

# ASCILITE 2025

## Future-Focused:

*Educating in an Era of Continuous Change*

### **From the eyes of a third space witness: An autoethnographic account of gaps in multimedia pedagogy and translation into classrooms**

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As a media developer embedded in a research-intensive university in Australia, I occupy a third space that spans academic, professional, and pedagogical domains. This autoethnographic study examines the persistent disconnect between academics' content-heavy approaches to educational video production and students' need for concise, engaging, and pedagogically aligned media. Drawing on my dual role as facilitator and observer, I reflect on the hidden labour involved in translating disciplinary content into video formats informed by principles such as Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning. Systemic and design-related barriers, including siloed workflows, limited academic training in multimedia pedagogy, and institutional imperatives for scalability, contribute to this misalignment. From my third space vantage point, I argue for reframing educational video production as a collaborative act of teaching. I propose the establishment of transdisciplinary design teams, the provision of pedagogical training for academics, the use of artificial intelligence to support script development, and the application of learner analytics to evaluate impact. This study contributes to ongoing discourse on multimedia learning by highlighting the role of third space professionals in advancing student-centred, theory-informed digital education in higher education contexts.

*Keywords:* Third space professional, educational videos, multimedia learning, learning design, video pedagogy, student engagement, autoethnography

#### **Introduction**

The expansion of online and blended learning has cemented educational video as a core mode of content delivery in higher education. While this shift has prompted widespread use of digital media, it has not been matched by a corresponding pedagogical transformation in video production practices. Academics often prioritise disciplinary completeness, favouring dense, lecture-style content that mirrors traditional teaching methods. In contrast, students increasingly expect clarity, brevity, and design features that support active and multimodal engagement. Research in multimedia learning consistently demonstrates that student outcomes are enhanced when video content applies principles such as segmenting, signalling, and visual-auditory integration to reduce cognitive load (Mayer, 2021; Noetel et al., 2021). Despite the availability of this evidence base, these design principles remain underutilised in the development of educational video in many university contexts.

This paper responds to this gap by examining the often-invisible work of third space professionals—staff who operate across academic, professional, and pedagogical domains in roles that defy traditional classification (Whitchurch, 2013). As a media developer working within this space, I frequently mediate between competing priorities: academics' content-focused intentions, institutional requirements for scalability and compliance, and students' demand for accessible, engaging, and relevant learning experiences. My daily work involves translating abstract or highly specialised disciplinary knowledge into video artefacts that are pedagogically sound and technically feasible. This translation process, however, is rarely foregrounded in institutional strategy or educational research.

Through an autoethnographic methodology (Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011), this paper reflects on my lived experience as both participant and observer in the design and production of educational videos. I use this third space perspective to interrogate the systemic, pedagogical, and design-related misalignments that constrain effective video use in higher education. The aim is not merely to describe the challenges, but to reframe video

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production as a collaborative act of teaching that requires shared pedagogical responsibility. By making visible the hidden labour and decision-making processes within this work, I argue for more integrated approaches that position video production within a broader educational design ecology.

### **Context: The third space**

The concept of the “third space” in higher education refers to a growing category of professionals whose work traverses and integrates academic and administrative domains (Whitchurch, 2013). These roles challenge traditional boundaries between teaching, research, and professional services, blending pedagogical understanding, institutional knowledge, and technical expertise.

As a media developer, my work sits squarely within this third space. I collaborate with academics to transform discipline-specific content into multimedia artefacts that are intended to support student learning. This requires more than technical skill. It demands fluency in educational theory, sensitivity to student experience, and an ability to navigate institutional expectations such as accessibility, scalability, and consistency. These competing demands often surface during video production, where the framing of content, style of delivery, length, and visual structure become sites of negotiation.

Despite their pivotal role, third space professionals frequently operate in the background of educational innovation. The intellectual labour of aligning multimedia production with contemporary learning theory is seldom recognised in formal teaching or course design processes (Macfarlane, 2011). Yet this work is critical to enabling meaningful learning experiences, particularly in environments where educational media is central to the curriculum.

In this study, the third space is not only my professional context but also a methodological vantage point. It informs how I perceive and reflect on the disconnections between content-driven academic practices and student-centred design imperatives. By grounding the analysis in this hybrid role, I aim to surface both the frictions and the generative potential of the third space as a locus for educational transformation.

### **Observations: Misalignments in practice**

My work as a media developer reveals a consistent pattern of misalignment between academic intentions, pedagogical principles, and student expectations in the design of educational video. These misalignments manifest across three interrelated domains: pedagogy, design, and system-level processes. Each domain contributes distinct, yet overlapping, barriers that limit the effectiveness of educational video as a learning tool.

#### **1. Content depth versus pedagogical design**

Academics commonly approach video production with an emphasis on content completeness, often attempting to replicate the density of a live lecture within a single video. This approach is driven by disciplinary norms that value exhaustive coverage and conceptual nuance. However, students tend to disengage from lengthy, content-saturated videos that lack structure, interactivity, or opportunities for application. Evidence from multimedia learning research consistently shows that brief, conversational videos that follow principles such as segmenting, dual-channel delivery, and signalling support deeper learning and retention (Mayer, 2021; Brame, 2016). Despite this, these principles are rarely adopted in practice unless explicitly advocated for by media professionals or learning designers.

#### **2. Design intent versus functional execution**

Academics often treat educational video as a delivery mechanism rather than a designed learning experience. This instrumental view positions media developers as technicians whose role is to “make it engaging,” rather than co-designers embedded in pedagogical dialogue. Consequently, videos are frequently developed in isolation from course outcomes or assessment strategies, resulting in static content that serves as information repositories rather than interactive tools. This disconnect is particularly pronounced in programmatic assessment contexts, where cumulative, integrated learning is essential. Without deliberate alignment between design intent and pedagogical purpose, the potential of video to support active and scaffolded learning is lost.

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### 3. Institutional priorities versus academic autonomy

University-wide priorities such as equity, scalability, and accessibility introduce additional constraints that further complicate the production process. Requirements for captioning, standardised templates, and branding guidelines, though pedagogically and ethically important, are sometimes perceived by academics as peripheral to their teaching goals. This tension often places third space professionals in the role of negotiators, balancing compliance with institutional standards against the academic's desire for disciplinary specificity and creative autonomy. The resulting compromise can dilute both pedagogical clarity and media coherence. Across these domains, a common thread is the fragmentation of roles and responsibilities. Media production is rarely embedded in an integrated course design process. Instead, it is frequently treated as an add-on at the end of curriculum development. This structural separation reinforces siloed workflows and perpetuates the disconnect between teaching intentions and student learning needs. In practice, it falls to third space professionals to bridge these gaps, often through informal advocacy, translation of feedback, and iterative adaptation of video artefacts.

### Analysis: Navigating pedagogical and structural tensions

Drawing on autoethnographic principles (Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011), this analysis positions my lived experience as both participant and observer within the institutional processes of video production. The value of this dual position lies in its capacity to expose the tensions that are often rendered invisible within formal curriculum design processes. By occupying a third space role, I am uniquely situated to identify not only where breakdowns occur, but also how they are silently negotiated and resolved in practice. This section analyses three recurring tensions that emerged through sustained engagement with video projects over time.

#### 1. Misrecognition of pedagogical expertise

A recurring challenge is the marginalisation of pedagogical knowledge in production processes. While academics are rightly regarded as content experts, there is limited institutional recognition of the educational design expertise required to transform that content into media that supports learning. The frequent request to 'make it engaging' reflects an assumption that engagement is primarily a function of visual design or post-production, rather than an outcome of sound pedagogical structuring. This misrecognition constrains the possibility for genuine collaboration and places pedagogical decisions outside the scope of formal design conversations. In this context, I often find myself advocating for principles such as cognitive load reduction, narrative structure, and learner interaction, yet these suggestions are treated as enhancements rather than foundational to learning.

#### 2. Resistance to iterative and student-centred design

Despite growing availability of learner analytics and student feedback mechanisms, their integration into media development remains sporadic. In several projects, I have used completion rates, drop-off points, and qualitative student comments to argue for shorter or restructured videos. These proposals are frequently met with resistance, particularly when they require academics to prioritise clarity and conciseness over disciplinary fidelity. This resistance is not merely a reluctance to simplify but reflects a deeper epistemological tension between academic identity and instructional pragmatism. The third space role requires ongoing translation of this data into pedagogical reasoning that is legible to disciplinary colleagues, making visible the ways in which student engagement data can inform, not dilute academic quality.

#### 3. Systemic fragmentation and institutional incoherence

The broader institutional ecosystem often reinforces siloed practices through fragmented governance of curriculum, technology, and media. For example, accessibility compliance is managed by one team, pedagogical guidance by another, and production workflows by yet another. In this environment, my role involves continuous boundary-crossing to align video artefacts with course learning outcomes, accessibility requirements, and institutional priorities. This invisible coordination work is intellectually and emotionally demanding but rarely acknowledged in formal workload models or curriculum governance structures. It reflects what Whitchurch (2013) describes as the unbounded nature of third space work—dynamic, relational, and institutionally contingent.

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By reflecting analytically on these tensions, this autoethnography foregrounds the epistemic and institutional labour required to align educational media with pedagogical purpose. It challenges deficit framings that treat production issues as technical failures or academic oversights and instead situates them within broader structures of practice that require deliberate, collaborative reconfiguration.

### Implications and recommendations

The analysis above highlights the need for a deliberate reconfiguration of educational video production as a pedagogically grounded, collaborative practice. Rather than positioning media development as a technical service or post-hoc enhancement, institutions must recognise it as a core component of curriculum design—one that requires shared responsibility across academic, professional, and pedagogical domains. The third space perspective reveals not only the barriers to such integration but also the conditions under which meaningful alignment can occur. Based on this insight, I propose four interrelated strategies.

#### 1. Establish transdisciplinary design teams

Educational video production should be embedded within transdisciplinary teams that bring together academics, media developers, and learning designers from the outset of curriculum planning. Such teams enable early dialogue around pedagogical intent, assessment alignment, and student engagement strategies. Joint planning workshops, for example, can scaffold the development of video artefacts that are tightly aligned with course learning outcomes and delivered in a format informed by cognitive and multimedia learning principles (Laurillard, 2012). This approach also distributes design responsibility, reducing the burden on third space professionals to retrofit content after the fact.

#### 2. Build pedagogical capacity for multimedia integration

To enable more effective collaboration, academic staff require targeted support in multimedia pedagogy. Institutional professional development should include practical modules on video design principles (e.g. Mayer's cognitive load theory), visual storytelling, and student-centred scripting. These modules should be embedded in existing teaching development frameworks, rather than offered as optional extras. Strengthening pedagogical fluency across the academic workforce enhances the quality of video artefacts and normalises shared design discourse between academics and third space professionals (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004).

#### 3. Leverage artificial intelligence to scaffold production

AI-enabled tools can support more efficient and pedagogically coherent production workflows. For instance, large language models can be used to generate initial video script drafts that integrate discipline-specific content with scaffolding strategies such as questioning prompts, examples, or programmatic progression. These drafts can then be collaboratively refined by media developers and academics. In this way, AI functions not as a replacement for pedagogical or creative labour, but as a catalyst for iterative design grounded in learning science and accessibility principles (Bates et al., 2020).

#### 4. Develop meaningful evaluation metrics for video effectiveness

Current institutional evaluation of video often focuses on usage statistics rather than learning impact. A more pedagogically meaningful approach would combine analytics on engagement patterns with indicators of student learning and satisfaction. For example, video drop-off rates, quiz performance, or feedback on clarity and relevance can be triangulated to inform iterative improvement. This data should be made available to all members of the design team, including third space professionals, to support continuous enhancement and strategic decision-making (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Taken together, these recommendations aim to shift the framing of educational video production from a service-oriented task to a collaborative act of teaching. They recognise the intellectual and relational labour of third space professionals as central to enabling pedagogically robust media design. More broadly, they offer a pathway for institutions to align digital education practices with the demands of future-focused, student-centred learning.

### Conclusion

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This autoethnographic study has illuminated the persistent misalignments between disciplinary content priorities, pedagogical best practices, and student engagement needs in the production of educational video. As a third space professional, my work reveals the invisible labour of negotiating these tensions across fragmented systems, siloed workflows, and competing epistemologies. The analysis demonstrates that effective educational video design is not a technical or aesthetic exercise alone, but a pedagogical endeavour that requires transdisciplinary collaboration, shared language, and institutional support.

By framing educational video production as a collaborative act of teaching, this paper advocates for structural and cultural shifts in how universities approach digital media. Integrating media developers, learning designers, and academics into coherent design teams enables pedagogically grounded decision-making from the outset. Building academic capacity in multimedia pedagogy, leveraging AI-enabled tools, and embedding evaluation metrics that prioritise learning outcomes further support this alignment.

The third space perspective offers critical insight into both the challenges and possibilities of educational innovation in an era of continuous change. It foregrounds the expertise, adaptability, and relational work required to bridge institutional and pedagogical divides. As universities continue to invest in digital education, recognising and resourcing this boundary-spanning labour will be essential to realising the transformative potential of multimedia for student learning.

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