensions enacted through activities that are not typically found in schools. For example, while Williams (2014) used third space to understand teacher educators' shifting identities, Beck (2016, 2020) investigated third space as a hybrid space for ideological and practical negotiation and Abraham (2021) applied third space as a theory and pedagogy to challenge and expand notions of teacher education, confront inequitable practices, and question language and literacy ideologies and pedagogical practices. While acknowledging the concept of third space as an in-between space (Bhabha, 1994; Rutherford, 1990) where elements of different identities synthesize to create new, hybrid identities and knowledge, we visualize the third space as a dynamic realm that goes beyond the mere blurring of two cultural boundaries (Smith, 2008). In our study, third space is where individuals interact while maintaining their unique identities and resisting homogenizing forces (Tatham-Fashanu, 2023). As multiple communities come together and form new meanings through interaction and negotiation within a boundary zone – a material and conceptual space between activity systems (Engeström, 2001) – this process creates opportunities to explore the intersections and disconnections between different discourses. These discourses emerge in the home and community, as well as in schools.

To make sense of the participants' learning trajectories and activity systems, we draw on Engeström's (2001) model of the third generation of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), also known as CHAT-3rd, as our theoretical framework. Grounded in the understanding that human activity is mediated through artifacts, is goal-oriented, and has evolved through different generations, CHAT-3rd addresses diversity and dialogue between different traditions or perspectives. By highlighting the complexity of how different activity systems interact towards shared goals, it provides a holistic view of human activity and agency. The components include the *Subject* (individuals), *Community* (groups with shared objectives), *Division of labor*, and *Rules*. Evolving through the interaction among these components, the system begins with Object 1, a situationally given goal, then moves to a collectively meaningful goal, Object 2, and eventually to a potentially shared or jointly constructed goal, Object 3. *Mediating artifacts* provide the subjects with cognitive and/or material sources to achieve the objects of the activity.

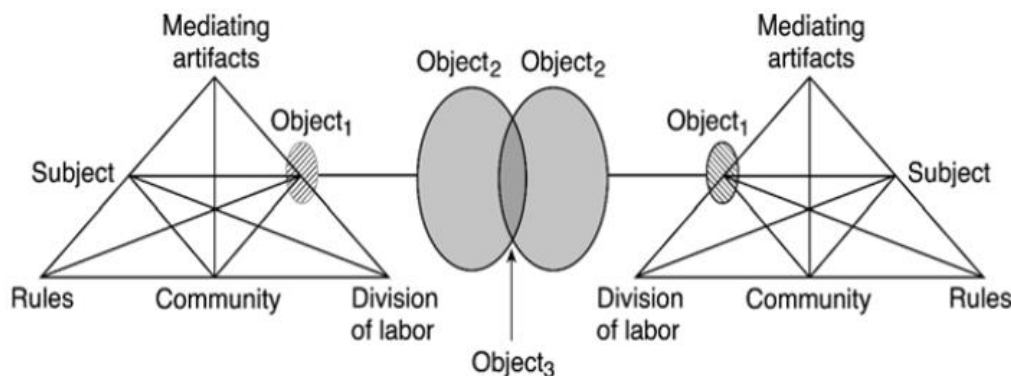


Figure 1

Two Interacting Activity Systems as a Minimal Model for the Third Generation of Activity Theory (Engeström, 2001, p. 136)

By situating our study within CHAT-3rd as an analytical lens, our concept of third space necessitates approaches that transcend national frameworks, facilitating the blending and exchange of cultural elements, where individuals draw from multiple cultural repertoires to construct their identities (Loh, 2022). Understanding third space as the intersection of transculturalism and transnationalism, where identity is constantly reconstructed, we explore how participants' professional learning experiences facilitate both the development of transcultural dispositions (e.g., the ability to draw on diverse cultural repertoires) and the adoption of transdisciplinary approaches (e.g., collaborative and integrative practices that transcend disciplinary boundaries). This framing leads us to capture the complexity of interactions in virtual spaces and the processes through which individuals construct hybrid identities, negotiate meaning, and

transform their practices transcending essentialized views of culture, allowing cultural boundaries to intersect, and creating new forms of identity and knowledge.

Teachers' Development of Transcultural Dispositions

Lee and Canagarajah (2019) used the term *transcultural disposition* to refer to beliefs, values, knowledge, and identities within the framework of transculturalism. According to Loh (2022), transculturalism occurs in the synthesis of two simultaneous phases as one moves in liminal cultural spaces. First, there is the deculturalization of the past where one unlearns pre-assigned cultural and linguistic categories and boundaries. Here, the individual tries to break out of the deterministic model that is grounded on cultural essentialism. This allows for “a reflexive identity, where individuals can participate in ‘self-criticism of one’s own cultural identities and assumptions’” (Berry & Epstein, 1999, p. 307, as cited in Soong et al., 2021). Second, based on interactions with different peoples and cultures, the individual redefines both the self and the cultures it traverses (Aksakalova, 2021). In doing so, each individual actively draws on the values and practices of these diverse cultures to continuously reconstruct identity and social belonging (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). Similarly, Aksakalova (2021) found transcultural orientation to foster flexible attitudes and creative collaboration across languages and cultures, deconstructing power structures, increasing learner agency, and challenging essentialized norms. Thus, developing transcultural dispositions requires individual agency (Loh, 2022; Zamel, 1997) as one navigates “sociocultural in-betweenness” (Canagarajah, 2013).

Transcultural disposition has recently been examined in close relationship with translingual practices (e.g., Aksakalova, 2021; Lee & Canagarajah, 2018; Rafi & Morgan, 2024). While these studies have significantly advanced understanding of the benefits of a transcultural disposition from learners’ perspectives, how teachers’ transcultural disposition shapes their instructional practices and the impact of those practices on students remains less explored (Casinader & Walsh, 2019). From the limited pool of existing research, Gu and Canagarajah (2018) examined how migrant English language teachers in Hong Kong used their transcultural dispositions to creatively reform local pedagogical traditions, drawing on their enculturated and embedded knowledge gained through transnational experiences. Similarly, Soong et al. (2021) found that international pre-service teachers’ prior experiences and transnational field experiences built their capacities to engage with cultural and linguistic diversities, ultimately enhancing their transcultural competencies. Transcultural dispositions are associated with an openness that allows individuals to construct complex identities based on a blend of cultural influences, thus breaking down societal boundaries (Loh, 2022). This openness enables individuals to acquire values, skills, and attitudes that favor peaceful co-existence and intercultural understanding (Canagarajah, 2013; Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). Research on teachers’ transcultural dispositions has largely focused on their instructional strategies. However, there is a need to explore how

teachers' evolving professional knowledge and identities as transcultural educators develop over time and across various spaces (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). Examining their histories and socialization can help identify the factors that cultivate transcultural dispositions and enhance both professional development and student learning.

Transdisciplinary Approach to Reorienting Language Teacher Education

Historically, bi/multilingual education, specifically English education, has generally been understood within the discipline of applied linguistics with little connection to a general theory of learning. Informed by second language acquisition theory, language has therefore been conceptualized as the object of learning and as an autonomous system, with the focus primarily on linguistic structures (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). This definition of language as a bounded system of grammatical rules often leads to the monolingual and monocultural framing of language learning (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2016). Particularly in the context of ELT, making a direct correlation between the nation-state and the language pervades (Risager, 2007) where the English of the "native speaker" is taught as the ideal model for linguistic and cultural learning. Despite the much-contested notion of native-speakerism (Phillipson, 1992), this ideology still remains deeply ingrained in many English language educators' practices (Kiczkowiak & Lowe, 2024), often sidelining learners' own languages, cultures, and identities to avoid interfering with the acquisition of the native speaker's language and culture (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2016).

However, against the backdrop of globalization, scholars began to problematize such a narrow view of language learning and bring to the foreground the need for a new, transdisciplinary approach that can provide a more holistic understanding of the complex phenomenon of language learning. While extensive research has explored the transdisciplinary approach to general education and social reform (Klein, 2018; Nicolescu, 2013), its application in bilingual English education has received far less attention. While disciplines such as history, geography, and literature are included in the curriculum as belonging to the realm of "culture," these subjects are approached simply as add-ons to language teaching (Byram & Wagner, 2018). Instead, educators can integrate insights from a range of disciplines where learners engage in problem-oriented research to address real-world issues. For instance, there has recently been a significant rise in connecting English language teacher education and critical pedagogy (e.g., Crookes, 2013; Kubota & Miller, 2017) as demonstrated in critical language teacher education (Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Hawkins, 2011) that aims for social justice and equity outcomes in education. Research has also focused on integrating culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies (Alim & Paris, 2017) to more fully address the diverse linguistic and cultural experiences of the learners (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Warner, 2018). These practices seem to reflect the current understanding of "truncated multilingualism"

(Blommaert et al., 2005), where the linguistic competences are organized according to specific domains or activities rather than full fluency across all contexts (Kubota, 2013). For example, Canagarajah's (2013) study of African migrants illustrates how they adapt fragmented linguistic resources to specific domains – such as work or social interactions – to meet their immediate communicative needs. Similarly, Kubota's (2013) study of Japanese expatriates highlights how they use partial competence in multiple languages for specific activities within their professional fields, combining this with relevant cultural knowledge for effective communication.

Research Methodology

This study is part of a larger multiple-case research project exploring the professional learning of English language teachers in South Korea and Taiwan. A total of eight teachers – four from each country – participated in a professional development (PD) program, with Korean and Mandarin serving as their respective home languages. Recruitment was conducted through professional networks and all participants provided informed consent. This paper focuses on two teachers, Kang (South Korea) and An (Taiwan) (pseudonyms), who participated in the same PD program, delivered in English as a lingua franca. They were selected for their evolving transcultural dispositions and the ways in which their engagement in third space led to transformative practices. As a bi-national pair, they collaborated to design and implement an in-class project. By analyzing their partnership, we examine how they navigated and transcended cultural categories (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). At the time of the study, Kang was teaching 7th-grade English at a public middle school in South Korea. She had seven years of teaching experience. She had also completed an 8-month study abroad in the U.S. An was teaching 8th-grade English at a private middle school in Taiwan, also with seven years of teaching experience. She completed two language study programs in the U.S., including a one-year exchange student program and a 3-week summer program.

Pedagogical Orientation of the PD

From August 2020 to December 2021, over a 16-week period, Kang and An participated in a virtual transnational PD program, facilitated by the first author through weekly online meetings (see Table 1). Designed to foster collaborative learning between teachers from different national and cultural contexts, the PD connected educators across South Korea and Taiwan in a shared professional experience. Each weekly meeting lasted approximately 90 to 120 minutes, where teachers engaged in various activities to explore culture, identity, and interculturality.

Designed by the first author, the PD adopted a transdisciplinary approach to English language teacher education, with a focus on interculturality—a dynamic, interactive view of culture (Monceri, 2019). Similar to transculturalism, interculturality views culture as an evolving entity that people “process together.” Interculturality, as a key concept, challenges essentialist views of culture and promotes the co-construction of identities (Dervin, 2010; Holliday, 2021). By engaging in a virtual transnational partnership, teachers had the opportunity to actively negotiate cultural meanings, reflect on their identities, and apply their learning in a cross-national collaboration.

Interculturality is therefore embraced as an important concept to be addressed in the PD as it challenges essentialist views of culture and encourages teachers and teacher educators to focus on how individuals actively engage with and enact interculturality and their cultural identities (e.g., Guilherme, 2004; Zhu, 2010). By strategically deepening their understanding of interculturality, the PD aimed to help teachers cultivate transcultural dispositions by appreciating cultural diversity and questioning dominant monolingual and monocultural ideologies.

Week	Topic & Activities	Purpose	
Weekly Online Meetings			
First Phase	Week 1	Topic 1. Culture & Identity	Teachers reflect on their cultural backgrounds and personal identity formation.
	Week 2-3	Topic 2. Culture & Interculturality in Education	Discuss how culture affects classroom dynamics and student learning.
	Week 4-5	Topic 3. Culture & Interculturality in Language Education	Explore transcultural teaching strategies and culturally responsive pedagogy.
	Week 6-7	Topic 4. Intercultural Citizenship in Language Education	Examine how educators can foster global citizenship through language teaching.
	Week 8-10	Topic 5. Role of Language Educators	Reflect on teachers' roles as mediators of culture and identity.
Weekly Online Meetings in Conjunction with In-class Project			
Sec	Week 11	Introduction to the History of Names Project	Introduce students to the project and its intercultural focus.

Week 12-13	History of Names One-pager; Cultural Mapping (An's class only)	Students research and write about their name's history; An's class engages in cultural mapping.
Week 12-13	History of Names One-pager; Cultural Mapping (An's class only)	Students research and write about their name's history; An's class engages in cultural mapping.
Week 14-15	Recording Videos of Individual History of Names	Students record their name stories and prepare to share them.
Week 16	Uploading Videos on Padlet as Posts; leaving comments to group peers' posts	Students upload videos and engage in intercultural exchanges.

Table 1
The PD Activity Procedures

In the first phase of the PD, Kang and An participated in various activities designed to deepen their understanding of culture, its role in shaping transcultural dispositions, and its impact on teaching (Gay & Howard, 2000). The PD included structured activities such as critical discussions on cultural identity, interactive reflections, and hands-on projects. Based on their engagement with these activities and their developing conceptual understanding, the teacher pair collaboratively designed and adapted content for their in-class projects. Kang and An's in-class project, "History of Names," culminated in a module consisting of multiple mini-lessons. One key component was an asynchronous activity where students recorded personal histories of their names, posted them on a virtual platform, and exchanged comments with peers. Implemented during the second phase of the PD, a total of 30 students from An's 8th-grade class and 26 students from Kang's 7th-grade classes participated.

In addition to the History of Names project, An implemented an additional activity called cultural mapping in her classroom. In this activity, students mapped culturally significant places tied to their personal experiences, memories, and emotions. This practice aligns with Byram and Wagner's (2018) recommendation to integrate cultural learning with other disciplines, such as history and geography. Throughout these mini-lessons, students used their home languages (Korean or Mandarin) as the medium of instruction to support conceptual understanding. However, the final outcome – videos on personal name histories – were produced in English, allowing students in Korea and Taiwan to share their work with each other. By engaging in these activities, the teachers aimed to motivate students to use English in meaningful, authentic contexts while fostering cultural exchanges and identity exploration. This process not only influenced students' motivation and behavior but also expanded the third space in which transcultural learning took place.

Data Collection

To explore the development of teachers' transcultural dispositions as part of their engagement in transnational partnership, three main types of qualitative data were collected with IRB approval. First, during the first half of the PD, teachers took turns writing journal entries, forming a written dialogue through comments. Once the in-class project began, they wrote individual weekly reflections on their learning and classroom practices. Second, throughout the PD, all the teachers met weekly with the first author on a virtual platform for 90 to 120 minutes. Meetings included interactive activities and discussions around the concepts of culture and interculturality, followed by collaboration on a joint in-class project, which were video-recorded. Finally, all the teachers engaged in two semi-structured interviews with the first author, once at the beginning and once at the end of the PD, each lasting 60 to 90 minutes. Interviews addressed teachers' understanding of interculturality, their own cultural perceptions, and the incorporation of interculturality into their teaching practices. The recordings of the meetings and the interviews were transcribed for further analysis.

Data Analysis

To examine the developmental trajectory of teachers' transcultural dispositions, a grounded content analysis approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) was employed. The first stage of analysis involved open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), in which the data were examined to identify emerging key words and phrases related to transcultural dispositions, interculturality, and language teaching (Agar, 1980). Terms such as "fact-based approach to teaching culture" and "connecting nation-state and language" were clustered into preliminary themes. Shifts in discourse were also noted, such as An's transition from viewing culture as "something national" to describing it as "much more personal and unique," which was coded under "conceptual transformation." To further refine the analysis, focused coding was conducted to examine moments of teacher learning, particularly instances where teachers explicitly identified how and what they had developed in their understanding of culture and interculturality. This included analyzing artifacts or individuals that mediated their learning. For example, references to peer discussions and specific activities were coded under "mediational tools." This iterative coding process helped identify patterns in teachers' evolving pedagogical thinking. However, while grounded coding provided an inductive approach to identifying themes, further theoretical grounding was needed to analyze the interactions and tensions in the teachers' learning process. To address this, CHAT-3rd (Engeström, 2001) was used as an additional analytical framework.

With the model taking two activity systems as a minimal unit of analysis, the activity of the pair – Kang and An – was considered one joint activity system.

Following prior research on intercultural telecollaboration (Antoniadou, 2011; Basharina, 2007; Ryder & Yamagata-Lynch, 2014), CHAT-3rd was applied to situate teachers' learning within their professional and institutional contexts, identifying contradictions that shaped their developmental trajectories. Each major theme from the coding process was mapped onto an activity system component to analyze how learning emerged through interaction. Figure 2 provides an illustration of this, demonstrating how Kang and An's professional learning and development of transcultural dispositions unfolded within a transdisciplinary framework. It helps map out the key mediational components, contradictions, and transformations that influenced the teachers' engagement in intercultural teaching. Each teacher entered the PD with pre-existing cultural perspectives and instructional approaches, represented by their individual activity systems (left and right triangles). The central overlap between the two systems represents the shared third space (Bhabha, 1994), where their learning experiences were co-constructed through collaboration, negotiation, and mediated action. This visual representation clarifies the process of professional transformation by tracing teachers' developmental trajectories within the third space. It captures how tensions between prior beliefs, new learning experiences, and institutional constraints led to negotiations and shifts in teaching practices. Additionally, it highlights the transdisciplinary nature of the PD, where insights from linguistics, intercultural studies, and teacher education intersect to create holistic, practice-oriented professional development.

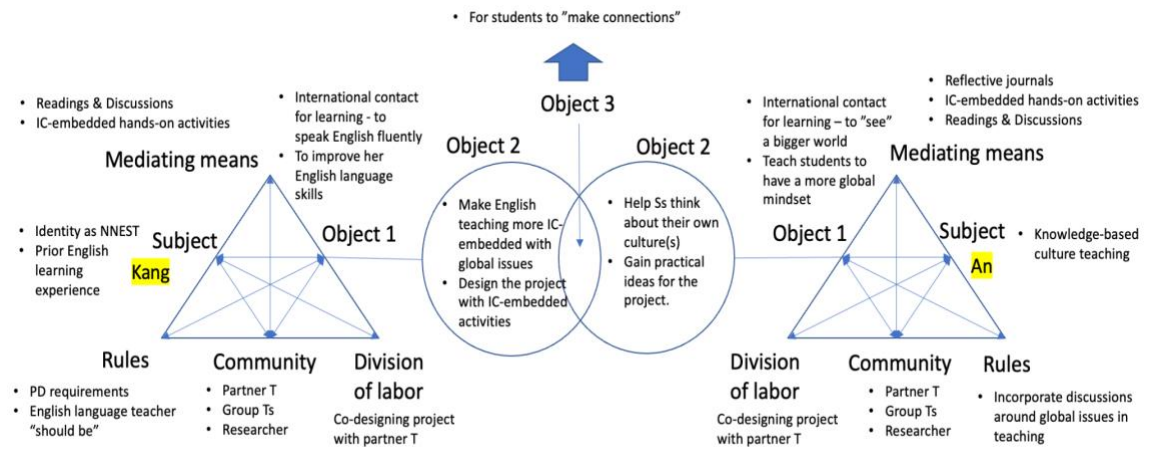


Figure 2
Two Interacting Activity Systems as a Minimal Model for the Third Generation of Activity Theory

Combining grounded content analysis with CHAT-3rd allowed for a holistic understanding of how teachers' transcultural dispositions developed through both cognitive and social mediation. Applied to the current study, this framework captures the learning trajectory of the two teachers who underwent individual and

collective transformation as they navigated the third space in a transnational partnership. Exploring how the two teachers met and occupied the third space while cultivating transcultural dispositions, particular attention was paid to the shift from Object 1 (situational goal) to Object 2 (collective goal) and then to Object 3 (shared goal), tracing how the activity system components influenced the teachers' engagement in knowledge creation and problem-solving across disciplines, cultures, and identities.

Study Findings

This section presents findings that address how Kang and An's professional learning experiences shaped their evolving transcultural dispositions and engagement with the third space. The analysis revealed three key themes in Kang and An's developmental trajectories: (1) expanding the purpose of ELT from language teaching to intercultural responsibility, (2) redefining culture from national identity to relational and situated perspectives, and (3) co-constructing intercultural pedagogies through transnational collaboration. Each teacher's experiences are analyzed chronologically, tracing how they reconceptualized their roles as English language educators, managed their inner contradictions, and engaged in transnational partnership. While their experiences are discussed separately, the findings reveal how both teachers transformed their pedagogical approaches within the third space, ultimately developing more dynamic and reflexive transcultural dispositions. This transformation is significant in the context of multilingual education, as it highlights how teachers can shift toward trans-educator roles that integrate multilingual and multicultural perspectives into their teaching practices.

Kang: From Linguistic Accuracy to Intercultural Responsibility

Kang's professional development journey illustrates a fundamental shift in the perceived purpose of ELT—moving beyond a focus on linguistic accuracy to embracing intercultural responsibility. This shift is a key marker of her development as a trans-educator, as she began to view her role not just as teaching English but as fostering global competencies among her students. Initially prioritizing grammatical correctness, she grappled with inner contradictions as she confronted new perspectives on language learning as a social, dynamic process. Through reflective engagement in the PD, she redefined her pedagogical approach, incorporating more culturally responsive and socially engaged practices. This section traces how Kang's evolving transcultural disposition led her to reframe her understanding of ELT and reimagine her teaching within the third space.

The left triangle of Figure 2 illustrates how Kang as the subject of the activity system brings a set of subjectivities shaped by her history of learning and teaching English as a non-native English speaker (NNES). Her earlier experiences with

learning English were primarily through formulaic methods aimed at passing exams, English being a core subject in South Korean schools. This education system instilled in her the ideological concepts of correctness and proper English, heavily influenced by the native speaker myth (Phillipson, 1992), which is rooted in colonial history and globalization. The entrenched notion of native-ness (Canagarajah, 2013; Seidlhofer, 2004) views the native English speakers' (NES') language as the norm and standard, while the NNES' English is viewed as deviant and deficient (Davies, 2003). In addition, Kang seems to have developed a deficit perspective towards her identity as a legitimate English language user and teacher, describing herself as "someone who imitates and copies - like a copycat. Like someone who imitates... try to sound like them [NES] - their accent" (Final Interview).

Kang's self-doubt about her legitimacy as a NNES comes into conflict with the PD expectations, which seems to further impact her learning experience. Throughout the PD, Kang was expected to write weekly journals and participate in weekly online meetings. In her journal, Kang expressed difficulty due to her ongoing sense of struggle with English: "I'm struggling with how to express my abstract ideas or thoughts in English... I wonder if it is my lack of English." This struggle led her to become increasingly reticent during virtual meetings, hindering her active participation in the PD. The distribution of power within the activity system, or *division of labor*, reflects this dynamic. Kang's diminishing confidence and reduced online engagement caused her to adopt a more passive role in her collaboration with An. This perceived lack of English competence and resulting passivity eventually led her to having a demotivating belief, "feeling like I don't think enough" (Final Interview).

However, Kang was able to turn these moments into a deeper understanding of her own learning. Her new instructional plan—shifting from a focus on grammatical accuracy to incorporating global issues—reflected a new goal for her teaching. Kang began to critically examine her previous instructional practices where she would "unilaterally accept and assimilate only the culture of the native speakers, using English names in English class... doing Halloween events and Christmas celebrations" (Final Interview). By questioning the purpose of these activities, she considered how to create more meaningful learning experiences for her students. She realized that it "might be meaningful to have students talk about their own culture... because we have our own [individual] identity, our own culture" (Final Interview). Contrary to the common practice in Korea of connecting only with NES as cultural partners, Kang came to understand that collaborating on such projects with NNES schools could provide equally valuable learning experiences.

During one of their online meetings, as the two teachers were sharing different types of activities they had previously implemented in their own classrooms for the purpose of intercultural learning, An introduced to Kang an activity called Write for Rights. As Kang noted in her weekly journal, this conversation boosted her confidence, making her feel she could "also try to implement social justice, equality, and global issues like the Taiwanese teacher

[referring to An].” Kang described this realization as discovering “the WHY behind English language teaching” (Final Interview), further explaining that she saw this new plan for action as a way to deal with always having to teach to a test or to achieve native-ness English fluency. Instead of viewing English language proficiency as the ultimate goal, Kang began to understand that the new role of an English language teacher involved “thinking deeply about global, social issues” and integrating them into instructional practices (Final Interview). Especially during the global pandemic, which forced many of her students to stay at home and feel increasingly isolated, Kang believed that creating connections between her students and those around the world through the introduction of global, social issues could provide them with a sense of being “part of the community, part of the world” (Final Interview). She asserted that it was the responsibility of language teachers to continue fostering these connections by becoming “more socio-politically aware... more proactive... more knowledgeable about what is going on around the world and trying to design lessons that can connect to society and the world” (Final Interview). This redefinition of her role aligns with the notion of trans-educators, as she recognized the need to support students’ intercultural development rather than adhering solely to traditional language instruction models.

And for teachers to be able to make such connections, Kang believed they needed to cultivate curiosity about others through understanding differences and showing respect for other cultures so as to create similar learning experiences for the students. Kang’s regained sense of agency in reorienting her ELT was also evident towards the end of the PD. She was determined to make plans to actively explore the Write for Rights website for opportunities to involve her students and research online resources to bring a more intercultural focus to her activities if she were to do a similar type of project with teachers from different countries. Such interest in transnational, transcultural collaboration seemed to further reflect Kang’s commitment to a more inclusive and globally aware teaching practice.

An: Redefining Culture and Fostering Connection

While Kang’s transformation centered on rethinking the purpose of English language teaching, An’s journey involved a redefinition of culture itself. Initially viewing culture as a set of fixed national characteristics, she gradually embraced a more relational, situated, and fluid conceptualization of cultural identity. This shift enabled her to foster deeper intercultural connections in her classroom, encouraging students to reflect on their own lived experiences rather than external cultural facts. In this sense, it also prepared her as a trans-educator, recognizing the need to move beyond fixed cultural representations and instead create opportunities for students to engage in relational and situated understandings of culture in their learning environments.

The right triangle in Figure 2 represents how An, as the subject of the activity system, brought to the PD a particular history, identity, and motive that interacted with other components of the system(s). As reflected in Object 1, An aspired to

guide students in becoming global citizens, helping them “feel that they can do something to make the world a better place” (Initial Interview). She believed that cultural awareness and everyday cultural misjudgments stem from lacking comprehensive knowledge of global events. Therefore, she prioritized teaching “more [background] knowledge,” and using information about different countries to “lead the discussions in a deeper and more thought-provoking way” (Weekly Journal). Acknowledging this is “not an easy job,” An reported having “failed” in her teaching approach many times.

One of the major themes that emerged from An’s data was her evolving understanding of the concept of culture. Initially, she viewed culture from “a more general point of view; more like from a nationwide perspective” (Final Interview). However, through various hands-on activities and discussions with Kang, she began to see culture “on a smaller scale,” recognizing that it “can be very personal” (Weekly Journal). In the initial interview, An described her culture as Taiwanese, which reflected her understanding of culture in relation to fixed notions of national identity. Yet, as the PD progressed, she explored her identity and culture(s) from multiple angles beyond nationality: “Being able to, like, learning to express my culture or to share my culture with other people in multiple ways. Like, for example, my upbringing and cultural artifacts like cultural maps...sharing who you are as a person” (An, Final Interview). These experiences allowed An to acknowledge the “different aspects of culture,” ranging from those “as small as something you see yourself in or see yourself with... a family basis” to aspects “as big as something that the whole country can relate to.” With this nuanced understanding of culture, An realized that culture “actually brings up, like, the diversity in... even the same community” (Online Meeting). Instead of holding an essentialist, binary view of culture that separated Taiwanese culture from others, she recognized the “differences within the shared [national] culture” (Weekly journal). For example, taking Asian culture as a commonality she shared with Kang, An believed she could broaden her students’ perspectives by discussing not only “the shared culture” but also “the variations among different families”.

Based on her reconceptualization of culture as “a very individual thing” and how she was “influenced as a person geographically, like from a geographical aspect” (Final Interview), An carried out a cultural mapping activity with her own class, which she had experienced with Kang during the first phase of the PD. As illustrated in Figure 3, she asked her students to draw and share a map of their neighborhood, highlighting places that were meaningful to them. She reported that the activity enabled her to “have a more personalized understanding of each student’s cultural backgrounds” (Online Meeting). In carrying out this activity, An set two objectives for herself. One was to incorporate different fields into her English class, specifically geography, by using maps to allow students to gain knowledge from another subject. The other one was to have students “really think about what these places mean to them” (Final Interview). In short, the activity helped students not only think deeply about their past memories related to places but also created an opportunity for them to better understand their hometowns from a geographical perspective.

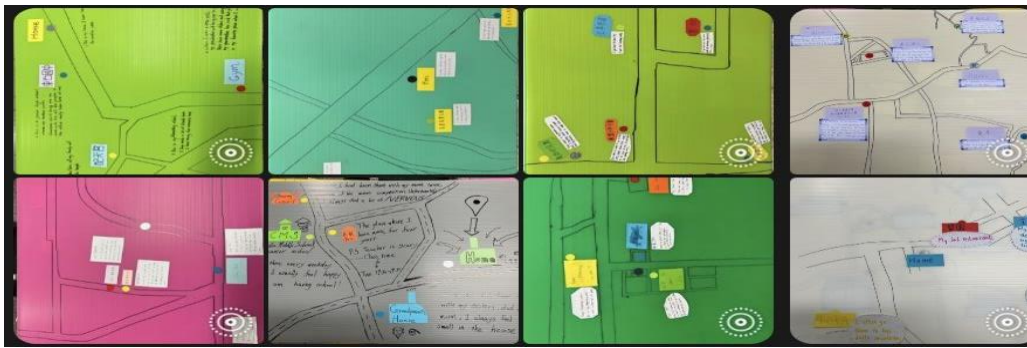


Figure 3
Student Work of Cultural Mapping

With this activity as a springboard, An began to proactively reexamine her prior teaching practices and realized that the students' lack of interest might stem from them not having an emotional connection to the topic:

I'm thinking maybe building that connection can be a solution to that... I hope that when I can help my students build the connection, they will be able to really see why this is something they want to think about. (Final Interview)

With this insight, she began to make deliberate changes in her instructional practices by, for instance, “making the discussion more relatable to the students” (Weekly Journal), creating spaces for students “to really think about what they have and then they’ll be able to see what other people are experiencing” (Final Interview). For An, incorporating interculturality into teaching therefore became all about helping students “make that connection.” This pedagogical reorientation demonstrates a trans-educator approach to multilingual education, where linguistic and cultural learning are deeply intertwined rather than treated as separate instructional components. An learned that asking her students to talk about their individual cultures “create[d] an opportunity for them to pause, think, and question the everyday cultural practices that are often taken for granted.”

Rather than imposing topics and themes on students that were not relevant to their daily lives, An planned to adjust her instructional practices to guide students toward social justice more actively:

It's about making a connection between yourself, a person, and to other groups around you...but not just to people, to... for example their city, like geographically or to different objects as well. I think making that connection is so important from one person to... for example, a group of persons like your family members, maybe like a small group of friends. And then also to, for example, like to people from your city and then to people from the entire nation and then to all humankind as a whole. (An, Final Interview)

This shift in her approach to teaching culture signified a profound transformation in An's teaching practice, where encouraging deep, personal reflections and

thereby fostering genuine connections became central. In making this change, she aspired to cultivate a more empathetic and globally aware generation of students, capable of engaging meaningfully with the world around them. Additionally, An's incorporation of cultural mapping reflects an interdisciplinary blending of geography, intercultural communication, and language education, highlighting the potential for transdisciplinary approaches to support meaningful identity exploration and linguistic engagement in ELT.

Discussion

Acknowledging that virtual PD and transnational partnerships can promote a trans perspective among teachers, we considered various aspects of transcultural dispositions, such as "tastes, values, and skills that favor co-existence with others" (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 176). In the evolving experiences of Kang and An, their recognition of the importance of considering cultural differences and diversity guided their professional development towards becoming "transdisciplinary individuals" (Liddicoat, 2018), capable of implementing a transdisciplinary approach to ELT. Through the three objects within the activity systems, their initial motives (Object 1) were transformed through interaction and negotiation in the third space. This process ultimately led to a shared outcome (Object 3) that incorporated broader sociocultural elements into their teaching, reflecting both their transcultural disposition and transdisciplinary approach to ELT (Engeström, 2001).

The findings of this study align with existing literature on transcultural and transdisciplinary approaches to English language teacher education. Our research questions sought to understand how teachers' transcultural dispositions evolved throughout their participation in the virtual PD and how these experiences shaped their engagement with the third space. This study's findings contribute to ongoing discussions on teacher learning within transnational contexts (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019; O'Dowd & Dooly, 2022) by demonstrating how virtual PD can serve as a liminal space where teachers navigate and reconstruct their professional identities. These findings extend Canagarajah's (2013) work on translingual and transcultural practices, emphasizing the fluid negotiation of identities in multilingual and multicultural spaces. Through their engagement in the third space, Kang and An transcended static notions of culture and language, instead constructing more fluid, context-dependent identities and teaching philosophies. By actively participating in virtual exchanges, they experienced cultural and linguistic hybridity that shaped their perspectives on English language teaching. This highlights how engagement in transnational partnerships can facilitate a shift in pedagogical perspectives, echoing the work of Byram and Wagner (2018) on interculturality and teacher education.

An important dimension of this digital third space is linguistic hybridity, which is central to preparing teachers as trans-educators. By engaging in multilingual interactions, Kang and An developed pedagogical strategies that leveraged

students' full linguistic repertoires, moving away from monolingual norms in ELT. As Kang and An engaged in transnational collaboration, they navigated the complexities of using English as a lingua franca while reflecting on the role of their first languages (Korean and Mandarin) in their teaching and identity formation. This aligns with Lee and Canagarajah's (2019) argument that transcultural dispositions are closely linked to translingual practices, where educators strategically draw on multilingual resources to create meaningful learning experiences. Initially, Kang's self-perception as a non-native English speaker constrained her engagement in discussions, reflecting dominant language ideologies tied to native-speakerism (Phillipson, 1992). However, through sustained interaction in the PD, she reimagined English not as a fixed entity but as a dynamic communicative tool, shifting from linguistic correctness to intercultural responsibility. Similarly, An's evolving conceptualization of culture as fluid and personal also influenced her views on language, leading her to encourage students to integrate their linguistic repertoires into their intercultural projects. The findings also resonate with Canagarajah's (2013) notion of translingual practice, where multilingual individuals strategically employ different linguistic resources based on context. In this study, Kang and An's classroom implementations reflected this shift. For instance, students engaged in projects that allowed them to use their home languages to conceptualize ideas before presenting in English, reinforcing the role of translanguaging in developing interculturality.

As Kang and An moved beyond a monolithic view of culture and language, they co-constructed an intercultural project that emphasized identity exploration and meaningful linguistic engagement. The in-class intercultural project became Object 3, a tangible outcome reflecting their development of transcultural dispositions that emerged from their experiences of working together in a transnational partnership (Byram & Fleming, 1998). While Kang moved towards integrating global issues, An emphasized cultural self-exploration, showing how the third space fosters differentiated yet complementary pedagogical shifts. These transformations challenge essentialized views of culture and language, reinforcing the need for teacher education programs to integrate transcultural and translingual approaches. This reflects the broader role of trans-educators, who must navigate multiple cultural and linguistic realities while equipping students with interculturality and flexible language practices. As suggested by Risager (2007), deconstructing the nation-state framework in language education enables teachers to foster a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment that better prepares students for global engagement. This enabled Kang and An to critically examine their teaching practices, adapt to new cultural contexts, and integrate their learning into their professional identities and classroom practices. The interaction between their activity systems illustrates how professional learning experiences can unfold at the intersection of transformative dimensions, reflecting the growth of a cooperative transcultural disposition (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). Their collaboration exemplifies how engagement in a virtual third space facilitates the negotiation of cultural and linguistic boundaries, enabling teachers to critically examine their roles as English language educators in transnational contexts. In doing so, they redefined their teaching as trans-educators – teachers who not only support

language learning but also act as cultural mediators, fostering multilingual identities and cross-border communication skills among students. This study thus contributes to the broader discourse on transdisciplinary and transcultural teacher education by highlighting the role of virtual PD in fostering pedagogical innovation and intercultural awareness.

Conclusion and Further Considerations

This study examined how two teachers developed transcultural dispositions while participating in a virtual PD program grounded in a transdisciplinary approach to ELT, which integrated insights from applied linguistics, intercultural communication, teacher education, and digital learning. The findings have significant implications for both practice and research, particularly in developing teachers of English as trans-educators. First, virtual PDs can create rich boundary-crossing environments that enable teachers to engage in transnational partnerships, without the need to travel abroad (e.g., Soong et al., 2021). Virtual communities facilitate connections beyond local contexts, promoting transcultural dispositions and redefining bilingual/multilingual teacher education (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). Such engagement helps teachers challenge stereotypes and view cultural differences as the norm (Loh, 2022). This encourages a transformative approach to ELT practices that are both transcultural and transdisciplinary (Ferri, 2023), which has been found essential for future educators to effectively teach in culturally diverse environments, positively impacting both students and colleagues (Casinader & Walsh, 2019; Gu & Canagarajah, 2018).

Second, the study addresses Byram and Wagner's (2018) call for a transdisciplinary approach to ELT, demonstrating how this can expand disciplinary boundaries and promote reflexive knowledge-making (Lee & Canagarajah, 2019), transforming teachers into "transdisciplinary individuals" (Liddicoat, 2018). The findings show how teachers develop a transdisciplinary vision that is also transcultural and transnational (Hyun, 2011), enhancing their sociocultural and global awareness. Both teachers adapted unfamiliar methods and revised individual disciplinary schema, creating a collaborative in-class project reflecting their transdisciplinary and transcultural understanding. This project, or Object 3, highlights how collaborations within the third space can challenge conventional boundaries and foster transformative learning (Bloomfield & Nguyen, 2015; Lee & Canagarajah, 2019). In this sense, the trans-approach to ELT disrupts monolingual and monocultural framing of language learning, encouraging teachers to navigate diverse linguistic and cultural systems and engage in meaningful reciprocal communication (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2016). PD programs based on this approach create third spaces where teachers from diverse backgrounds construct new knowledge and practices, preparing them to thrive in an interconnected world.

Third, from a methodological standpoint, the study addresses a more complex theory of teacher learning by revealing how social, cultural, economic, political, and identity-related factors influence teacher participation and learning in

the third space (Holliday & MacDonald, 2020; Johnson, 2009; Selvi et al., 2023). The study suggests that combining third space theory with CHAT-3rd as an analytical framework can be an effective tool for teacher educators and researchers to rethink bi/multilingual teacher learning. This approach highlights the dynamic and multidimensional nature of teaching and learning beyond national boundaries (Spooner-Lane et al., 2013), preparing teachers to engage in meaningful intercultural experiences so they can communicate and teach successfully in a global context. Taking a step further, future research can explore the effectiveness of combining the two in different teacher education contexts. While this study demonstrates its utility in capturing the dynamic and multidimensional nature of transnational teacher learning, further studies could examine its applicability across varied educational settings, such as pre-service teacher training or multilingual classrooms. Longitudinal research could investigate how teachers continue to engage with third space dynamics beyond the immediate PD experience, asking questions such as whether teachers' transcultural and translanguaging practices shift over time, or how institutional constraints or support systems influence the durability of these transformations. While it was not the scope of this study, another key area for exploration is how CHAT-3rd coupled with third space theory can be operationalized to analyze not only teacher learning but also student experiences. Future studies could examine whether and how students in transcultural and translanguaging classrooms navigate third space interactions, offering insights into the reciprocal impact of teacher pedagogical shifts on student engagement. Finally, comparative studies across diverse geopolitical and linguistic contexts could deepen our understanding of how teachers and learners negotiate third space engagement. Investigating how sociocultural, institutional, and technological factors mediating these processes could provide a more nuanced perspective on the affordances and limitations of this framework in language teacher education.

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