

CROSSING THE FIELD LINE: A MODEL OF ELT LECTURER IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

Vocational higher education institutions (VHEIs) increasingly hire English Language Teaching (ELT) lecturers for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses and sometimes for content subjects outside English, even though the lecturers are not formally qualified or trained. Much work has examined the pedagogical challenges of such teaching, but relatively few conceptual studies have explored how multiple experiences of teaching outside one's own discipline change a lecturer's understanding of professional self. This paper takes the above gap as its point of departure by presenting a synthesis of three theory traditions: Out-of-Field Teaching, Boundary Crossing Theory, and Language Teacher Identity as an integrated conceptual model called the Disciplinary Boundary-Crossing Identity Reconstruction (DBIR) Model. The paper adopts a theory-synthesis conceptual design carried out as a critical integrative review, drawing on 46 sources, 37 of them published from 2022 onward, on out-of-field teaching, English-medium instruction, and ESP practitioner identity, together with the foundational work in each tradition. The synthesis suggests that identity reconstruction may unfold in three recursive phases: contextual disruption, boundary negotiation, and integrative identity work. Because the model has not yet been tested empirically, five theoretical propositions are derived to guide future validation. Finally, the paper argues that if institutions treat disciplinary crossing as a process to be supported rather than a hardship to be endured, current policy pressures could become a source of interdisciplinary expertise for vocational ELT lecturers, a possibility that future empirical work will need to examine.

Keywords: out-of-field teaching, boundary crossing theory, language teacher identity, English for Specific Purposes, vocational higher education

Introduction

International higher education systems are challenged to create graduates who can navigate across disciplines, technical and communicative. Vocational higher education, especially, has been restructured to focus on industry relevant and interdisciplinary courses, with a combination of

technical and employability skills, including communication, problem solving and cross-cultural competence (Bolton et al., 2023; Marginson, 2016). This restructuring is a previous part of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy implemented in Indonesia in 2020, shifting higher education institutions' focus from disciplinary silos to closer collaboration with industry (Rihatmi et al., 2025; Salim et al., 2022). In 2025, Kemendikristek discontinued the Kampus Merdeka branding following a ministerial reorganization and a comprehensive policy evaluation. Although the name MBKM is no longer officially used, the underlying policy direction, that of inducing lecturers and students to shift to practice-oriented work that is connected to industry, has remained constant.

One of the implications of this shift is that ESP is now often being taught by ELT lecturers who have not necessarily been trained in language pedagogy and applied linguistics but in other technical areas, such as engineering, hospitality, tourism, or information technology (Murdanianto & Mas Muhammad, 2026; Suherman & Kertawijaya, 2023). In some vocational institutions, the responsibility extends further, with ELT lecturers having discipline-related content subjects which are completely outside of their training. These are assignments that place ELT lecturers in what the literature refers to as Out-of-Field (OOF) Teaching, which is the situation where the teacher is assigned to teach a subject other than his discipline with which he was prepared (Hobbs et al., 2022, 2022; Widagsa et al., 2025).

The practical and emotional challenges of disciplinary reassignment have been well documented in research on OOF teaching, ESP practitioners' development, and English-medium instruction (EMI) (Campbell et al., 2023; Handayani et al., 2022; Wildeman et al., 2022). What this literature has not yet fully accounted for is the internalization of the experience, that is, how crossing disciplinary boundaries becomes a change in the understanding of the professional self of the lecturer. Studies on language teacher identity have identified the continuous negotiation of identities through institutional demands, emotional labour and professional relationships (Lawrent, 2024; Nazari, Nejadghanbar, et al., 2023; Sydnor et al., 2024), but few of these

identity studies directly engage with the disciplinary boundary-crossing mechanism described in OOF and EMI studies, and few OOF studies draw on identity theory to explain why some lecturers eventually come to see the boundary crossing as a source of expertise rather than as a deficiency.

This paper addresses that disconnect. Instead of presenting novel research findings, it proposes a conceptual synthesis that relates three theoretical traditions: Out-of-Field Teaching, which describes the circumstances that may cause disciplinary disturbances; Boundary Crossing Theory (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) that describes how learning mechanisms help people move across different communities of practice and has recently been applied to faculty and out-of-field teacher learning (Järvinen et al., 2026; Perl-Nussbaum et al., 2025); and Language Teacher Identity, which describes how such learning experiences become part of a re-constituted identity. The outcome is an integrated model, the Disciplinary Boundary-Crossing Identity Reconstruction (DBIR) Model, designed to provide a coherent theoretical vocabulary for describing a phenomenon that existing literature in vocational higher education in Indonesia addresses only in bits and pieces.

Two research questions guide the synthesis. The first asks how Out-of-Field Teaching, Boundary Crossing Theory, and Language Teacher Identity can be integrated to explain ELT lecturers' identity reconstruction during disciplinary reassignment. The second asks what conceptual phases and propositions can be derived from this integration to guide future empirical investigation. The integrated model presented in the Findings and Discussions section answers the first question, and the five propositions that follow the model answer the second.

Methods

The paper takes a conceptual, library-based research design, rather than an empirical design, in the form of a theory synthesis (Jaakkola, 2020) conducted as a critical integrative review (Cronin & George, 2023), which aims at integrating theoretical traditions that have so far developed in relative isolation from each other. The two labels describe different aspects of the

design. In Jaakkola's (2020) typology of conceptual papers, a theory synthesis brings several theoretical perspectives together to offer a new, higher-level understanding of a phenomenon; here, its end product is a model that specifies how constructs relate to one another and yields testable propositions. In terms of review type, the paper follows Cronin and George's (2023) account of the integrative review, which deliberately draws on literatures produced by separate scholarly communities and reads them against one another in order to build a new representation of a topic. This distinguishes it from a systematic review, which seeks exhaustive coverage of studies addressing one pre-specified question and aggregates their findings, and from a narrative review, which summarizes a single body of work. The review is critical in that it examines what each tradition can and cannot explain about disciplinary reassignment, rather than accepting it as given. Since exhaustive coverage was not the aim, no PRISMA flow is reported; the selection criteria and analytic steps are instead set out below so that readers can follow, and if necessary repeat, the procedure.

Data sources

This paper does not have human subjects because the data is from published, peer reviewed sources. The sources were identified by using key words in the form of a combination of terms out-of-field teaching, boundary crossing, language teacher identity, English for Specific Purposes, English-medium instruction, teacher agency, and Indonesian vocational higher education, and then searched in Scopus-indexed and Google Scholar-indexed databases. Sources were included if they (a) were peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, or chapters in edited volumes; (b) either theorized one of the three traditions or examined teachers or lecturers working across disciplinary or curricular boundaries; and (c) offered empirical evidence or a theoretical argument bearing on professional learning or identity. Studies that dealt only with student outcomes or with language proficiency measurement were excluded. A preference was given to studies published from 2022 onward to ensure that the synthesis was based on up-to-date evidence, but studies such as those of Akkerman & Bakker (2011) on boundary crossing

and Varghese et al. (2005) on language teacher identity were included when a concept was first proposed in this work, and subsequent research has emerged that builds directly on this contribution. These seminal works were retained because they define the core constructs of their traditions, but each was read alongside recent work that applies, tests, or revises it: Järvinen et al. (2026) and Perl-Nussbaum et al. (2025) for boundary crossing, Sadeghi and Bahari (2022) and Tajeddin and Nazari (2025) for language teacher identity, and Quinn and Hobbs (2025) for out-of-field teaching. In this way the synthesis rests on current rather than historical formulations of each theory. The final corpus comprised 46 sources, 37 of which were published from 2022 onward; the remaining nine are earlier works, most of them the foundational texts that introduced the constructs on which the model builds.

Procedure and data analysis

The analytical process followed three steps. In the first place, each source was categorized by the main tradition it targeted, either Out of Field Teaching, Boundary Crossing Theory, or Language Teacher Identity, as well as a secondary category for studies that spanned the English-medium instruction field and English for Specific Purposes research. Each source was then entered into a concept matrix recording its context, key constructs, and the part of the reassignment experience it addressed. Second, the frequent findings in each tradition were compared for commonalities and differences, particularly between studies that describe OOF disruption and those that describe identity reconstruction. Third, convergences and gaps from the second stage were used to develop the integrated conceptual model described in the Results and Discussion section and the set of propositions for testing in future empirical studies.

Four principles governed how the three traditions were integrated. The first was complementarity of explanatory focus: each tradition was assigned the question it answers best, so that Out-of-Field Teaching accounts for the conditions that trigger disruption, Boundary Crossing Theory for the learning mechanisms through which disruption is worked on, and Language Teacher Identity for the processes by which that learning becomes part of professional

self-understanding. The second was ontological compatibility: concepts were combined only where the traditions share a sociocultural, situated view of learning and identity, avoiding constructs built on incompatible assumptions. The third was process sequencing: concepts were linked through a temporal logic of condition, mechanism, and outcome, and each link had to be supported by at least one empirical study in the corpus rather than by theoretical argument alone. The fourth was propositional derivation: every relationship in the model was restated as a proposition that empirical work could support or refute, which keeps the model open to falsification.

Findings and Discussions

Out-of-field teaching as contextual disruption

Out-of-field teaching was first defined by Ingersoll (1998, 2002) as a staffing phenomenon which occurs when teachers are asked to teach subjects for which they are not formally qualified, usually due to staff shortage or scheduling problems. Recent research has shifted the focus on OOF teaching from an issue of staffing deficiencies to a complex experience for teachers (Hobbs & Porsch, 2022). Hobbs (2013) was one of the first to focus particularly on out-of-field teachers, and to argue that the act of being placed OOF itself is a boundary-crossing moment that constructs teacher identity, determined by the supports a teacher has available and her own resources. According to Hobbs et al. (2022) the precise definition of OOF teaching, and its differentiation from related concepts like underqualification, remains an ongoing imperative for research, policy, and institutional practice.

Since 2022, empirical research has continued to record the actual burden that OOF tasks put on teachers. Campbell et al. (2023) found a decrease in lesson planning and classroom management confidence among teachers teaching outside their area of specialty in Australian secondary schools. Goos & Guerin (2022) compared the self-efficacy beliefs of three groups of teachers: out-of-field, in-field, and upskilled mathematics teachers, and found that the confidence gap between the groups of out-of-field and in-field mathematics teachers was reduced after targeted upskilling, but not

eliminated. Regarding the particular focus of language education, Widagsa et al. (2025) explored the knowledge base and pedagogy of English teachers in Indonesian primary schools who were not trained as English teachers, and discovered that a lack of disciplinary preparation contributed to a textbook-centered and communicationally restricted approach, with some teachers balancing this by engaging in informal peer learning and improvisation. This was further explored in a companion study by the same lead researcher (Widagsa et al., 2025), which examined the professional development pathways of out-of-field English teachers in the Indonesian system more broadly. In vocational higher education, ESP has long served as a kind of disciplinary crossing, as it requires language experts to work within technical and professional discourse communities that are not their own (Kim, 2016). Wildeman et al. (2022) investigated a technical vocational subject teachers' professional development program that aims to help technical vocational subject teachers incorporate language instruction into their content courses; they found a similar sense of disciplinary unfamiliarity in the content teachers when compared to the language teachers pushed into the content areas, suggesting that OOF disruption is a generic phenomenon of interdisciplinary teaching, irrespective of the direction of crossing.

The link between out-of-field teaching and identity, rather than competence alone, needs to be made explicit. A teacher's professional identity rests to a large extent on a recognized disciplinary knowledge base: to be a teacher of a subject is to be seen, and to see oneself, as someone entitled to speak for that subject. An out-of-field assignment disturbs this alignment between knowledge, role, and recognition. Hobbs (2013) therefore described teaching out-of-field as a boundary-crossing event in which teachers must reconcile the identity formed in their home subject with the demands of an unfamiliar one, with the outcome shaped by their personal resources and by the support their school provides. Recent studies trace this link in more detail. Using cultural-historical activity theory, Quinn and Hobbs (2025) followed an early-career teacher teaching mathematics out-of-field in a small rural Australian school and showed how tensions in the teaching

activity were bound up with the teacher's emotions and identity and shifted over time. Perl-Nussbaum et al. (2025) found that biology and chemistry teachers assigned to teach physics did not discard their home-discipline practices but adapted them to include new ones, which suggests that out-of-field identity work proceeds by extension rather than replacement. Read together, these studies show that an out-of-field assignment touches identity in three connected ways: it unsettles the teacher's sense of legitimacy, generates emotions that must be managed, and opens the possibility of a broadened professional self. For this reason, the DBIR Model treats the out-of-field assignment as an entry point for identity reconstruction, not merely a staffing problem.

Boundary crossing theory as a learning mechanism

Whereas OOF research discusses the conditions when a lecturer is outside his/her disciplinary comfort zone, Boundary Crossing Theory explains what happens next. According to Akkerman & Bakker (2011) boundaries are sociocultural differences that create discontinuities in action or interaction as people cross from one community of practice to another, and four types of mechanisms of learning at the boundaries: identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation. The theory does not view boundaries as something to be avoided, but as a potentially productive learning space, if supported.

Recent applications are an extension of this productive frame. In higher education, Järvinen et al. (2026) studied faculty teaching in a new interdisciplinary engineering degree and found that, although staff valued the program, institutional silos held back active boundary crossing; successful crossing required continuous work at the boundary, and brokers who took part in several practices at once played a demanding but essential role. Perl-Nussbaum et al. (2025) drew on the same learning mechanisms and on the notion of boundary objects to design professional development for out-of-field science teachers. In the setting of vocational education and training, Veltman et al. (2024) investigated what strategies teachers use to support students in learning a boundary-crossing expertise when tackling complex,

ill-defined problems, and concluded that explicit scaffolding of the 4 learning mechanisms resulted in a significant increase in the students' ability to synthesize knowledge from different domains. Disciplinary boundary crossing is the moment when the ELT lecturer moves from the known world of language education into the unknown world of a technical discipline, e.g., engineering, where he or she has to learn and make sense of technical jargon, practice and conventions, and subject-matter expectations in theory, a process of active involvement rather than passive transfer of knowledge. Theory alone does not account for how repeated participation can become embedded in lasting changes in professional identity, which is why Language Teacher Identity research is essential.

Language teacher identity and agency

Language Teacher Identity (LTI) research views identity as fluid and constantly renegotiated and not as an entity that is determined at the time of professional qualification Varghese et al. (2005). Recent reviews confirm that this view now dominates the field. Sadeghi and Bahari (2022) traced a shift in second language teacher identity research from a normative to an interpretative paradigm, and Tajeddin and Nazari (2025), reviewing 60 studies, found that context can constrain teachers' multiple identities in different ways and called for more research in specialized and underrepresented areas, a call that the present paper takes up for ESP and out-of-field teaching. Taking an ecological approach, Nazari et al. (2023) showed that emotion and identity construction are mutually constituted, and that the experience of emotion becomes a fundamental way of constructing identity. Nazari et al. (2026) showed that institutional policy has a discursive impact on the extent to which a language teacher has agency to produce their professional identity, and identity reconstruction is not necessarily solely an individual psychological process. This ecological perspective has been expanded to teacher educators by Nazari, Nejadghanbar, et al. (2023), who argued that emotional labor is a defining aspect of TESOL teacher educators' professional identity, and a subsequent study conducted by the same group of scholars Nazari, Nejadghanbar, et al. (2023), indicated that agency is not an

innate trait for teacher educators but rather a factor that contributes to the ongoing identity creation process.

Such macro-reforms in education, which are trying to change the image of vocational higher education in Indonesia, can also be identity-destroying. Lawrent (2024) explains that the changes at the sector level trigger the ELT teacher to constantly redefine core professional values, which is similar to what occurs when an ELT lecturer is assigned in a new discipline in the current interdisciplinary curriculum reform in Indonesia. In the ESP context, Tao & Gao (2018) found that when Chinese teachers shifted from general English teaching to ESP, the transformation of their teacher identity was not only knowledge-driven, but also included the process of agency, reflection and engagement; another study conducted earlier revealed that the identity change of Chinese teachers during the curricular shift is related to teacher agency (Tao & Gao, 2017). More recently, Rahmawati et al. (2026) found that, across four Indonesian universities, ESP teachers in non-English departments engaged more deeply with their ESP role than those in English departments, suggesting that institutional location shapes ESP teacher identity. Since 2022, publications on identity reconstruction in narrative form have reached a common conclusion: this process is not smooth. Sydnor et al. (2024) traced novice teachers' professional experiences over four years and found that professional identity is created through unanticipated and nonlinear pathways, and Lestari & Rosmayasari (2023) and Hanifah et al. (2022) employed narrative inquiry to show how Indonesian teachers' professional identity construction was shaped by the intersection of personal history, institutional culture, and classroom experiences. In the Indonesian EFL context, Wijaya (2023) synthesized twenty previous studies and found internal motivation and external institutional support as the two dominant cultivating factors, and Nue & Manara (2022) and Dewi & Fajri (2023) traced the relationship between pre-service teachers' investment and motivation to practicum experience in identity formation. Few of these pieces of evidence from Indonesia, however, focus on the construction of identity in a context of crossing disciplinary boundaries specifically.

Disciplinary boundary crossing in EMI and ESP research

The closest empirical analogue to this picture of content specialists crossing into ELT is English-medium instruction (EMI) research, which deals with the mirror-image situation: ELT specialists crossing into content. Richards & Pun (2022a) note that successful EMI is not so much about an instructor's level of proficiency in English as it is about their integration of the three aspects of disciplinary literacy, including the cognitive, genre, and academic-task aspects. They further elaborate this claim to become a comprehensive treatment of EMI pedagogy Richards & Pun (2022b). Qin et al. (2022) shared an autoethnographic account of the conflicts between disciplinary and linguistic identities faced by Chinese university EMI instructors, (Yuan, 2023) identified the complex emotional tensions Chinese EMI instructors might encounter when assuming their roles, and Yuan (2023b) tentatively suggested a developmental pathway for language specialists to become EMI teacher educators.

By summarising the research on teacher development regarding EMI from 2018 to 2022, Wang et al. (2025) found that teacher identity negotiation should be the key to preparing teachers for EMI rather than language proficiency only. In the context of content mastery, Jiang & Zhang (2023) and Tai (2022) found that translanguaging was a source for content mastery in EMI classrooms. In the Indonesian context, the typology and problems of EMI implementation in private primary schools were reported by Handayani et al. (2022) and the implementation of translanguaging was found to be a way for reclaiming the professional agency of the lecturer when Aba Sha'ar & Rofiah (2024) studied the case of ELT lecturers in the context of technical education.

The Indonesian vocational higher education context

This synthesis is especially timely because of the policy environment in Indonesia. Since 2020, the MBKM policy has been formally encouraged,

including interdisciplinary curricula and close business relationships (Salim et al., 2022). According to the results of the institutional studies during the MBKM period, the policy opened up opportunities for students, but at the same time it also added to the workload of lecturers and demanded an interdisciplinary approach in teaching and learning, which was not supported by curriculum coordination and pedagogical support (Rihatmi et al., 2025). Kemendikhsaintek phased out the Kampus Merdeka brand in 2025 and replaced it with Kampus Berdampak, which still focuses on Industry-Based, Interdisciplinary Learning, with restructured sub-programs. For this paper, the policy label is less important than the pattern of the two periods: appointing Indonesian education lecturers to become interdisciplinary and industry-oriented. Suherman & Kertawijaya (2023) reported that some structural obstacles that have hindered general English lecturers from becoming effective ESP practitioners are that ESP competency is not clearly recognized as a competency within the institution, and Murdanianto & Mas Muhammad (2026) reported that even if ESP is formally mandated, the instructional materials may still be generic and not suitable for the occupational communication needs.

Toward an integrated conceptual model

The above literature review coalesces into three statements that each describe part of the phenomenon under investigation but collectively set the stage for an integrated process. The rationale behind out-of-field research is why disciplinary reassignment results in disruption. Boundary Crossing Theory helps explain how this kind of disruption can become a constructive space for learning, as long as the right support is in place. Language Teacher Identity research accounts for how these learning experiences are sedimented and become lasting changes in professional understandings of self. No single strand provides the full range of disciplinary reassignment to a reconstructed professional identity. The three strands are combined here into one explanatory sequence, the Disciplinary Boundary-Crossing Identity Reconstruction (DBIR) Model, summarized in Table 1.

The DBIR Model differs from a purely linear stage model because it is recursive and not one-directional. This model can be cyclical: a lecturer who has successfully completed integrative identity work in one disciplinary crossing (e.g., hospitality ESP) may return to contextual disruption when reassigned to a different discipline (e.g., transportation management), and so on. This recursive structure aligns with the non-linear identity trajectories identified by Sydnor et al. (2024) and the focus on identity negotiation as a continuous achievement in EMI teacher development studies (Wang et al., 2025).

This model yields five propositions for future empirical studies.

Table 1. The Disciplinary Boundary-Crossing Identity Reconstruction (DBIR) Model

Phase	Theoretical Basis	Characteristic Feature	Illustrative Sources
Contextual disruption	Out-of-Field Teaching	Uncertainty about competence and legitimacy following an out-of-field assignment	Campbell et al. (2023); Widagsa et al. (2025); Quinn & Hobbs (2025)
Boundary negotiation	Boundary Crossing Theory	Active identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation across disciplinary communities	Akkerman & Bakker (2011); Veltman et al. (2024); Järvinen et al. (2026)
Integrative identity work	Language Teacher Identity	Emotion- and agency-mediated internalization of disciplinary crossing into professional self-understanding	Nazari et al. (2023); Lawrent (2024); Tajeddin & Nazari (2025)

Proposition 1 (P1). The amount of contextual disruption an ELT lecturer will suffer in entering an out-of-field assignment will be influenced by the perceived level of difference between the discipline trained and the discipline to which the ELT lecturer has been assigned, with assignments to 'far away' disciplines (e.g. engineering) causing greater initial disruption than assignments to 'closer' disciplines (e.g. tourism communication).

Proposition 2 (P2). Following Veltman et al. (2024) institutional scaffolding of the four boundary crossing mechanisms (identification,

coordination, reflection, transformation) will predict whether a lecturer's boundary negotiations leads to integrative identity work or to prolonged disruption.

Proposition 3 (P3). Emotional labor and perceived institutional agency will mediate the relationship between boundary negotiation and identity reconstruction, where the higher the institution's support for the lecturer's agency, the more likely the lecturer will reinterpret disciplinary crossing from a deficit to knowledge, as mentioned in Nazari, et al. (2023) and Aba Sha'ar & Rofiah (2024).

Proposition 4 (P4). A series of disciplinary crossings, not just one, are more likely to result in a stable, integrated professional identity, which sees interdisciplinary competence as a professional trait in its own right, as the recursive structure of the model suggests and Sydnor et al. (2024) showed in a study of cumulative identity development.

Proposition 5 (P5). When the policy environment does not support the implementation of interdisciplinary teaching, as is recorded during the MBKM period and in the Kampus Berdampak that succeeded it (Rihatmi et al., 2025; Salim et al., 2022; Suherman & Kertawijaya, 2023), the number of lecturers who are still in the state of prolonged contextual disruption will increase.

Theoretical contributions

The DBIR Model makes three contributions to the literature. First, it addresses the gap mentioned in the introduction by explicitly linking three research strands: OOF teaching, Boundary Crossing Theory, and Language Teacher Identity in one explanatory sequence, rather than treating them as parallel but disconnected strands of research. Second, the model suggests that crossing disciplinary boundaries can take place in either direction: that content specialists cross into language pedagogy and that language specialists cross into content pedagogy, as these are both structurally similar identity processes and are mostly done in isolation from each other (Richards & Pun, 2022b; Wang et al., 2025; Widagsa et al., 2025). Thirdly, the recursive structure of the model is a corrective to stage-based identity models, which

suggest a single point of resolved identity; this is more in line with recent research on identity that documents the more iterative nature of identity development (Lestari & Rosmayasari, 2023; Nazari, Nejadghanbar, et al., 2023; Sydnor et al., 2024).

Practical and policy implications

For vocational higher education institutions, the model implies that disciplinary reassignment should not be an administrative process but an intervention with foreseeable psychological and professional consequences. Institutions that have adopted interdisciplinary curricula in projects under Kampus Berdampak, or any other policy implementation that follows, could apply the three stages in the model to plan for targeted support: orientation programmes to resolve contextual disruption when the assignments are made, structured mentoring and/or co-teaching arrangements, to support the four boundary-crossing mechanisms during the negotiation stage, and recognition structures, such as formal recognition of ESP or interdisciplinary teaching as a professional competency, for integrative identity work that will not happen on its own if left to individual lecturers. The lack of precisely this type of institutional recognition is a continual obstacle in the Indonesian context, both in the past (Suherman & Kertawijaya, 2023) and the present (Murdanianto & Mas Muhammad, 2026).

For lecturer professional development in general, the model suggests that content-focused professional development, without addressing identity and emotional aspects, may not be enough. This resonates with Wang et al. (2025) who concluded that teacher professional learning for EMI should focus on identity negotiation and Nazari et al. (2023) who found that emotion regulation, beyond knowledge acquisition, is a key factor in successful professional transition. From a policy perspective, it is proposed that the policy of compulsory interdisciplinary curriculum such as MBKM or Kampus Berdampak or any future policy development should be accompanied by a clear investment in the infrastructure of professional development for lecturers responsible for implementing them, in line with the general policy argument put forth.

Conclusion

As Indonesia expands mandates to teach interdisciplinary subjects in vocational higher education, more ELT lecturers will be assigned to teach interdisciplinary subjects in MBKM or its successor, Kampus Berdampak. This paper argues that this shift to out-of-field teaching needs to be linked to three streams of literature that have largely emerged independently: Out-of-Field Teaching, Boundary Crossing Theory, and Language Teacher Identity. The ensuing Disciplinary Boundary-Crossing Identity Reconstruction Model suggests that identity reconstruction occurs through repeated cycles of contextual disruption, boundary negotiation, and integrative identity work, and does not necessarily happen once and for all during a lecturer's career.

This synthesis is a conceptual paper that has not been tested in practice, and the five propositions mentioned above require qualitative and mixed-methods research for validation. Narrative inquiry, in particular, seems to be well suited to show the recursive movement between the three phases of the model in a lecturer's career. Future research could also test the model's hypotheses through survey scales assessing perceived institutional support, emotional labor, and self-reported identity change among ELT lecturers in other technical disciplines. The model was built mainly on literature from higher education contexts in Indonesia and East Asia, so an open empirical question remains about its applicability to vocational systems with different institutional structures. If institutions come to view disciplinary crossing as a process that can be supported and managed rather than as an inevitable hardship, the policy pressures that currently strain lecturers might be channeled into genuine interdisciplinary expertise. Whether this happens is an empirical question, and the propositions above are designed to test it.

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