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To cite this article: Zhenjie Weng, Tamara Mae Roose, Grace Jue Yeon Kim & Yuseva Ariyani Iswandari (18 Mar 2026): Early career language teacher educators' intersectional identities and practices across diverse contexts: a collaborative autoethnography, *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, DOI: [10.1080/07908318.2026.2644173](https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2026.2644173)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2026.2644173>



Published online: 18 Mar 2026.



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Early career language teacher educators' intersectional identities and practices across diverse contexts: a collaborative autoethnography

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ABSTRACT

This collaborative autoethnography (CAE) aims to explore our lived experiences as four female language teacher educators (LTEs) in tertiary-level education across different contexts (U.S., China, and Indonesia). Drawing upon the concepts of intersectionality, we report on our constructed identities at the intersections of diverse backgrounds (e.g. cultural, linguistic, gendered) and the impact of the intersectional identities on our practices in language teaching and/or teacher education. Our CAE reveals that identities are not shaped by discrete categories but by multiple intersecting factors, such as cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, while also highlighting the contextual dynamics of LTE identity negotiation. Further, our lived experiences indicate that marginalisation and empowerment are not mutually exclusive but coexist within our LTE identity construction. Despite the challenges we experienced as LTEs, we turned those challenges into resources to empower ourselves and students, specifically by agentively utilising asset-based pedagogical approaches, advocating for ourselves and students, and engaging in scholarship on bilingualism, translanguaging, and marginalisation. Lastly, the study provides implications for LTE education and research.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 5 August 2025
Accepted 8 March 2026

KEYWORDS

Language teacher educators; intersectionality; identities; collaborative autoethnography; teaching practices

Introduction

Recently, as an expansion of existing identity research within the field of language education, scholars have started focusing on the identities of language teacher educators (LTEs), which has given rise to an emerging area of study within the larger field of language teacher education (Barkhuizen, 2021; López-Gopar et al., 2024; Yuan & Lee, 2021). LTE identities are conceptualised as the evolving professional self of LTEs, influenced by a diverse range of factors (Gerlach, 2024). These factors include their professional history, knowledge, skills, roles, responsibilities, pedagogical beliefs, emotions, and desires (Barkhuizen, 2021; Trent, 2024; Weng, 2025). LTE identity research has thus

far offered insights into the tensions and conflicts that occur during the professional identity development and construction of LTEs across contexts. For instance, studies have delved into how transnational LTEs negotiate their identities and practices across academic cultures and discourses (e.g. Lu et al., 2025; Uştuk, 2025). Other research has explored the struggles of LTEs in managing multiple roles within their workplaces (e.g. Gerlach, 2024; Song & Nejadghanbar, 2024), as well as the transition from language teachers to LTEs (e.g. Wang & Fang, 2025). A common theme emerging from these studies is that LTEs' identity construction is a complex process fraught with challenges and often lacking sufficient professional guidance.

Previous research has indicated that individuals' sociocultural positioning and experiences, based on aspects such as gender, sociolinguistic background, ethnicity, and race play a significant role in the process of negotiating LTE identities (Lin et al., 2004). The intersectionality of race, gender, class, and/or linguistic ability has received significant attention in the investigation of language teacher identities (e.g. Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Weng et al., 2023). However, the complexities and difficulties associated with the construction of LTE identities at the intersection of social categories (e.g. race, class, gender, language) and its implications for language teaching and/or teacher education practices remain under-documented.

To address this gap, this collaborative autoethnography (CAE) research examines our LTE identity construction and practices through the lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). The guiding research questions are *How are our LTE identities constructed at the intersections of our diverse backgrounds (e.g. cultural, linguistic, gendered)? How do these identities impact our practices in language teaching and/or teacher education?* By taking stock of this important and emergent line of research, this article intends to enrich the hitherto limited understanding of LTEs' intersectional identities. The article can also offer valuable practical guidance for LTEs and language teacher education programmes, promote inclusivity and equity in language education, and contribute to methodological development in the field.

Literature review

Research on LTEs and LTE identity

LTEs are a varied and heterogeneous professional group from different parts of the world, with varying levels of qualifications and years of language teaching and/or teacher education experiences (Yuan et al., 2022). To better contextualise LTEs in this study, we borrow Yazan's (2022) concise definition: 'practitioners who work with language teachers or TCs [teacher candidates] through formal and informal structures in order to prepare them to serve language learners' (p. 2). We believe that LTEs undergo an 'ongoing, fluid, multidimensional, and context-bound process' to construct their evolving identity in this position (Yazan, 2018, p. 143). This definition includes LTEs whose responsibilities are not limited to institutional settings but also beyond to embrace their wide range of work (e.g. workshops for in-service teachers and government consultations). In actual practice, LTEs frequently have to initiate professional development for themselves (Banegas & Gerlach, 2021) or rely on themselves to explore what it means to be LTEs, indicating their process of professional identity formation is often isolated and lonely.

Research on LTE identities has predominantly been on three major categorisations: identity alignment, tensions, and negotiation (e.g. Gerlach, 2024; Lu et al., 2025; Nazari et al., 2024; Song & Nejadghanbar, 2024; Trent, 2013; Weng, 2025; Yazan, 2018; Yuan, 2016). Among the research, it was found that, despite various identity tensions and conflicts, LTEs can assert agency to negotiate and reconcile their identities as Weng (2025) stated, 'The possession and maximization of agency empower LTEs to develop capable and autonomous LTE identities' (p. 2). Nazari et al. (2024), for example, found that although external power structures undermined the agency and identity of Iranian LTEs, resulting in negative consequences, these difficulties spurred the LTEs to cultivate caring and proactive identities. However, what has been insufficiently addressed in current literature on LTEs is the discussion of their intersectional identities, which is the focus of the study.

Intersectionality and LTEs

Coined by Crenshaw (1989) within the context of legal studies on civil rights, intersectionality, rooted in Black feminism and critical race studies, provides a critical lens to analyse how different power structures and forms of marginalisation or privilege converge to shape individual experiences. This theoretical framework acknowledges composite identities (e.g. race, class, gender, sexuality dis/ability, age), 'operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities but build on each other and work together' (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 4). When analysed through an intersectional perspective, the interplay of numerous identities exposes the intricate and frequently cumulative obstacles that teachers and learners confront, especially those from disadvantaged communities (Tarrayo, 2025). According to Crenshaw (1989), intersectional experience is greater than the sum of each individual discrimination. Only through an intersectional perspective can the subordination of marginalised individuals be sufficiently addressed (p. 140). A keynote is that intersectional identities challenge the exclusive focus on individuals' marginalities, emphasising the intersection of both privileges and oppression (Nash, 2008).

Informed by the theoretical framework of intersectionality, we first clarify our working definition of intersectional identity as it applies to LTEs. For the purpose of this study, an intersectional LTE identity refers to the dynamic, context-dependent interplay of an LTE's social positionalities (e.g. race, gender, class, linguistic background, nationality, sexuality) and professional roles (e.g. language teacher, teacher educator, researcher, supervisor). These interlocking identities do not operate in isolation; instead, they mutually influence one another, producing unique experiences of privilege, marginalisation, tension, and/or agency that shape how LTEs construct their professional selves and engage in teacher education practices. Crucially, intersectionality also emphasises that the diverse dynamics are context-bound: 'a particular social category membership in connection to others may privilege an individual or a group of individuals in one context but marginalize the same individual or group of individuals in another' (Kayi-Aydar et al., 2022, p. 3). For LTEs, this means an identity marker like international scholar might foster credibility in global teacher education networks but create barriers to tenure-track positions in institutions prioritising local academic norms.

Although intersectionality has been widely examined in other disciplines, its application to language teachers, let alone LTEs, remains emergent (Kayi-Aydar et al., 2022;

Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Seo & Kubota, 2023). Previous studies on language teacher identities have explored how racialised identities interact with gender, class, language, sexuality, ability, and religion to perpetuate social injustice and inequalities (e.g. Troyan et al., 2023; Weng et al., 2023). In language education, teachers' racial and linguistic identities are inherently intertwined (Kayi-Aydar et al., 2022), with 'raciolinguistic essentialism', the belief that certain racial groups are 'legitimate' speakers of a language, granting White L1 English speakers structural privilege (Kubota, 2023, p. 2). This ideology permeates global English language teaching contexts, from North America to Asia, where employers often prioritise White L1 speakers in their hiring practices (e.g. Hickey, 2018; Jenks, 2017).

Gender and sexuality also intersect with race, class, and professional identity. Studies (e.g. Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Lin et al., 2004; Weng et al., 2023) have highlighted how race, gender, sexuality and (non-)native speaking status exert a significant role in shaping language teachers' lived experiences in language teaching and teacher education. Lin et al.'s (2004) study explores how women faculty of colour in TESOL face compounded marginalisation, exclusion from decision-making, overwork, devalued cultural heritage, and gendered/racialised labour segregation, stemming from the intersection of their gender, race, and professional roles. Varghese et al. (2025) similarly explored how their professional identities intersected with gender, language, race, citizenship, class, and other backgrounds to create opportunities and challenges. For instance, in the study, one participant discussed how her young age, language status, gender, faith, ethnic and cultural background intersected and positioned her in the periphery in academia. Built upon this still scarce but growing body of literature, our study contributes to the emerging line of research on intersectional LTE identities by explicitly examining how the interplay of social positionalities and professional roles influence identity construction and teacher education practices.

Methodology

CAE is a 'multivocal approach in which a team of two or more researchers work together to share personal stories and interpret the pooled autoethnographic data' (Lapadat, 2017, p. 589). As a methodology, CAE combines autobiographical study of the self with ethnographic analysis, creating space for intentional dialogues and reflections to move beyond individual to collective experiences (Blalock & Akehi, 2018; Chang et al., 2013). As a cohort of four female LTEs with varied professional backgrounds, we employ CAE to examine our LTE identities through a rich comparative perspective on what it means to be an LTE across different institutional and cultural settings. By detailing our personal transformations, professional challenges, and adaptive strategies, we highlight the need to consider individual LTE trajectories and multiple identities as integral to professional development and well-being.

Our positionalities

Although we each have extensive prior experience as language teachers, we all viewed ourselves as novices in the LTE role. Therefore, we consider ourselves emerging female LTEs from diverse linguistic, cultural, and teaching backgrounds. Before we started our doctoral studies in the same programme at a U.S. university, we all had lived abroad in

different countries for (language) learning and teaching in various settings, ranging from K-12 to higher education and in English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and bilingual education contexts. Later, we shared experiences from the doctoral programme, research collaborations, and professional development facilitation. Despite all identifying as women and early-career LTEs, our social identities intersected in particular ways based on our situated contexts. Below we detail our positionalities and who we are as LTEs in our current contexts.

Author 1

I am Chinese, in my early 30s with about ten years of language teaching experience. It is my third year in my position as an Assistant Professor, teaching academic English writing to Chinese students at an international university in China. I have also been teaching online professional development courses for in-service and pre-service teachers (PSTs) worldwide, as well as education-related courses for prospective teachers of Chinese or English inside and outside of China. Despite years of language teaching experiences, I recently extended my identity to an LTE, leading to my self-perception as an early-career LTE.

Author 2

I am a U.S.-born native English-speaking White female with over 15 years of experience as an English language teacher. In my new role as an LTE, I am currently in my third year as an Assistant Professor in a graduate TESOL programme at a public university in California, classified as a Hispanic-Serving Institute. I prepare PSTs and in-service teachers to work with multilingual students across diverse educational contexts in the U.S. and abroad, such as K-12, adult schools, language institutes, community colleges, and universities.

Author 3

I am Korean with a background of growing up in a Spanish-speaking country and years of experience working as a language teacher in bilingual education and ESL programmes. Currently, I am in my fourth year working as an Assistant Professor of Education at a private university in Pennsylvania. I oversee the TESOL programme and teach courses on ESL methods and linguistics for PSTs, along with other education courses. I also supervise and provide individual advising for PSTs pursuing the ESL-specialist certification in their fieldwork teaching emergent bilingual students. Therefore, I consider myself as an early-career LTE whose role has expanded from being a language teacher to an LTE.

Author 4

I am a 46-year-old Indonesian educator with more than 20 years of teaching experience. I currently work as an English teacher and teacher educator in an English language education study programme at a private university in Indonesia. Although I have extensive teaching experience, I still consider myself an early-career LTE because my work as a teacher educator began much later than my language teaching career. I currently

teach culturally and linguistically diverse EFL PSTs from different regions across Indonesia. I also provide supervision and mentorship for them during their school-based teaching practice. I also provide mentorship and training for in-service English teachers.

Data collection and analysis

Data collection lasted four months, January to May 2025, with monthly reflections guided by thematic prompts. Each prompt consisted of one individual reflection followed by a group meeting. Our prompts concentrated on our LTE professional training and trajectory, challenges and struggles in relation to different dimensions, our expectations and work as LTEs, and our identity impact on practices. We each wrote and shared our reflections with the group. We read each other's reflections before the monthly meetings. The four monthly meetings were arranged over Zoom and video recorded to further engage in dialogue on our intersectional identities and the impact on our practices. During each meeting, we shared our observations and asked each other questions. Data collected for this study include 16 reflections (62 pages total) and four recordings of group meetings (approximately 5.5 h total).

We analysed the data using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). We transcribed all recordings for a careful analysis. All of us individually coded the reflections and meeting transcripts. The codes were informed by the research questions and theoretical frameworks: intersectionality and LTEs. Each of us developed a codebook with code groups, codes, descriptions of codes, and examples from the data. After individual coding, we shared our codebooks and met to compare codes and to discuss emerging themes until we reached consensus.

The research rigour of CAE is strengthened by multidimensional perspectives on the research since data generation, analysis, and writing are done collectively (Chang et al., 2013). To ensure credibility of the data collection, we triangulated data from different sources and types (i.e. personal memory, self-reflective writing, and discussion), as well as contextualised our individual stories within our collective experiences and the extant literature (Hernandez et al., 2017). At the same time, we acknowledge the constraints of this methodology, for example, potential researcher subjectivity due to the data being self-reported, complexities stemming from ideological differences among multiple voices of researchers, possible relationship issues due to power dynamics, and tendency to hastily reach consensus (Hernandez et al., 2017; Roy & Uekusa, 2020; Zhu et al., 2022). However, the trust and respect already established as former doctoral colleagues allowed us to engage in critical dialogue and ongoing member checking, enabling us to speak honestly and ask questions freely (Lapadat, 2017).

Findings

In this findings section, we addressed the first research question by presenting individual intersectional identity narratives with figures we each created to visualise our complex intersectional experiences as LTEs. These narratives were dialogically constructed through our reflexive discussion and repeatedly revised to foreground our distinctive intersectional identities as LTEs. We then turn to our collective reflection on how being part of this CAE deepened our understanding of intersectional identities. To answer the

second research question, we identified common practices that emerged across our narrated experiences, including moving from deficit to asset-based views and advocating in our teaching and scholarship.

Research question 1: how are our LTE identities constructed at the intersections of our diverse backgrounds (e.g. cultural, linguistic, gendered)?

Individual intersectional identity narratives

In this section, each of us unpacks the dynamic interplay between our diverse identities and contextual factors, revealing how marginalisation and privilege coexist to influence our pedagogical practices, research pursuits, and ongoing negotiation of authentic professional selves.

Author 1

My multiple intersecting identities – young age, female gender, Asian appearance, non-native English speaker status, F-1 visa holder, Chinese nationality, and a daughter from a patriarchal family – have influenced my personal and professional life as both a language teacher and an LTE (see Figure 1). These identities do not exist in isolation but intersect to create a complex experience of marginalisation and empowerment. My youth, gender, appearance, and non-citizen status in the U.S. generated vulnerability and fear as a novice language instructor, influencing students' perceptions of my legitimacy as a teacher. For example, when teaching in a language class, I was around 24, significantly younger than most students in their mid-30s or 40s. Some were sceptical of my qualifications. Once, a disagreement erupted with a male student refusing to accept the inaccuracy of his answer. Despite my attempts to clarify and justify the correct response, he remained confrontational until another male student intervened and urged him to

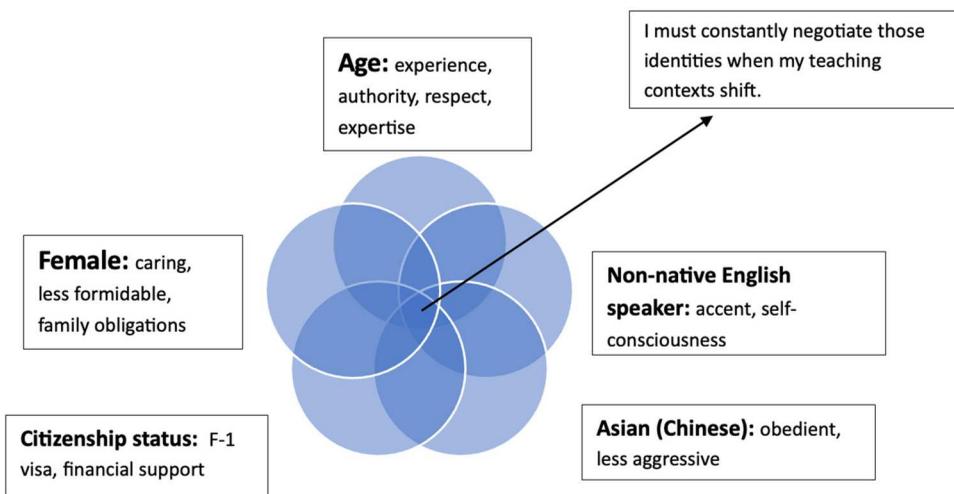


Figure 1. Author 1's intersectional identities.

stop. My Asian appearance and linguistic identity as a non-native English speaker further complicated my authority, especially when students dropped my class in favour of White native-speaker instructors. This bias made me feel insecure about my job and led me to sacrifice personal time to support students, making me wonder: Did I conform to gender role expectations? As someone relying on an F-1 visa in the US, I did not know what else I could do to overcome those insecure feelings, striving to demonstrate to my employers that I was indispensable to students.

These experiences drove me to pursue a Ph.D., where my LTE identity took shape. As a researcher, I engaged with studies on marginalised teachers, drawing strength and solidarity from their stories. Yet academic pressures, such as publishing in English-dominated journals, reinforced my outsider status and self-doubt. Returning to China shifted some dynamics – youth and gender became assets, particularly becoming a role model to my female PSTs – but new challenges emerged, like heightened expectations of linguistic fluency, research productivity, and family pressure. I constantly navigated the multifaceted, often conflicting dimensions of my identities in pursuit of belonging, credibility, and empowerment across cultural and professional contexts while maintaining my authentic self.

Author 2

The ongoing tensions between my various identities and the multilayered sociocultural contexts in which I work and live have shaped who I am as an LTE (see [Figure 2](#)). I found my home in the TESOL world over 15 years ago teaching international students in a university academic English programme in California. Since then, I have taught adult English learners from around the world at the community college and university level across the U.S. and in East Asia. Being a language teacher has been central to my

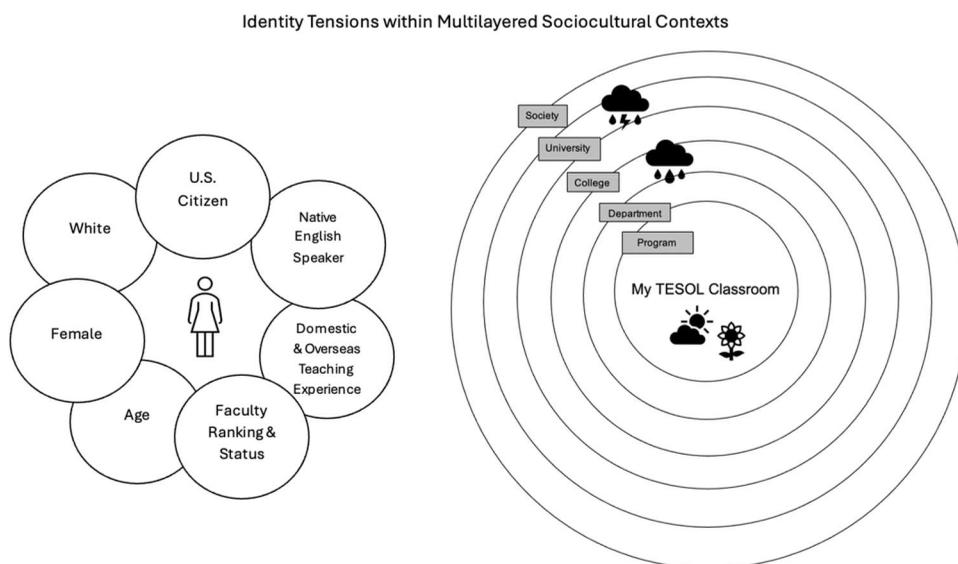


Figure 2. Author 2's intersectional identities.

identity for quite some time, shaping the way I see and want to live in the world. I believe I become a better teacher and human by learning from my students' experiences, perspectives, and identities, while witnessing their growth in knowledge, skills, confidence, and passion. I continue to find a deep sense of purpose in the classroom, now preparing future teachers to work with multilingual students in my new role as an LTE.

As a U.S.-born native English-speaking White female, I carry certain privileges as an LTE, and my credibility is often assumed based on these identities. The classroom remains my comfort zone and ray of sunshine, while spaces beyond it often feel stormy, stirring tensions between my identities and these contexts. As a new, untenured faculty member, I have navigated academic culture shock while striving to acclimate to new workplace dynamics and politics of higher education. TESOL programmes in the U.S. are shrinking as universities face budget cuts and declining international student enrolment. Nationwide, political tensions shape educational conditions, as ESL classes are often cancelled due to lack of funding and high absenteeism in schools driven by safety concerns. While I continue to have deep love for the field of TESOL and have found great joy in the profession, as a U.S. citizen and LTE, I often grapple with a sense of unease as I prepare students to enter a profession increasingly marked by uncertainty and challenge.

Author 3

My social identities have shaped my work as a language teacher and an LTE across different contexts. With [Figure 3](#), I aim to capture three main ideas in describing the relation between my social identities and my LTE role: (a) that my work as an LTE is deeply influenced by the intersections of my identities, (b) the way I position myself and am positioned by others depends on the context, and (c) these all have become more complex in my constantly evolving and expanding roles.

The intersections of different social identities have shaped both my teaching and research. Thanks to my background as a Korean growing up in Latin America, I was exposed to a bi/multilingual environment at an early age, learning Korean, Spanish, and English simultaneously. The diverse languages and cultures I have learned became a central part of my identity. Moreover, my previous K-12 teaching experiences as a middle school Spanish Language Arts teacher in a bilingual education programme and a high school ESL teacher in a large city in the Midwest have informed my research and teaching as an LTE. During my doctoral studies as a graduate teaching associate, I taught ESL composition courses for both undergraduate and graduate students, in addition to TESOL and bilingual education endorsement courses for in-service teachers. All these experiences have further enriched my work of advising PSTs pursuing the ESL-specialist certificate.

Secondly, [Figure 3](#) highlights the fact that the way I am positioned by others and position myself varies depending on each context I teach. For instance, regarding how I am positioned by others, my race as an Asian becomes more salient in teaching contexts such as Spanish-English dual language bilingual education programmes, especially when teaching Spanish Language Arts. I often receive questions, many times from the students, on where and how I learned Spanish. The contexts also shape how I position myself, as I draw upon different experiences that are relevant to each context. In my work as an ESL LTE in the U.S., I often share examples from my previous teaching experience as a high

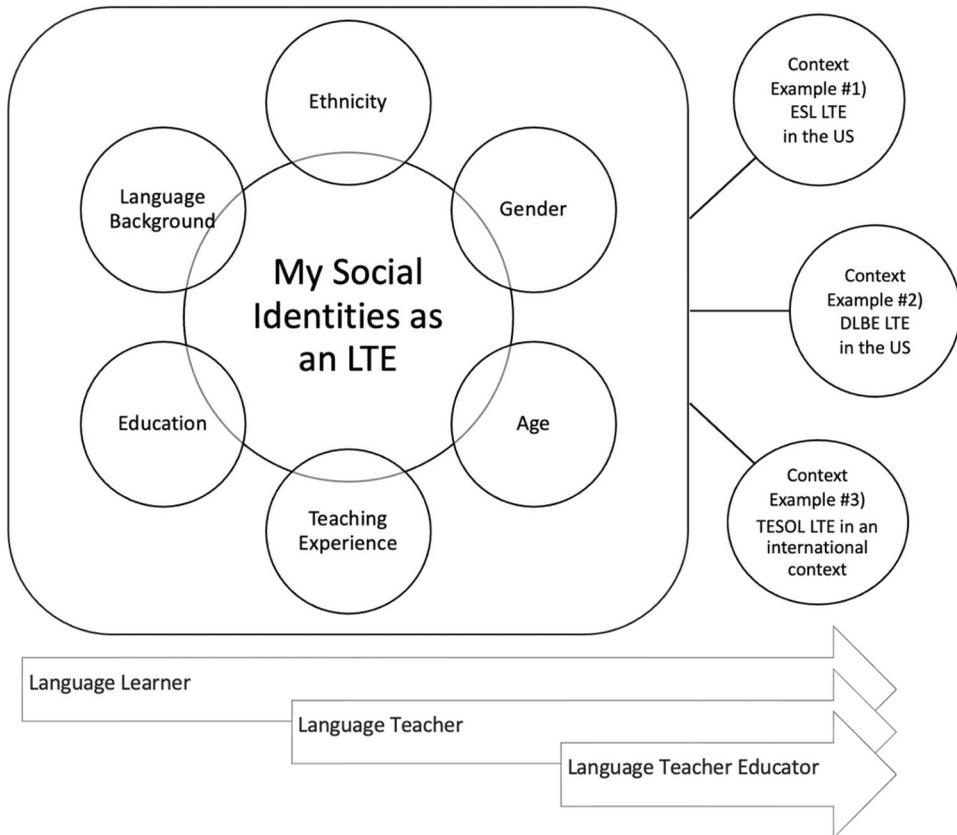


Figure 3. Author 3's intersectional identities.

school ESL teacher. Yet when I work with TESOL educators in an international context, I frequently bring in examples from my previous experience of learning English in an EFL context. All these intersectional identities across diverse contexts have become more complex as my role has evolved and expanded from first being a language learner, later to being a language teacher, to also becoming an LTE.

Author 4

My work as an LTE has been deeply influenced by the intersections of my diverse cultural, linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic identities and backgrounds. Although these may seem separate, they are in fact interconnected in shaping who I am as an LTE, as displayed in [Figure 4](#) below.

These identities are illustrated within a single circle, which constantly rotate, interact, and contribute to the ongoing construction of my LTE identity. Their influence is reflected through both the opportunities they offer and the challenges that, in turn, become opportunities. For example, my socioeconomic and educational backgrounds – coming from a small Indonesian village with limited exposure to English – intersected with my linguistic identity, which challenged my early LTE career. I developed negative feelings

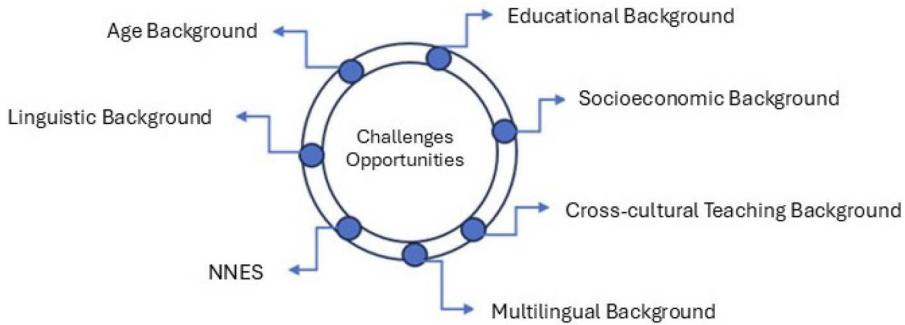


Figure 4. Author 4's intersecting identities.

towards the language at an early age, which led to insecurity and anxiety in using it. These challenges influenced my confidence as a novice LTE and researcher. However, these challenges became a foundational part of my evolving LTE identity where I developed deep empathy for PSTs who faced similar challenges.

My decision to pursue graduate studies in the U.S. further shaped and expanded my LTE identity. Academic coursework, along with collaborative research opportunities with professors and peers, exposed me to theories such as sociolinguistics and translanguaging. These theories were especially helpful in guiding me to implement and promote pedagogical translanguaging in classrooms. In addition, my LTE identity was also negotiated when I had an opportunity to teach international students in the U.S. context. As a non-native English speaking (NNES) instructor, some students questioned my credibility and legitimacy in teaching academic writing. However, I transformed this challenge into an opportunity to see my multilingual identity as an asset. Upon returning to Indonesia, my U.S. degree has opened new professional opportunities, including leading teacher workshops and mentoring PSTs. However, my age intersected with my professional identity when I faced initial resistance towards my ideas from some senior teachers. Ultimately, I view all my diverse identities – socioeconomic, educational, linguistic, age-related, multilingual, NNES, cross-cultural teaching – as valuable resources that contribute meaningfully to the ongoing construction of my identity as an LTE.

Collaborative nature of intersectional identity construction

In addition to the individual reflection of our intersectional identities, this CAE provided us with new perspectives and space through interaction, sharing, and collaboration among group members, enabling us to examine our intersectional identities more comprehensively and in-depth. In this space, we not only listened to each other's stories and experiences but also deepened our self-understanding through interaction and feedback. For instance, Author 1's sharing in the third online discussion demonstrates the unique value of this space:

Before I wrote this reflection, I felt like, what can I do? Just bear with [all those marginalization and negative emotions brought by intersectional identities]. But then, during the process of reflection, and also reading all of your reflections, I realized, yes, I was marginalized or had a certain period of challenging time. I was also privileged in a lot of ways. I feel like this

reflection made me be more critical and [developed] a more balanced [attitude]. Viewing myself not just as a vulnerable person, but at the same time, to acknowledge, I have a lot of privileges that I have enjoyed I didn't realize before writing this reflection.

This reflective space created by CAE broke the limitation of isolated individual reflection. We examined our experiences from multiple perspectives and explored the overlooked dimensions of our intersectional identities and how power structures in our societies shaped our experiences of marginalisation and privilege.

In response, Author 2 emphasised the importance of sharing and telling our stories, which could be an empowering process of reflection on our individual and shared identities:

What I was thinking as you were talking right now is the idea of strength within vulnerability. [...] There's vulnerability in all those identities, like in the identities many people shared like age, gender, socio-economic status, native or non-native speaking, legal status, status as faculty members. I felt a lot of admiration and respect for each of you because I could see so much strength within the journeys each person took, so to me, there was a lot of beauty in that, [...] It made me think of [...] a quote that I really love. [...] It's not just the story that's told; it's the actual act of telling the story and having somebody listen to it. [...] I really found it powerful to hear each of your stories, and I imagine there's also some power in being able to share it, and that there's people who are listening to it and resonating with it and learning from it. (Discussion 3)

Sharing our intersectional identities via CAE helped us realise that we were not alone in our experiences as our colleagues faced many similar challenges. In this resonance, we found connection with each other and discovered that our own experiences were reflected in others, gaining a deeper understanding of our own intersectional identities.

Similarly, Author 3 shared how participating in the CAE engaged us in deeper reflection to not just acknowledge but also to overcome and address the challenges we experienced due to our intersectional identities:

All of your sharing made me also think about [...] how much of those messages that we hear from the society we internalize, [...] sometimes without realizing it. [...] What I found really powerful in all of our reflections is how we have tried ceaselessly to overcome and address those challenges no matter what. (Discussion 3)

By exchanging experiences related to our intersectional identities with others, we recognised the challenges we faced were not isolated personal problems, but were closely linked to social issues, helping us to better understand the nature of the challenges.

Further, CAE provided a safe space where we built trust and camaraderie. For example, resonating with Author 2's experience, Author 4 chose to be vulnerable about her intersectional identity construction:

After [Author 2] shared her experience and her reflection right now, I feel like I am not yet being honest to my own identity, especially the identity that I have right now. So probably it's again just like what [Author 2] said that she's feeling comfortable sharing in this small group, and I feel the same way. [...] I have so much tension and negotiation of identity. And I share the same feeling with [Author 2]. [...] And I'm glad that [she] brought that up in the discussion. (Discussion 3)

After hearing Author 2's sharing, Author 4 felt an atmosphere of trust and safety, prompting her to let down her guard and bravely acknowledge her struggles with intersectional

identity recognition. This candid sharing not only allowed Author 4 to release her inner pressure but also enriched other members' understanding of their own intersectional identities.

In other words, this CAE provided a platform where we could easily *breathe, process* our emotions, *connect* with colleagues in different parts of the world, and *feel supported*. This space not only allowed us to share difficult moments without the fear of bearing consequences but also broadened our perspectives of intersectional identities.

Research question 2: how do these identities impact our practices in language teaching and/or teacher education?

These intersectional identities have allowed us to develop more asset-based views of ourselves as LTEs, which, in turn, has strengthened our asset-based views of our students, enabling us to better advocate for multilingual students and educators in our teaching and research.

Moving from deficit to asset-based views

As we engaged in dialogue and reflection, we became increasingly aware of how we have shifted our perspectives to position our social identities and experiences as personal assets in our roles as language teachers and teacher educators. In the past, we often internalised deficit-based messages about our identities (e.g. age, race, gender, language use, faculty rank) leading to anxieties, insecurities, and self-doubt. Recognising this deficit internalisation, we stressed the importance of LTEs embracing, valuing, and centring the unique identities and experiences they bring to the classroom. To illustrate, Author 3 shared how she questioned her view of herself in her early years as an LTE:

I realized that I was caught up with the question of what I did not have and/or what I had to learn. Having such a deficit mindset towards me was emotionally and mentally draining [...] I had to constantly remind myself to re-learn the asset-based approach in seeing my work and myself as an LTE. (Reflection 4)

She emphasised that for people with minoritised positions, 'it's easy to think of the differences and position ourselves to be inferior than the majority' (Discussion 4). Thus, she stressed the importance for emerging LTEs to advocate for themselves: 'not to lose (or hide) ourselves, our identities, or our journeys and backgrounds,' encouraging emerging LTEs to remember they are 'knowledgeable and skilled' with 'something to contribute' (Reflection 4).

Author 1 experienced a similar journey, expressing 'vulnerability' as her 'authority and credibility were under silent scrutiny' based on her minoritised identities (Reflection 3). This experience led to self-marginalisation: 'I always feel I put myself in an inferior or too humble kind of position, and I always felt like, "Oh, I need to learn more. I need to do more, so I can contribute"' (Discussion 4). She acknowledged the heightened pressure resulting from the intersection of her multiple social identities:

Societal stereotypes about women's roles and capabilities [...] potentially affect[ed] student trust and respect. Furthermore, as a non-native speaker of English, I faced the prevalent ideology of native speakerism [...]. I recognized that students might [...] envision a mature,

authoritative figure, typically Western, whose native fluency in English fits the conventional image of a linguistic role model. My position as a young, Asian, non-native female contradicted many of these elements. (Reflection 3)

Yet, she pushed back against societal norms and expectations by drawing upon her identities as resources to construct her curriculum and pedagogy:

I included [...] a section on the value of global Englishes and the importance of diverse linguistic models. [...] I facilitated open dialogues, sharing my own linguistic journey and expertise [...]. Moreover, I leveraged my young age as a dynamic asset that allowed me to relate closely to the challenges of my students, often bridging gaps with technology and contemporary pedagogical approaches [...]. My gender, too, was utilized to create a nurturing and inclusive learning environment that can boost motivation and engagement. (Reflection 3)

Author 1's actions underscore the importance for LTEs to adopt an asset-based view of their identities: 'We should accept who we are and validate our own values [...] We should admit that we are already good enough' (Discussion 4).

Advocacy in our teaching

By recognising and affirming our own assets as LTEs, we became better positioned to advocate for our students and affirm their assets. For example, Author 4 drew upon her social identities and life experiences to strengthen her rapport and teaching practices with multilingual students:

In the early stages of my teaching career, I often viewed my background (coming from a village with limited exposure to English, which affected my English ability) as something that always needed to be *fixed* because my background often made me feel inadequate professionally. (Reflection 4)

Nonetheless, as she gained more teaching experience, pursued higher education, and engaged in reflective practices, her perspective on herself began to shift:

I found that my multilingual background and intercultural sensitivity became assets in the classroom. I could empathize with my students' struggles with academic writing because I had experienced similar challenges. I intentionally incorporated translanguaging practices and encouraged them to see their multilingualism as a strength rather than a deficit. (Reflection 3)

Moreover, Author 4's deep understanding of the Indonesian context, where there were frequent curriculum overhauls driven by political turnover, uniquely positioned her to 'mentor pre-service teachers and help them navigate these changes so they are well-prepared for the future of English language education in Indonesia' (Reflection 2).

Author 3's reflection underscores a similar dynamic at the district level where she previously worked as a dual language bilingual education teacher. While her programme supported bilingual education, district policies 'mostly reflected English-medium schools and not bilingual programs', leaving her and colleagues to modify materials and instructional methods independently (Reflection 1). As 'the main person who had to advocate for the ESL program and [her] students', she faced systemic challenges but adapted proactively to align with both district standards and goals of the ESL and bilingual programmes: 'if I don't [advocate for them], then the students are the ones who are affected' (Discussion 2).

Author 2's experience also highlights a critical tension in her contexts: the multilingual first-generation college students in her institutions and lack of curriculum and student support resources to address their needs. For example, she dedicated class time to help students search for jobs in the U.S. and overseas, understand requirements, prepare applications, and conduct mock interviews (Discussion 1). Being aware that she carried privileged LTE identities as a White native English-speaking U.S. citizen, Author 2 positioned herself as 'an advocate for the culturally and linguistically diverse communities' (Reflection 3) and intentionally tried to push back against monolingual assimilatory norms and ideologies.

I strive to affirm [students'] expertise and reinforce across my pedagogy and curriculum that their language and cultural backgrounds (i.e. linguistic repertoires and diverse funds of knowledge) are invaluable for them as language teachers. I truly believe this, and I also think this helps to redistribute power in my classroom and communicate and cultivate a community of respect and appreciation for one another. (Reflection 3)

Positioning our linguistic and cultural identities as resources ultimately helped us connect to our students and shaped our pedagogical approaches, enabling us to better support our diverse students.

Advocacy in our scholarship

Our intersecting identities and asset-based views of ourselves and students shaped not only our teaching practices but also our research agenda. Through our reflections and virtual discussions, we shared that our personal histories, linguistic experiences, and educational backgrounds contributed to the construction of our academic paths, including the topics we explored, the questions we addressed, and the communities we chose to engage with. Both Authors 3 and 4 shared how their teaching experiences shaped their research on bilingualism and translanguaging. To illustrate, Author 3 stated that 'I help students to develop both languages [... so that they can] use those languages in whatever career they pursue [...] That has shaped how I approach my research agenda in bilingualism and in translanguaging' (Discussion 1). Author 1's scholarship was grounded in the tensions between her personal, gendered, and cultural identities, motivating her to give voice to the lived experience of other marginalised teachers:

My entire doctoral program life, as an international student relying solely on on-campus job opportunities, was of course full of fear of losing financial support and not being able to graduate on time. Those fears altogether became the motivation for me to work harder and more easily resonate with other minoritized teachers and scholars, further inspiring me to research and support marginalized teacher groups. (Reflection 3)

For Author 2, she recognised her privilege as an LTE and the power loss students often face in English-speaking settings. Thus, she affirmed students' identities by conducting classroom-based research on how multilingual students and teachers agentively use their cultural and linguistic resources to build new academic practices.

Discussion and implications

Our LTE identities highlight the intricate and dynamic nature of LTE identity construction at the intersections of diverse cultural, linguistic, gendered, and socioeconomic

backgrounds. Each of us underwent a unique path in becoming LTEs, the process of which was influenced by various factors. Despite the diversity and complexity, common themes of marginalisation, vulnerability, and empowerment were identified. These findings resonate with Lin et al. (2004), 'although our narratives show a diverse range of experiences, some clear, common patterns of systematic marginalization and silencing emerge, indicating that these experiences are not isolated, random, individual happenings' (p. 494). In line with previous literature (e.g. Gerlach, 2024; Lu et al., 2024) on LTEs' identity tensions, we encountered a range of tensions in the process of constructing our LTE identities, including conflicts between linguistic legitimacy and raciolinguistic essentialism (Kubota, 2023), traditional gender expectations and professional authority as LTEs (Lin et al., 2004), as well as seniority and professional expertise. Through an intersectional lens, those identity tensions brought not just challenges but also opportunities, embodying the dual impact and contextual nature of intersectional identities (Kayi-Aydar et al., 2022; Nash, 2008; Varghese et al., 2025). For example, we converted those identity struggles into targeted teaching pedagogies as a means of resisting societal marginalisation. To illustrate, Author 1's youth, gender, appearance, and non-citizen status triggered student scepticism about her legitimacy. However, she pushed back against those societal norms and expectations by adding the discussion of global Englishes to course content to facilitate open dialogues with students. Similarly, growing up in a small Indonesian village with limited English exposure, Author 4's socioeconomic and educational backgrounds intersected with her linguistic identity, initially causing insecurity and anxiety in her LTE career. These challenges later became the foundation for developing deep empathy for PSTs facing similar struggles. She also intentionally incorporated translanguaging practices and intentional encouragement to help her students frame their multilingualism as an asset.

This study not only further confirms that LTE identity construction is an ongoing process, dependent on the shifting professional contexts (Lu et al., 2024; Weng et al., 2023; Yazan, 2018) but also reveals that contextual factors, ranging from cultural-linguistic norms to institutional policies and structural forces, significantly shape how our LTE identities are constructed, negotiated, and performed. For instance, these structural forces are evident across our narratives: Author 1's students dropping her class for White native-speaker instructors, Author 3's students questioning her authority to teach Spanish Language Arts due to her race being an Asian, and Author 4's students challenging her credibility to teach academic writing as an NNEST. These personal experiences are not mere student bias but manifestations of institutionalised raciolinguistic essentialism (Kubota, 2023). Further, political contexts shape LTE identities by influencing institutional contexts and broader social attitudes towards language and education. Author 2's narrative highlights how political tensions in the U.S. have impacted student attendance and programme viability, creating an emotional conflict between her role as an LTE and her awareness of the current climate. Our narratives confirm that context is not a static backdrop but a dynamic catalyst interacting with intersecting identities to shape our LTE identity construction.

A related note is that power in the classroom is co-constructed through the interplay of LTEs' intersecting identities, students' social positionalities, and broader structural ideologies such as native speakerism, gendered authority, and racial hierarchies. For LTEs with marginalised intersecting identities, traditional classroom power could be eroded by

students' internalised structural biases. For example, Author 1's experience with a confrontational male student in the U.S. illustrates this dynamic. This incident was not a random act of defiance but a manifestation of how raciolinguistic and gendered ideologies (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Lin et al., 2004; Weng et al., 2023) intersect to position marginalised LTEs as illegitimate authorities. While intersectional marginalisation can erode traditional authority, it also creates opportunities to redistribute classroom power by fostering solidarity with and among students who share experiences of marginalisation. Despite Author 2's privileged LTE identities and the academic culture shock she experienced in her new untenured faculty role amid challenging workplace dynamics, she found joy and peace in her classrooms. In this space, she intentionally cultivated a classroom community that centred around students' lived experiences being predominantly Hispanic, bilingual, first-generation college students. That is, our intersectional identities become a tool to disrupt oppressive power dynamics, creating classrooms where students' linguistic and cultural resources are valued as much as ours.

Despite these tensions, we enacted agency (e.g. Nazari et al., 2024; Weng, 2025) to actively resist, negotiate, and transform the marginalisations we experienced and utilise situational opportunities to empower ourselves and students in our teaching and research practices. As illustrated, we advocated for more inclusive and effective teaching practices that meet the needs of all linguistically and culturally diverse students. We viewed students' and our own language learning backgrounds, cultural experiences, and struggles as assets to bring unique perspectives to the classroom. Additionally, the influence of identities extended beyond the classroom to the area of scholarly and research work and shaped the research topics we explored, the questions we posed, and the communities we engaged with. These agentive actions we practiced in teaching and research reinforced our role as LTEs, striving to empower the marginalised in the field.

This study offers implications for ongoing support for LTEs and future research. First, support that is provided by professional organisations or institutional communities can explicitly address how intersecting identities shape LTEs' experiences and practices. These support programmes can offer courses exploring the impact of raciolinguistic ideologies, native speakerism, and gender biases in teacher education and incorporate case studies and collaborative autoethnographic methods to enable LTEs to reflect on their own identity intersections. Programmes can also prioritise training that transforms marginalised identities into educational assets by developing workshops on translanguaging and culturally responsive teaching and by providing advocacy frameworks for LTEs to address systemic inequalities. Additionally, programmes can foster collaborative reflection communities by building sustained, cross-contextual collaborative spaces, such as virtual peer circles and institutional learning communities, modelled after our CAE process. These spaces can enable LTEs to share intersectional identity narratives, challenge internalised deficit mindsets, and gain collective insights into context-specific identity negotiations. Such communities can address the lack of support often reported in LTE identity development (Banegas & Gerlach, 2021) by providing validation.

Regarding future research, studies can draw more attention to LTEs by examining LTEs in non-Western contexts beyond the U.S. to address global gaps in intersectional LTE research. Further, research can adopt longitudinal designs to track how LTE intersectional identities evolve across career stages. For example, future research can compare intersectional identity negotiation among early-career versus senior LTEs to understand how

experiences of marginalisation or empowerment shift over time. Last, this study's multivocal approach highlights its value in capturing complex identity intersections. Future research can expand the use of CAE and other participatory methods to centre around LTEs' lived experiences.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethics statement

This manuscript is from a collaborative autoethnography project in which we are the only participants. We provided verbal informed consent and sought reviews from Institutional Review Boards at our individual institutions. The review was exempted at Author 1 and Author 4's sites, and the reviews were expedited at Author 2 and Author 3's respective institutions.

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