SHIFTing Identities: From Tension to Transformation in EAL Teacher Practice

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Overview

From exploring tensions towards a practice-oriented framework for designing professional learning to support change.

1. Illustrative example of practice
2. Professional identity as a dialectical unity
3. Background and methodology
4. Introducing and visualising *perezhivanie*
5. Introducing & applying SHIFT
6. Main takeaways
   Q&A

A pedagogical dilemma: Who can we learn from?

When understandings of teaching and learning English differ

An experienced ESOL teacher, working in a pathway-to-university programme, values communicative language learning and regularly incorporates group activities to encourage students' interaction.

During a group activity, several students question why they should learn from classmates whose English proficiency is still developing. They believe that the teacher, rather than their peers, is the primary source of modelling language and meaningful language learning.

The teacher wants to encourage collaborative learning while responding to students' different expectations and previous educational experiences.

Illustrative example adapted from a participant's account in Ivanova-Miloshevska (2026)

What is at stake for this teacher beyond getting students to participate in group work?

So many questions to ask



From research towards professional learning

Study focus	Main RQ	Contribution
• Mid- to late-career ESOL teachers' experiences of professional identity transformation in Asia-Pacific higher education pathway and university contexts.	• How do historical, sociocultural, and political contextual factors impact Asia-Pacific ESOL teachers' professional identity?	• Develops a Vygotskian account of professional identity transformation. • Proposes Dialogic Partnership in Learning for Development: a practice-oriented framework for collaborative professional learning.

Source: Ivanova-Miloshevska (2026)

When workplace tensions challenge teachers' professional identity, how can professional learning support meaningful change?

Methodology

Research design

An international, qualitative, interpretive study focused on understanding people's meaning-making in context.

Participants

Experienced ESOL teachers working with adult students in pathway and university contexts across 9 Asia-Pacific countries (Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam).

Data generation

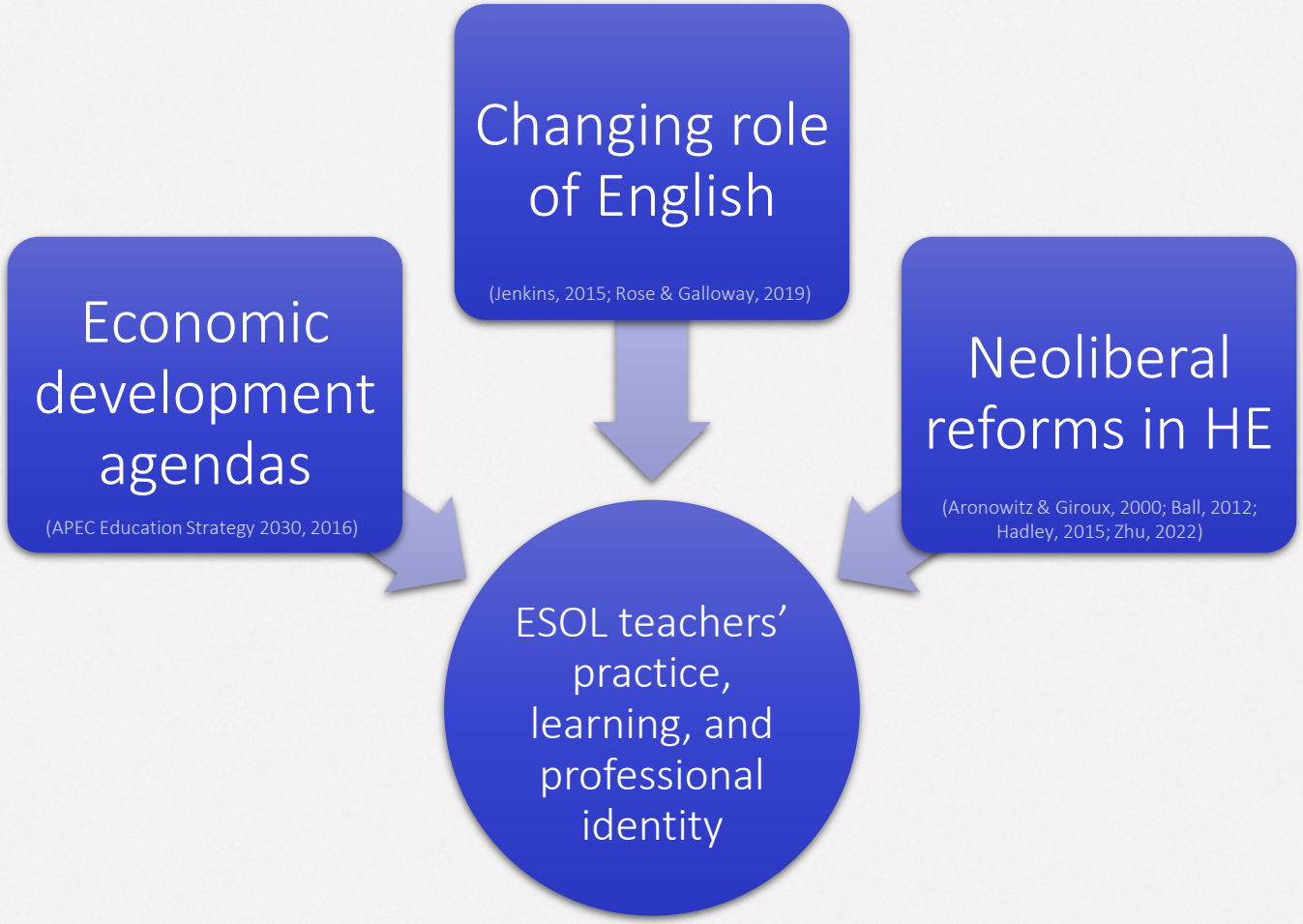
- Qualitative survey: n=44
- Individual in-depth interviews: n=16
- Artefacts – TESOL magazines and newsletters articles, published between 2019-2023: n=75

Data analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), articulated through an identity-in-activity meta-theoretical framework (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007).

Source: Ivanova-Miloshevska (2026)

The Asia-Pacific TESOL changing context



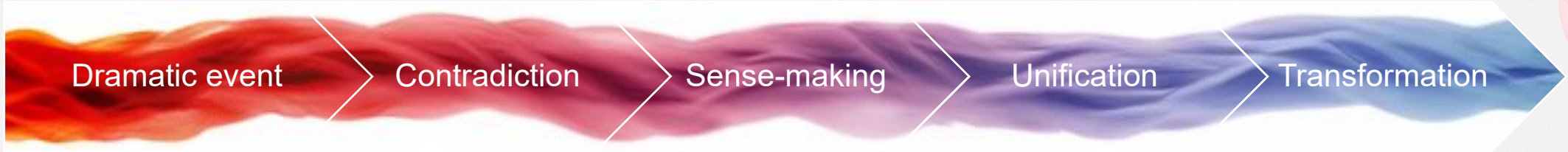
(Cross, 2020; Dang & Cross, 2022; Cirocki & Hallet, 2024; Johnson & Golombek, 2016, 2020)

Looking for answers

PEREZHIVANIE

Perezhivanie: A developmental movement

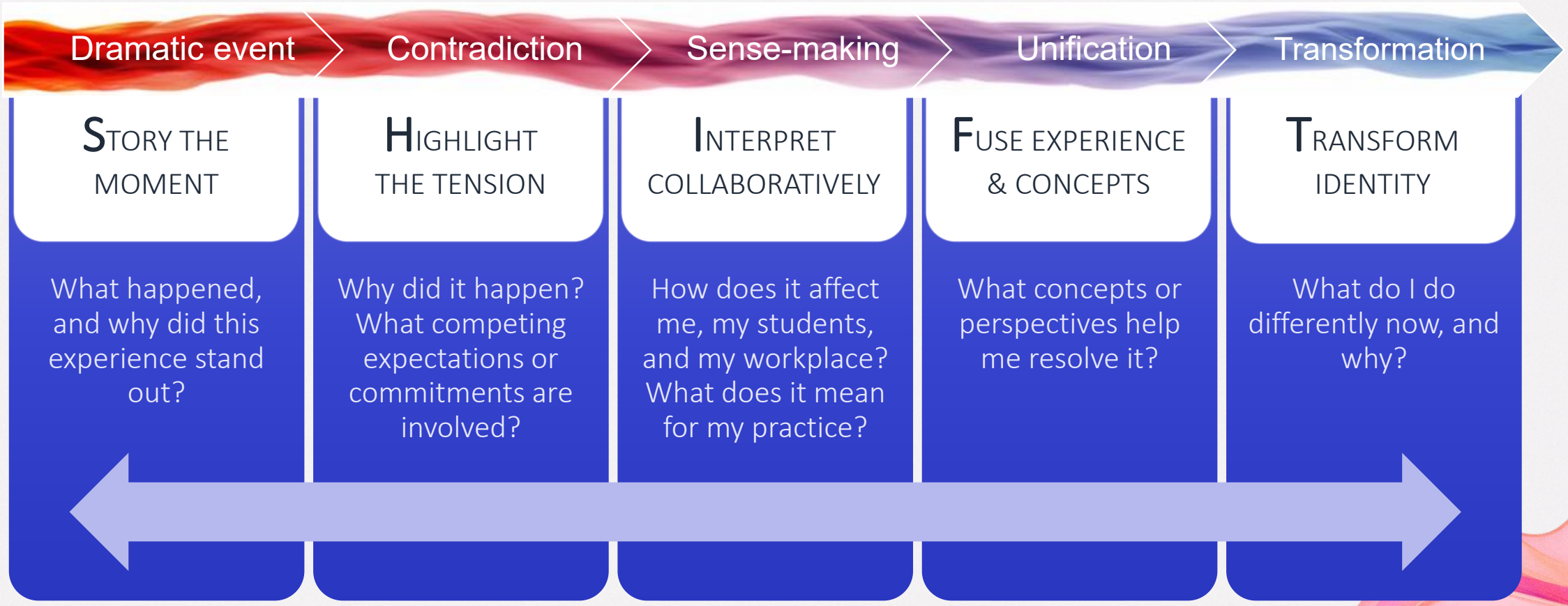
> *"A perezhivanie is a unit where, on the one hand, in an indivisible state, the environment is represented, i.e.* that which is being experienced … *and on the other hand, what is represented is how I, myself, am experiencing this,* i.e., all the personal characteristics and all the environmental characteristics are represented in a *perezhivanie*; … So, *in a perezhivanie we are always dealing with an indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics, which are represented in the perezhivanie*."
>
> (Vygotsky, 1934, p. 343, emphasis in original)



A study-derived visualisation of *perezhivanie* as a transformative process (Ivanova-Miloshevska, 2026, p. 263)

Introducing SHIFT

A dialogic protocol derived from Dialogic Partnerships in Learning for Development (DPLD)



Applying SHIFT: From tension to action

Pedagogical dilemma: Who can we learn from?

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The teacher wants to encourage collaborative learning while responding to students' different expectations and previous educational experiences.

SHIFT prompts:

Story the moment:
What happened, and why did this experience stand out?

Highlight the tension:
Why did it happen? What competing expectations of teaching and learning are involved?

Interpret collaboratively:
What might this mean for the teacher and her practice?

What might this tension mean for the teacher's professional identity as a unity of *Being*, *Becoming*, and *Belonging*?

Analysing the tension

TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL COMMITMENT: *Learning through interaction and collaboration*



STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS: *Learning primarily through teacher instruction*

What happens to our understanding of being a good teacher when our pedagogical commitments encounter different expectations of learning?

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Fuse experience and concepts:
How might understanding learning as socially mediated help us reconsider this situation?

Transform identity:
What new understandings or possibilities for professional action might emerge?

How might the teacher's experience of this tension create opportunities to reconsider her understanding of language teaching and learning?

Main takeaways

- Teacher professional identity is (trans)formed in the dialectical relationship between teachers and their changing sociocultural environments.
- Workplace tensions can challenge teachers' professional identity, but they may also become moving forces for development.
- Language, as a social act of word-meaning, mediates collaborative and personal practice-theorising.

Meaningful professional learning begins with teachers' lived experiences and develops through reflective and reflexive dialogic inquiry, opening possibilities for the transformation of professional identity as a unity of *Being*, *Becoming*, and *Belonging*.

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Thank you!

We welcome your questions.

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