

Towards Becoming a Transnational Language Educator

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By

Natalia Wright

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Nearly everything I write these days is on the issue of “non-nativeness”. It is hardly surprising, considering my own non-native status. This book is no exception. It is dedicated to all “non-native” expatriate teachers striving for professional recognition. This piece is a tribute to your remarkable efforts in combating inequalities and the enduring impact you have in the field of language education.

Through the labour, risk, and effort
Butterfly was seeking light.
So its silken wings would let us
Behold the beauty in purest sight.

Once the larva in slow fashion
To a cocoon itself does cast
Soon beneath the threaded mansion,
Breaking free her soul comes.

Paralysed by nectar fusion,
Like a tightrope-walker's thrill,
Wings of velvet's soft illusion,
Hold her balance, poised and still.

Life as short as one day only
Is unlike our human age.
Resting on a flower homey
Is a dream beyond our cage.

While she flutters all alone,
Kissing petals on her way,
To each flower that she's known,
She delivers blossom grains.

Glancing back at former glory,
She will soar above the skies.
Death is not the end of story:
We, as butterflies, revive.

—Valentin Gafit, Butterfly (1998) (own translation)

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FOREWORD

The phenomenon of transnationalism has long been a subject of keen interest in the field of migration studies. TESOL scholarship has shifted its attention to transnationalism quite recently. This change is due to the increased movement of English language teaching professionals internationally for employment facilitated by the widespread adoption of English as a lingua franca globally. Since Johnston's (1999) study of expatriate "native" teachers, various attempts have been undertaken to illuminate the hybrid nature of the lives and work of those who choose to work outside countries of their origin. I believe that among the diverse spectrum of global nomads, one particular group of expatriates, "non-native" language educators, has not received sufficient coverage in the literature. It is known that 80% of all TESOL teachers worldwide are "non-native" speakers. Also, much is written on the subject of inequalities and how the absence of a "nativity" element negatively affects the professional image of language teachers whose first language is not English. What remains unknown is how many of them work in transnational contexts, what motivates them to relocate, and what challenges they encounter while adapting to new societies. This raises an even bigger question: how does their borderless existence transform them personally and professionally? These concerns lie at the heart of this book which arose from my desire to understand the intricacies of my own transnational realities.

The book draws on findings from my doctoral dissertation, which is guided by the idea of "becoming", understanding one's life as an ongoing process of growth and transformation, metaphorically likened to the metamorphosis of a butterfly. In a similar vein, I argued that becoming transnational entails a series of critical moments or turning points, with each bringing one toward the goal of a fully realised transnational identity, which is always in a state of evolving. This metamorphosis takes place in the "Third Space(s)" expatriates come to inhabit, which I present as both physical, placed between cultures defined by borders, and imagined, representing sites of ideological becomings. To investigate how becoming transnational can be experienced, I employed a qualitative methodology, which is a combination of autobiography and interviews. The findings revealed that becoming transnational is an open-ended process of renegotiation and reconstruction of "non-native" teachers' dispositions,

values, and beliefs, often fraught with fears, tensions, and struggle for justice. The reality of being in a new cultural and linguistic environment challenged participants' preconceptions, leading to shifts in their personal and professional selves. This metamorphosis manifested differently across participants through their *perezhivaniya*, or experiences of living through events, leading me to believe that there is no singular or uniform path in the process of becoming transnational. This work represents a significant opportunity to amplify the voices of the most marginalised groups within the TESOL community. Focusing on their identity work in transnational contexts could enrich our understanding of the role of such language educators in today's world and the unique contributions they bring to the field of language teaching. The aspiration is that the insights gained from these perspectives will enable educational institutions to more effectively support their expatriate teaching staff, addressing their needs not only in a professional capacity but also with regard to their personal adjustment and well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the support of many people. First and foremost, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my mother, a non-native speaker herself, who was uprooted from her homeland when she was 18 and spent most of her life in another land. You taught me the essence of resilience through your courageous example, mama. Your strength and determination have been my guiding light.

To my family, especially my son Kirill and my sister Tanya, I extend my heartfelt thanks for their continuous support throughout the writing process. Your encouragement sustained me, and I humbly ask for your forgiveness for the times I could not be as present as you deserved. Your love and patience helped in tough times.

To my dear friend, I owe this success to you. Thank you for not doubting me for even a moment!

I am forever thankful to my participants, who let me into the treasuries of their private realms and bravely shared their stories. Your willingness to relive moments that were often sensitive and difficult has enriched this work beyond measure. Your voices are the heart of this book.

To my dear friends and colleagues, who have always been my pillars of strength. Your genuine interest and eager anticipation for this book have kept me going. I am so thankful for your presence in my life and cannot wait to share this milestone with you.

I am deeply grateful to the artist, Ludmila Shkorina, for her exquisite butterfly illustrations that grace the pages of this book. Her artistry captures the delicate beauty and transformative spirit of butterflies, bringing a vibrant and evocative dimension to this work.

To Rod Neilsen, the author who inspired me to write this book, many thanks for reviewing it and writing a generous testimonial.

Finally, I wish to convey my sincerest appreciation to everyone at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their exceptional professionalism in creating this book. Thank you for making my dream come true!

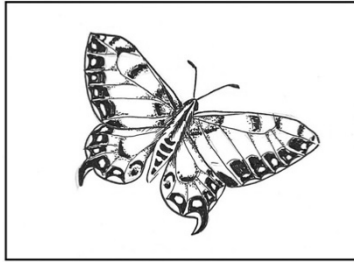
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	The Alphabet
AE	Assigned Expatriate
AFELT	Adjunct Foreign English-Language Teacher
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ARB	Aspirations— Realisations—Balancing
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CD	Compact Disc
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
DELTA	Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	English as a Medium of Instruction
ENL	English as a Native Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GT	Grounded Theory
IATEFL	International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IH	International House

JALT	Japan Association for Language Teaching
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
MA	Master of Arts
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MES	Monolingual English Speaker
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OE	Organisational Expatriate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCI	Problem-Centred Interview
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SIE	Self-Initiated Expatriate
TA	Thematic Analysis
TCT	Third Culture Teacher
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TNC	Transnational Corporation
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TSMO	Transnational Social Movement Organisation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

SEEKING LIGHT



Prologue

*“Will you be able to adapt to a different culture?
You’ll be a stranger in a strange land, you know”.
Learning a new language is just the beginning.
There’s the disorientation that comes from
living in a totally different world,
where everything is different: the colours, the sights,
the customs, the ways of getting things done.*

—Robert Rahula, 2018

I am looking at a photo taken on August 17, 2017, picturing me standing at Domodedovo airport in Moscow with my entire life stuffed into an enormous suitcase. Smiling faintly at my sister, my hand trembles as I wave her goodbye. It is time to leave; my flight has been announced. I can hear my heart pounding in my ears. She looks at me with tearful eyes, which read, *“Do you even realise where you are going, poor thing?”* Instead, she says, *“Have a safe flight. Please, text me as soon as you arrive”*, and hugs me for a long time in a way that I have always missed since I left home. As I make my way to the security checkpoint, it dawns on me that once I pass the passport control, my life will never be the same. While waiting to board the plane, my life visualises

itself in my head in a colourful mosaic: trading my hometown for life in Moscow, the “land of promise”—a move that eventually led to divorce—struggling to fit in, trying to unlearn my accent that betrayed my peripheral habitus. Over the four years I spent there, I never learned to speak like a true Moscovite. Nor did I try to pass for an authentic (Slavic) Russian. With my slanted eyes and Mongolian facial features, I was often taken for an immigrant from one of the former Soviet Union countries, such as Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, or Uzbekistan, who flock to Moscow to scrimp and save. Such people acquired the name *gastarbeiters*, from German, “guest workers”. I did not even object when the police stopped me to check my *propiska*¹. The “Metropole” valiantly protects its borders from unwanted outsiders. Unlike other new arrivals who tried to blend in, I never acquired the propensity to hold a conversation about nothing as if it was something of great importance or nod my head affirmatively whenever I disagreed. The sense of belonging to the place I call home was never there: being a *Chuvash*² nationality collocated with being not enough white or fair or blue-eyed, in other words, being different, an Other. For me, there was always a longing for a place where my otherness could become less prominent or noticeable and accepted. A few months before completing my distance MA in the UK, I started searching for a new job outside the geographical boundaries of my home country. The job offer arrived on my birthday while I was at the cinema watching a film. After numerous unsuccessful applications, I felt Lady Luck decided to have mercy on me, and I got a job as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in a private American school in Kuwait. I almost jumped up with excitement when I read an email, and seeing it as a sign from above, I hurriedly accepted it.

Five hours later, I am awakened by the screech of the brakes—the sound of the aeroplane rubbing its steel belly against the ground. I am in Dubai. I have never been to Dubai. In fact, I have never travelled to any Middle Eastern countries. Suddenly, a cold shiver runs through me. *What if I don't like it there? Where will I go then?* My mind paints a gloomy picture of me returning to Russia and begging for my old job. I brush off the nagging thought. I have two hours before the flight to Kuwait, so I check the documents: a work visa letter, a contract, an attested diploma, and a passport. Hidden in between its pages is 700 euros. I hope they will last me until I receive my first salary. Once on the plane, I look around. I am surrounded by absolute strangers: Arab women in black dresses called *abayas*, some wearing *hijabs* (head scarves) only, others literally covered

¹ propiska (Rus.) – proof of residence stamped in an internal passport.

² Chuvash – a Turkic ethnic group, native to an area stretching from the Volga-Ural region to Siberia.

from head to ankle, making it impossible to see expressions on their faces. Men are wrapped in crispy white *dishdashas*, loose, long-sleeved, ankle-length gowns with *keffiyeh* (a folded, checkered cloth) on their heads. Children's clothes, on the other hand, are similar to what kids in any European country wear. They all speak Arabic, the language that sounds foreign to me: too throaty, too harsh, too aggressive, "too much loud", as my students put it (later, I heard the same sentiments about Russian, my native language).

I go through passport control, where an unenthusiastic officer stamps it mechanically without looking at me, and then head to the baggage area, where I wait anxiously for my luggage. Outside the arrival gate, I am greeted by Dr Cooper (the name has been changed) from Canada, the principal of my school, who courteously picks up my suitcase and leads the way out of the airport. As I exit the airport, a sudden gust of blazing hot air bursts into my face, erasing the last traces of tears on my cheeks. "How was your flight?" Dr Cooper wants to know. I do not hear him.

My eyes desperately seek to find at least one tiny patch of green. Instead, I see a parched, dusty, and unremarkable piece of land with dehydrated palm trees that have not seen water in months or maybe years. When I hear the sound of multiple *adhans* ("calls to prayer") from the mosques overlapping each other, I have an astounding epiphany, a realisation that a fortune teller's prediction ("I see you living in the country with many mosques") finally came true twenty years later. "How was your flight?" Dr. Cooper repeats. "It was okay", I reply, trying to sound cheerful.

A few moments later, together with another teacher from South Africa, I find myself in a minivan, wheeling us away from the airport to our accommodations. As we stare out the windows with the culture shock written all over our faces, Dr Cooper gives us the first lesson on the local culture. "I am going to teach you the most important word", he says knowingly. *Insha'Allah*. You will hear it a lot here", he continues, looking at the Egyptian driver as if waiting for confirmation of what he is about to say. "It translates as "*God willing*" and is used by Muslims in reference to the uncertainty of their promises. For example, if you ask them to do something, they typically say "*Insha'Allah*". Since it is ultimately up to God and not them, there is no assurance that they will carry it out". "It is also often used as a polite way to say 'no'", he chuckles. *How can it be right to give a promise without intending to keep it?* I am thinking to myself. Eventually, this word infiltrated my casual conversational lexicon and, despite not speaking Arabic, was attached to my promises with the same purpose: to avoid a definitive yes or no response, a euphemism for "We'll see".

Forty minutes seem like an eternity. Finally, we stop at a tall grey block of flats and take a lift to the 11th floor. I am in a tiny studio that has a bed, a couch, a TV, a thoughtfully stuffed fridge with food and a small kitchen area. “The bus will pick you up on Tuesday at 6 am”, Dr. Cooper reminds me before leaving. I am alone. I look outside and down and see the same yellow patches of dry land and people lazily walking in the scorching sun. I turn on the TV and flip the channels until I find one in English. *What am I going to do for four days until Tuesday?* I remember that I had not texted my sister. I insert a local SIM card into a spare phone I brought with me and type a message, “I am in Kuwait, in the apartment, settling in”. There is no response from her, and suddenly, I feel alone and so lonely that I want to cry and run back to the airport, but the thought of having nowhere to return to (I have sold my flat in Russia) sobers me up. *If I could survive in Moscow, I could survive here too.* I spread myself on a squeaky couch, the same dramatic colour as my entire life, and cry myself to sleep. *Tomorrow will be another day—tomorrow I will begin a new life.*

The prologue illustrates my journey of becoming a transnational, a concept that is subject to multiple interpretations. I adopt a very straightforward understanding of this phenomenon. I draw on Vertovec’s (2009) definition of transnationalism as a process and an outcome involving “sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations, and social formations spanning nation-states” (p. 2). As the prefix *trans* suggests, “crossing between two or more communities, languages, and nations” (Canagarajah, 2018, p. 41), I define myself as an individual who moves across different cultural and linguistic worlds in search of a new identity. I have lived in Russia, the UK, and now Kuwait. Akin to the concepts “border-crosser” and “boundary spanner” described by the postcolonial literature (Anzaldúa, 1987, 2002; Bhabha, 1992, 1994; Canagarajah, 2018), I exist in the “Third space”, at a juncture between global and local forces with the sense of belonging to both and none at the same time. The story shared at the beginning is testimony to crisscrossing numerous discourses in search of new possibilities. People like me are referred to as expatriate teachers, citizens of one country who work in another (Johnston, 1999, p.256). Like other “self-initiated expatriates” (SIEs) (Inkson & Myers, 2003), the reader will meet in this book, moving abroad or employment was my own initiative. Most people would call me a NNES (non-native English speaker) as English is not my first language. I belong to the growing community of transnational “glocademics” (Guilherme, 2022), whose work is characterised by their engagement in glocal (global and local) academic practices. Most importantly, I consider myself a “Third

Culture Teacher” (Bailey & Cooker, 2019) in that my professional practices have been imminently affected by my transnational experiences, making them a fusion of various cultural influences.

My experience of relocating overseas is not unique. Many teachers I met, both physically and virtually, share similar stories. Yet, some are more emotionally charged than others, and some are conflicting. I chose to focus on the group of educators with similar characteristics. They are transnational, “non-native” language teachers who live in countries where English is spoken as a second or foreign language. They have all lived abroad for over five years and work as English language teachers. I will use the word “non-native” repeatedly throughout the book. This choice is deliberate. The very prefix non- bears the signature of being deficient, second-class, and unsuitable. It tells the tale of having to prove one’s professional worthiness, solely because they are not “native” English speakers. It means being denied a job opportunity based on the colour of your passport under the excuse of visa regulations. Often, “non-natives” find solace in the lands which grant them temporary shelter in exchange for their services. Literature on transnationals rarely describes the lived experience of these types of teachers who come from “non-centre” and work in “non-centre” contexts. This book aims to fill this gap by exploring how individuals’ sense of transnational identity evolves when they cross geographical, cultural, ideological, and linguistic boundaries.

The Ontology of Becoming

The concept of “becoming” is of key importance in this book, but before I move on to discuss the matter further, I want to share a personal story that, among other things, inspired and crafted me in the way I approach this topic. In December 2022, during the holiday break, I travelled to Dubai to spend some time with my son. Among other places, we visited the Dubai Butterfly Garden, a home for more than 15,000 butterflies of different sizes and colours. As soon as we stepped into the domes, a flurry of winged creatures surrounded us, some flitting away, afraid of being captured, while others landed wearily on our hands as if surrendering their escape. After we had had enough of chasing butterflies, we made our way towards the “Butterfly Life Cycle” display, which showed the various stages of a butterfly’s transformation (Fig.1.1).

Figure 1.1 Photo of Dubai Butterfly Garden



Author's photograph

Several stages are involved in this process called “metamorphosis”: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. It starts with an egg, which is small and feeds itself on the nutrients contained within the egg. In the Larva stage, the egg hatches and becomes a caterpillar whose only activity is to eat and grow and find a way not to be eaten. Then, the caterpillar looks for a suitable spot and weaves itself into a cocoon. This stage, during which a remarkable transformation takes place, is called “pupa”. It might look like nothing is happening as no changes are visible on the outside. However, intensive work on the inside leads to the development of wings, eyes, and other parts. It gradually reorganises into a new form and emerges as a new-looking insect. The final stage is when a butterfly leaves its shell and becomes an adult who learns how to fly, lay eggs, and begin the life cycle all over again. Each stage of its development is a step towards a greater, more magnificent version of itself. In admiration, I thought that this journey from an egg to a butterfly is one of the best illustrations of the idea of “becoming” for my book.

Third Space

“Third Space” is another important concept I use in this book. Homi Bhabha, who pioneered the concept of “Third Space”, relates to it as “space” that arises from individuals’ existence between their original cultures and those that are newly imposed, constantly reinterpreting their identities. He describes this space as “interruptive”, “interrogative”, and “enunciative” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 341). It is a space where cultures, languages, beliefs, and ideas come into contact and conflict with each other, destabilising fixed colonialist categorisations of culture and identity and where new forms of knowledge and cultural meanings are being pronounced. Soja’s (2008) idea of “Thirdspace” resonates with Bhabha’s conceptualisation. Drawing his inspiration from the works of Henri Lefebvre, Soja describes Thirdspace as a “contradictory and ambiguous” space of “resistance and permanent struggle” (p. 56). It is also a productive space that, through critical examination and exchange of ideas, grants us limitless possibilities to move beyond the known and arise as renewed versions of ourselves. This understanding is closely related to Bhabha’s notion of “hybridity”, central to envisaging “Third Space” as enabling conditions that allow “other positions to emerge” (Rutherford & Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). Unlike Bhabha, for whom “Third Space” takes a non-material form, Soja (1996, 2008) recognises it as an amalgam of physical and abstract, material and mental, real and imagined, embedded in the so-called “trialectics of spatiality-historicity-sociality” (Fig.1.2), where “historicity” refers to the “Firstspace” and focuses on the material “real” world as an objective reality. “Sociality” as a “Secondspace” deals with “imagined” and subjective representations of the world, and “spatiality” is “Thirdspace”, which is “a transcending composite of all spaces” (Soja, 1996, p. 62). It offers a “radically different way of looking at, interpreting, and acting to change the embracing spatiality of human life” (Soja, 1996, p. 29).

Anzaldúa (1987) calls this space *Nepantla*, which in her mother tongue translates as “the space between two worlds” (p. 276). Agreeing with Bhabha, she views it as a transformative stage “where you are not this or that but where you are changing... you are in a kind of transition” (p. 276).

For the purpose of this book, I use a combination of “Third Space” perspectives. I view this space as both physical and imaginary. It is physically manifested as a geographical space/place inhabited by people of different nationalities (Anzaldúa, 1987) for whom English is not their first language. Phillipson (1992) uses the term “Periphery” to describe countries where the adoption of English was a consequence of imperialist pressure from the “Centre”. When referring to these labels, I draw on Kachru’s (1985)

Figure 1.2 The Trialectics of Being adapted from Soja (1996, p. 71)



model of concentric circles that mark the geographical spread of English around the world. In this model, the so-called “Inner Circle” countries where English is a native language (ENL) (the USA, the UK, and their settler colonies Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand) make up the Anglophone “centre”. Other parts of the world where English is spoken as a second or foreign language, such as India, Nigeria, Singapore, Egypt, China, Japan, Germany and Russia, are classified as the “Outer Circle” and “Expanding Circle”, respectively. They are considered part of the “Periphery”. The “three circles” model serves as a useful framework for describing the varying degrees of English language influence in different parts of the world.

Despite its usefulness, the paradigm has come under heavy criticism from various scholars (Bruthiaux, 2003; Jenkins, 2009; Kobayashi, 2018; Pennycook, 2003; Saraceni, 2015; Tan, 2014) for its failure to address the evolving role of English, especially in “Outer Circle” countries. For example, Tan (2014) notes that in Singapore, English serves as an official language across different public and private domains and should therefore be regarded as a mother tongue. Others (Canagarajah, 2006; Michieka, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2010) find that Kachru’s model does not take into account the unique sociolinguistic realities of the nations in each of the circles. Martin (2014), for instance, observes that in the Philippines, all three circles are present. The “Inner Circle” is represented by the minority educated elite

who speak “standard” English, the “Outer Circle”—speakers of Philippine English, and the “Expanding Circle” with the majority of users of English of any variety. This way, the country can be conceived of as an “Outer Circle” with many circles. Kamwangamalu (2006) makes comparable claims about South Africa when arguing that it belongs to both “Inner” and “Outer” Circles due to the coexistence of white and black populations. For Pennycook (2003), the model’s weakness is its tendency to describe Englishes primarily by national boundaries. Schmitz (2014) criticised the model because it positions the monolingual “Inner Circle” as a “norm-providing” centre. Within the current climate of cultural hybridity that we live in, this claim is questionable, as English has traversed the borders of the “three circles”, co-mingling with local languages and creating complex linguistic hybrids. Deshors (2018), arguing along similar lines, advocates for new theoretical models that can more accurately represent the dynamic character of English and the changes it continues to undergo.

It is not my intention to delve deeply into the argument, but my whole effort is to show that the circles in the Kachruvian model are “leaking outside their borders” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 1999). This is why it is difficult to classify countries that use English as a lingua franca as either belonging to the “Outer” or “Expanding” circle. Rather, existing beyond national borders, these communities are “third spaces”, characterised by their transcultural and transnational nature. According to Bhabha (1994), they are “interstitial spaces”, offering a challenge to the notion that linguistic identity is solely determined by nationality. On the other hand, despite the shortcomings of Kachru’s framework, it still functions as a convenient way to represent various ideological connections between different types of English and the associated identities they represent. Throughout the book, I make frequent references to this model, particularly in the discussion of “native” and “non-native” dichotomies.

“Third space” also exists within the realm of our imagination and can be thought of as “a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings” (Soja, 1996, p. 2). Most importantly, “Third Space” is not confined to spatial and geographical margins. It is this ambivalent “space” that allows for the coexistence of contrasting cultural attitudes, creating opportunities for “other positions to emerge” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211) and new knowledge(s) to develop. It is a site of becoming transnational through “the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity” (Rutherford & Bhabha, 1990, p. 112), moving beyond “centre-peripheries” boundaries and colonial brackets or “non-nativeness”, towards articulating one’s value as “legitimate” language professionals.

Book Organisation

There are six chapters in this book. Chapter One above set the stage for the whole book, offering the background, the theoretical framework and objectives. Chapter Two starts with the concept of transnationalism and its different interpretations in migration studies. It discusses the typologies of transnationalism proposed by scholars, which focus on the activities and behaviours that qualify individuals as transnational. I continue by exploring its relevance to second-language teaching professionals who pursue careers in different countries and are often viewed as a homogeneous group. The chapter focuses on self-initiated expatriates. The name highlights that these teachers have willingly relocated abroad for employment purposes, distinguishing them from other categories of teachers. Following that, the section, The “Native” speaker bias: Myths and realities. It explores the various myths and misconceptions surrounding the concept of a “native speaker” and challenges the belief that they are inherently more qualified or competent as language teachers. Departing from these premises, the chapter looks at how job advertisements often prioritise “native” speakers, perpetuating the “native-speaker” bias in hiring practices. It details the harmful consequences of this bias, such as discrimination against “non-native” English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and the limited opportunities available to them.

Chapter Three introduces participants and explains the methodology I used to explore their transnational life and work experiences. I begin the chapter by reflecting on their positionality as both an insider and an outsider in the research, due to being a “non-native” English language teacher living outside their home country, like my participants. Next, I present my view on the research paradigm chosen for this study, interpretivism, which allows for understanding participants’ experiences as ongoing and living rather than fixed or lived. The concept of *perezhivanie*, influenced by Vygotsky, is used to further explain this choice.

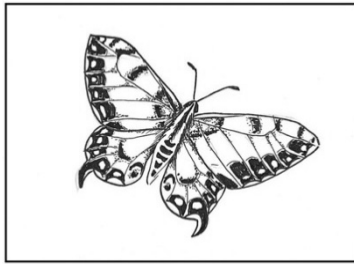
Chapter Four provides a summary of the research findings obtained from interviews with participants, addressing the central research question of how these teachers experience becoming transnational. The chapter outlines significant turning points in their lives, their motivations for pursuing a career abroad, the challenges they faced, and the adjustments they made in foreign lands. The chapter paves the way for further discussion in Chapter Five, which offers an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the research findings, contextualising them within the broader scholarly literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The chapter proceeds to identify and analyse key turning points in the participants’ experiences of becoming transnational.

Themes are structured in alignment with the four stages of a butterfly's metamorphosis, reflecting each phase as a significant turning point. The analysis is enriched through the lens of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter One and relevant literature.

Chapter Six serves as the conclusion of the book. It brings together the research findings, implications, and personal reflections, offering closure while also providing pointers for future research. I close the book by recounting my reconnection with the participants after nearly two years. Doing so allowed me a unique glimpse into their continued transnational experiences and their aspirations for the future.

CHAPTER TWO

THROUGH THE LABOUR, RISK, AND EFFORT



More persons than ever before, especially professionals and those in business, in more places around the world are opting to pursue transnational lives. (Koehn & Rosenau, 2003, p. 106)

Today we live in a borderless reality that has opened wide portals for cross-border migration for all kinds of skilled specialists (Koehn, 2006). The explosion of work opportunities for English language educators around the world, proliferated by the globalisation of English, has made it possible for such individuals to pursue professional careers away from their home countries. Like other categories of migrants who relocate from their country of origin to another, self-expatriate language professionals also reside between countries and are part of a back-and-forth movement and exchange across the borders called “transnationalism”.

Trying to find a suitable definition of “transnationalism”, I noticed that the concept has been interpreted differently across disciplines, often vaguely and indistinctly. This chapter makes an effort to synthesise the past and current trends on the matter and come up with the most relevant one. I start by looking into various understandings of transnationalism found in the field of anthropology and migration studies, commenting on their strengths and shortcomings. I then review various typologies of transnationalism offered by scholars with special attention to the nature of migrants’

activities that would qualify them as transnational. Then the concept of transnationalism receives further extension in the area of TESOL Applied Linguistics. The point here was to see to what extent transnationalism in the discipline of English language teaching moves along with or against the currents in the sphere of general transnational thought. In doing so, I delve into the research findings presented by “transnationalists” in my field, uncovering differing levels of transnationalism experienced by English language teaching professionals. After that, I outline my own viewpoint on transnationalism; more accurately, what it means to be transnational, which is one of the key questions of my research. I argue here for a more nuanced approach to defining transnational language teaching educators. In the following section, I examine the issues around nativeness/non-nativeness as they are the ones that have a profound effect on how non-native language professionals are perceived by various stakeholders. The chapter moves towards describing biases non-native teachers encounter when they seek employment overseas. The literature discussion concludes with an overview of a “Third space”, which is seen as a space that transnational language teachers occupy as a result of living between cultures and forms a theoretical framework for my study.

Towards Understanding Transnationalism

Transnationalism in Migration Studies

Although not a new phenomenon (the first uses of “transnationalism” can be found in the late 1980s/early 1990s literature on migration studies), transnationalism has been a topic of interest and critical discussion across many disciplines in the past twenty years. A recent search in EBSCO³ database has revealed 4,432 titles keyworded “transnationalism” that appeared between 1971 and 2022. Only 182 works (academic journals, magazines, and books) were published between 1971 and 2000. The vast majority of publications (4,250) were written during the past 22 years, especially in the context of globalisation and rapid technological developments. In this period, transnationalism has spurred interest from disciplines such as migration studies, history and archaeology, political science, anthropology, social sciences, languages and, and many others.

Different perspectives on “transnationalism” make it difficult to come up with one definition of the term. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines “transnationalism” as economic, political, and cultural processes that extend

³ EBSCO is an acronym that stands for Elton B. Stephens Company that provides information resources and tools to libraries.

beyond the boundaries of nation-states. Vertovec (2009) takes a similar approach to “transnationalism” as “sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states” (p. 2). Traditionally, transnationalism commonly serves as an umbrella term to describe various “manifestation[s] of globalization” (Vertovec, 2009, p. 2), or in other words, “some of the most globally transformative processes and developments of our time” (p. 12). These aspects of globalisation include deterritorialisation⁴ of nation-states, the rise of multinational corporations, internationalisation of education, enhanced labour migration, increased cross-border movement, human mobility, and others. Despite their mutual dynamics, globalisation and transnationalism have different meanings. The former is characterised by economic, social, and political activities that transcend national frontiers and a growing intensity of “interaction and interconnectedness within and between states and societies” (Held, 1999, as cited in Levitt, 2001, p. 14). The latter is commonly seen as “the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Schiller et al., 1992, p. 1). These processes are characteristic of transnationalism “from below” (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998) and often contrasted with transnationalism “from above” involving macro-level structures and processes. As discussed further, not all scholars find such a typology satisfying.

Migrant transnationalism as a multidisciplinary area focuses on understanding a “range of practices and institutions linking migrants⁵, people and organizations in their homelands or elsewhere in a diaspora” (Vertovec, 2009, p. 13) and encompasses a number of different and often competing perspectives on the subject. Some transnational scholars (for example, Portes et al., 1999) observe that transnationalism has been viewed by many as either an old or a new phenomenon. Proponents of the former view (Portes, 2003, for example) posit that transnationalism as a phenomenon has existed at least for a century and therefore, should not be treated as anything novel. One such argument is that “transnationalism is not new, even though it often seems as if it were invented yesterday” (Foner, 1997, p. 355).

⁴ Deterritorialisation refers to the reconfiguration of geographical relationships as a result of the technological, substantive, and geopolitical shifts that occurred in the late 20th century (Tuathail, 1999).

⁵ For the lack of a universally-agreed-upon definition of the term “migrant”, I adopt Faist’s (2019, p.16) broad view of migrants as people who have lived abroad for more than a year.