

# Space as Metaphor: Transformative Language Learning

A presentation by Nicole Lopez, Practitioner-Scholar in  
TESOL and Transformative Learning

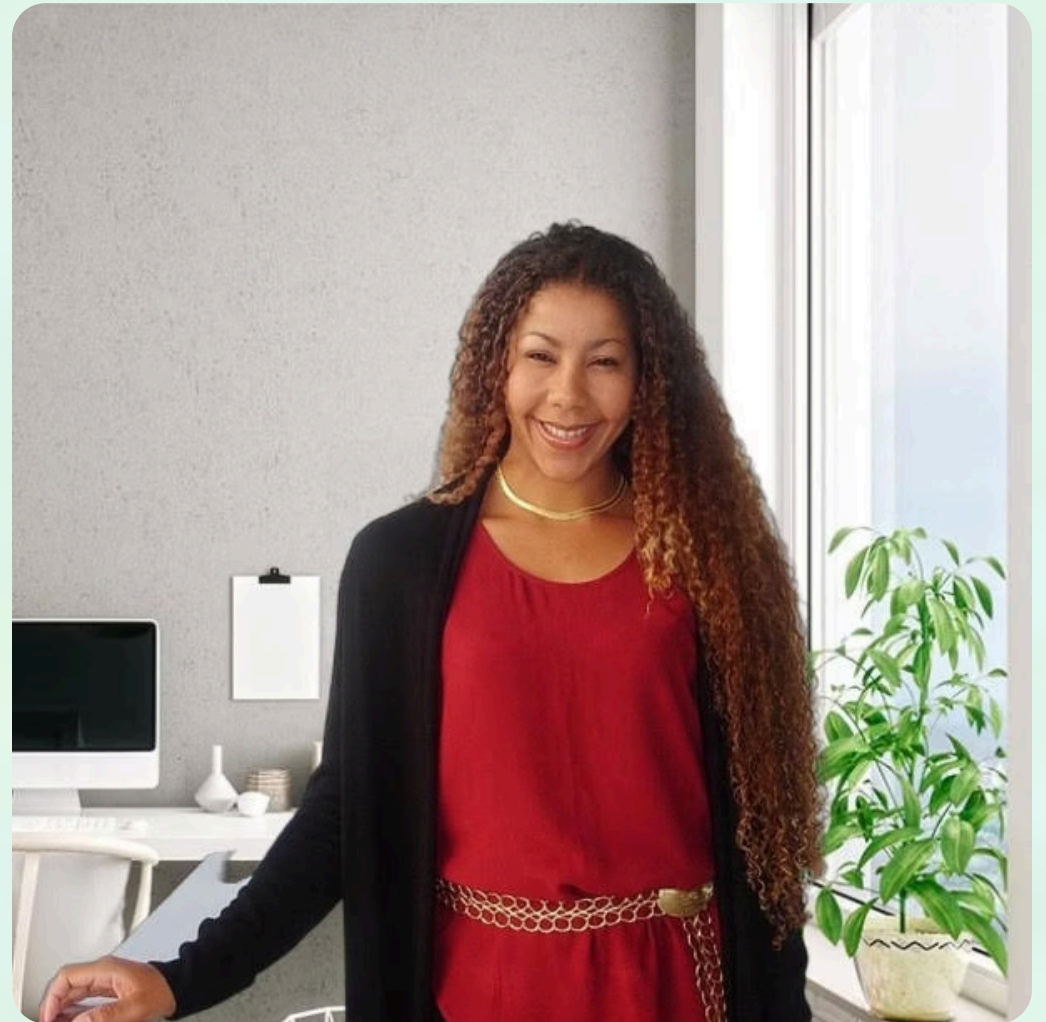


# About the Educator

Nicole Lopez brings over a decade of experience in diverse teaching contexts with:

- Dual master's degrees in TESOL and Transformative Learning
- Three years of doctoral study at CIIS in Transformative Studies
- Current PhD student at SIT Graduate Institute focusing on Global Education

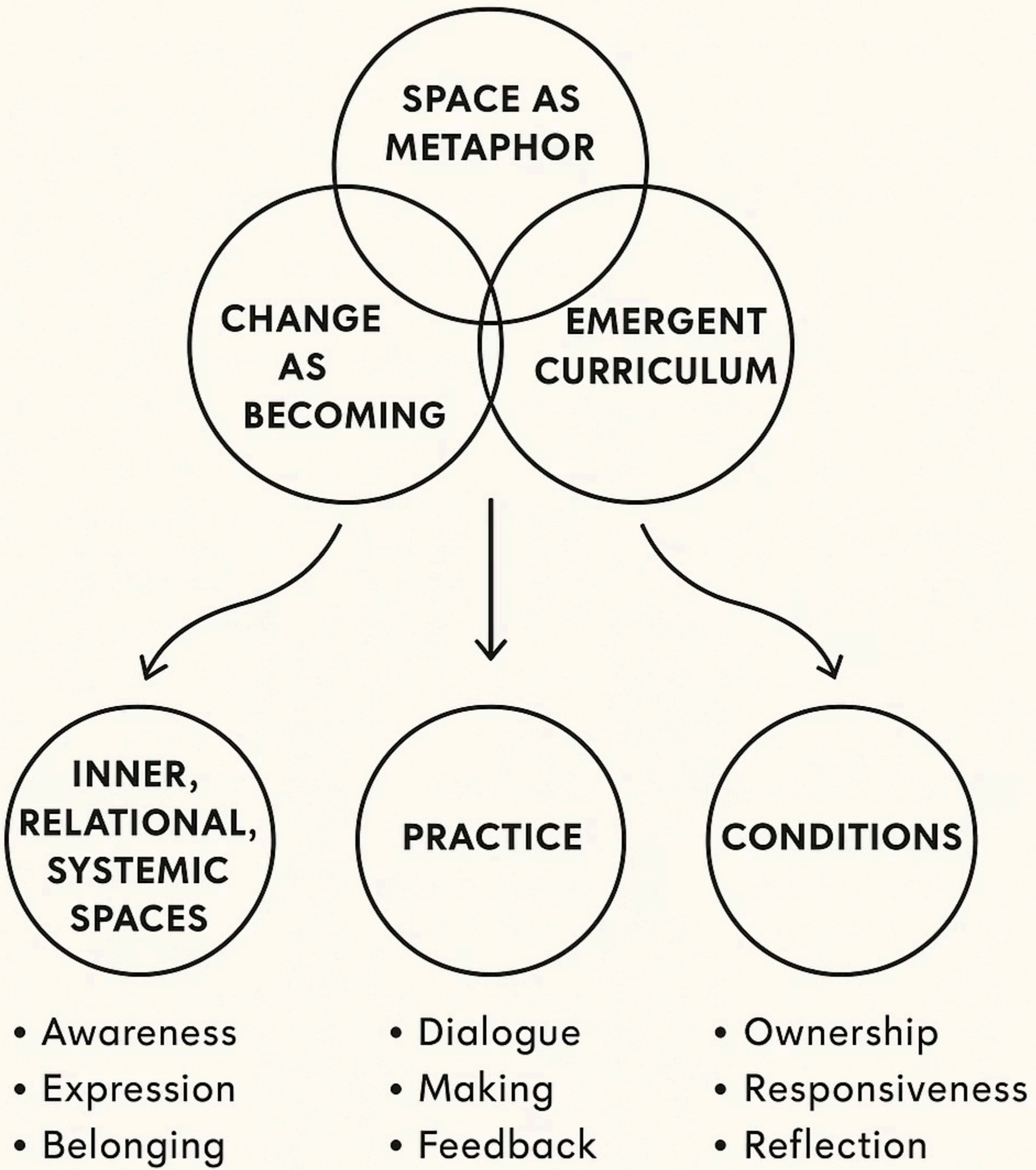
Her work exists at the intersection of language acquisition, identity, and systemic change, reimagining language education as a relational, emergent process of becoming.





# Space as Metaphor: A Transformative Framework

## TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY



### Relational Spaces

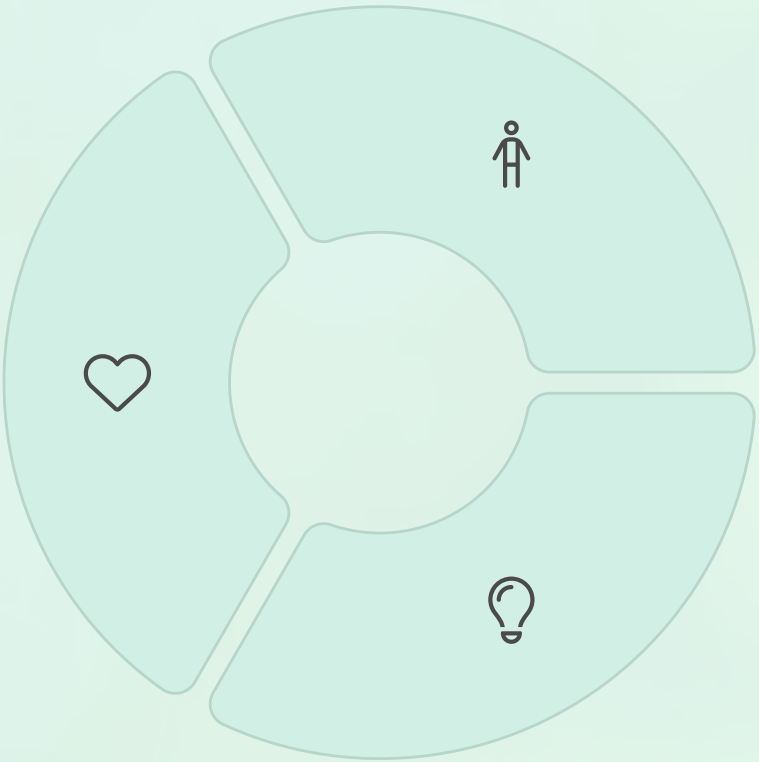
Dialogic environments where meaning is co-constructed through interaction and collective understanding

### Systemic Spaces

Third spaces (AI or Art) that mediate, disrupt, and expand possibilities beyond traditional learning

### Inner Spaces

Self-inquiry, emotion, and identity exploration where learners develop awareness of their internal landscape





# The Key Question

Where is the transformative element in this new pedagogy? Where and how does change happen?

Transformation occurs as learners move between and within these spaces—becoming more self-aware, connected, and capable of navigating complexity. This isn't just methodology; it's a praxis of possibility.



# Transformation for Adult ESL Learners

## Emergent Space Pedagogy



### Personal Agency

Learners use AI to test, reflect, and reshape their narratives—gaining power over how they express complex ideas and are perceived



### Ethical Dialogue

Classroom becomes a site of philosophical inquiry and relational accountability, not just functional language practice



### System Navigation

Students learn not just English, but how to navigate social, bureaucratic, and technological systems more effectively and critically





# Transformation for K-5 ELL Learners

## Creative Constellation Pedagogy

### Creative Self-Awareness

Art allows children to express meaning before they have the words—cultivating voice, confidence, and emotional literacy

### Language through Making

Language acquisition becomes embodied and joyful; learners engage not just their minds but their hands, eyes, and hearts

### Integration

Instead of learning "school English" in isolation, language is integrated into identity, culture, emotion, and imagination



# Conditions for Transformation



## 1 Emergent Curriculum

Lessons adapt to learners' interests, histories, and questions, encouraging ownership and responsiveness

## 2 Dialogic Feedback

AI or peer dialogue is used not to "correct" but to deepen understanding, nuance, and complexity

## 3 Portfolio and Reflection

Learners track growth not just by test scores but by evolving capacity to express, inquire, and connect

# The Continuous Journey of Transformation

Transformation in these pedagogies is not a destination—it is a continual unfolding of awareness, expression, and belonging, fostered by environments that honor complexity and co-creation.

This approach reimagines language learning beyond skill acquisition, creating spaces where inner voice, collective dialogue, and creative expression shape both language fluency and personal transformation.

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