



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**TEACHER IDENTITY AND PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN
GRAMMAR TEACHING AMONG ESL PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS**

NORHAKIMAH KHAIESSA BINTI AHMAD

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By

NORHAKIMAH KHAIESSA BINTI AHMAD

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2020

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

My parents Ahmad and Khadijah, my bubbly sisters CJ, CK, and Chik, and the teacher-participants: Azra, Maya, and Adelia

With love, respect, and a bunch of memories of my late father who passed away during the Covid-19 Movement Control Order Day 63

Indeed, we belong to Allah and indeed to Him we shall return.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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By

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February 2020

Chairman : Professor Arshad Abd Samad, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

This study explored how teachers who are engaged with young learners used self-constructed metaphors to conceptualise their identity in grammar teaching. The examination of teacher identity was conducted through qualitative approach. Three experienced teachers were involved in this study. Employing a multiple case study design, data sources were collected from semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall interviews, lesson observations, observation field notes, and Picture Perfect (teaching metaphors reflected in the form of pictures). To answer each research question, data were analysed through coding, categorizing, and identifying sub-themes for the development of the main theme. The findings revealed that *Teacher as Structural Builder* emerged as the primary role in grammar teaching. The sub-identities of knowledge provider, chef, planner, diagnostician, and gem carver illustrated the participants planned, designed, and occasionally modified the grammar tasks to enhance children's understanding and enable them to construct the structure of grammar items before they used it in written or spoken form. *Teacher as Classroom Manager* was the secondary role in grammar teaching. The sub-identities included the roles of manager, mother, and juggler, wherein teachers adopted these roles to manage both lessons and pupils in grammar lessons. These findings imply that identities were individually constructed on a moment-to-moment basis and evolved based on the pedagogical techniques and grammar tasks. All teachers practised balanced knowledge of learners and self. This outcome exhibits that the construction and negotiation of identities were accomplished by teacher-pupil interactions, classroom practices, personal language learning experience, and balanced knowledge of learners and self. This study benefits the stakeholders due to the pressing need for continuing professional development programme to cultivate self-understanding among in-service teachers in structuring their pedagogical reasoning and raising awareness of factors that may impede or facilitate identity development in grammar teaching. It is recommended that further examination on the primary and secondary

role identities among teachers of young learners in grammar teaching is conducted in different types of primary school.



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UNTUK PENGAJARAN TATABAHASA DALAM KALANGAN
GURU ESL SEKOLAH RENDAH**

Oleh

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Kajian ini meneroka bagaimana guru bahasa Inggeris sekolah rendah menggunakan metafora terbina sendiri untuk menyerlahkan identiti mereka dalam mengajar tatabahasa. Kajian ini dijalankan dengan menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan kualitatif berunsur kajian kes. Seramai tiga orang guru bahasa Inggeris berpengalaman yang dipilih secara persampelan bertujuan terlibat dalam kajian ini. Data diperolehi melalui temu bual separa berstruktur mendalam, temu bual ransangan, pemerhatian, nota lapangan, serta *Picture Perfect* (metafora pengajaran yang diterjemahkan dalam bentuk gambar). Untuk menjawab setiap persoalan kajian, data dianalisis serta diberikan kod, kategori, dan sub-tema bagi membangunkan tema utama. Hasil kajian mendapati guru bahasa Inggeris memainkan peranan utama sebagai *Pembina Struktur* dalam pengajaran tatabahasa. Subidentiti nya termasuklah peranan sebagai sumber ilmu pengetahuan, ketua jurumasak, perancang, pendiagnosis, dan penggilap bakat. Subidentiti ini menunjukkan bahawa guru perlu memastikan kanak-kanak memahami struktur tatabahasa sebelum mereka berjaya menggunakannya untuk menulis atau bertutur. Guru sebagai *Pengurus Bilik Darjah* merupakan peranan sekunder guru. Subidentitinya termasuklah peranan sebagai pengurus, ibu, dan penjuagel yang mana guru memainkan peranan ini untuk melaksanakan pengajaran dan pembelajaran tatabahasa murid. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa identiti guru terbentuk secara individu berdasarkan masa-masa tertentu dan perkembangan berdasarkan teknik pedagogi dan aktiviti tatabahasa. Kesemua guru juga mempamerkan keseimbangan pengetahuan murid dan diri sendiri. Dapatan ini menunjukkan proses pembinaan dan negosiasi identiti terbentuk melalui interaksi guru-murid di dalam bilik darjah, amalan bilik darjah, pengalaman peribadi guru dalam pembelajaran bahasa, serta keseimbangan pengetahuan murid dan diri sendiri. Kajian ini dapat membantu pihak berkepentingan dalam program pembangunan profesional berterusan untuk menerapkan amalan pemahaman sendiri dalam kalangan guru dalam perkhidmatan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran tentang faktor yang boleh menghalang atau

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FonF	Focus on Form
GPS	score of average grade school
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IH	Interaction Hypothesis
KSSR	Standard Curriculum for Primary School
L1	First Language/Mother Tongue
L2	Second Language
MBMMBI	<i>Memperkasakan Bahasa Malaysia Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Ingeris</i>
MEB	Malaysia Education Blueprint
OB	Observation
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SR	Stimulated Recall Interview
SBT	High-Performing School
SS	Semi-structured Interview
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TEYL	Teaching English for Young Learners
TLA	Teachers' Language Awareness

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Research on identity has recently gained much attention from researchers within the field of teaching and second language teacher education in the last two decades (Richards & Wilson, 2019; Varghese, Motha, Park, Reeves, & Trent, 2016; Wolf & De Costa, 2017). Central to educational research on identity is the concept of language teacher identity primarily because it has become an analytical tool to elucidate the relationship between schools and its outcome to the society (Gee, 2001). Studies pertaining to teacher identity raise awareness of what it means to be a teacher by exploring a range of aspects that reflects identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Therefore, teacher identity has emerged as a powerful platform in language teaching, which is in line with the notion highlighted by Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) that “in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are” (p. 22). Due to the central role of identity in the lives of language teachers, more studies are in need to comprehend how teachers construct and multiply their identities over time in their attempt to legitimise their own pedagogical practices.

Teachers continue to construct their identities in light of new roles as they interact with colleagues and learners in various contexts. To date, there has been a growing trend towards examining teacher identity among the non-English-speaking teachers. As the majority of the TESOL teachers are non-native speakers (Braine, 2014; Kachru & Nelson, 2006), their position has been discussed in terms of how teachers negotiate their multiple identities. Language teaching, nevertheless, is never simple within the second language (L2) contexts because teachers are heavily burdened with long working hours, extra school duties, and pressure to promote teaching innovations (Loh & Hu, 2014; Trent, 2017; Yuan, 2017; Yuan & Burns, 2017). Several imposed constraints, such as syllabus, textbook, and policy, have caused teachers to either adapt to the constraints or create new teaching practices. Such unpleasant experiences can possibly generate identity stress (Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 9) that could affect both emotional experiences and personal wellbeing among teachers. The process to project identity based on the institutional or individual role suggests that identity multiplies when teachers assume a particular role in the classroom as they implement the curriculum content.

The past decades have witnessed a steady growth of research on non-English speaking teachers' attitudes, emotions, and professional identities across curriculum reforms in language teaching and general education (e.g., Chan & Lo, 2016; Yuan, 2017). This line of research indicates that in some contexts, where teachers are open to curriculum changes, they are willing to try out innovative approaches or ideas and adapt the existing materials to accommodate their classroom situations (Lloyd, 2008). Nonetheless, the resistant teachers might choose to retain how they teach in fear of

losing their autonomy and comfort zone (Remillard & Bryans, 2004). The exam-oriented system and traditional learning culture (i.e., excessive focus on drills and rote learning) may pose threats to teachers' attempts to implement curriculum reform. It takes immense courage and practical wisdom for teachers to leave their comfort zone and innovate their teaching in line with the curriculum mandate (Lee, Mak, & Burns, 2015; Nguyen & Trent, 2020). With sufficient institutional support, teachers will encounter fewer problems in implementing their teaching approaches, instructional focus, and content coverage of the curriculum.

In 2011, a curricular reform for primary education in Malaysia, known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (henceforth known as the KSSR curriculum), was implemented across all taught subjects including English language. The English language curriculum reform places great emphasis on the development of communicative competence through interactive learner-centred teaching approaches. Nevertheless, it is important to note that according to this curriculum, language skills are taught beginning from Year 1, while grammar is taught starting from Year 3 (Ministry of Education, 2011). The implementation of the KSSR curriculum in the classroom has given teachers a specific role in grammar teaching, because grammar can only be taught for young learners from age 9 and above.

In this study, young learners refer to Malaysian primary school children as the term 'young learners' is defined as children between the ages of 5 and 12 (Ellis, 2014; Garton & Copland, 2019; Jin & Cortazzi, 2019). Grammar teaching for young learners requires teachers to apply two different sub-knowledge: how words in their accurate form are sequenced to create meaningful sentences and how sentences are organised to form a coherent text. In other words, grammar teaching entails taking into account learners' vocabulary size, existing grammatical knowledge, grammatical structures to be internalised, and the learning condition they are in (Cameron 2001; Puchta 2019; Spada & Lightbown, 2008). More importantly, Cameron (2001, p. 100) argues that to sustain the 'internal grammars', teachers need to look for ways to organise grammar in the learners' mind. This implies that teachers' instructional strategies during grammar lessons are implicitly shaped by their self-perceived role in teaching the language structures. It can be inferred that the national curriculum reform agenda will only succeed if teachers are aware of their role in grammar lessons.

In meeting the curricular reform in grammar teaching, Malaysian language teachers are left to attain different goals in diverse contexts by employing agency to make choices, influence, resist, or take stances (Duff & Doherty, 2015; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). This indicates that agency in grammar teaching is intrinsically related to teacher professional role identity. Vähäsantanen (2015) further highlighted that curriculum reform often requires negotiation of professional role identity, in which agency emerges as an important factor to understand why and how teachers modify their teaching practice (see also Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2017; Tao & Gao, 2017; Wallen & Tormey, 2019). Given the complex realities and critical teachers' roles in the Malaysian curriculum reform, more studies should examine the interrelationship between the role of identity and teachers' classroom practices in grammar lessons.

Understanding identity begins from exploring the personal agency of ESL teachers and what they do in the classroom. In 2014, a TESOL Research Agenda Task Force highlighted the importance of understanding teacher identities by calling for research focussing on the roles that teachers assume in shaping their own professional development as language teaching professionals (TESOL International Association, 2014). To address this research focus, Chan and Lo (2016) examined how three primary school teachers in Hong Kong constructed their identities as inclusive practitioners among ESL learners with special learning needs. The findings exhibited that the teachers displayed the identity of ‘acculturators’ and ‘active learners’, who consistently explored different educational theories apart from using various teaching techniques, to promote equal opportunities and social inclusion in English classrooms. In contrast, Nguyen (2016) assessed how six Vietnamese teachers enacted the role of ‘artists’, ‘mothers’, ‘trial judges’, ‘intercultural promoters’, and ‘democrats’, thus presented evidence of multiple identities construction in relation to the EFL context. Both studies have offered significant insights into the particularity of identity multiplicities in teaching language to young learners. While the findings demonstrate that experienced teachers vary in their identity, the findings only examined who teachers should be in the classroom context. None of these studies explicitly discussed the teachers’ different pedagogical practices when teaching specific subjects in relation to the professional role identity.

Teaching how to learn a subject does not only reflect a process of transferring subject knowledge, but it also involves factors that sustain the process of identity construction. In other words, factors that can either facilitate or impede the construction of teacher identities should be considered in order to understand what challenges teachers are experiencing while transferring the curriculum content in the classroom (Clarke 2008; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Varghese et al., 2005). In a study on form-meaning relations of the English tenses, Kwan and Wong (2016) found that first language (L1) has strongly influenced the L2 acquisition of the English present perfect and the simple past tense. They argue that Malaysian Chinese ESL learners will continuously face difficulty in applying tenses accurately, unless teachers play their role effectively in helping learners to acquire the accurate form. The results in another study by Jai Shree, Parilah, and Juhaida (2014) revealed that only 4% of the 90 non-English language option teachers rated themselves as highly excellent in grammar. The role of teacher identity was not discussed in both studies. Nevertheless, the findings imply that teachers’ Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) categories, such as grammatical content knowledge and grammatical pedagogical knowledge vary according to the teaching context, are possible factors that impede or facilitate their role identity in teaching grammar items. It also shows that identity plays a major role in grammar instruction as making good pedagogical decisions hinges on the quality of teachers’ knowledge categories (Guerriero, 2014).

The current trend in reviews of studies on teacher identity reveals that researchers have been inclined to focus on identity construction from two perspectives. Scholars tend to focus on either the process of identity construction or the tension between teachers and their context in the process of constructing their professional identity (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; GÜNGÖR, 2017; Trent, 2016b, 2020). Studies on teacher

identity in the recent decade seem to indicate that the trend has shifted from using metaphors to conceptualise teaching to using metaphors as proxies for experiences (Craig, 2018) or blueprints of the role of identities in language teaching (Lee & Schallert, 2016; Mahlios, Massengill-Shaw, & Barry, 2010; Saban, Kocbeker, & Saban, 2007). For example, the teachers in Yuan and Burns' (2017) study on curriculum reform shifted their identity from 'fisherman' to a 'fishing coach', while Lee's (2013) study on introducing new writing practices reported that the teachers' identity shifted from an 'advocate' to a 'change agent'. Identity shift suggests that the role of identities needs to be viewed as what teachers do in the classroom reflects who they are and their knowledge of self. Hence, the present study argues that it is pertinent to focus on the process of identity construction by employing metaphor to understand the conceptualisation of identity in relation to classroom practice.

A number of studies have begun to explore the field of teacher identity in Malaysia. Unfortunately, relatively few studies have focussed on how Malaysian teachers conceptualise the role of their identity in grammar teaching. To date, studies on English language teacher identity in Malaysia have revolved around novice teachers, pre-service teachers, and university teachers (Fatiha, 2016; Hasim, Barnard, Maarof, Halim, & Mohtar, 2015; Shafie & Nayan, 2010). Hasim, Barnard, Mohtar, and Maarof (2016) have attempted to give insights on how student teachers conceptualised the role of teacher as facilitator within the Malaysian classroom context. However, these authors did not describe thoroughly the process of how professional role identity was constructed and did not elaborate on how this role was sustained throughout the practicum context. The discussion has been restricted to the importance of promoting interaction among language learners. Identity construction occurs in a nonlinear process when teachers evaluate the knowledge that they practise and relate this experience to their knowledge of self (Henry & Tynkkinen, 2017; Steenbeek & van Geerts, 2015). As such, more comprehensive studies are in need in order to explore the process of constructing teachers' professional role identity in grammar teaching.

The identity construction process offers accounts into the interrelationship between identity and PCK in grammar teaching. Up to now, unfortunately, common interests in teachers' categories of PCK in Malaysia are limited to research exploring the practical knowledge of ESL teaching strategies (Othman, 2010; Othman & Kiely, 2016), recognition of phrases and clauses (Ibrahim & Nor, 2011), attitude towards task-based instruction in grammar teaching (Choo & Too, 2012), and teachers' difficulty in grammar explanation (Munir, 2009; Narinasamy, Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2013). Assessing the outcomes of past studies in Malaysia, it can be said that what often gets reported is confined to teachers' pedagogical strategies employed in the classroom. Despite the volume of work done, no attempt has been made to associate the interaction between professional role identity demonstrated in the lessons and teachers' grammatical content knowledge in grammar teaching.

Past studies, as shown above, have foregrounded that there is an interaction among teachers' knowledge of self, grammatical content knowledge, and their grammatical pedagogical knowledge. Nonetheless, little attention has been paid on the instances of how different categories of knowledge interact with self. For instance, Moganashwari,

Melor, and Mohamed's (2018) findings of teachers' PCK have not reported in much detail how different categories of PCK interacted simultaneously in a lesson. In a similar vein, Gan's (2012) study that involved 40 teachers in Sabah has been restricted to pre-test and post-test results in teaching simple present tense using drill as an approach in grammar teaching for young learners. Although past studies have acknowledged categories of PCK, a systematic understanding of the interplay between identity and knowledge of self as one PCK category in grammar teaching demands a comprehensive investigation.

One of the ways to investigate the interplay between identity and knowledge of self is through examining teachers' reflective practice. There is a growing empirical evidence that indicates encouraging both pre-service and in-service TESOL teachers to engage in reflection gives positive impact on their recognition of self, knowledge, and classroom practice. For example, Cirocki and Widodo (2019) studied activities that promote EFL practitioners to engage in reflective practice. They concluded that activities that were closely related to reflection beyond lesson have encouraged teachers to conceptualise their role by exhibiting the interplay of linking theory to practice, curriculum, language policy, and instruction. In Gutiérrez, Adasme, and Westmacott's (2019) study on EFL teacher identity formation, the researchers noted that reflection has influenced the teachers to be aware of the needs to resolve problem and more open to changes. Both instances demonstrate that teachers who reflect on their philosophy and experiences are found to be better in understanding the origin, formation process, and development of their own identity. However, Farrell (2018) has observed that when teachers combine philosophy and beyond practice in their reflection, their self-perceived role goes beyond instructional decisions in the classroom. Reflection on teaching practices leads teachers to associate themselves with the role of identity in understanding the process of knowledge creation (Craig, 2018). This shows that linking knowledge of self as teachers and classroom practices to their professional role identities mediates teachers to be aware of their identity in grammar teaching.

The study on teachers' conception of identity and knowledge in grammar teaching is crucial as grammar teaching does not only play a significant role in young learners' language acquisition but also strengthen the teachers' quality. The specialised knowledge used to justify any pedagogical strategies advocates that it is this "declarative-procedural nature of the subject-matter knowledge of language that makes language teaching different from general subject pedagogy" (Pang, 2016, p.249). In other words, teachers simultaneously draw on various categories of knowledge and competency to discern the features of language item in focus (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Investigation on the notion of teachers' conceptualisations of identity and knowledge in grammar teaching is remarkable, primarily because the conceptualisations offer some important insights into the way teachers conceptualise who they are and what grammar teaching is in their actual classroom practice. Therefore, this study contributes to a better understanding of the interconnectedness between the conceptions of professional role identity in relation to teachers' knowledge of grammar teaching in the ESL classroom context.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Professional role identity is important for ESL practitioners to establish themselves as experts in both language and content area, not necessarily through teaching the grammar content, but also through designing grammar activities. In the process of identity construction, the existing literature on non-English speaking teacher identities has shown that identity development occurs when teachers attempt to balance their experience, individual agency, educational policies, and flexibility in adjusting self to complex situations (Moodie, 2016; Phyältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2012). In spite of the increasing numbers of children learning English globally, informed discussion of Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL) teachers has mainly focused on literacy, effective pedagogy, integration of technology, teacher education, and policy development (Copland & Garton, 2014). What is known about teacher identity is derived from the studies conducted among pre-service teachers, novice teachers, and graduate programmes (Said, 2015; Xu, 2013; Zhu & Zhu, 2018), secondary school teachers (Lee, 2013; Trent, 2017), and university teachers (Fowler, 2017; van Lankveld, Schoonenboom, Volman, Croiset, & Beishuizen, 2017). Although teacher identity has become a burgeoning theme in the field of language teaching, identity of teachers who are teaching English to young learners receives less attention. What remains unclear is how teachers who are engaged with young learners conceptualise their identity (Butler, 2015; Copland, Garton & Burns, 2014). To counterbalance the scant attention by scholars, it is a timely effort to expand the research on TEYL teacher identity by examining teachers' knowledge of subject specific content. Research on teacher identity raises social awareness of what it means to be a teacher by linking the content knowledge to their practice.

While teachers share similar professional attributes, teachers' knowledge of subject specific content may vary in terms of content knowledge, goals, and attitudes (Beijaard et al., 2004; Phipps & Borg, 2009). Studies on grammar teaching among primary school teachers highlighted that teachers' underlying knowledge includes metalinguistic awareness (Asiah, 2013; Ho, 2016; Marlyna, Tan, & Khazriyati, 2007; Munir, 2009), pedagogical strategies (Rosniah, Idris, Nor, & Noorizah, 2014; Mohtar, Abdullah, & Mat, 2015), and instructional techniques (Ng & Sheila, 2011; Yee & Gan, 2017). The findings of these studies, however, are not specifically associated with the categories of PCK in grammar teaching. None of these studies appears to relate grammar teaching practice to the teachers' identity. In addition, the literature places emphasis on teachers' lack of knowledge or training rather than the teachers' self-perceived knowledge of how to teach grammar. Despite the importance of PCK in grammar teaching, the paucity of evidence on the interaction among its related categories remains underexplored. Thus, there is an urgent need to understand how identity plays its role in shaping the enactment of teachers' different categories of PCK in grammar teaching.

Extensive research has explored the role of different types of pedagogical knowledge in general education and within the field of TESOL (see Borg, 2003; 2009; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Gattbonton, 1999; 2008; Karimi & Norouzi, 2018; Tsui, 2003). Although these studies have been remarkable to extend

the understanding of teachers' knowledge, little evidence exists that documents how teachers' PCK in grammar teaching is shaped by their identity (Miller, 2009; Pennington, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Recent systematic literature reviews on identity reported the lack of focus on teachers' metacognitions about their own identities. In fact, existing studies that discuss the shifts and maintenance of identity of non-English-speaking teachers were conducted in the English-speaking countries (van Lankveld et al., 2017; Yuan, 2018). While past studies have examined the contributions of PCK and identity, the connection between both concepts is yet to be fully conceptualised. This calls for a comprehensive investigation that highlights how teachers perceive their professional role identity and relate it to their actions in grammar teaching in order to inform the interactions between teachers' subject-specific knowledge and their instructional practice.

In examining professional role identity, metaphor is a tool that acts as the medium for teachers to conceptualise the role identity and relate their experience with teaching (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011; Zhao, Coombs & Zhao, 2010). In Malaysia, Hasim, Barnard, Mohtar, Maarof, and Zakaria (2017) and Nikitina and Furuoka (2008) have adopted Oxford's et al. (1998) categories of metaphor to conceptualise teachers' role. Both studies, nevertheless, are subject to at least three limitations. First, teachers in these studies conceptualised their teaching metaphor from four predetermined perspectives: social order, cultural transmission, learner-centred growth, and social reform. Second, neither study focused on in-service TEYL teachers. Third, while both studies investigated the conception of teaching and teachers' role, the teachers had to choose metaphors from Oxford's et al. list of categories, wherein the findings did not relate metaphors to role identity in teaching a specific language content. These limitations demonstrate that what has been missing in the literature is how exactly TEYL teachers construct their role identities in grammar teaching through metaphorical expressions. Hence, the present study argues that self-constructed metaphors have the potential to elucidate the interplay of conceptualization of identity and roles, as well as pedagogical practice in the context of grammar teaching among teachers of young learners.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore and describe how primary school teachers employ self-constructed metaphors to conceptualise their identity in grammar teaching in the ESL context. With its aim of addressing the scarcity in TEYL literature, examining teacher identity using metaphors can possibly offer in-depth understanding regarding the conception of TEYL teachers' identity in grammar teaching. Primary school teachers' identity ought to be made visible in both teacher education and teacher induction, primarily because the process of identity construction varies according to different situations. With this understanding, the researcher can propose an identity taxonomy for training pre-service teachers that emphasises on identity in grammar teaching. Besides, teacher educators and stake holders may integrate this element in the teacher education programme.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To conceptualise teacher identity and describe the roles played by the teachers in grammar teaching
2. To investigate teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and their classroom practice in grammar teaching
3. To examine the enactment of identity in grammar teaching

1.4 Research Questions

The three research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What identities do teachers assume in grammar teaching?
2. How do the teachers perceive pedagogical content knowledge and practise it in grammar teaching?
3. How does (can) the enactment of identities influence grammar teaching?

1.5 Significance of Study

First, the present study contributes to the body of knowledge by bridging the gap in the existing literature on teacher identity. Rather than conceptualising teachers' role identity and knowledge in grammar teaching separately, this study explored self-constructed metaphors in conceptualising the teachers' identity in grammar teaching. In addition, there is a need for more research that explores the complexity of teacher identity construction in teaching grammar content to young learners. As such, examining the function of role identities resulting from teachers' reflections in this study addresses the missing link in the existing literature on identity among teachers of young learners. By exploring the way teachers construct their identities, the present study provides an in-depth examination on how these identities influence the enactment of the categories of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) into teachers' role in grammar teaching practices.

Second, the findings of this study further supports the concept of 'dynamic perspective' in PCK. Turner-Bisset (2001) asserted that all categories of PCK exist as the 'overarching knowledge base' which are simultaneously practised by teachers. The present study reaffirms Turner-Bisset's (2001) dynamic view of PCK by extending one of the categories of PCK, namely knowledge of learners and self. Self-perceived roles and balanced practices between knowledge of learners social and cognitive are closely associated with teachers' knowledge of self. Turner-Bisset's PCK model is reliable to connect teachers' categories of PCK with their classroom practices as it emphasizes on the idea that identity constantly evolves. Acknowledging this connection generates in-depth insights in understanding teachers' reflection on

their knowledge of learners and self. The convergence between knowledge and practice helps to inform the nature of interaction among categories of PCK in grammar teaching.

Third, the findings of this study can also contribute to the English Language Teaching (ELT) in Malaysia for teacher educators, in-service teachers, and teacher-participants. During the training period at the Institute of Teacher Education, teacher educators can help to raise pre-service teachers' awareness of what role they need to play in actual grammar teaching practices. In light of ongoing professional development context, reflection in the form of stories on personal and professional practice may be employed as a route to enhance classroom practice in grammar teaching. Teachers' stories can be used by teacher educators, either as an activity in a continuing professional development programme, or as independent reflective work. As ESL practitioners, the participants in this study also gained benefit from self-reflection. According to the participants, the way they perceived their role identities and grammatical pedagogical knowledge had given a subtle impact on how they viewed their own tacit knowledge and approach the grammar activities. Such understanding is important and supports Wenger's (1998) claim that identity develops through day-to-day experiences.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of Study

First, the data collection of this study was conducted over a period of six months. The scope of the present study is limited to non-longitudinal data to investigate the process of how teacher identity evolves from one teaching episode to another. As such, how explicitly the data demonstrate the transformation of identities along a career path cannot be done within this time frame. As the teachers' number of years teaching in their current school varied from less than a year to six years, their identities were analysed within the stated duration of data collection.

Second, the sampling of participant is also a limitation for this study. By employing qualitative multiple case studies approach, only three teachers were recruited from a single context; one district in West Malaysia. Based on the characteristics of a qualitative case study, recruiting less than ten participants is acceptable to provide in-depth description and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Although the findings are 'credible' (Creswell, 2013, p.246) and replicable, with a small number of research participants, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other populations, teachers of lower primary, or different school setting.

Third, since the teachers have obtained different academic qualifications and training backgrounds, the exploration of identity in grammar teaching varies according to the classroom settings and participants. Due to the context of both schools, observations and interviews were only conducted when the participants were not involved with any school programmes or Ministry of Education official gazetted activities for schools. With this limitation, the teachers' identities and categories of pedagogical content

knowledge observed in the grammar lessons had been interpreted based on what teachers did in the classroom.

1.7 Constitutional and Operational Definitions of Terms

In order to establish a consistent and common meaning for the terms used in this study, constitutional and operational definitions of the key terms are provided as follows:

- i. **Teacher identity:** This term refers to “a construct, mental image, or model of what “being a teacher” means that guides teachers’ practices as they aim to enact being a teacher through specific arts of teacher identity” (Pennington, 2015, p.16). In this study, teacher identity is operationalised as the teachers’ self-perceived roles in teaching the grammatical structure as Teaching of English to Young Learners (TEYL) teachers in promoting accuracy and fluency, and how the teachers display the knowledge of grammar teaching as well as practice this knowledge in their grammar lessons.
- ii. **Metaphor:** This term denotes the “analogic devices that lie beneath the service of a person’s awareness and serve as a cognitive device ... as a means for framing and defining experience in order to achieve meaning about one’s life” (Massengill-Shaw & Mahlios, 2008, p.35). For this study, the definition of metaphor refers to the teachers’ role in grammar teaching based on two criteria: (1) the name of the metaphor reflects the distinctive character of these participants as a TEYL teacher, and (2) the meaning of the metaphors and its subsumed metaphorical expressions are represented by the key conceptual metaphor.
- iii. **Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK):** The term PCK represents “the knowledge of, reasoning behind, and enactment of the teaching of particular topics in a particular way with particular students for particular reasons for enhanced student outcomes” (Carlson, Stokes, Helmes, Gess-Newsome & Gardner, 2015, p.24). For the purposes of this study, PCK is operationalised as the foundation of instructional practice for subject-specific teaching that underlies and offers prominence to the knowledge categories for grammar teaching, which include knowledge of curriculum and context, knowledge of learners and self, grammatical content knowledge, and grammatical pedagogical knowledge.
- iv. **Grammar teaching:** This term refers to “any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it” (Ellis, 2006, p.84). In this study, grammar teaching is operationalised as any grammar lesson that might consist of the presentation and/or practice of grammatical items, which involve learners to discover grammatical rules for themselves; explicitly taught, conducted by eliciting language production of the structure, or by means of corrective feedback of learners’ errors.

1.8 Summary

This chapter elaborates the thrust of the present study. It highlights the background, the problem, and the significance of understanding identity in relation to teaching subject-specific knowledge. Three research objectives and research questions are proposed to explore new knowledge in comprehending the role of identities in grammar teaching. Both the significance and the limitations of this study ensure the scope of examination is sufficiently narrow for effective data management and trustworthiness of this study. Chapter 1 ends with the definition of terms that establishes the boundary of understanding teacher identity within this study.



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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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