EMPIRICAL FEATURE ARTICLE

"I felt like I was being judged…": A duoethnography exploring international language teacher educator identities

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Abstract

Given the need to explore the nature of language teacher educator (LTE) identities, this duoethnography centers the identity journeys of three language teacher educators—Lu, Yuseva, and Zhenjie—as they evolved together and in dialogue with their advisor, Francis. To this end, they began with the central identity task, the Language Use Profile—part of the foundations course in their language teacher education programs and their language teacher educator development. As a point of departure for their duoethnography, this task allowed them to examine their understandings of their bi−/multilingual language use, language ideologies, and identities, and subsequently engage in a dialogic spiral that centered "reciprocity, care, and critical listening in research activities" (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017, p. 391S). Their findings point to the importance of these spaces in LTE development as a means for centering identities in doctoral programs, in particular to better support the development of language teacher educators in ways that are both humanizing and acknowledge the complex nature of the work that they do.

1 | INTRODUCTION

A considerable body of literature in teaching and teacher education has underscored the importance of identity in teacher development (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Izadinia, 2013; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Language teacher identity (LTI), as a subfield within this larger field, has been frequently defined in relation to particular stages of teaching careers. For instance, during the preservice teaching stage, LTI is characterized as multiple and conflicted (Archanjo et al., 2019; Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2015; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Taşdemir & Seferoğlu, 2024; Yazan, 2019), and sometimes experienced by language teachers via constructed multiple imagined identities (Archanjo et al., 2019). In other words, teacher candidates (TCs) initially develop dual identities as both English teachers and language users/learners. By contrast, in-service teachers who have gained much more teaching experience and are at different stages in their careers, negotiate and construct more complex and dynamic identities as their social contexts of interaction and participation have widened and become more intricate than during their teacher education program. At the same time, in-service teachers may experience identity tensions related to language policies and local contextual factors that delegitimize their expertise in the classroom (e.g., Martínez-Prieto & Lindahl, 2020; Nazari et al., 2021). In addition, transnational language teachers might encounter tensions between what they learned in native English-dominant countries (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada) and the realities in their home countries (Ilieva & Ravindran, 2018).

While LTI has received a significant amount of attention in the literature over the past 20 years, language teacher educator (LTE) identities have received considerably less focus. A trend that has begun to shift in recent years with explorations of LTE practices (Kessler, 2024; Peercy et al., 2019; Peercy & Troyan, 2017) and LTE identities (Barkhuizen, 2021). In this article, as part of our Humanizing Projects in LTE, we used duoethnography to examine our understandings of our bilingual/multilingual language use and identities, and subsequently engaged in a dialogic spiral that centered "reciprocity, care, and critical listening in research activities" (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017, p. 391S). San Pedro and Kinloch describe how Projects in Humanization [PiH]

> center the daily experiences (e.g., storytelling, story gathering, relationship building, reciprocal engagements) we have *with* people in ways that, on the one hand, emphasize our shared desires for racial, linguistic, educational, political, and social justice in schools and communities and, on the other hand, emphasize those same desires in our professional and personal lives. Theoretically and methodologically, PiH are enacted through the development of relationships, the process of listening and storying, and the dialogic engagement that occur during the telling *and* receiving of stories that have the potential to effect change.
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> (374S)

Contextualized within the need to better understand LTE identity development, this study employs duoethnography (Norris & Sawyer, 2012), a qualitative research method that explores personal and professional experiences through collaborative dialogue and reflection. This duoethnography centers the experiences of Lu, Yuseva, and Zhenjie as we evolved together and in dialogue with our advisor, Francis.

2 | LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATOR IDENTITY

Language teacher educators (LTEs)—defined as "practitioners who work with language teachers or TCs through formal and informal structures in order to prepare them to serve language learners" (Yazan, 2022, p. 2)—must undergo an "ongoing, fluid, multidimensional, and context-bound process" (Yazan, 2018, p. 143) to construct their evolving identity as teachers of TCs. This identity is often not automatically granted by receiving a relevant teaching assignment. Further, scholars (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2021; Trent, 2013; Yazan, 2018, 2021; Yuan & Lee, 2021) have affirmed that teacher educators in language teacher education are not sufficiently researched. Often, LTEs must take on their professional development and identity work independently, such as through the formation of self-study initiatives (e.g., Austin, 2022; Peercy & Sharkey, 2020; Peercy & Troyan, 2017; Troyan & Peercy, 2018). Yazan (2022) underscored the importance of understanding LTE identities:

> Understanding language TEs′ identities as well as the intricate processes and dynamics of identity construction will provide important insights into the preparation, development, and growth of language TEs. Such understanding is also particularly significant since language TEs′ identities inform their teacher education practices and impact teacher candidates′ (TCs′) pedagogical knowledge, skills, and teacher identities.
>
> (p. 1)

To delve into LTEs′ identity construction, we challenge the misconception that a good language teacher could automatically be a good LTE who does not need any professional preparation and special knowledge in order to educate language teachers. Instead, as Yuan and Lee (2021) noted, "[language] teacher educators ... need to foster professional knowledge, unique dispositions, and robust identities in order to educate future generations of language teachers" (p. 7).

Despite limited studies on LTE identity, research suggests that the transition from teachers to teacher educators can be incidental (Barkhuizen, 2021) and, therefore, that LTE identity development can happen incidentally. For most LTEs, the journey to becoming an LTE is seldom smooth or supported (Yazan, 2018; Yuan, 2016). Barkhuizen (2021) illustrated through his recount of his early LTE experiences, noting that he felt unprepared and lacked training for the role, with the identity enforced more by job requirements than personal readiness. Moreover, LTEs often grapple with challenges in negotiating different professional roles, as evidenced by Yazan's (2018) study, in which he reflected on his challenges as an LTE in the face of redesigning a graduate course, Critical Autoethnographic Narrative (CAN), focused on identity construction for TCs. Balancing roles as a researcher offering theoretical insights and a teacher educator guiding practical application posed a central challenge. His identity as a teacher educator was intertwined with his other identities as he negotiated his role in facilitating TCs′ identity development in his course.

Two other studies explored LTE identity in the diverse institutional norms and expectations of higher education in Hong Kong. Yuan's (2016) study illustrated the challenges faced by two LTEs in adjusting to institutional expectations, research pressures, and changes in the academic landscape. The study by Trent (2013) of seven beginning English LTEs highlighted the importance of agency in negotiating identity conflicts that arise as teacher educators evolve in their professional contexts. Further, with the intensified globalization of language education, transnational LTEs might confront the tensions between Western pedagogies, student-centered and inquiry-based

learning (Wu & Tarc, 2016), and local language teaching realities and norms; and they might also experience marginalization as nonnative speakers of the targeted language but feel empowered through the practice of "translanguaging" (García, 2009).

García (2009) defined translanguaging as "*multiple discursive practices* in which bilinguals engage in order to *make sense of their bilingual worlds*" (p. 45). Translanguaging as a framework considers bilingual/multilinguals' fluid language use as a norm and therefore challenges monolingual ideologies (García & Li, 2014). From a pedagogical perspective, Gort and Sembiante (2015) described translanguaging pedagogies as "the dynamic and discursive exchanges in which teachers and students engage as they draw on and choose from multiple languages and language varieties" (p. 9). Translanguaging pedagogies can help to disrupt monoglossic ideologies and empower linguistically minoritized communities (García, 2017), including language teachers as suggested by Woodley (2016). In this vein, translanguaging pedagogies can be used to empower international multilingual teachers by validating their linguistic identity and enabling them to draw on all their language resources in the classroom, fostering a more inclusive and affirming environment for them and their students.

This study draws upon Barkhuizen's (2021) five definitions of LTEs that include a range of identities to offer a structured way to explore and understand how the three LTEs in this study see themselves and their roles within the context of language teaching:

1. Professionals who support the learning of teachers.
2. Those teaching or supervising TCs as they learn to teach.
3. Those who provide professional learning opportunities for TCs.
4. Those who combine the roles of scholar, practitioner, and researcher.
5. Academics or researchers.

What is clear across the examples and narratives that Barkhuizen outlined in his book is the role of context in LTE identity, taking up Gee's (2000) view of identity that links context with one's role "as a certain 'kind of person'" (p. 99). Barkhuizen (2021) centered his study on LTEs in Colombia, our study extends the framework to a group of international LTEs enrolled in a doctoral program in the United States. These experiences in LTE practice and identity development have rarely been examined in the literature.

Barkhuizen presented a range of questions to consider when exploring LTE identity:

- How are LTEs perceived by colleagues in their institutions?
- How do language teacher educators' intersecting identities inform who they are in the classroom and how does this shape what they do and how they are perceived by their student teachers?
- How should induction programmes for new language teacher educators take into account their professional identities?
- What should institutions do to acknowledge and work with their identities in the planning and implementation of these programmes?

In addition to serving as a lens for structuring our data collection and guiding category development in our analysis, the questions provided by Barkhuizen helped us to develop our research questions:

RQ1: In what ways do the contexts in which three language teacher educators evolved shape their identity construction?

RQ2: What tensions do they describe in their LTE identity construction?

In exploring these questions, we found our work is deeply embedded in our personal experiences and professional identities. Duoethnography allowed us to embrace subjectivity and self-reflection as inherent components of our investigation, which aligned with our understanding of the multifaceted nature of LTE identities.

3 | METHODOLOGY

Duoethnography (Norris & Sawyer, 2012) is a qualitative research method "in which two or more researchers of difference juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple understandings of the world" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 9). It draws from social justice principles, narrative studies, autoethnography, and curriculum theory (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). The development of autoethnography aligns with the emergence of identity politics, advocating for community members to share their narratives autonomously (Adams et al., 2015). In teacher education, it has been used to investigate teacher professional development (Long et al., 2021), mental health among preservice teachers (Brown & Barrett, 2017), and the connections between teacher identity and professional trajectories (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). Furthermore, Dobbs and Leider (2023) utilized duoethnography to explore the experiences of women faculty of color in navigating predominantly White academic spaces. Their study highlighted shared themes of cultural taxation, invisibility, and hypervisibility while demonstrating duoethnography's potential for understanding positionality and developing coping strategies in higher education settings.

As a research methodology, duoethnography emphasizes the multifaceted, reflexive, and aesthetic dimensions of both the ongoing research process and its outcomes. Researchers typically collect their primary data through dialogues guided by research questions, engaging with various textual artifacts and the evolving narrative that emerges from these conversations. Due to the highly reflexive nature, initial research inquiries may evolve throughout the project as new interpretations emerge and fresh avenues of dialogue unfold based on ongoing interactions (Lawrence & Lowe, 2020).

In the presentation of data, duoethnography employs reconstruction, transforming raw data into scripted conversations to integrate diverse sources and enhance readability. The writing process itself is also a form of data, allowing for the inclusion of fresh insights and commentary during the write-up phase (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2019). Because duoethnography tends to avoid making definitive statements and often eschews the presentation of clear-cut conclusions in its writing, the responsibility of generalization is typically placed upon the readers. Readers are encouraged to extrapolate from the particulars presented in one context, creating universal connections and applying the generated meanings to their own unique contexts (Sawyer & Norris, 2012).

In this research, approved by the institutional review board at our university as part of our ongoing Projects in Humanization in LTE (e.g., Troyan et al., 2023), duoethnography provided a methodology centered in "reciprocity, care, and critical listening in research activities" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017, p. 391S). This dialogic method provided a space for critical exploration of our own evolving identities as LTEs, revealing how these identities are constructed, challenged, and negotiated over time. We, the first three authors— Lu, Yuseva, and Zhenjie—were all part of a course on language teacher education in 2018, as well as a course on functional linguistics, identity, and pedagogy in summer 2020. As such, we were all invested in issues related to LTE and identity and accepted the invitation to engage in this duoethnography.

Through engagement in conversations about our experiences and reflections, we unpacked the complex, dynamic interplay between personal histories, beliefs, and the broader educational contexts in which we operate. This allowed us to critically examine the influence of different educational and cultural contexts on our identity formation as LTEs, as well as the underlying ideologies that informed our professional identities.

3.1 | Data collection and analysis

During the Autumn of 2023, we conducted a structured exploration of LTE identities through a series of dialogues. This inquiry originated from a *Language Use Profile* (Troyan & Sembiante, 2021) assignment completed during a course in summer 2020 that allowed us to delve deeply into specific aspects of language use across contexts and LTE identity. The task involved both a written and a visual description and analysis of language use:

> [You] will critically examine your path as a language user at three distinct points throughout the semester. Using the language use map created in the first class session, you will prepare a two-page, first-draft narrative of your language use profile. For session eight, you will revise the first draft of the language use profile, incorporating their understanding of field, tenor, and mode into a four-page second draft. In the fourteenth class session, you will present your language use profile, which includes a visual or graphic representation of language use across contexts.
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> (Troyan et al., 2023, p. 895)

The reflective experiences of developing language teachers and language teacher educators has been described in detail elsewhere (See Troyan & Sembiante (2021) and Troyan et al., (2023)).

With the language use profile task completed in summer 2020 serving as the starting point, we engaged in four 1-hour dialogues via Zoom. These dialogues were initially centered around four main topics guided by our research questions, which included *language use and identities*, *language use and language teaching*, *language use and language teacher education*, and *language teacher identity and research*. During each session, we took notes to capture major themes and emerging ideas, which guided subsequent conversations. Each dialogue was built on the insights and reflections from previous sessions, enabling an ongoing state of inquiry. For example, during an early discussion about our evolving LTE identities, the topic of *researcher identity* emerged as a common theme among us. This shaped the focus of subsequent sessions, allowing us to explore how our researcher identities intersect with and inform our identities as LTEs.

In each dialogue session, we embraced reciprocity, care, and critical listening by giving each other space to share unique perspectives, promoting thoughtful reflection, and actively listening to each other's insights. This included acknowledging each participant's experiences, validating our feelings, and fostering an environment of mutual respect and empathy. We also engaged in subjectivity and self-reflection by sharing personal anecdotes and reflections related to our experiences as LTEs, which allowed us to connect our individual stories to broader themes in the field. Furthermore, we engaged with introspection and critical reflexivity through activities such as creating illustrations that represented our evolving understanding of LTE identity construction.

The dialogues were recorded and transcribed, forming the foundational data set. Our data analysis began with each of us independently coding the transcribed dialogue transcripts. We identified concepts and recurring patterns within the data, developing initial coding schemes based on

observations. To ensure consistency and reliability, we engaged in cross-referencing and cross-coding. Initial codes included *legitimization as an LTE*, *influence of language ideologies*, *awareness of context on LTE construction*, and *incidental language teacher identity development*. Following this, we met as a team to examine the coded transcripts and emerging categories, refining our coding scheme to accurately capture the multifaceted and evolving nature of LTE identity as revealed through our dialogues (Sawyer & Norris, 2012). We constructed our findings according to the salient themes that we identified and selected excerpts from our dialogues that represented the essence of those themes. In the writing of the findings, we reconstructed the excerpts into scripted conversations and incorporated other sources (e.g., LTE identity illustrations) to enhance readability. During the write-up phase, we also added fresh insights and commentary to dialogues to capture our evolving understandings.

3.2 | Participants' biographies and positionalities

Lu's journey in language education started in a suburban region of China, where she first encountered English as a foreign language in elementary school and continued learning it throughout her public school years. After completing her undergraduate degree in English, Lu moved to New York City for her master's degree in TESOL and a certificate to teach Chinese. After graduation, she taught English as a second language (ESL) and Mandarin at various private institutions and universities. During this time, Lu primarily worked with immigrants and their children, an experience that significantly influenced her research interests in the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse students in world language classrooms. At Ohio State University (OSU), Lu taught academic writing to international students and supervised World Languages and TESOL preservice teachers. As an LTE, Lu was motivated to equip teacher candidates with knowledge and confidence in working with multilingual students for their language studies.

Yuseva identified as a 44-year-old Indonesian female. Born and raised in a village in Java, her exposure to English began in the second grade of junior high school, where she started learning very basic English. After completing her university undergraduate studies, she became a lecturer at the same university, where her responsibilities included teaching preservice teachers in a microteaching class, a teaching practicum–based class that aims at helping preservice teachers to be ready to teach. This professional experience working closely with culturally and linguistically diverse teacher candidates influenced her interest to focus on language teacher identity, translanguaging practices, and translingual teacher identity. To further her professional development, she pursued master's and doctoral degrees in the United States, which exposed her to Western ideologies on teaching contexts through coursework, teaching opportunities as a graduate teaching associate, and research collaborations with colleagues and professors. These opportunities contributed to her identity construction as a multilingual teacher and teacher educator.

Zhenjie's English language journey began in primary school in China and continued from there, eventually leading to a bachelor's degree in English literature in the United States. While completing her master's degree, she taught English language skills to international students, but her nonnative-English-speaker status posed challenges to her credibility. While pursuing doctoral studies at OSU, Zhenjie developed a strong researcher identity before venturing into teaching second language writing in her second year, when she was assigned to teach both undergraduate and graduate level writing courses. Driven by a desire to solidify her professional identities and enhance her job market competitiveness, Zhenjie carried out multiple research projects and sought teaching opportunities across the campus. Her efforts led to an assistant professor position at an international university in China.

Francis, a White, gay, cisgender male and the doctoral advisor of Lu, Yuseva, and Zhenjie, grew up in a rural area of the northeastern United States, where Polish was a heritage language in his family and where he studied French as a high school student. He taught the doctoral seminar on language teacher education that took place in 2018 and the course on functional linguistics, identity, and pedagogy that all three students took in summer 2020. It was this course and the language use profile task that inspired multiple explorations of language teacher and LTE identity through language use. While his identities and privileges as an instructor, advisor, collaborator, teacher educator, and interlocutor are present in this work, he attempted to remain in the background in order to center the identity construction journeys of the first three authors. Francis felt that this was particularly important because of his native speaker identity, and other identities that privileged him in this LTE context in the United States. Finally, it is important that Francis acknowledge his power, and to some extent, his agenda in engaging in this research: To advance an issue that he has witnessed has been neglected in his work as a teacher educator, mentor, and doctoral student educator: namely, the absence of systematic development of language teacher educator practices and identities in doctoral education in applied linguistics (and perhaps across schools of education). This agenda was likewise present in the background as Francis extended the invitation to Lu, Yuseva, and Zhenjie.

4 | FINDINGS

4.1 | Incidental development of LTE identity

This section integrates our duoethnographic findings to address Research Question 1: "In what ways do the contexts in which three LTEs evolved shape their language teacher educator identity construction?" Although Lu, Yuseva, and Zhenjie had individualized trajectories in becoming LTEs, our initial construction and development of LTE identity was more incidental than structured. Through a series of dialogues, we reveal (in excerpts below) how personal experiences, professional assignments, and educational contexts contributed to the incidental and multidimensional development of our LTE identities.

Excerpt from Dialogue 3

> **Francis:** What are your thoughts about your identities as a language learner and a language teacher? How does that all inform your identity as a language teacher educator?
> **Zhenjie:** My identity as a language learner, particularly my experience of learning the target language, you know, English is the foundation at the bottom [see Figure 1]. And then I developed this teacher identity. And this is a process for me to kind of, combine my learning experience and then transform that into like my teaching experience. And it's also like a connection between [my] learner identity and this educator identity. But further, after I established this language teacher identity, my language teacher educator identity for me is my end goal, or like my mission as a professional. Because I feel like being a teacher educator, I can make a larger impact in the field.
> **Lu:** My journey … began as a language learner, then became a language teacher, and then progressed to a language teacher educator [see Figure 2]. But something that I noticed was my identity—it seemed to evolve along the journey. … After becoming a language teacher, I felt a strong urge to learn more [languages] and to improve my proficiency in English
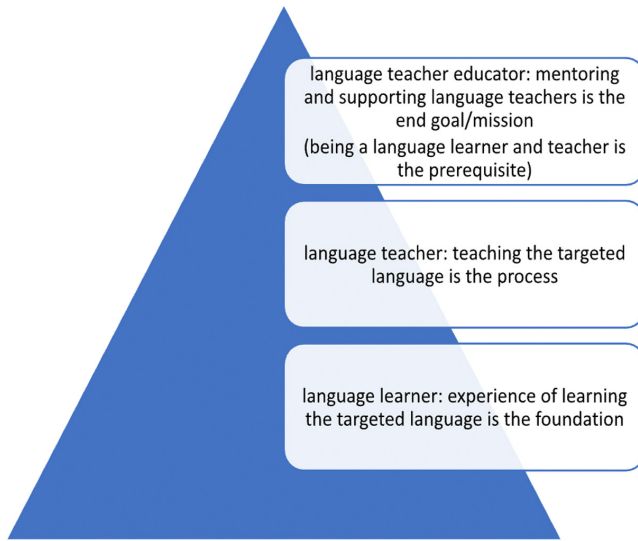
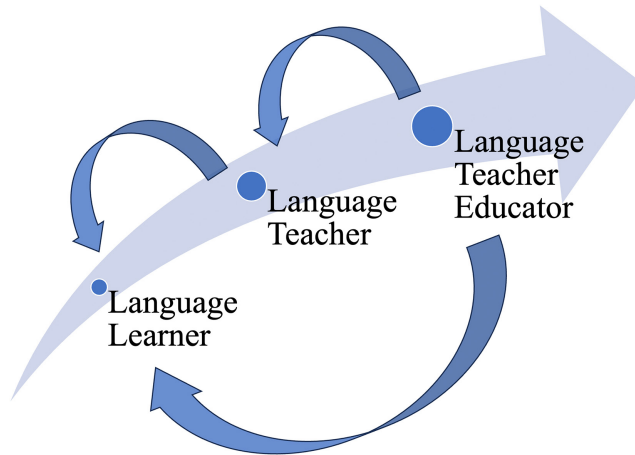**FIGURE 1** Zhenjie's LTE identity journey.

FIGURE 2 Lu's LTE identity journey.

.... And then when I started doing research related to SLA [second language acquisition], I decided to learn a new language. ... My identity as a language teacher educator kind of evolved naturally alongside my assignment as an LTE teaching and working with TCs and my research interests.

Yuseva: [My journey was] quite similar to Lu's. ... I started to teach as an English teacher in an English course center, where I learned a lot about how to be an English teacher and how to improve myself and my English because ... I was not only teaching English classes, but there were regular teachers language training where my employer trained us to have better skills, grammar, vocabulary pronunciation. So that's where I learned how to improve my English. But then, when I was an English teacher, I always looked back on my experience as a language learner. That's why I draw an arrow to a language learner. After graduating and obtaining my undergraduate degree in English teaching, I worked in the same study

program as an English teacher .... I also taught language skills, like speaking, reading, writing, and listening. But I also taught microteaching classes. So that's my identity—I never separate English teacher and teacher educator because for me it's like one unity—my one unity of identity [see Figure 3].

Francis: Is there development and support of a language teacher educator identity? Do you feel that you are supported in developing, in nurturing, in acknowledging a language teacher educator identity?

Yuseva: Yeah. In my case, from my sketch I mentioned, for professional development as a teacher educator, in the place where I work—they support financially and also mentally, yeah, especially financially. Because I think that's important, like, for conferences and conducting research, they always have funding for that. So ... I can go every year to international conferences outside of Indonesia. ... And also the permission to continue studies, like what I'm doing now. So yeah, I would say that it's ... support from the department.

Lu: I feel like for me, [my LTE identity is] inseparable from my researcher identity, and also my research journey at OSU. If I really trace back to the first time when I recognized my language teacher educator identity, it was like back in my year one or year two, when I presented at the state TESOL conference—translating what I learned from my class into something more tangible for language teachers. ... And I would say my [doctoral] courses allowed me to internalize how my professors do in their class ... and then apply those in my own teaching [with language teachers].

Zhenjie: So for me also, my researcher identity plays a very important role. In this PhD program, we were exposed to different concepts, for instance, like expertise, agency, etc. During the PhD, I collaborated with several colleagues from my cohort on language teacher agency, and we published articles and all of those have implications for teaching and ... teacher educators. In addition to that, we also presented in conferences, such as the state TESOL conference where the audience was mostly local teachers. That's my first exposure to really presenting my work to practitioners. ... And also during PhD, I was teaching
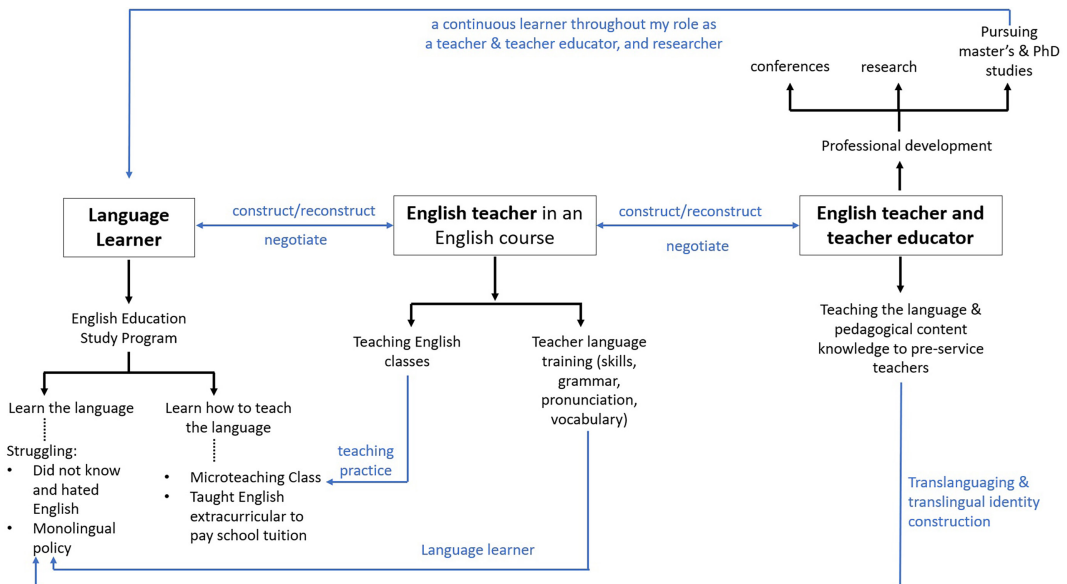

FIGURE 3 Yuseva's LTE identity journey.

composition in the ESL program, and under [my supervisor who] had several projects on creating textbooks or handbooks, and she invited me to work together with her. So I had experience creating materials for teachers. It really inspired me to work more on this ... teacher educator identity. And I do believe research is a very essential part because the kinds of research I do ... and my publications have implications for teaching and teacher educators. So I feel like research is a very important source for me to claim myself as a language teacher educator.

Although we all followed the path from language learner to language teacher to language teacher educator, this progression was neither linear nor uniform. Instead, it was multifaceted and contextually embedded. Our construction of LTE identities varied significantly depending on our unique teaching contexts, research interests, and other experiences, reflecting the diverse pathways that contribute to the evolving identity of an LTE.

For example, Zhenjie's journey from a language learner to a teacher and then to a teacher educator was a transformation in which each stage built upon the previous one. This layered development shows how her early experiences as a learner were instrumental in forming her educational philosophies and teaching practices, ultimately guiding her towards a more impactful role as an LTE. Zhenjie particularly emphasized the significance of her researcher identity in shaping her journey as an LTE. As she developed her research interests in language teacher identity and agency during her PhD program, the implications of her research became oriented toward language teacher education. To align her research and practice, she looked for opportunities to further develop her LTE identity, including presenting research findings to TESOL practitioners.

Lu's journey began as a language learner, progressed to becoming a language teacher, and further evolved into an LTE based on experiences during her PhD program. She noted that her identity as an LTE evolved simultaneously alongside her teaching assignments and research interests developed during the course of her studies. Further, Lu recognized the ways in which her LTE identity was intertwined with her researcher identity, marked by experiences such as presenting at conferences, applying research findings to teaching, internalizing teaching methods from professors, and gaining practical insights through various classroom experiences. These elements collectively contributed to the formation and development of her identity as an LTE. The context of her doctoral studies, with its emphasis on research and practical teaching, played a crucial role in nurturing this ongoing development.

Yuseva's journey to becoming an LTE was established prior to entering her PhD program and was characterized by her role as a teacher educator in Indonesia working with preservice teachers in the microteaching class. The development of her LTE identity was supported by her job. In this job, her continuous reflection on her past experiences as a learner and a teacher informed her approach as a teacher educator, making her identity development an interactive process. The professional support she received, particularly in the form of training and professional development opportunities, further shaped her identity as an LTE.

For all of us, our researcher identity played a crucial role in shaping and solidifying our identities as LTEs. Engaging in research allowed us to explore and deepen our understanding of language teaching, while our teaching experiences provided valuable, practical insights that further enriched our research. The incidental nature of our identity development was evident in how these opportunities arose naturally through our academic journeys, rather than being the result of a predefined path.

4.2 | Tensions of legitimization of LTE identity for nonnative language teachers in Western contexts

In exploring the ideologies that have shaped our construction of LTE identities, two prominent themes were evident in our dialogues related to the tensions surrounding the legitimization of our LTE identities as nonnative English speakers trained in the U.S. context: (1) The nonnative speaker dilemma in LTE legitimization and (2) reconciling Western training with diverse LTE contexts.

4.2.1 | The nonnative speaker dilemma in LTE legitimization

Our dialogues revealed a consistent struggle to affirm our professional competence, often overshadowed by the need to demonstrate English language proficiency. This aspect of our identity influences our self-perception and external validation. As nonnative-English-speaking LTEs, our epistemic and linguistic statuses were challenged from multiple directions: by our colleagues, our students, and even internally. The pressure to prove our English proficiency often took precedence over showcasing our pedagogical skills and expertise.

Excerpt from Dialogue 1

> **Francis:** Looking back at those language use profiles—the images, and the writing that you did in 2020—what are your thoughts?
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> **Zhenjie:** I feel like I'm more like a multilingual speaker now than in the past. Right now, in this workplace [my university in China], I feel like I can naturally use different languages in one context. But when I was writing those reflection journals [for language use profile in 2020], I feel like I maybe intentionally just focused on one language and one context.
>
> **Francis:** What about the context that you were working and teaching in at that time [in the English Language Program at OSU]?
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> **Zhenjie:** It was more legitimate for me to use English, even though my students were Chinese international students. But I feel like to establish my authority, and also because of my nonnative-English-speaker identity, I feel like I was more willing to show my English proficiency at that time, and also want[ed] to prove my English proficiency ... and I feel like it ... would be not professional if I use[d] Chinese to communicate with Chinese students. But here [at my Chinese University], I feel more at ease to use different languages .... Maybe this is also related to my research on translanguaging .... I know more about translanguaging and translanguaging pedagogy and how it can help my students better.
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> **Yuseva:** I actually have the same experience as Zhenjie. But that happened when I was in Indonesia. ... My institution also hired ... native speakers to teach in my study program. And I had one experience that was, I think, a speaking course, and many of my students chose and wanted to be taught by the native speakers. So, at that time they thought that learning with native speakers would be much better than the nonnative speakers. So ... I tried to speak English because of the nonnative speakerism.
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> **Francis:** So, had you previously used multiple languages in your teaching?
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> **Yuseva:** Yes, yes. I used Indonesian and also Javanese, especially with the students who also come from Java .... When I started my teaching, I actually tended to implement English-only practice, because I was still young and I was new in the department, and I want to show somehow that I have English competence to teach .... So that was me before

I took my masters in a U.S. university, where I learned about translanguaging and the use of translanguaging to help students learn English. So after I went home after I took my master's, I felt like I became a new person .... I tried to implement the translanguaging practice ... and contextualize my teaching more closely to the students' lives. That changed my perspective .... I think my identity has transformed and evolved.

Yuseva: I actually have questions for Zhenjie and Lu because both of you have been living in the U.S. for quite long. How do you use English differently when you're talking to your colleagues in Chinese contexts? Do you find any expectations [from them]? I am asking because I once had a Zoom meeting with some colleagues in Indonesia, one of them said "You've been in the U.S. for quite some time. I believe that your English now is much, much, much better. ... I want to hear you using English in this meeting."

Zhenjie: Something very similar happened to me. I remember once a Chinese colleague from another department asked me what courses I taught, I said EAP [English for academic purposes], and she said, "Wow! Your English must be very good, as good as native English speakers." I didn't give any comments. [W]henever [I'm] in front of Chinese colleagues, I do feel like I have to show them. You know, I got this degree from the US. I feel like I have to constantly prove myself like I have to show them I'm qualified .... When I talk more there is other knowledge involved like pedagogical knowledge. It's not just English competence, but I do feel a lot of times when people judge me. They just judge my English competence, but not other kinds of knowledge.

Lu: I do feel like I have that feeling of being judged sometimes when I work with teacher candidates. I remembered one time I arrived at the recitation early and ran into a student who ended up asking me a million questions not related to my expertise but like, "Where did you grow up? How was your schooling experience?" I felt like, "okay, yeah, where does this lead to?" It seemed like they wanted to know all of [my] experiences to judge if [I was] qualified for this position. I felt like I was being judged because I did not grow up in the local context.

Our experiences illustrated a compelling internal and external pressure to demonstrate English proficiency, even in contexts where it may not be pedagogically necessary or appropriate. This focus on language proficiency was echoed in Yuseva's account, where the preference for native speakers among students in Indonesia reinforced the notion that teaching competency is predominantly judged by linguistic ability, rather than pedagogical skill or content knowledge. A pattern also emerged where we, as nonnative LTEs, felt compelled to prioritize showcasing our English language skills, often overshadowing our other professional competencies. This was captured in Zhenjie's reflection on interactions with colleagues, where her language proficiency is seen as the primary indicator of her teaching ability. Lu introduced another dimension to this conversation: the judgment faced by nonnative LTEs working in U.S. contexts regarding their upbringing and educational experiences outside of the United States. While the student's intent might have been to seek information rather than to assess, these feelings of being judged are not random; they stem from repeated experiences of needing to justify her qualifications based on her non-local upbringing and education.

However, through the engagement with translanguaging during our graduate studies, we were able to reframe our approach to language instruction. For Zhenjie, the concept of translanguaging helped her feel more at ease using different languages in her current context at a Chinese university. Yuseva's experience mirrored this transformation. After returning to Indonesia from her master's studies in the United States, she felt empowered to implement translanguaging

practices in her teaching, allowing her to connect more closely with her students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This shift increased her confidence as a teacher and educator.

4.2.2 | Reconciling Western training with diverse LTE contexts

Our dialogues also revealed the complexities of reconciling the Western training we received with the diverse teaching contexts we encountered. The influence of Western training we received and ideologies we adopted due to our experiences in the United States emerged as a critical factor in shaping our conceptions of effective pedagogy. These Western pedagogical models often clashed with the realities of our local contexts, adding another layer of tension to our LTE identities.

Excerpt from Dialogue 2

> **Zhenjie:** I feel like I haven't really embraced my identity [as a language teacher educator] because I was Western-trained. I'm a Western-trained scholar, and I was imposing a lot of Western ideologies, like what's considered good pedagogy in my research analysis and my facilitation of professional development. For example, a good teaching pedagogy needed to be student-centered, interactive, and engaging. This Western view influenced how I interpreted my research data and interacted with participating teachers. ... When I was facilitating a professional development on language teacher agency, I wasn't really aware of the classroom size in courses in China because in the U.S., I had between 12 and 20 students in my classes. I wasn't aware that in the context of the teachers in China who participated in the professional development that I facilitated, they could have 50 students or 100 students. ... I was a nonnative English speaker, but at the same time, I was Western-trained, and my affiliation with OSU, you know, really benefited me, privileged me to a large extent.
>
> **Lu:** I could relate to what Zhenjie said in a lot of ways. The first thing that came to my mind was that context really matters .... This also makes me think about the role of English as a lingua franca and how that role has impacted knowledge construction and the hierarchies in terms of knowledge constructed in different languages. I realized that even in many other countries outside of the U.S., knowledge constructed in English from the Global North is sometimes still viewed as superior and we rarely learn about those pedagogies, perspectives, or theories that are developed from the ground in those contexts.
>
> **Yuseva:** Similar to Lu and Zhenjie, I think context matters. And probably because I identify myself as an Indonesian English teacher educator, I also center my focus, my research, everything [in the Indonesian context], like whenever I learn a theory or something. And when I want to put the theory into practice, the first thing coming to my mind would be Indonesian contexts. So, I think how I identify myself has a strong influence on what I do as a scholar, a researcher, and also as a teacher. ... My identity, and also my experience teaching multilingual students, actually help me to feel more confident.

Zhenjie's reflections exemplify how being Western-trained led her to adopt certain pedagogical ideals, such as student-centered and interactive teaching, which she initially considered universally applicable. She also acknowledged that being a nonnative English speaker who was trained in the United States and affiliated with a U.S. university allowed her to access more resources and opportunities, as she commented "privileged me to a large extent." However, Zhenjie's experience facilitating professional development with participants accustomed to large class sizes

revealed the limitations of the Western-centric teaching approach that she was often exposed to. This exposure hindered her understanding of the challenges inherent in teaching larger classes and adapting to diverse educational norms in other contexts. Lu and Yuseva's dialogues underscored the significance of contextual awareness in teaching and knowledge construction. Lu pointed out the global perception of English and knowledge from the Global North as superior, indicating a hierarchical view in educational knowledge that often marginalizes local pedagogies and theories. Yuseva's experience, on the other hand, highlighted the importance of aligning teaching practices and theoretical applications with the specificities of the local context, in her case the Indonesian educational setting. Her identity as an Indonesian English teacher educator played a central role in how she adapted and applied her knowledge.

Despite these challenges, obtaining higher education degrees in a Western setting contributed positively to Yuseva and Zhenjie's identity transformation upon returning to their countries for teaching.

Excerpt from Dialogue 1

> **Zhenjie:** Whenever I'm in front of, like Chinese colleagues, I do feel like I have to show them, you know, I got this degree from the U.S. I feel like there's something I have to constantly prove, like I have to show them I'm qualified. ... Can I just share one more comment to just what Yuseva shared? Yuseva mentioned something about being a novice teacher. She was concerned about her own professional identity, and she had many uncertainties. But then she became more confident as she gained more experience, and she cared more about what students needed. That's exactly what I experienced. When I just began my teaching, I was so self-conscious about my English proficiency. But then, when I became more experienced in teaching, I realized there was more knowledge involved like pedagogical knowledge, right? It's not just about English competence. Of course, English competence is important as an English language teacher, but it should not just be about English. Knowledge of students, knowledge of methods, and so on are also important, so we should not be solely judged by our English competence.
>
> **Yuseva:** So, after I went home after I finished my master's, I felt like I became a new person. So ... I tried to implement the translanguaging practice, or ... using any languages and any repertoires. Actually, not only languages, but also images. And I contextualized my teaching closer to the students' lives. ... So it was my master's degree that ... changed my perspective.
>
> **Francis:** So that's what was after [your master's studies] because you talked about forcing students to use English prior to that. You had this policy of really strict language use as a teacher.
>
> **Yuseva:** From my master's. When I implemented [translanguaging], or when I used other languages [than English in teaching], I no longer felt incompetent [and it's] because of my degree. I mean, I got my master's [degree] by a prestigious scholarship from abroad, so using other languages than English [in teaching] no longer justified who I was as a teacher ... even though I used other languages than English. So again, I think my identity has transformed and evolved.

Yuseva and Zhenjie's pursuit of higher education degrees in a Western setting, specifically in the United States, also had a profound impact on their LTE identities. While they experienced some tensions reconciling their Western training with their specific teaching contexts, their U.S. degrees conferred a heightened sense of legitimacy. Upon returning to their home countries, just based on their experiences, the attainment of their U.S. degrees enhanced their sense of

qualification and confidence, which influenced their teaching practices and perspectives on language use in the classroom.

5 | DISCUSSION

This project, part of our Projects in Humanization in language teacher education, sought to better understand our identity journeys as three LTEs evolving in our work during our PhD programs through reflection on our past and present identities and how those identities contributed to our LTE identities. As Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) noted, "identity is dynamic, ... a teacher's identity shifts over time under the influence of a range of factors both internal and external to the individual" (p. 177). In a similar vein, LTE identity is equally complex. Duoethnography allowed us to reflect upon and depict our LTE development journeys while international doctoral students in the United States, as likewise dynamic, shifting overtime and dependent on particular constraints and affordances of the local context.

The contexts in which we evolved as LTEs shaped our LTE identity construction in distinct ways. For Lu, her journey towards becoming an LTE began as a language learner, transitioned to becoming a language teacher, and eventually developed into an LTE. She described her identity formation as an ongoing and progressive process that has evolved and continues to develop alongside her teaching assignments and research interests. Yuseva's journey towards becoming an LTE was primarily characterized by her teaching role. After completing her undergraduate studies, she had the opportunity to teach preservice teachers in microteaching class, a context that played a crucial role in supporting her professional development as an LTE. Zhenjie's identity as a researcher significantly influenced her journey as an LTE. Enrolling in a PhD program exposed her to various concepts and allowed her to develop her own research interests, which played a crucial role in positioning herself as an LTE. Through her teaching and research interest during her doctoral studies, she increasingly focused on language teacher teaching development and, over time, took up an identity as an LTE. Our LTE identity construction reaffirmed Yazan's (2018) argument that LTEs must undergo a continuous, fluid, and context-bound process to construct their identity as teachers of TCs.

Overall, our journeys toward becoming LTEs can be described as more incidental than structured. While our initial construction and development of LTE identities were influenced by specific factors and contexts, there was a sense that our unique paths contributed to our particular journeys as LTEs, aligned with what Yuan and Lee (2021) state: "there are marked differences in the route of becoming TESOL teacher educators in different contexts" (p. 2). Just as the previous experiences and histories of language teachers play a crucial role in their professional growth and development (Davin & Donato, 2024; Johnson, 2016; Johnson & Golombek, 2020), the personal backgrounds and histories of LTEs are equally important as they navigate their doctoral programs and shape their identities as LTEs (Barkhuizen, 2021). This includes drawing upon their experiences as language learners, language teachers, and even their experiences as LTEs themselves. These collective experiences should be utilized as valuable resources in the process of identity construction and reconstruction for LTEs in doctoral programs.

Context also influences what is valued and legitimized in terms of pedagogical knowledge (Barkhuizen, 2021). Our dialogues revealed the pressure from our different contexts to demonstrate English language proficiency, often at the expense of other professional competencies, such as pedagogical content knowledge. This reflects an ideology that prioritizes linguistic ability over pedagogical skill or content knowledge, particularly in contexts where native English speakers

are perceived as inherently more competent, a perception which has been documented in many LTI studies as well (e.g., Martínez-Prieto & Lindahl, 2020; Nazari et al., 2021). Our experiences also suggest that pedagogical models, which emphasize student-centered and interactive teaching, do not always align with the realities of larger class sizes and different educational norms. However, upon returning to our home countries after receiving training in the United States, we felt an increased sense of qualification and confidence, suggesting an internalized valuation of Western educational credentials in our home countries. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy in how different types of teaching experiences are valued, especially for international LTEs. Our experiences demonstrate that valuable teaching experiences in non-Western contexts are often disregarded or not acknowledged in Western settings.

While our previous learning experiences and contexts greatly influenced our perceptions of our own sense of legitimacy as language teachers and LTEs, by engaging with translanguaging (e.g., García, 2009; Li, 2018; Sayer, 2013), we were able to redefine ourselves as multilingual users, embracing the various linguistic resources available to us. This process also required us to confront self-doubt and challenge deeply ingrained ideologies. Through this reframing of language teaching, we came to realize that sounding like a "native speaker" should not be the ultimate goal of language learning. Instead, we shifted our focus towards creating inclusive and empowering language learning environments. Much as Woodley (2016) described the power of translanguaging to help language teachers and students move "from pain to healing" (p. 570) as they reflect on language use, doctoral programs and LTE professional development can create spaces for reflection on the transformational power that translanguaging and other similar concepts can have to enable a healing journey for developing LTEs.

6 | CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study centers on the identity journey of three international LTEs during their doctoral studies, offering a unique perspective on the experiences of nonnative, Western-trained educators. Through our duoethnographic exploration, we were able to capture the dynamic, multifaceted, and context-bound nature of our LTE identity construction. The findings also highlighted the tensions we experienced as international LTEs trained in the United States, particularly in reconciling Western pedagogical training with diverse local teaching contexts. By centering our experiences in dialogic spirals that emphasize reciprocity, care, and critical listening, we advocate for more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches in doctoral programs to support the development of LTE identities.

Context plays a significant role in shaping LTE identities. LTEs' professional identities are influenced by their experiences, challenges, and the broader educational context in which they operate (Trent, 2013). Therefore, the development of LTEs' pedagogical knowledge must consider the unique contexts in which they operate. Additionally, there is a need for a shift in how language teacher education programs perceive and incorporate the experiences of nonnative, Western-trained educators. Recognizing and valuing the diverse pedagogical backgrounds and linguistic experiences of these educators can enhance the learning environment.

The findings of this Project in Humanization in LTE have implications for doctoral programs that also prepare language teacher educators. Prioritizing the development of language teacher educator practice and identities involves formalizing the spaces and activities that are often informal or incidental in doctoral education. To this end, we envision doctoral education that

- intentionally acknowledges and nurtures language teacher educator identity through guided reflective activities throughout the doctoral program that acknowledge the lived experiences of developing language teacher educators and allow opportunities for dialogue and storying of those experiences;
- prepares language teacher educators with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and pedagogical content knowledge to reach and effectively prepare language teacher candidates in ways that are community and culturally responsive and work for social justice; and
- supports the development and recognition of language teacher educators as intellectuals and change agents engaged in theorizing and action with regard to persistent and urgent societal and educational needs.

The journey from being language teachers to becoming LTEs is filled with challenges related to linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical expectations (e.g., Trent, 2013). These challenges are further complicated by the pressure to conform to Western pedagogical standards, which may cause professional dissonance and impact identity formation and legitimacy in the field. To address these challenges and realize a more humanizing approach to LTE development, doctoral programs and professional development initiatives should provide comprehensive support, resources, and guidance that acknowledge and address the unique experiences of LTEs, especially those transitioning from being language teachers. This support could include mentorship programs, workshops focused on identity development, and forums for sharing experiences and strategies.

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